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The order of the order: buyer-seller interactions in an industrial setting

Work in progress

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Abstract
This paper follows along the lines of Ford et al. (2008) with the purpose of analysing business interaction. It focuses on dyadic micro interactions between companies' representatives in a business to business context. The paper draws upon a study of customer service personnel and their interaction with customers by telephone in an industrial setting. The purpose is to analyse business interaction in the form of conversations. The analysis is focused on (1) how past interactions are brought into the present interaction; (2) if and how future interactions are being called for; and (3) how present interaction enables future interaction. The main question dealt with in this paper is: How can dyadic micro interactions taking place through ordering processes be conceptualised? We use a threefold conceptualization of interaction as past, present and future interaction combined with the ARA-model. It is argued that studying mundane micro interactions in a more detailed way is important in order to increase our understanding of business interactions.

Keywords: *Interaction, conversations, business-to-business, ordering, time*

Customer (C): I've ordered a pair of L accessories to a TB product, but I haven't received any.
Customer Service (CS): You haven't received any?
C: No, I still haven't received it.
CS: But we have received... How did we receive the order... or how...?
C: I've called and talked to him.
CS: But who told us then and what? I mean, who told us that we should deliver L products? Who have you talked to? (No25)

The above excerpt is taken from a phone call between a customer service representative and a customer representative in a business to business setting. It is an example of mundane, ordinary conversations which constitute a great deal of interactions between companies. In order to increase our understanding of business interactions, we suggest that closer attention should be paid to these kinds of conversations. In this paper we outline ideas for how this form of business interactions can be attended to. Five sections follow. First, we discuss the importance of studying interaction. Second, we describe the study design. Third, we will present our analytical approach for studying interaction. Fourth, we present the results. Fifth and finally, we discuss our findings including the benefits and drawbacks of the approach used.

Marketing and the importance of interaction

Even though interaction has been of central interest since the start of the IMP Group (Håkansson, 1982), Ford and Håkansson (2006) pointed out that a prime task for the IMP Group is to further increase our understanding of business interaction. Interaction has not yet received the acceptance it deserves in the marketing literature and the reasons are that interaction is: "... difficult to demonstrate, to analyse, to picture, to conceptualise, to make normative statements about, or to translate into a management technique" (Ford & Håkansson, 2006:253). Beyond this, the antecedents and outcomes of interaction are often unclear and there are often conflicting interpretations and meanings among the parties involved in the interactions (Ford et al., 2008). It is also difficult to "… separate the individual actions, re-actions and re-reactions of each actor or to trace their causes, effects and outcomes" (ibid., 2008:4). Another challenge is the variation regarding the history, volume and complexity (Ford et al., 2008). Nevertheless, interaction is a primary characteristic of the business landscape since a business relationship is based on repeated interaction between the counterparts. Schurr et al. (2008) claim that most of the work of analysing relationships by marketing scholars has been done through reducing a dynamic process into a static one, such as a snapshot at a specific point in time. This had the effect of relationships being described as a state, rather than as a combination of interactions. Ford et al. (2008) state that: "… if we wish to examine business in an interactive world then our unit of analysis must be the specific process of interaction and how it occurs between particular combinations of companies" (p. 15). As such, further conceptualization of interaction is required. To participate in this endeavour, this paper focuses on dyadic micro interactions in the form of conversations between companies' representatives in a business to business context. Most interaction episodes are each relatively insignificant among many others but taken together they comprise the relationship between the participants (ibid., 2008). As Håkansson and Snehota (1995) state: "A relationship develops over time as a chain of interaction episodes – a sequence of acts and counteracts. It has a history and a future" (p. 25). Ford et al. (2008) also state that routines play an important role in providing a basic structure to business activity. Therefore we argue that in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of business interaction all forms of interaction, also the mundane, routine and ordinary should be studied. The purpose of this study is to analyse business interaction in the form of conversations. The analysis is focused on (1) how past interactions are brought into the present interaction; (2) if and how future interactions are being called for; and (3) how present interaction enables future interaction. The main question dealt with in this paper is: How can dyadic micro interactions taking place through ordering processes be conceptualised?

Study design

The paper draws upon a study of customer service personnel and their interactions with customers by telephone in an industrial setting (Salomonson, 2005). We have chosen to analyse interactions taking place through the ordering process, i.e. before, during, and after ordering. These interactions are one type of interactions among many others taking place between a company and its customers. The ordering process is an important part of business interactions since questions are answered and agreements, decisions and commitments are made between the parties. The empirical material consists of recorded telephone conversations between customers and customer service personnel. The personnel represent a Swedish industrial company in the building and construction industry that sells products for plumbing and heating. The customers, who mainly are wholesalers, usually have long-term contracts with the company. The most

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frequent calls concern information about products, prices and delivery; ordering of products; making changes of orders; or making complaints. A total of 80 incoming phone calls were recorded at eight different occasions during a three month period and then transcribed. The customer service centre receives phone calls from a large number of customers each day. Out of the 80 registered phone calls, there were only two calls being directly related to the same customer.
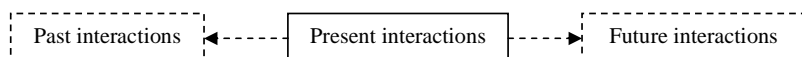
Time and elements of interaction

The material was analyzed using a combination of the "ARA-model" (Håkansson & Johansson, 1992; Håkansson & Snehota, 1995) and a threefold conceptualization of interaction as past, present and future interaction (Medlin, 2004). The ARA-model provides a conceptual framework of the process and outcomes of interaction (Ford et al., 2008). It describes three different layers of substance that characterize the outcomes of an interaction process (the content / nature of a business relationship): activity links, resource ties and actor bonds. The first layer concerns the *activities* (technical, administrative, commercial and other) that are linked through the relationship (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). The activities build up the relationship and connect, more or less closely, various internal activities of the two parties. Second, through a relationship there are also various *resources* that can be combined and tied together. The resource ties (technological, material, knowledge and other intangibles) represent in itself a resource for the companies involved. Third, there are bonds between *actors* which affect how the actors perceive, evaluate and treat each other. The actors become connected as the relationship develops and the bonds become established through the interaction and reflect the interaction process. These three layers are interconnected and their interplay is a driving force in the development of business relationships (ibid.). Holmlund (2004) also states that the interaction levels can be further developed into a process and an outcome. A process can have one or several outcomes or no outcome at all and the outcome typically reflects the result of the process. However interactions have not always a clear beginning or end: "Interactions may be parallel to each other and take place simultaneously, and interactions can be sequentially interdependent so that they follow on each other and require a certain order of enactment" (ibid., p. 282).

The dimension of time becomes particularly important when analysing interaction. Ford et al. (2008) further developed a model of business interaction that relates the three layers of the ARA-model to *time* and *space* that are considered to be two key dimensions of interaction. Ford et al. (2008) describe that time largely defines the nature of interaction as a process in which sequential events are related to each other. Interaction is however difficult to delimit in time since it does not have an easily identifiable beginning or end. Things taking place are continuations of previous interactions. Interaction is however not pre-determined by what has happened before and the significance of a single episode is impossible to assess at the time it occurs. Those involved in a single episode are affected differently and are also likely to interpret it differently. Ford et al. (2008) relates their treatment of time to "… four ways in which researchers have conceptualised the problematic characteristics of interaction over time and of the ways that subsequent interaction episodes are related to each other" (p.19). The first approach is to ignore any effect between episodes by assuming that each episode or exchange is independent of all other episodes. Each episode is thus analysed and managed separately. A second approach is to consider that episodes are related together over time in a process of development that comprises a life cycle consisting of a number of different stages. As such, episodes are part of a process of learning, adaptation, commitment and distance-reduction over time. Ford et al. (2008) state that this approach tends to infer that the development of relationships is a rather deterministic, unidirectional and linear process. A third approach is the assumption that interaction over time has a cumulative effect. Companies are over time considered to be investing in each other through their relationship and as a consequence the experiences and processes must be taken into account when the value of a company is assessed. The fourth approach is to take a longer-term historical view when studying the process of interaction over time. Contemporary records can be used to examine the commonalities within interaction that may only become apparent over an extended period.

In this paper, we explore interaction using a fifth approach, turning it into an empirical question. Using this approach, we chose to attend to the interactions without making assumptions of an existing relationship, its structure or duration. Attending to these micro interactions, in this case conversations, we don't know a priori whether these interactions are part of a joint history or a joint future. However, this might be visible in the interactions. By using this approach, there are three issues in particular in the prevailing conceptualization of interaction that we would like to address. The first issue regards time. We share the notion that interactions are affected by what has happened previously or expectations of the future (Ford et al., 2008). The second issue regards space. We share the notion that specific interactions should not be regarded as isolated events from others with which it is connected (ibid.) existing in parallel or in sequence. However, attending these two

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issues we choose an empirical approach which is more directly oriented towards understanding interaction "here and now" and the different "building blocks" that constitute the content of the interactions. The third issue regards the participants' intentions and interpretations of the interactions. Asking the participants is the main mean for the researcher to understand how a specific interaction is related to other interactions. This is particularly important when looking for specific or critical events that in some way differ from the ordinary business life. However, we are interested in understanding more about the mundane, ordinary and routine business interactions taking place. We believe that it is fruitful to attend to what actually happens in these interactions. This can be seen as complementary to approaches were participants' interpretations of the events are studied.

Attending to the interactions the material was analyzed from two dimensions. The first dimension regards time. We use a threefold conceptualization of interaction as past, present and future interaction (Medlin, 2004). Needless to say, all interactions observed are present interactions. However, we are interested in finding out if and how past interactions are brought into the present interaction as well as if and how future interactions are being called for and how present interaction enables future interaction. This is done with the notion that the present shapes the selection of the past, as well as the future (Mead, 1932). As observers, it is difficult to identify or define boundaries of time regarding interactions (Medlin, 2004; Ford et al., 2008), but in our case the time boundary of the present interaction is the time of the phone call. This means that we are attending to present interactions in order to look for traces of past interactions as well as enablers of future interactions (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Questioning past and future interactions through present interactions

The second dimension regards elements of interaction. We use the ARA-model in order to analyze how actor bonds, activity links and resource ties can be identified during the interactions. We use the model with the notion that these elements are results of and defined by interaction, being both "inputs" and "outcomes" of interaction: "Interaction is the substantive process that occurs between business actors through which all of the aspects of business: material, financial and human and all of the elements of business: actors, activities and resources take their form, are changed and are transformed" (Ford et al., 2008:12). The analytic scheme is illustrated in figure 2 below:

	Past interactions	Present interactions	Future interactions
Actors	1a	2a	3a
Activities	1b	2b	3b
Resources	1c	2c	3c

Figure 2. Time and elements of interaction

Results

In this section we will present our results. We will follow the structure presented in Figure 2 giving examples of each of the nine combinations resulting from the dimensions of time and elements of interaction.

1a. Actors and past interactions

Past interactions between actors become visible in present interaction in several ways. In the interactions, there was variation regarding to what extent the parties were known to each other. In some phone calls the customers introduced themselves more formally through stating their family name, the company name and/or location. Sometimes the customers introduced themselves less formally through stating their first name only and sometimes combined with the company name and/or the location. There were also some few calls in which the customer didn't mention his/her name at all but was nevertheless recognised by the customer service representative, as in this example:

CS: B-company AB, Ulrika.
C: Hello, it's me.
CS: Hi Susanne, Hi. (No3)

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The customer's (C) response "Hello, it's me" is personal and something one can expect when the parties are known to each other. Traces of previous interaction/-s can thus be found in this and other phone calls where their initial interaction (greetings) indicates that they have spoken to each other before. The customer id number is another example of connecting different interactions. However, the customer id number was only stated explicitly by a customer in one (No1) out of eighty phone calls. In many of the phone calls, other actors involved in previous interactions were referred to, such as customer service personnel (others), sales engineers (No22) or sales managers (No48) of the building company or colleagues (No16), sellers (No3) or customers (No6) of the customer company. Both parties in the interaction make referrals. In some situations the interactions are particularly difficult for the observer to grasp, since they refer to past or future events unknown to the observer (No41). We found one example with a person calling and there were no signs of past interactions with this person and the company. He, being interested in a special product, was calling in order to know if there were any retailers dealing with the product (No18). Not being able to build upon past interactions, such as having a customer id number or article number the interaction did not run as smoothly:

> CS: Svensson
> C: Hello Anders Larsson, City A.
> CS: Hello.
> C: I'm interested in SF products.
> CS: You mean PSF products?
> C: Yes. SF-products. Are there any retailers?
> CS: Where did you call from?
> C: City A. Between City J and City M.
> CS: City A... Well, yes. There would be someone I guess. Have you heard with P-company?
> C: No. I haven't spoken to anyone. I looked at the internet but I didn´t find that much. (No18)

It turned out the product was not available at any retailers for resale and couldn't be ordered by the person. His address was taken in order to send him a brochure and he was recommended to call back at a later time.

Throughout the interactions, there are expectations of being able to identify one another. In one situation the customer service representative expressed embarrassment when not being able to find the customer in the system right away (No49). It was an example of how the actors were struggling with identifying each other throughout the interaction.

1b. Activities and past interactions

There are many different ways throughout the interactions in which previous activities are referred to. There are also specific references that are known to both parties involved in the interaction, such as order numbers (No5); waybill numbers (No3) or shipment numbers (No44). These references are used as "tools of identification" when referring to previous activities such as orders. The following excerpt is an example of this:

> C: I ordered F-products April 19th. Now I receive from the customer that it has not been delivered.
> CS: April 19th.
> C: I have my order number.
> CS: Yes... [enters the it-system]
> C: 1005913.
> CS: Let's see. It left us on April 24th.
> C: Ok. So it's green?
> CS: Yes. (No5)

Referring to previous interactions might be more or less explicit. Another way of referring to previous interactions is referring to previous agreements and acknowledgements. In one interaction (No4) the customer went from being less explicit (an order acknowledgement) to somewhat more explicit (an agreement with sales engineer). The customer service representative however expresses a need for further information and asks for the order number. An example of a less explicit reference to previous interaction by referring to a previous order is:

> C: The things I ordered last week, have you sent it?
> CS: Eh... I think it's being sent from me today. Wait, I'll see. I'll check just in case [enters the it-system].
> The thing was I didn't have any FHR-products.
> C: But it's that I have been waiting for.
> CS: Yes... but [she sounds frustrated]. Yes and they were going to be completed to day.
> C: Okay that was the case.
> CS: Yes that was the case. (No32)

1c. Resources and past interactions

In the interactions observed the main resource referred to was products. Products were brought into the interaction in two main ways: by stating article number (refers to a specific product) (No28) or by mentioning a specific product's characteristic (No24; No65). Both ways refer to a specific resource, which has been dealt with in the past. In one example (No28) the customer admits having made a mistake about the number of products previously ordered and refers to the article number in order to identify the product. An example of previous interactions of resources brought into the interaction is this excerpt about an order of a customized product which the customer wants to cancel:

> C: The intention was to put the households together three and three and now there is a change and it will be two and two instead.
> CS: Okay.
> C: Is that possible to arrange?
> CS: Yes then I just need to check... I can't see what has been reported yet because it's special production as you know. It's not a standard article in any way. So I have to check how far... what has happened. Whether anything has been made.
> C: Can you please get back to me?
> CS: Yes of course.
> C: What was your name again?
> CS: Ulrika.
> C: Yes because if we calculate two and two instead it's not this then.
> CS: Yes. Mm... But shall I cancel it completely then?
> C: Yes do it if it's possible.
> CS: Yes then I will see what I can do.
> C: Okay. Thanks. (No22)

As compared to activities and actors, traces of past interactions were not as visible regarding resources and we found few examples of this in the interactions.

2a. Actors and present interactions

The interactions are taking place between representatives of two actors (the company and the customer company) and the actors are being connected through the activities decided in the phone call, such as ordering. But the interactions are not restricted to the dyad. Other actors are also being brought in and connected through the interactions. A customer can for example request that the customer service representative tags the delivery with a name of the person that is the specific receiver of the products. It can be the customer's customer. In the following example, several different actors are being connected through the interaction in which the customer places an order.

> C: Now, I will give you a task and the goods needs to be there by tomorrow.
> CS: Tomorrow?
> C: The order number is 24715996. 160 EM-products.
> CS: Sorry? 247-
> C: 15996. We can't get the goods of from City H and now a damn hotel has stopped entirely.
> CS: This must be the thing Karin [in B-company's customer service] was just talking about.
> C: We can´t get it loose.
> CS: Wait a second. I wonder if I have any...
> C: ((xxx))
> CS: Sorry?
> C: I can't get it loose and now it's totally stopped.
> CS: Stay put.
>
> The customer service representative turns to Karin. She finds out there are no goods in stock. She turns to the phone again.
> CS: Hello. Haven't they received an order to City H?
> C: They have, but I can't get it loose. They don't have the time.
> CS: I see. They haven't had the time to unload.
> C: They have worked in three shifts recently. We have to solve it or chaos will follow.
> CS: How many are we talking about?
> C: 150.
> CS: Yes, no, I can't manage to handle that now. It's impossible. Not 150. Let's see...
> C: It doesn't matter how you solve it, as long as we get it to City S.
> CS: Ok, It's only that I don't know how to deliver it. That's the problem.
> C: How many are there in a carton? There are 24 in a carton.
> CS: Well, it's slightly more than 30. Stay put.

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The customer service representative calls to a person in the warehouse. Yet another person in the warehouse is involved, as well as another customer service representative. Products are subsequently taken from another customer order. The products will be delivered by express railway. It will be delivered to the station by the customer service representative and from the end station by a local delivery. The customer calling is giving his customers' name, phone number, address and name of the representative in order to have the products delivered correctly. (No9)

The example show that, apart from the interaction between the customer service representative and the customer, there are other actors present in the interaction; customer service personnel, warehouse personnel, the customers' customer, distributors and the other customer (whose already picked order was reduced). Different actors are connected through the interactions.

2b. Activities and present interactions

Activities between the parties are coordinated and connected through interaction. The interaction is thus in itself a coordination activity. Three examples of activities found in present interactions are completion of orders; delivery costs negotiations; and coordination of frequency and/or time of delivery. Completion of orders is the most frequent occurring activity. The following excerpt illustrates the coordination of a delivery:

C: Ehh... I would like you to send it to the following address [give address]
CS: Grimstagatan... Yes...
C: And you send it all. You have it?
CS: Yes I have it. But then we take it at once?
C: Can he get it on Friday?
CS: Yes that is probably doable. On site on the 3rd.
C: Yes that's fine.
CS: Mm... We'll arrange that.
C: Perfect.
CS: Okay. (No34)

2c. Resources and present interactions

Different resources are combined and linked through the interactions. This concerns the transferring of resources, such as products or knowledge and the matching of requirements and resources through the interactions. Throughout the interactions different resources are combined as shown in the following example:

C: Well. I have a bit odd question about K-products.
CS: Yes.
C: Do you have DM-products fit for driving?
CS: No. You know, our L-part is not fit for driving.
C: It's not?
CS: No. You need a so called B5 – designation and replace our PL-part with.
C: Ok. What's that?
CS: It's the big round one. The one you see in the street so to speak. With an R-part and an L-part. That one you buy at the VA wholesaler.
C: Well, ok. We have for sure.
CS: Yes...
C: B5 – designation L-part and R-part?
CS: B5, yes.
C: It fits?
CS: Yes. It's a good size so it will be able to fit on the outside of our K-part, our small S-part.
C: Which B-product is it? Is it the one of one meter a diameter?
CS: Sorry? We don't have as big as that, or?
C: It's not a meter?
CS: Well, but then it is... It's 100 at the bottom and 75 centimetres high. And the KN part will be added.
C: Ok. It's like that. Ok.
CS: So it must be about 70 centimetres a diameter.
C: Ok. So... 70 centimetres?
CS: Yes.
C: Ok. Then I know how it is. Thanks. Now I'll probably be able to work it out. (No10)

As this example shows knowledge and material resources are combined through the interactions. It is not a matter of direct transfer of resources, but both actors participating in creating new combinations, which emerge through the interaction.

3a. Actors and future interactions

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The present interactions also enable future interactions between the same actors or with other actors. An example of reference to future interaction between the same actors is when the customer upon having checked prices or availability, and seemingly got the information needed says "Ok. I will check that out and get back to you" (No23; No47). There are also examples when the customer will get back but are not that specific about who he/she will get back to: "I'll be back" (No14; No15; No27). It's in these cases for the customer often a matter of checking with their own customer (the customer's customer). Sometimes this is mentioned explicitly by the customer: "I'll talk to the customer and get back to you" (No36). In some cases, there are unknown *other* actors mentioned in more general terms, such as "some manufacturer" (No2). In other cases, the actor is specified, such as the name of the wholesaler to turn to for purchasing a specific product (No10).

3b. Activities and future interactions
As with the examples above with reference to future interaction of the actors, there are many different examples of how potential future interactions concerning activities are being introduced in the interactions. Examples are when the customer in a phone call, after have gotten the information needed about prices, then announces that he/she will check this with their own customer and get back to place an order (No15). This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

> CS: Mm... It's 325969. Do you want me to make an order or?
> C: I will call the customer and give the price and then make an order out of it.
> CS: Okay.
> C: That's fine.
> CS: Mm... You'll be back.
> C: Yes. (No49)

Other examples of how future interactions are facilitated through present interactions are when reference numbers such as shipment numbers are produced in the interaction (No25; No77). Another example was presented above with the customer who wanted to cancel a previous made order (see section 1c. Resources and past interactions, No22). The customer service representative could not confirm the cancellation right away. Instead, she promised to get back to the customer when she had checked how far in the production process the order was.

3c. Resources and future interactions
Finally, the future use of resources can be enabled through interactions. A customer can be in need of prices or product information in order to make a future decision about ordering of products. The customer can for example ask for a price lists (No67) or a product sheets. It can also, as in the following example, be a combination where the customer asks about a product sheet and the customer service representative refers to the company's website. In this excerpt, resources (such as website, brochures and knowledge of its use) are combined in order to provide for future acquirement of resources (a specific product).

> CS: And then you click on... let's see... download brochures. Then you get all brochures that are there. Then there is one... cable... B-company cable product systems. There are the products.
> C: Then it's easy for me and for you also. There are numbers also?
> CS: Yes there is.
> C: Then I will get back later on.
> CS: Yes that's great. If you get any problems just call me and I will fax you or something.
> C: That's good.
> CS: Mm... Okay. (No69)

Having presented our examples of interaction, in the next section we will discuss the implications of using this approach in understanding business interaction as well as what we so far have identified as the benefits and drawbacks of this approach.

Discussion
The call from Ford and Håkansson (2006) about the need to increase the understanding of business interaction and Ford et al. (2008) conceptualization on the subject was the starting point for this study. Our study has demonstrated how an analysis of dyadic micro interactions "here and now" can be performed in order to show how interactions become part of a joint history or a joint future. The results show how past interactions are brought into the present interaction and how future interactions are being called for and enabled through present interaction. A threefold conceptualization of interaction as past, present and future interaction is important in order to understand interaction processes. In relation to Ford et al. (2008) study we have unveiled a mundane and ordinary but nevertheless vital part of the complex transformation process that occurs between business actors. In the interactions studied we observed how the actors relate to past, present and future activities and different resources. Actors, activities and resources are constantly being brought into,

coordinated and connected through the interaction. Actors outside the dyad (or even the network) are brought in order to fulfil commitments about activities and resources. Commitments about future activities are being made and commitments from past activities as sometimes questioned. The studied interactions also reveal the interpretations and assessments made by the participants at the time of the interaction. One example (see section 2a, Actors and present interactions, No9) showed how a customer presented a problem for the customer service representative and how she solved the problem by connecting different actors. It is also an example of coping with change through interaction. Of course this interaction is only a fragment in the overall interaction and transformation process that occurs between the companies. However if the customer service representative does not fulfil promises made (on behalf of the company) it will have an effect on the overall relationship. As Ford et al. (2008) state: "… the effects of interaction may be both immediate and long term and current interaction is affected by what has taken place previously and by the perceptions and expectations of future interaction held by the actors" (p. 11).

Attending to dyadic micro interactions contributes with knowledge about the mundane, ordinary business interactions that constitute most of contemporary business life. We believe that the critical events or unusual and memorable events are important to study, but should be complemented with more ordinary interactions. Our suggested approach has the benefits of allowing us to observe interactions without "jumping between aggregation levels" and using a more flat perspective in order to understand how different interactions are connected to each other. This approach also allows for understanding of how the participants in the interactions are using different conversation techniques for connecting present, past and future interactions. Another benefit of the approach is that the interactions are "naturally occurring" (see e.g. Silverman, 2001). Using this approach we can also grasp some of the aspects taken for granted by the participants, which might not be recalled using other methods (such as interviews). We are able to study the result of the continuous first-hand interpretations – still messy – but actual interpretations the participants make in the interaction. The focus is on the interaction process rather than the outcome. A response by a participant is a result of an interpretation of a previous contribution made by the other participant in the conversation. If there is a misunderstanding in the interaction there are often signs of efforts to clarify it (restatements, request for clarifications etc.). Interviews capture interpretations of previous made interactions sometimes with considerable time lapse between interview and interaction.

One of the major drawbacks of this approach is that it becomes the researchers "outsider" view instead of the "insider" view of the participants. It is difficult for the observer to understand aspects of the interactions as well as the meaning and the outcomes of it. Some aspects might appear meaningless to observer but might at the same time be meaningful to the participants. A related drawback is that refraining from "jumping between aggregation levels" means that as observers we don't have enough knowledge of the context (regarding both time and space) of the specific interaction. Even though the approach has the objective of questioning past and future interactions through the present interactions, there is a risk that the interactions studied become isolated events. Taking the benefits and the drawbacks of this approach into account, we believe that different approaches should be combined in order to understand more about the specific interactions. Observation of what happens in the specific interactions could be combined with interviewing the participants in order to have more knowledge of their interpretations of the interaction as well as the context needed in order to understand the specific interaction. It is also a way of bringing in aspects that the participants might take for granted in the interaction and call for their reflections and interpretations of these aspects. The participants' approaches or intentions of entering the interaction might also be revealed.

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