

**UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

**SHIFTS IN PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS IN MULTIPARTY CONVERSATION**

**A Pro Gradu Thesis**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA**

### **ENGLANNIN KIELEN LAITOS**

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SHIFTS IN PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS IN MULTIPARTY INTERACTION

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia osallistumiskehikkoa monenkeskisessä keskustelussa. Osallistumiskehikon muodostavat keskustelun osallistujien erilaiset ja vaihtelevat roolit puhetilanteessa. Kaikki keskustelijat yhdessä muokkaavat osallistumiskehikon. Osallistumiskehikko sisältää pääasiassa puhujan ja kuuntelijan roolin, mutta myös osallistujien vaihtelevat diskurssi-identiteetit esim. kyselijät, vastaanottajat, tietämättömät vastaanottajat, tarinankertojat, sivustakuulijat ym. Tutkimusaineiston olen kerännyt itse ja se koostuu yhdestä tunnin mittaisesta videonauhoitetusta arkikeskustelusta, jossa 11 osallistujaa keskustelee englanniksi. Aineisto on litteroitu videonauhalla.

Tutkimusmetodina käytän tutkielmassa keskusteluanalyysia. Keskusteluanalyysillä pyrin analysoimaan puhetilanteiden monimuotoisuutta ja vaihtelevuutta sekä osallistujien erilaisia rooleja vuorovaikutustilanteissa. Osallistumiskehikossa kaikki läsnäolijat yhdessä luovat keskustelukontekstin ja jokaisella osallistujalla on oma osallistujaroolinsa. Tutkielmassa tarkastelen osallistujien osuutta puhetilanteen muodostumisessa, ottaen huomioon puhujat, sekä aktiiviset että passiiviset kuulijat ja heidän toimintansa osallistumiskehikossa. Erityisen huomion kohteena ovat osallistujien toiminnat, sekä sanalliset että ei-sanalliset. Roolien jakoon keskustelutilanteessa vaikuttavat osallistujien erilainen asema suhteessa puheeseen. Erilaiset diskurssi-identiteetit vaihtelevat keskustelun aikana ja niin myös osallistumiskehikko on koko ajan liikkeessä.

Aineistossa osallistumisroolien merkitys puheen muotoilussa oli valtava. Tarkastelussa olivat seuraavat puhetilanteet: uudella puheenaiheella keskustelun aloittamisen erilaiset vaihtoehdot; selvennyksen antaminen keskustelussa; äänessä olevan puhujan kannattaminen ja puheenaiheen vaihto uuden puhujaroolin ehdottamisella.

Asiasanat: participation framework, conversation analysis, mundane interaction



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research reported here examines the shifts in participation frameworks in multiparty interaction. The aim of my study is to explore the dynamics of interaction and look especially at participant roles that are created during the interaction. The objectives of my study are 1) to investigate how various participant roles are created, maintained and distributed among the participants, 2) how the participants display their understanding during the course of interaction, 3) how participants perform different kind of actions and how they interpret each other's turns 4) and how recipients express their role in interaction, concentrating on hearer signals. I will focus on those aspects of participation that seemed relevant to my study and consequential of my data. The data examined in this research comes from a 60-minute video recording which was conducted by me. The video recording represents an informal mundane interaction, in which participants were instructed to discuss some pre-selected topics. The interaction was performed in English and transcribed afterwards. The participants of the video recording were representatives of different cultural backgrounds: Russian and American. The total number of participants was eleven.

My own particular area of interest has for a while been social interaction in our everyday life. My interest grew out of my bachelor thesis, where I studied gender-related differences in interaction and focused mainly on interactional management, concentrating on observable male domination in conversation. It was a quantitative analysis with very interesting results and it motivated me to study the same data with the different perspective in focus.

The participation framework changes constantly during the conversation and it provides the participants the possibility to participate in several different ways. Interactants adopt different participant roles during the interaction, a speaker role might be switched into a hearer role and a hearer might become a speaker during the course of conversation and thus all the participants collaboratively shape the participation framework. Recipients' actions and their contribution to ongoing talk

are of great importance. By orienting themselves to talk and ongoing activities, recipients state their position and their relation to other participants.

In the following work, I will concentrate on the description of participant roles and participant actions within participation frameworks. My study starts with the discussion of conversation and conversation analysis, which I chose to be the method of my thesis. In the same chapter turn-taking and research on multiparty interaction is briefly reviewed. Chapter three deals with the previous research and the concept of participation framework. With the examples I will show that the participation framework is a multiparty activity and the input of each participant is important. There are different types of participants and various discourse identities during the interaction, which is under surveillance in my thesis.

Interaction is performed through talk, but not talk alone evokes conversation. Nonverbal and other embodied activities such as gaze, gestures etc. are essential in creating interaction, because these accompany the way that participants understand and interpret each others utterances and embodied activities. Nonverbal interaction is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 3.3. In addition, I will pay special attention to nonverbal actions throughout the empirical part of my thesis (chapters five and six) and illustrate it with examples.

Chapter four starts with the overview of the data and transcription. I value my data quite much, because it was self-collected and enormous effort was made during the course of its collection and the process of transcription. The research question and the procedure of the study are also discussed under this chapter.

Narration is very common in interaction. Interactants share their communicative knowledge through telling and thus create a framework for participation. Every utterance carries meaning and it is interpreted differently by each participant. In chapter five I will analyse conversational narration as frequently occurring activity in everyday interaction and I will examine the examples having various participant roles in perspective.



Often participants have difficulties in understanding the fellow-speaker, especially when they are not familiar with the topic. In these cases participants ask the current speaker to clarify his or her utterance in order to be able to follow the conversation. Sometimes the speaker realizes himself from the co-participants' reaction that everything is not okay, because his turn is not interpreted the way he expected. In chapter 5.2 requests in storytelling are under discussion.

Chapter six deals also with the topical organization, especially with topic introduction and topic change and how it affects participants and overall interaction.

Chapter seven is dedicated to recipients and their communicative actions. I will look especially at the hearer role in conversation and what kind of verbal and nonverbal feedback the hearers provide to their co-participants. In addition, recipients' different involvement in handling discourse topics and their contribution to topic development is under discussion in chapter seven. Finally I will discuss my findings in chapter eight, the conclusion.

## 2. CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

### 2.1 What is conversation?

In order to explore the notion of conversation analysis, I would like to provide some definitions and discuss over the concept of conversation. Several researches have approached the term conversation and have found it having a quite broad meaning. Bublitz (1988:151) points out that “conversations are entities which exist, grow and proceed in time and continuously develop and change” Ten Have (1999:3) explains that “conversation can mean that people are talking with each other, just for the purpose of talking, as a form of ‘sociability’, or it can be used to indicate any activity of interactive talk, independent of its purpose”. Goffman (1963:23) has defined conversation as “the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention.” In his research Goffman left out nonpresent parties and included copresent parties and thus for example telephone calls cannot be categorized as conversation and this might be somehow misleading. As Goffman (1975) notes there are two approaches to define conversation: one refers to casual talk in everyday settings and another refers to spoken interaction. In addition to talk, Goffman points out that conversation can include behaviour other than talk. Also Wilson (1991:41) claimed that “conversation refers to direct social interaction, including nonverbal aspects as well as talk.” In my study I will treat conversation as an organization of verbal and non-verbal activities providing a basis for social interaction. Don H. Zimmerman and Deidre Boden have used the term talk-in-interaction to refer to conversation. They highlighted that the study of mundane or everyday conversation “is central for understanding social interaction as well as for elucidating social structure as an everyday, practical accomplishment (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:4). In their article they referred to Schegloff who asserts that talking with each other is social interaction and talk itself is omnipresent in social life.

Researchers have distinguished everyday conversations and institutional conversations from each other and studied them separately. My study will concentrate on naturally occurring talk or everyday conversation, focusing on what

the current interaction is about over the course of the interaction itself and what are the main characteristics of it. The study of verbal action as organized and orderly grew into the study of conversation, more precisely the field of conversation analysis, which is under discussion in the next chapter.

## **2.2 Conversation analysis as a method**

Already in 1950s and 1960s conversation analysis was developing together with other numerous approaches (e.g. sociology, anthropology, education, psychology, linguistics etc.) that dealt with the study of interaction. Before that time, researchers were studying conversations mainly normatively, meaning that their emphasis was on how people should speak, rather than how people actually speak. In addition ordinary conversations were treated as chaotic and disorderly (Ten Have 1999). With the emergence of recording devices and the development of methods how to study conversations, the order of conversation was discovered. According to Ten Have (1999) CA can denote any study of people talking together, if treated in wider sense, but in restricted sense CA denotes one particular tradition of analytic work that was started by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues.

Conversation analysis (or CA) as a method grew out of Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodological research and was developed further by Harvey Sacks (together with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson) in the 1960s. Harold Garfinkel's research was focused on common-sense reasoning and practical theorizing in everyday activities, whereas Sacks was interested in the details of the actual practices of people in interaction (Ten Have 1999:6). Sacks and Schegloff began to study conversational exchanges and adopted the point of view emphasizing that ordinary, everyday talk can be a legitimate and rich object of sociological analysis.

Many researchers have treated conversation analysis as a basis for studying human interaction and the term sequential organization comes across while dealing with CA. Ten Have (1999:6) summarizes it "as the idea that what a doing, such as an utterance, means practically, the action it actually performs, depends on its sequential position." According to Wilson (1991:22) the central concern of CA is "with

elucidating the mechanisms of sequential organization of interaction, that is, the way participants construct their interaction turn by turn over its course to accomplish an accountably coherent exchange.” Over the years conversation analysts have tried to pay special attention to purely sequential phenomena and this has produced much knowledge about the mechanisms through which people organize and construct their conversation. Schegloff (1987 b, cited in Wilson 1991:23) has noted that the main research strategy has been “to identify a collection of instances of a particular phenomenon across different conversations in order to examine the general features of interactional mechanisms”. According to Zimmerman and Boden (1991) the central position of conversation analysis is the organization of conversational interaction and the focus is primarily on the analysis of sequential opportunities and constraints and therefore the “varieties of sequential organization – the turn-taking system for managing the construction, allocation turns at talk, sequences for entry into and exit from conversation, and for the repair of trouble or for doing invitations, requests, assessments, and the like – provide the structure for conversational encounters, and talk-in-interaction more generally.” (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:9) They continue to explain that the sequential environment of talk is essential to the participants in their understanding of the context they act in. It is also important to bear in mind that the elements of interaction are actions performed by participants and not just unchangeable objects and these actions are shaped and reshaped over the course of talk (Zimmerman and Boden 1991). “The initiation of an action and the response to it create the immediate sequential context of these events, and occasions as well as exhibits the participants’ analysis and understanding of the unfolding course of the interaction. Mutual understanding is thus a methodical achievement employing the resources provided by the mechanisms of conversational interaction” (Garfinkel 1967:38-42; Heritage 1984a:259, cited in Zimmerman and Boden 1991:10)

The method of conversation analysis is based on recording and collecting empirical naturally occurring talk and transcribing it in the process of analysis. During the 1960’ mainly audio recordings were used, later the availability of video recordings enabled researches to study visual aspects of interactions and thus took the analysis to the next level (Ten Have 1999). Among the most prominent researchers to use video recordings were Charles Goodwin, Marjorie Harness Goodwin and Christian

Heath. There were several requirements that had to be taken into consideration in doing conversation analysis, for example it was preferred that the talk was not produced for the purpose of study and no pre-selection of topics was allowed. Furthermore, “no assumptions are made regarding the participants’ motivations, intentions, or purposes; nor about their ideas, thoughts, or understandings; nor their moods, emotions or feelings; except insofar as these can demonstrably be shown to be matters that participants themselves are noticing, attending to, or orienting to in course of their interaction” (Psathas 1990:47). In addition to the linguistic features of interaction, also laughter, pauses, repair etc. are all mechanisms that are used by participants in interaction and therefore it is important to look at these resources as crucial elements of interaction.

CA focuses on what “ordinary people” do with their utterances and how they make sense of their everyday life and the interaction they are engaged in. “Conversation analysis studies the order/organization/orderliness of social action, particularly those social actions that are located in everyday interaction, in discursive practices, in sayings/tellings/doings of members of society” (Psathas 1995:2). It attempts to describe the mechanisms that participants use in interaction with each other, in order to make it intelligible and orderly.

An important aspect to take into consideration while analyzing interaction is context. Conversation is seen both context-dependent and context-free, which means that the way people use language is shaped by the context, but at the same time, how people use language also shapes the context (Goodwin and Goodwin 1990). Thus, it was not important when, where and by whom the interaction took place, because it did not affect the system of turn-taking in conversation. Every utterance is understood and interpreted in a certain way by speakers and hearers and therefore the participants already have certain expectations what is to follow. The order that researchers (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson etc.) noticed in their analysis is characterized by the following: usually one speaker speaks at a time, the change of interlocutors occurs smoothly and the transition from one turn to the next involve very small gaps. Moreover, utterances combine to form chains and are produced by successive speakers in a time-bound process and conversation is described to have a sequential nature as the utterances follow each other in a systematic and orderly fashion. Talk is

described to proceed through a sequence of turns and turn-taking is the process through which talk is performed. The phenomenon of turn-taking will be under discussion in the next chapter.

### **2.3 Turn-taking in interaction**

As turn-taking is a vehicle for interaction between parties I will briefly summarize some main tendencies that can be observed in conversation. The concept of 'turn' is approached differently by different scholars and these definitions are not so transparent, moreover Bublitz (1988) claims that 'turn' as a term is not unambiguously definable. For example, Goodwin (1981:2, cited in Bublitz 1988:148) defines it as follows: "the talk of one party bounded by the talk of others constitutes a turn, with turn-taking being the process through which the party doing the talk at the moment is changed". Goodwin (1981:5) continues that "the exchange of turns in conversation requires action by at least two parties, one who changes his behaviour from speaking to hearership and another who moves from hearership to speaking". When the actions are performed by either alone, it is insufficient and cannot be called an exchange of turns. So, speakers take turns and a turn is defined as having control of the floor. According to Yule (1997) in any situation where control is not fixed in advance, anyone can attempt to get the control. It is overwhelmingly so that one party talks at a time, because the system allocates single turns to single speakers. With the turn a speaker gets the right to talk until the transition relevance place, which means until any possible change of turn. In conversation, turns can be shared equally by the participants, but there are also conversations where speakers seem to be in competition, fighting to keep the floor and preventing others from getting it (Yule 1997:31). Thirdly, turns of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief. These occurrences can be either interruptions or overlaps. In conversation, turn order, turn content and type, and turn size are not fixed but vary and therefore they are locally and interactionally determined (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:14). Furthermore, length of conversation and what each participant will say is not specified in advance. In addition, the number of participants can vary and talk itself can be continuous or discontinuous. Talk is continuous when a speaker continues to talk with a minimization of gap or

overlap, whereas discontinuous talk occurs when a current speaker stops talking and there is no speaker to continue, which causes a gap (also called a pause).

An advantage of turn-taking organization is that it partially controls the understanding of utterances. Therefore, a participant who is willing to take a turn if selected, will need to listen to any utterance, to find if he or she is being selected to be the next speaker. Similarly, questions are asked and in order to provide an answer, the display of understanding the prior turn's talk is performed (Yule 1997).

Zimmerman and Boden (1991:14) claimed that "in multiparty situations, the conversational turn-taking system exhibits a bias toward a "breakdown" into two-party talk. Without some constraint on turn-taking, the parties present could divide into a number of smaller conversational groupings rather than attend to a single focus of attention". In my study of multiparty interaction, there is only one conversation going on during the 60-minute recording and therefore previously mentioned phenomenon was not observable.

The interest in CA is in discovering different structures of interaction, by describing and analyzing social actions and the organizational features of various naturally occurring interactional phenomena. Descriptions and analyses try to note how a phenomenon appears in the course of its actual production.

As conversation is a jointly produced phenomenon by the participants, co-operation and intersubjectivity are emphasized in CA studies. Conversation analysts focus on how speakers rely on a common shared understanding of the world in order to manage with everyday situations. Intersubjectivity is achieved by participants through relying on shared understandings and it is maintained through routines of interaction and language use. Intersubjectivity is created through joint actions which are carried out in sequences. All the utterances carry sequential implications by showing how they relate to previous turns and at the same time set up expectations to following turns and by examining how turns are linked to each other, it is possible to show how shared understanding is built and negotiated in talk-in-interaction.

To sum up, the central aspect of conversation analysis is to look what happens during the interaction and how do the participants understand and interpret each other's turns and these turns are treated as meaningful actions.

#### **2.4 Research on multiparty conversation**

Most everyday actions that we are engaged in are multiparty interactions. For example when a child attends school and interacts with the teacher and classmates (interaction in school setting) or when a child is taken to the hospital by his/her parents and is examined by a doctor (doctor-patient-bystander interaction) or when friends are having a tea-party (interaction among close friends) etc. All these actions are multiparty actions in nature. In multiparty interaction the task of a single participant is more challenging than for example in two-party interaction, because s/he has to pay attention to the interaction as a whole by taking all the co-present participants into account, whereas in two-party conversations the current speaker can extend his/her turn until the co-participant interrupts him/her or he himself concludes his turn. In multiparty interaction it very much depends on a current or primary speaker and the content of his/her turn, because the next speaker can be selected by the primary speaker or self-selected.

By examining multiparty interactions it is possible to find out how participants interpret each other during the conversation and how they know it is their turn to take the floor. It is also interesting and challenging to investigate what are the verbal exchanges that are relevant to participants in utilizing their turns at a particular moment in time. In this chapter I will attempt to describe some main features of multiparty interaction and also investigate some problems concerning the sequential organization of multiparty interaction.

Two-party interactions and multiparty interactions differ in their structure and turn-organization. In two-party conversations participants take turns and they have to pay attention only to one co-participant, whereas in multiparty interaction the situation is much more complex involving the understanding of collaborative interaction style and utterance understanding. According to Londen (1997) in multiparty conversation



it is quite important for the interactants to know who speaks next. It is possible that participants might compete with each other to get the floor, as it is not obvious who will speak next, as it is in two-party conversation. For example, if speaker A has selected C to be the next speaker, A has to formulate his/her turn properly so that participants B and D will also understand that the next turn is directed to C (Londen 1997:58). If a current speaker has not selected the next speaker, anyone can take the turn and the one who starts speaking first is entitled to take the turn. This is also called self-selection.

Londen (1997) points out that in multiparty interactions participants tend to take shorter turns than in two-party conversations and the current speaker is the one who formulates his/her turn in a way that the recipients understand whose turn it is to speak next, in case the speaker selection takes place.

It is quite normal in multiparty interaction that the primary speaker selects the next speaker, but it is also common that the next turn is directed to multiple speakers, which means that the participants can or must follow the turn-taking rules themselves in order to display the participation in an orderly way. Turns can include elements on the basis of which several recipients can interpret that it is their turn to speak next. Also power relations can arise in multiparty interactions, depending on the context of conversation and power relationships between the participants. Within the participation framework certain participant roles are created and therefore it is also possible that voluble participants decide which topics are discussed and how the turns are distributed (Londen 1997).

In multiparty interaction it is possible that some of the participants might form smaller groups and start discussing within it, which makes the work of the transcriber and researcher quite complicated, as he or she has to take all the participants and their actions into consideration, as these might give insight of what the participants mean with certain utterances and actions. Very often these actions are created collaboratively and simultaneously. Moreover, the whole conversation and all the related actions might change several times during the interaction and also the turn might be directed to several participants simultaneously. Although there are many types of data in which participants form groups among groups, there are still

conversations with more than two participants and only one conversation going on. My data, for example, consists of one hour of videotaped multiparty conversation, in which only one conversation between 11 participants is taking place and I am going to examine it as one coherent conversation, focusing on actions and utterances as meaningful processes.

The term recipient design comes up in multiparty interaction, which means that participants will formulate their turns so that co-participants understand what has been said and to whom the turn is directed to. “In multiparty interaction a speaker may have an interest not in gaining a display of reciprocity from any of the co-interactants, but in achieving reciprocity from a particular participant” (Heath 1984:261). Participants might have different kind of background knowledge about the ongoing conversation and therefore the current speaker has to take it into consideration while forming his/her statement. There are different techniques to establish a particular recipient, for example through vocal naming and body movements. In addition, “recipient selection requires not only action from the candidate recipient, but also cooperation from the co-participant(s)” (Heath, 1984:261). I will examine recipients and their action more thoroughly in chapter 6.

Another interesting phenomenon that might come up in multiparty interactions is conversational teamwork (Parker 1984:45, cited in Londen 1997:70). This means for example, that participants can share memories of some kind of event or happening and they tell these shared memories together to other participants that are not possessing the knowledge of that certain event. In these situations these knowing participants have the role of tellers and the unknowing participants act as recipients and display their participation in the form of asking questions and providing comments. In every conversation there are knowing and unknowing participants and therefore the participation framework is changing throughout the conversation (Londen 1997:70). In my data conversational teamwork was not observable as such, but there were definitely knowing and unknowing participants and especially knowing participants were acting together and were sharing the floor. This phenomenon is under surveillance in chapter 5.

### **3. PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS**

#### **3.1 The concept of participation frameworks**

Every participant has a role in a conversation and that role changes during the interaction, even within one utterance and therefore participants have to pay attention to it throughout the conversation. Among others, there are current speakers and recipients in conversation and they constantly interpret each other's utterances and ongoing actions in order to clarify what kind of position they have at a particular time at talk. Here the notion of participation status is relevant. Goodwin (1981,1992) highlighted the importance of participation status in the organization of context and activities. Through the details of the ways in which they participate in the activity of the moment, co-participants display to each other both their understanding of what is happening, and their alignment to those events (Goffman 1961a, 1981, as quoted by Goodwin and Goodwin 1990:80).

Different scholars have conducted research in the field of conversation analysis, but the man who developed the notion of participation framework was Erving Goffman (Seppänen 1997). Goffman was the one who started to break down the notions of speaker and hearer in conversation, but his concern was mainly with hearers, whom he subdivided into overhearers, bystanders and eavesdroppers and those he called ratified participants. According to him, these participants might have very different relations to what has been said. Some participants might have a certain social position in that conversation, in other words they are somehow involved, and others might be accidentally overhearing the conversation or even spying on purpose. Goffman also introduced the notion of production format instead of the speaker, in which the speaker had three roles. First, there was a role of animator which belonged to the one who actually produces the utterance, then there was an author, to whom the idea originally belonged and finally there was a role of principal, whose thoughts and values were declared (Seppänen 1997). Goffman emphasized the diversity of the roles of hearer, while separating speakers and hearers. He pointed out that even if the number of participants does not change in conversation, the relevance lies in how the roles are distributed between the participants. Although he did not do much empirical

research, his ideas have stimulated other scholars, who have been working with their data. For example, Charles Goodwin (1981) looked at how speakers and hearers together interact with language, how they organize themselves in relation to each other through talk and how they display their status with their bodies using eye-contact, gestures and this way collaboratively create a participation framework, in which every participant has a role. Goodwin (1981) claimed that in addition it is relevant to examine to whom the utterance is directed and if there is clearly a principal character or the current speaker in conversation, he or she has to take all the participants into consideration, even if the utterance is directed to one certain participant. All the participants or in this case recipients, give their contribution, for example by nodding, laughing etc. Therefore it is not only the current speaker who shapes the talk alone, but also recipients' input is considerable. Participation framework is seen as multiparty activity and one participant can only suggest a participation framework. To make my point clear I will illustrate it with an example taken from Charles Goodwin (1986:299).

- 14 Mike: Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in  
 15 the,  
 16 (0.6)  
 17 Gary: W'wzit la:st week sumpn like the't  
 18 ha [ pp'n too?  
 19 Mike Ohno: , th [ is  
 20 Gary: Somebody bumped somebody  
 21 else'n [ they -spun aroun=  
 22 Mike: I don't kno:w.  
 23 Gary: =th'tra: [ ck  
 24 Mike: Oh that wz::uh a'week  
 25 be [ fore last in the late models  
 26 Phyl: (Yeh they'd be doin'it) en den ney go  
 27 down'n ney throw their helmets off'n  
 28 nen n(h)ey [ j's l:lo ] ok\_  
 29 Mike: But,  
 30 Phyl: et each other.

In this episode Mike, Gary and Phyllis are talking about an incident that Mike and Phyllis have first hand knowledge about. It is important to mention that there are other participants as well, but they will not produce any utterances in this extract. Mike begins the story and Gary asks a question, which Mike is not answering directly, but with a delay and hesitation. Phyllis notices it and attempts to provide a response to Gary (line 26) by interrupting Mike or in other words self-selecting herself to take the turn. In addition, Phyllis laughs in line 28 and thus invites other

participants to join her in this participation framework, which will happen quite soon, see below:

31 Mike: this  
 32 Curt: [Ye::h hh heh heh  
 33 Phyl: [ehhehhh  
 34 Mike: [This:: uh:::  
 35 Gary: (They kno:w they gon//na get hurt/heard).  
 36 Phyl: eh eh!  
 37 Curt: Liddle high school ki:ds,=  
 38 Gary: (No matter=  
 39 Mike: [this,  
 40 Gary: =what ju:re)  
 41 Mike: [De was::ld spun ou:t. 'n he  
 42 waited

(Goodwin 1986:301)

It is evident from these extracts that Mike tries to proceed with his story and succeeds eventually in line 41. Phyllis' role is without a doubt a challenger in this conversation, she proposes a participation framework in which Curt and Gary, in addition to Mike, have important roles to play. While Mike is looking for a chance to tell his story, Phyllis seems to be more engaged in getting Curt and Gary to participate. She is determined to get the men actively involved and she is not concerned that Mike does not get a chance to finish his story. Mike tries several times, but he does not get a full turn (see lines 29, 31, 34 and 39). In this short extract the roles of teller and listeners are created. I will discuss more about participant roles and discourse identities in the next chapter.

### 3.2 Types of participants and discourse identities

In my study I will use the term participant to refer to the individuals who are interacting with each other in a conversation. "The activity of conversation provides a set of positions for the participants, the most salient being speaker and hearer. These positions have an ongoing relevance to the conversation in that different kinds of actions such as speech and silence are appropriate to each" (Goodwin 1981:4). In addition to the roles of current speaker and hearer or recipient there are different discourse identities that are relevant in forming the participation framework. For example there are questioner, answerer, story-tellers, story-recipients etc. According

to Seppänen (1997) the participation framework consists of two or more participants with different, varying discourse identities and it is important to know whether a participant is a knowing or unknowing recipient and where his/her information come from: is it common cultural knowledge or is it based on someone's own experience. According to Goodwin (1981:150) a recipient who is proposed to lack relevant information that the speaker possesses will be referred to as unknowing recipient and a recipient who is supposed to possess information that the speaker lacks will be referred to as a knowing recipient. The information or knowledge can also be shared, for example married couples have usually shared certain experiences and they can tell the story together to other participants and thus employ certain discourse identities e.g. as co-tellers of the story. These discourse identities help participants to orient in conversation.

I attempt to examine more closely the status of the recipients in my thesis. There are different types of recipients e.g. knowing and unknowing recipients. In the following I will study them further and find examples of how the speaker differentiates particular types of recipients and designs his/her utterance according to that. In my thesis I will also outline the ways in which participants collaboratively create participation frameworks through talk and coordinated action.

In addition to talk, the participation framework is created through nonverbal and other embodied activities. In the next chapter I will discuss the relevancy of nonverbal participation in interaction.

### **3.3 Nonverbal resources in displaying participation**

Many conversation analysts e.g. Goodwin (2000) have found that nonverbal activities, such as laughter, breathing, coughing, gaze and other different facial expressions (e.g. raising of elbows) play a central role in the process of talk. Also various gestures that participants make are used when establishing a participation framework. Goodwin (1984) examined body postures of the participants' and found out that the way the speaker handles his/her body during his/her turn is relevant to the telling of the story and through that a number of actions can be performed. For

example through gaze the speaker can select the next speaker, but can also invite anyone to be the next speaker. In addition, gaze almost always requires some kind of response in talk. Among others Goodwin studied gaze more thoroughly and pointed out that “participants not only actively orient to particular kinds of visual events, but use them as a constitutive feature of the activities they are engaged in (for example by modifying their talk in terms of what they demonstrably see)” (Goodwin 2000:5). He also rephrased a rule of organizing the gaze, which says that the recipient should be gazing at a gazing speaker. In everyday interaction the case is not always ideal and the recipients may also look away and be engaged in some other activity while listening, but they can demonstrate involvement or orientation to the event in some other way e.g. by nodding. Thus, conversations are organized both by the actions of the speakers and by the actions of the recipients.

In addition to gaze, there are other nonverbal elements that may be used while interacting e.g. hand movements. It is pointed out that in case of having a longer turn, the speaker tends to move her/his hands more than when a shorter turn is in question. Thus, hand and body movements have to be taken into account and treated as relevant social actions while analyzing talk in interaction.

Another nonverbal element that is relevant to point out while discussing nonverbal activities is laughing. Different speakers articulate differently and adding laugh tokens to talk is one way of getting the attention from the fellow participants. “Laugh tokens are not simply comments by the speaker on the talk being produced but rather may constitute invitations to laugh, moves making relevant particular types of subsequent action by a recipient” (Goodwin 1984:227). Speakers might want to highlight certain parts of their talk and therefore use laughing as means of it. Another reason for using laughing might be the need to make the atmosphere of interaction as casual and easy-going as possible. In my data I evidenced such a phenomenon quite a few times and I analysed it accordingly.

Goodwin (1984) has highlighted also the teller’s body position and body movements during the sequence of talk as important aspects to take into consideration. For example, the teller can clasp his or her hands together while he or she is trying to emphasize a certain point in his or her story or can place his or her elbows on the

table and lean forward to his or her addressed recipient. This way the teller can display full orientation and complete engagement to his or her selected recipient. Thus speakers' contribution in interaction is not visible only in talk but also in the way they organize their body and bodily activities during the talking. According to Goodwin (1984:229) with these resources the speaker is able to provide relevant displays about both their alignment to the talk and its sequential organization.

As was noted earlier, speakers gaze at each other during the interaction. The gaze between the speaker and addressed recipient is achieved through addressing the recipient directly by name e.g. *What about you Vova...* etc. or by pointing e.g. with a hand or a finger. In casual conversation there are also nongazing participants and violations to the rule that a recipient should be gazing at a gazing speaker. In my data I evidenced such cases where nongazing recipients were addressed directly and that way brought into conversation.

Nodding is another nonverbal activity that participants use in interaction. By producing the nod the recipient is expressing his or her orientation to talk even if she or he is not gazing at the speaker. In case the speaker wants to have eye contact with the recipient there are several ways in achieving that. For instance, having a phrasal break could function as a request to gaze or another possibility is to address directly. (Goodwin 1984).

Goodwin (1984) has highlighted that the actions of participants are not mechanically performed but achieved through a continuous process of interaction with each other

In my study I will consider nonverbal behaviour as an important and interesting factor to examine, as it accompanies and contributes to the way that participants create and interpret meanings in interaction.



## 4. DATA AND TRANSCRIPTION

### 4.1 Overview of the data

The data used for this study comes from the 60-minute video recording that was carried out on March 28, 2001 in Tartu. I conducted the video recording myself in order to get exactly the kind of naturally occurring verbal interaction I needed for my study. I chose video recording, because I had several speakers and it is advisable in more complex setting to use video recording instead of audio recording. In addition, video recording made it possible to study also visual aspects of verbal interaction. The participants of the recording were male and female native and non-native speakers of English, who were contacted using the networking approach, which means that some of the participants took along their own acquaintances. The total number of participants was eleven, of which four were male and seven female.

The participants were representatives of two culturally distinguished groups: Russian and American. All the Russians (one of the Russians had Armenian background), aged between 19-23, were undergraduates from the University of Tartu and were brought up and educated in Estonia. They were chosen from the department of English, Physics and Economics. There were five Russian participants in total, two males and three females. Their names (changed) were: Vova, Ivan, Anna, Marina and Olga. All of them were estimated to have a good command of English, as they were majoring in English or were advanced learners of English.

All of the Americans were visitors from different parts of the United States, and during the data collection, they were temporarily living in Tartu. There were six Americans altogether, two males and four females. Their (changed) names were: Ron, Ken, Diana, Kate, Jane and Sue. All of them were undergraduates or graduates of the universities in the United States and they were staying in Estonia as exchange students at the University of Tartu. The participants in the American group were aged between 20 and 32.

The video recording was made in an informal setting where an unattended video camera was used and the participants were left alone in the room after being instructed to talk about their impressions about Estonia and possibly discuss the differences between Americans and Estonians.

During the recording the participants talked about different languages and how people from different countries acquire foreign languages and what is the status of English in Baltic and Scandinavian countries. The Russian participants were curious about the reasons and motives why the Americans chose to study in Estonia and Americans were interested in the background of the Russian participants living in Estonia. In addition, the quality of education in Estonia was under discussion.

The nature of the interaction can be characterized as a multiparty everyday-like conversation, in which participants performed activities that are characteristic to everyday interaction e.g. telling stories, telling jokes, asking questions, offer personal opinions etc.

The atmosphere of the interaction was relaxed and there were both voluble and taciturn participants. Most of the participants participated in the interaction with enthusiasm and were really keen on each other's ideas. Nevertheless, there were some less talkative participants whose actions and nonverbal communication make an interesting contribution to the participation framework of the interaction and which I am going to pay special attention to in the forthcoming chapters.

## **4.2 Transcription**

In order to provide both the researcher and the reader with sufficient information to understand the interaction, transcribing the interaction is essential. Transcribing recorded talk makes it possible to notice and discover particular events and interactional episodes and provide the reader an access to take a look at the phenomena discussed in the analysis. In addition, transcriptions help the researcher to capture the sequential features of talk and present the phenomena of interest in

written form and highlight phenomena that may be later considered in detail (Ten Have 1999:33).

In my thesis I will use an adapted version of the transcription system originally developed by Gail Jefferson. I chose this transcription system because it has been the most widely used transcription system in conversation analysis and the transcription conventions seemed suitable for transcribing the sequential features of my data. Conventions used in transcripts are enclosed in appendix 1.

Transcription is always a tedious task and therefore I have transcribed episodes of the video tape that have a particular kind of interesting interactional feature. I have tried to transcribe the data as accurately as possible, including nonverbal behaviour of the participants wherever possible. As I had a multiparty interaction as my data, I had to pay special attention to the conversation behaviour of all of the participants. Because of the location of the camera, there were instances where the speaker's face could not be seen and therefore his or her possible gestures or gaze cannot be seen from the video recording. Fortunately there were only few instances of that kind, most of the time all the participants were visible during the 60-minute video recording.

### **4.3 Research question and procedure**

How talk is organized in ordinary conversation within the frames of different participation frameworks is under observation in my thesis. More specifically, I am going to analyze participants' roles in relation to ongoing talk and find out what are the roles that the participants adopt during their conversation and what kind of actions are associated with these roles. I am going to examine closely what participants do with their utterances and I will consider utterances as meaningful social actions by having a natural organization that can be described and examined. I am also interested in finding out why participants participate in certain ways and how speakers and hearers coordinate their turns and actions with each other in natural conversation. In addition, I will try to find evidence to the claim that participation framework is dynamic and changes several times even within one utterance.

Studying participation frameworks means that all the aspects that are related to the participants and the interaction they are engaged in have to be taken into consideration. For example, how the role of a speaker is adopted and maintained, and what is the speaker relation to other participants and what is their reaction towards the speaker, e.g. by giving feedback etc.

The objective of my study is to find out how the shifts in participation frameworks take place, what kinds of shifts there are and how do these shifts affect the overall organization of conversation.

The findings of the study have been analysed using the method of conversation analysis, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.2. This procedure is in my opinion most suitable for the purpose of describing the pieces of conversation, as it enables the researcher to confront the corpus as it is by exploring participant roles and speaker positions and thus find answers to the research question mentioned above.

Describing authentic conversation is a challenging task and there is no objective and singularly accurate understanding of those verbal and non-verbal forms of action that occur in the data. Moreover, the process of interpretation of conversational actions, attitudes and meaning depend on the researcher's background reading and general understanding of interaction interpretation. My own particular area of interest has for a while been people's communicative behaviour and therefore participant roles within participation framework seemed most opportune subject to explore. The reason for choosing mundane conversation seemed also very logical, because people behave spontaneously and arbitrarily in everyday settings when compared to e.g. institutional conversations. Although everyday interaction might be quite complex in its communicative activity, it is clear and orderly and very appealing phenomenon to discover. I also wanted to experience the process of collecting naturally occurring talk and the process of transcribing it.

Now I will move on to the analysis of my data, starting with the examining of the roles that the participants create during the interaction.

## 5. PARTICIPANT ROLES AND CONVERSATIONAL STORYTELLING

In everyday interaction people are engaged in different actions, talk being one of them. How people talk, differs from one person to the next and from one group to the next. It is impossible to define one conversational style and there is no need for that, rather it is important to understand that talk binds people and thus creates the framework that I am about to explore.

In this chapter I am going to examine the participant roles as they emerge from the data. I will investigate how roles are created, maintained and distributed among the participants. I will look at the dynamics of interaction and how it affects the participants and their interaction with each other.

In addition, I will also analyse topical organization, especially topic introduction and topic change and how it affects the participation framework and what kind of roles are created through topical movements.

The terms used in my analysis to denote different participant roles are adopted from Bublitz (1988). According to Bublitz there are three participant roles: a primary speaker, a secondary speaker and a hearer. The primary speaker is usually the most dominant participant in conversation and he makes a major speaker contribution to the topic. He usually narrates or reports an event or episode to other interlocutors and his contribution to the current topic takes up the most time. The secondary speaker is a minor participant and he makes a minor contribution to the currently discussed topic. Secondary speakers state their position by performing certain speech acts. Primary speakers very often introduce and shift topics, they also close topics. When it comes to the minor speaker's topical actions, they are normally agreeing, supporting and approving in the course of interaction and giving the impression that they are paying attention. There are also hearers and they perform a basic communicative act of hearing and give particular hearer signals, such as short forms and variants of *yes* etc. Hearer signals function as confirmation markers to tell the current speaker that the interlocutor is hearing and paying attention and thus the

conversation is conducted. In my data there are bystanders as well and they just follow the interaction and do not take part in it.

### 5.1 Opening a conversation by narrating

Telling or narrating is a quite frequently occurring activity in everyday conversations. People express themselves usually with more than one-word utterances and one of the ways of doing this is to formulate a narration or a story concerning their experience of certain activity. Stories have a structure and tellers shift the information according to the occasion.

The following example is taken from the very beginning of the video recording in which two American girls, Kate and Diana are acting together in order to start the conversation. Kate opens the conversation by eliciting about the background of some participants. As the participants are representatives of two culturally distinguished groups, it is quite obvious that Kate's question is directed to the Russian speaking participants, but it is not that clear to whom she directed it to as there were several Russian speaking participants. Let's have a look at the conversation:

- (1)
- |    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| 1  | Kate  | where are you guys from (.) Russia?                                   |
| 2  | Diana | or did you grow up here eh eh (0.4)                                   |
| 3  | Ivan  | I would say that my parents brought me to Estonia (0.2)               |
| 4  |       | eheheheh  |
| 5  | Ivan  | Yeah because I (.) actually I was born in Tallinn in the capital      |
| 6  |       | so I lived all my life like my life there (0.2) now three years ago   |
| 7  |       | I went to Tartu to study (0.4) and that's interesting                 |
| 8  | Ron   | you like Tartu better than Tallinn?                                   |
| 9  | Ivan  | yeah actually I do (0.2) because I'm thinking I think s:: somekind of |
| 10 |       | younger city  |
| 11 | Ron   | =ye::ah   |
| 12 | Ivan  | because in Tallinn you always especially where I live you always      |
| 13 |       | see the old faces (.) you just get si:ck of it                        |
| 14 | Ron   | mmhm  |
| 15 | Anna  | but where would you like to work after=                               |
| 16 | Ivan  | =yeah if I finish   |
| 17 | Anna  | you think (.) still=  |
| 18 | Ivan  | = I think I don't know maybe not even in Estonia eh                   |
- smiling-----

In this extract, several different participant roles are created. As I mentioned earlier Kate and Diana are conversation openers and are inviting someone to tell his/her

story. Kate starts to inquire the origin of some participants in line 1 and Diana continues with a question and asks whether they have born and grew up in Estonia in line 2. Neither of them addresses anyone particular, therefore anyone could have taken the floor. Their request to hear the story in line 1 is noticed by Ivan and he self-selects himself to take the turn. First he has the role of the recipient, but as he develops the topic in line 6-7 he becomes more like a teller. At first he just answers the question and there is a short pause in line 3, after which nobody else takes the turn and Ivan adopts the teller role. Ivan produces multi-utterance turns and he is treated like a storyteller by co-participants and they themselves become listeners. As he tells his story, others are asking further questions e.g. in line 8 and 15. In this episode Ivan and Ron take the control over the floor and Ron helps Ivan to maintain his position, by producing a further question about Ivan's preferences concerning Tartu and Tallinn. His question in line 8 and positive minimal responses in lines 11 and 14 signal that he wants Ivan to continue his speaker role. Anna is trying to participate, but it seems to me that Ivan is somehow ignoring her efforts in lines 15-18. He does not let her finish her utterances, their turns almost overlap, although Anna is trying to ask a question. In line 15 Anna tries to develop the topic, as no one else from Russian speaking participants is eager to answer to Kate's question about their origin. Ivan's answer in line 18 seems like an invitation to laughter as he smiles and produces a laughing sound. However, the utterance is not treated as such by the co-participants. To Ivan it seems amusing not to work in Estonia after graduation, but other participants do not react to that in the way that Ivan expects them to.

In extract (1) Kate and Diana are conversation initiators, whereas Ron and Anna adopt the role in which their primary task is to encourage the teller, they can be called also active recipients. Vova is the only answerer. Each questioner has slightly different perspective and is treated differently by the answerer.

Storytelling will be illustrated in the following example:

(2)

37	Ron	That's why (0,2) I came to Tartu specifically of course Tallinn is
38		the place to do business but everything is going on in Tallinn and
39		Tallinn and nothing is going into Tartu I needed a lesson with

- 40 Narva and that's in the border and you can imagine how aa depressed that economy is
- 41 Vova yeah: (.) I'm from Narva I know
- 42 Ron yea::h yeah
- 43 Anna me too
- 44 Ron you from Narva too?  
-----*Ron gazes at Anna*-----
- 45 Diana what is it (.) [I'm curious about]
- 46 Vova [north north]
- 47 Diana yeah I know where it is=
- 48 Vova =on the board=
- 49 Diana =yeah but I've heard a lot about it in just few classes and I'm just
- 50 curious like I don't know of what it's like cos I've heard it mostly
- 51 like [Russians]
- 52 Vova [dangerous]
- 53 Diana and well yeah and not just that it used to be like as grand city you
- 54 know and now not so much I've just heard a lot about it so I just
- 55 Vova Estonians said tha: say that Narva is the most criminal and the most
- 56 dangerous town in Estonia but just for Estonians because in Narva
- 57 lives maybe 98 per cent=
- 58 Ron =yeah
- 59 Vova Russian speaking and 2 or 5 per cent of Estonian speaking and I
- 60 just don't know it's not dangerous I live there I can walk there any
- 61 hour it's not dangerous for me just when you (0.4) there are some guy:s
- 62 not very old 14 (.) 16
- 63 Ron yeah

The example starts with the story provided by Ron. In lines 37 to 40 Ron tells other participants the reason why he decided to come to Tartu and not Tallinn. In line 41 Vova self-selects himself to be the next speaker by explaining his expertise in the topic with 'I'm from Narva I know', the topic that Ron is discussing in his turn in lines 37-40. In line 43 Anna adds that she is also from Narva and Ron in line 44 shows interest by repeating her statement. Immediately after that Diana elaborates the topic by asking a question and inviting Anna or Vova, as they are knowing recipients, to tell more (starting in line 45). What happens here is an interesting shift in participation framework, as Diana self-selects herself to be the next speaker, although Ron and Anna have not concluded their turns. Nevertheless Diana's action is clearly approved by other participants and she is treated as a questioner and no one is trying to take the turn from her. Vova has a role of an active recipient in lines 46, 48, 52 and in line 55 he becomes a teller. It is not clear whom Diane's request in line 53 and 54 is directed to: Vova or Anna, as they both are from Narva. Here the complexity of multiparty conversation is clearly observable, as the speaker-transition itself is more complex than in dyadic or two-person conversation. Diane does not select the next speaker by naming anyone or by directing her gaze at someone: rather the content of her question specifies that the next speaker is someone who knows



Narva. Vova starts his utterance immediately after Diane's utterance, there is even an overlap in lines 51 and 52, where Vova is trying to answer Diana's question 'what is it like' in line 50. In line 53 Diana tries to formulate her question, but she cannot complete it, as Vova in line 55 starts telling about his experience. He self-selects himself once again to be the next speaker and again Ron helps him to maintain his position by providing supportive minimal responses in lines 58 and 63.

In this example two stories were told, the first one by Ron in lines 37 to 40 and the second one by Vova starting with the line 41. Several participant roles were created in this episode. Ron has a role of a teller or primary speaker in the beginning of the extract and he becomes an active recipient after completing his turn in line 40. Vova selects himself to be the next speaker in line 41. His turn is short and he becomes quite soon after finishing his turn an active listener. His active listenership is observable in lines 46, 48 and 52. In line 55 Vova gets a teller role and maintains this position until the end of the extract. Diana has a role of a conversation initiator, as she continues the topic started by Ron in lines 37-40.

## 5.2 Requests in storytelling

In conversational storytelling participants create several different roles during the interaction. The most common ones are the teller and the recipients. Sometimes storytelling requires special effort from the recipients to catch the idea of the story. Unknowing recipients might have difficulties in figuring out what the teller has in mind. Therefore the teller has to design his or her talk in order that also unknowing recipients are taken into consideration.

In the following example the primary speaker or teller Anna initiates a story in line 124. During her turn in lines 124 to 126 Anna realizes that her co-participants have not caught the idea of the story, because they do not react the way Anna expects them to. Let's look at the example below:

(3)

124	Anna	I have a little story sometimes when I'm abroad (text) people ask
125		where are you from and I ask well (.) guess like I open it them to

126                    guess (.)  
 ----*smiling*-----  
 127 Diana        yeah  
 128 Anna        and then they mmmm guess mmmm eheh (0.2) they thought that the  
 129                    name of the country is guess  
 130 all            eheheh  
 131 Ron            oh ok  
 132 Anna        may be they've heard that-  
 133 all            eheheh  
 134 Ron            that's impossible  
 135                    (text)  
 136                    eheh  
 137 Anna        oh yeah?

In her utterance, in line 124 Anna has an intention to tell a funny story. In her role as a primary speaker she continues to talk about her topic until Diana uttered a hearer signal *yeah* in line 127. Anna is giving signals to the hearers, by treating talk as humorous. She has also a laughing tone of voice and a smile on her face. She expects her co-participants to understand what she had in mind, but after a short pause in her utterance in line 128, she realized that she had to clarify her statement, because her joke was not understood until her clarification in line 128. In line 128 she provides a clarification before a short pause and after her clarification, co-participants start laughing all together. Until that, they did not consider Anna's utterance in line 124-126 as a joke. Furthermore, Ron's utterance in line 131 expresses that he understood what was going on just then after Anna's clarification, not earlier. Ron's comment in line 134 makes it even more clear, because the hearers would not have understood what Anna had in mind with her utterance in line 124-126 as it is not obvious that 'guess' could be the name of the country.

The following extract represents an example of clarification, but this time, there is request for clarification by other participants.

(4)

77 Ron        but do they speak Armenian at home right  
 78 Vova      no ? (.) actually =  
 79 Ron        = no?  
 80 Vova      my home my house language is Russian  
 81 Ron        aa (.) ok  
 82 Vova      most of all=  
 83 Ron        = ok  
 84 Vova      because my mom does not speak Armenian so good as my father  
 85                    d:does my mom is from Azerbaidzan it's  
 86 Ron        [oh yeah okay]  
 87 Vova      [neighbour of Armenia] and my father is from [Armenia]

88	Ron	[so your mom's=
89	Vova	= no no she is also Armenian
90	Ron	ok
91	Vova	but they call them aa Baku is Azerbaidzan's capital and they call
92		them aa: Armenians from Baku something like that they are different
93		kind
94	Ron	aa okey

Requests for clarifications are quite easy to perceive from the context. Questions very often function as clarifications, although they are not in proper question forms e.g. in line 79 and 88. In this extract boys are wondering about Vova's origin and what language does he speak at home with his parents. Vova is a primary speaker and is asked to clarify his statements in line 79 and 88 by the secondary speaker Ron. In both cases the primary speaker is asked to supply further details in support of his previous statement. Although both Vova's parents are of Armenian origin, their language spoken at home is Russian. In line 79 Ron chooses quite subtle and circumspect way of stating his position by uttering 'no' with the rising tone of voice. He is not sure whether he understood the primary speaker concerning his parents' origin and the language spoken at home. In lines 84 and 85 the primary speaker provides a clarification to his statement uttered in line 80, which in turn ensued the secondary speaker's following request for clarification in line 88. Ron is not able to finish his turn in line 88, as the primary speaker Vova realizes that he is asked to clarify his utterance, which he does in line 89, 91, 92 and 93.

### 5.3 Supporting the primary speaker

In all types of conversational interactions there is always some kind of reaction to the current speaker. To signal active involvement, listeners are expected to provide regular and appropriate feedback (Stubbe 1997:257). Participants can show their interest in a topic and support their fellow speakers in different ways. Supportive verbal feedback can occur with nonverbal signals such as head-nods, facial expressions and direction of gaze. The functions of supportive responses include signalling attention, understanding and willingness to listen. Participants can also verbally show that they are actively involved in conversation. Interlocutors can either support or reject the current speaker by providing various verbal responses such as "yeah", "oh yeah", "ok", "uh-uuh" and "right" etc.

Then the participants can also express interest or doubt “*really*”, “*that’s interesting*” etc. or even reject the primary speaker e.g. “*that’s impossible*”. With the following example I want to illustrate how participants express their agreement with interlocutors and are enthusiastically involved in conversation.

(5)

138	Ivan	but those are kind of interesting commercials on TV where they asked
139		people to answer where Estonia is=
140	Ron	=oh man I saw that=
141	Ivan	= <u>AND (TEXT) THAT ONE WAS</u> just like=
142	Ron	=they’ve shouldn’t have (text)
143	Ivan	if you ask somebody of course you wouldn’t an: say oh I don’t know
144		then what oh yeah I know it’s a university it’s a go: very good
145		university you know (.) like my friend goes there he <u>likes</u> it
146	X	eheheh
147	Ron	I saw one with the lady (0.1) said that they asked her you know do you
148		anything about Estonia somebody said like where’s Estonia and
149		somebody else said who the hell cares and they <u>put</u> it on the
150		commercial
150	X	yeah
151	X	eheh

In this extract Ivan has a role of a primary speaker or teller. He tells of an incident in order to explain and illustrate how people react when they are asked accidentally on the street where an unknown country is situated. Ron states his position as a secondary speaker or co-teller in line 140 where his utterance latches with the primary speaker. With his utterance “*oh man I saw that*” Ron expresses his shared knowledge with Ivan, although he has not even heard Ivan’s whole utterance. In response, Ivan raises his voice in line 141 in order to finish his turn while Ron competes with Ivan for teller role in line 142. Ron is sure that he knows the incident Ivan is talking about and therefore Ron aligns Ivan in lines 140 and 142. Ivan is determined to tell his story and despite Ron’s attempt to take the turn and tell the story himself, Ron lets Ivan proceed. It turns out that it is not the same incident that Ron had in mind, as Ron takes over from Ivan and adopts the role of the primary speaker starting with the line 147. Before his turn there were supportive responses and laughter by unidentified participants in lines 150 and 151.

This example is very interesting concerning participation framework, as in the beginning of this extract Ron and Ivan were almost struggling to get the floor and tell the story, although Ron’s efforts are of supportive nature. It is seen from the video

recording that during the lines 139 to 142 Ivan and Ron are collaboratively telling the story, until Ron realizes that he had some other incident in mind. After Ivan continues his story in lines 143-145, Ron realizes that it was a different commercial. Ron and Ivan are having a constant eye contact, there are hand movements pointing at one another and they are having a dialogue. Ron could be called a co-teller, as he enthusiastically tries to give his contribution. Finally, he lets Ivan to finish his turn and proceeds with his own story in line 147.

A similar case is observed in extract (6). Starting with the line 152 Diana is telling of her experience with foreigners and their knowledge about Estonia.

- (6)
- |     |       |  |
|-----|-------|--|
| 152 | Diana | I have (0.1) a few people know about Estonia and get really excited    |
| 153 |       | about (text) (0.2) one women was like it's such a beautiful country    |
| 154 |       | dadadadadaa cos she just visited it last summer                        |
| 155 | Ivan  | that's interesting?  |
| 156 | Kate  | most people when when I said I studied abroad where are you going      |
| 157 |       | and Estonia was the answer the next question was where is that         |
| 158 | Diana | yeah   |
| 158 | Kate  | and then (.) I tried to to tell them what I had been used Russia as as |
| 159 |       | landmark that's why it ended up being a landmark anyway                |
| 161 | X     | yeah   |
| 162 | Kate  | and then they oh you are going to Russia (.)                           |
| 163 | Vova  | eheheh   |
| 164 | Diana | I've had that <u>so</u> : many times=                                  |
| 165 | Kate  | = I said Estonia yee yee Russia I (.) NO (.) Estonia                   |

In this extract various participant roles are created. Diana starts as a primary speaker and Ivan in line 155 wonders about Diana's statement in lines 152-154. He has a different opinion concerning foreigners' attitude towards Estonia. It is seen from the video-recording, that he has a rising tone of voice in the end of his utterance and he is shrugging his shoulders. Nevertheless, he does not proceed, but maintains his role as a listener. Kate, on the other hand, agrees with Ivan and not Diana. She takes over Diana's role as a primary speaker and tells her own experience in lines 156 and 157. Diana, in line 158 agrees with Kate's argument and produces a supportive response "yeah". Another supportive response is uttered in line 161, but the speaker remains unidentified. Even laughter in line 163 can be considered as an attempt to show support and agreement. An interesting shift in participation framework happens in line 164 when Diana utters "I've had that so many times". With this statement she

demonstrates that she shares the primary speaker's, Kate's, attitude, although she reported quite different experience with foreigners in lines 152-154. From that it is possible to state that participants' attitudes, emotions, assessments and judgments may change during the conversation and they might agree or disagree about the same subject or topic discussed within a short period of time and every participant's contribution is necessary to the joint construction of the conversation.

## 6. TOPICAL ORGANIZATION AND SPEAKER SELECTION

### 6.1. Initiating a new topic

In everyday conversations it is very common that participants change discourse topics and initiate new topics occasionally. However, participants cannot change a topic at random, introduce a new one or digress from the previously discussed topic at any time. It is important to take the context into consideration and presuppose the understanding of the co-participants. In this chapter I want to elaborate with the support of an example how a new topic is initiated and how context and the participants' understanding are taken into consideration.

- (7)
- 194 Vova =it is (0.2) when it is day it is (text) a very quiet town but in the night  
 195 sometimes happening things happen  
 -----*nodding*-----
- 196 Ron (text) ha  
 197 Marina but they have enough towns anyway  
 198 Ron yeah
- 199 Diana what do they doing with em I know we talked about this em in one of my  
 200 Baltic transition class like how are they intervening like the Estonian  
 201 language like did you guys speak Russian when you were in your  
 202 schools or did you (text)=  
 203 -----*Ivan is changing his sitting position*-----
- 204 Vova =actually I was studying in Russian school so(0.2)I was speaking  
 205 Russian -----waving hands, gazing at Diana-----
- 206 Anna =you're speaking Russian perfectly  
 207 Vova speaking Russian fluently  
 208 Anna we were at the same school  
 209 Vova yes we were from same-  
 210 Diana but like most schools are spoken (.) taught like in Russian like since  
 211 1980s (text) Russia
- 212 Anna [in Narva?] (0.1) there's just one Estonian school=  
 213 Diana =[yeah]  
 214 Vova yeah just one Estonian school  
 215 Anna and most of the children here they: they have maybe Estonian mom and  
 216 Russian dad  
 217 Diana and-  
 218 Anna so they can speak both languages  
 219 Diana that's good

A new theme is brought into conversation by Diana in line 199. With this statement Diana shows her concern about the language situation in Estonia. It can be interpreted also as a kind of continuation to the previous subject, as the participants

were talking about language problems generally, but it still has elements of an introducing a new subject. For example, she asks a question that is not directed to anyone particular, but is uttered out for everyone to discuss. An interesting non-verbal phenomenon is observed in line 203. Namely, 203 Ivan is changing his sitting position and such phenomenon can be interpreted as a sign of intention to take a turn. Ivan is clearly preparing himself to take the turn and start discussing Diana's question. As the question is not directed to anyone particularly Ivan was interested in getting the floor, but he failed in his attempt to establish himself as a primary speaker and talk about the topic initiated by Diana. His nonverbal movements can be interpreted as willingness to take a turn. His nonverbal behaviour is not noticed by Vova, who starts to debate over the issue and talks about his personal experiences. Vova is gazing at Diana and acting as if the question was directed to him. Anna is supporting Vova in line 206 and it turns out that they went to the same school. Once again they are in position of knowing recipients and they support each other verbally and nonverbally.

In this extract clear role distribution was observed – knowing versus unknowing recipients. In this episode Anna and Vova are knowing recipients and therefore they are more actively involved in discussing the topic that Diana has introduced. Vova missed to interpret Ivan's nonverbal actions and continues himself by telling his personal experience of the topic in line 204. Vova had been a primary speaker for a while and therefore he immediately interpreted that Diana's question was directed to him as a continuation to previously discussed issues. Anna is supporting Vova in couple of occasions in lines 206 and 208 and that gives Vova assurance that he is treated as a primary speaker and has a right to proceed. In line 210 Diana wants a clarification to the claim about Estonian schools and Anna and Vova collaboratively respond to her in lines 212 and 214. It came out from the discussion that Anna and Vova have studied in the same school in Narva and so they can be called co-tellers and therefore they were supporting each others utterances. Vova is repeating Anna's utterances in lines 207, 209 and 214 in order to back up Anna's utterances. Vova and Anna are sharing the role of the primary speaker. Diana has a questioner role (starts with the line 199) and continues in line 210 and 218.



In this chapter I have examined how a new topic is initiated and how it shapes the participation framework. In the next section I will analyse topic change and speaker selection.

## 6.2 Changing a topic and speaker-selection

Speaker-selection is a basic component of the system of turn-taking. Participants constantly pay attention to fellow participants and their communicative actions and thus define their position in the participation framework. Speaker-selection is the result of collaborative work by the participants.

In the following analysis I am going to explore how a topic change takes place in multiparty conversation and also how the next speaker is selected. In the extract, conversants are discussing the issue of foreign languages and how to make a distinction between quite similar languages or languages spoken in countries that have several official languages. I have chosen quite a long extract in order to be able to illustrate how different roles are created by changing a topic and how speaker-selection takes place.

- (8)
- 98 Ron were you actually born in Armenia too  
 99 Vova yeah  
 100 Ron ah ok
- 101 Vova I was born in the same hospital mm as my father was was born  
 102 eheheh  
 103 Ivan family tradition  
 104 Vova yeah of course (0.3)  
 105 Ivan but actually I wanted to ask you when you came to Estonia (.) for  
 106 example was it difficult for you to distinguish who is Russian  
 107 who is Estonian and if it was then after which time you started to  
 108 do it  
 -----*Ivan gazes towards Ron first-----then towards Diana*
- 109 Ken I think it is (.) can't tell the difference just like if I'm: in the St: if  
 110 you all to come to United States and I saw you walking on the street I  
 111 would think that you are from another country other than the United  
 112 States I mean it's just  
 113 Vova yeah but here-  
 114 Ken I think it's really hard especially for Americans (.) seeing the variety  
 115 of people we do to come to another country and be able to  
 116 distinguish nationalities  
 117 Ivan but when for example somebody speaks Russian or Estonian  
 118 Diana yeah than I (text)  
 119 Ivan yeah because I've met some people for example in Pepleri in

120 international students' dormitory there I spoke to some someone in  
 121 Russian and so (.) the person asked what language are you speaking  
 122 Estonian or Russian somebody really for some people it's not so easy to=  
 123 Ron =for some people it sounds like noise ah I've heard a bunch of=  
 124 X =yeah (text)  
 125 Ron well I've heard a bunch of different languages it takes me a while to  
 126 just a few minutes to distinguish between Finnish and Estonian  
 127 Ivan mhmm=  
 -----*nodding and gazing towards Ron*-----  
 128 Ron = but I mean I pick up easily between Danish and Swedish (.) Swedish  
 129 and Norwegian  
 130 Ivan [mhmm]  
 131 Anna [mhmm]  
 132 Diana it isn't tough for me aa like (.) aa you know talking for a little  
 133 bit I mean I can't hear more than three words or anything but I get  
 134 you are speaking Russian or Estonian but (.) I don't know I mean  
 135 definitely by now cos I'm here  
 136 X mhmm  
 137 Diana than I first got in here but I think they've studied Russian  
 -----*pointing with a finger at Kate and Jane*-----  
 138 like for five years so she can-  
 139 Vova do you spe:ak  
 140 Kate [I understand more than I speak]  
 141 Jane [(text)]  
 142 Diana but you can tell the difference right a way between Russian and  
 143 Estonian (0.2) probably  
 144 Jane yea:: pretty much  
 145 X [(text)]  
 146 Ron [I mean I've heard] I don't know how close Polish or Lithuanian are...

Changing the topic is a normal procedure in everyday conversations. A new topic is usually introduced after the previous topic has been closed and very often topics arise naturally out of one another. According to Bublitz (1988) it is quite difficult to decide whether a certain case in conversation is a topic change or topic shift. "Whether the participants or the analyzing observers can say that, with this utterance, the speaker has changed the previous topic or simply shifted or continued it, depends on what they understand to be the topic of this and the previous utterance. This understanding does not necessarily have to be shared by all, moreover, is not always easily achieved." (Bublitz 1988:62). The precondition of a topic change is the closure of the previous topic. Usually there is a short pause before the introduction of a new topic. In (8) in lines 98 to 104 Ron, Vova and Ivan have been discussing about Vova's origin and where he was born. In line 104 Vova closes the previous topic with '*yeah of course*' and after a short pause Ivan introduces a completely new topic. In this extract topic closure and topic introduction are performed by different speakers. Often a topic itself can automatically select some participants as next speaker. Ivan, in line 105 is introducing a new topic by asking a question which is

directed especially to the participants of American origin. In his utterance the word *actually* is used, which expresses a contrast between what a speaker is saying and the previous utterance and at the same time it implies that what he is saying is new and possibly surprising for the addressee/s (Bublitz 1988:59). In questioner-answerer roles the distribution of knowledge is asymmetrical. By asking a question the questioner indicates himself as a less familiar party and assumes that the answerer has information that the questioner and other participants might not have and thus places himself as a recipient of new information (Koskela 2001:46). After uttering the question Ivan gazes towards Ron first and then towards Diana. From the non-verbal behaviour it is observable that Ivan directs his words to Ron and Diana, but as neither takes the floor, Ivan's selection fails. In line 109 Ken takes the floor and proceeds with quite a long turn and is answering Ivan's question. He adopts the role of a primary speaker and is determined to speak what he had in mind. He ignores the attempt of another interlocutor to speak in line 113. In line 117 Ivan expands his question and continues talking about the current topic about his experience with languages and thus adopts the speaker role for a while.

In line 125 Ron takes his turn in order to tell about his experience. He started to take the floor already in line 123, but succeeds in line 125. Ivan and Anna are enthusiastically giving Ron verbal and nonverbal feedback by nodding and uttering '*mhmm*'. In line 132 Diana selects herself as a next speaker. She attempted to get the floor in line 118 but was not successful. At first she is speaking about her own experience, but in line 137 she has an intention to bring new speakers to the conversation. In addition to her verbal contribution, she is pointing with a finger towards Kate and Jane and wants one of them to be the next speaker. In this particular episode, Diana is acting as a knowing participant, because she is aware of the fact that Kate and Jane have studied Russian for several years. Thus, she is encouraging her co-participants to take the turn. Up to this moment Kate and Jane were mainly listeners, until Diana is offering them a turn of their own. Vova is anxious to hear more and asks a question in line 139 and in turn Diana is endorsing Jane with her utterance in line 142 and inviting Jane to tell more. Diana has adopted a role of an interaction initiator and is trying to recruit minor speakers into the conversation. Jane's contribution in line 144 remains quite unobtrusive and therefore the topic initiated by Diana in line 137 gets a closure with Jane's short utterance.

Also in the following excerpt the next speaker is selected or suggested by one of the interlocutors, in order to bring new and less talkative participants into conversation. I have observed in my data that there are such people in conversations that show concern for the overall flow of the conversation and there are these kinds of participants that are concerned with their own contribution and they never suggest the next speaker. In my data, Diana has in many occasions brought new speakers to the conversation; she has an initiator's role as the following excerpt shows:

- (9)
- 220 Ron I had no clue about what they're gonna take to the [exam]  
 221 Anna [think]  
 222 Americans like em Americans like something well you know  
 -----*gazing at Ron*-----  
 223 Ron = more structured  
 224 Anna yep (.) or like if have yes or no questions  
 225 Ron yeah  
 226 Diana I think that we are so that the program that we are in is probably a lot  
 227 different than like a regular well you (text) said [cos you took like a  
 228 regular] -----*direct eye contact with Ken and asking him directly*-----  
 229 Ken [yeah (.) I think (.) well]  
 230 the classes I had with English department were fairly organized (.) I  
 231 think the teachers I have that women I had she was able to tell me what I  
 232 needed to get  
 233 Diana [yeah]  
 234 Ken [cos I'm going home next week and-]  
 235 Diana = it is just Baltic studies that kind of like (0.1) it's a very small program  
 236 so it's maybe not like the most organized even (.) but I don't mind I love  
 237 it-  
 238 Kate = yeah

In this example participants are discussing about different courses in the university and how these courses are structured and organized. In the beginning of this excerpt from lines 220 to 225 Anna and Ron have started the subject and they are sharing an eye contact throughout these few lines. In line 226 Diana takes the floor and has an intention to bring Ken into conversation. Diana knows that Ken has personal experience about the subject and is thus a knowing participant once again. Diana wants Ken to share his point of view with the co-participants. In line 228 direct eye contact with Ken is observed and in line 230 Ken takes the floor. His utterance is an answer to Diana's request to share his experience with the rest of the participants. In line 232 Diana is giving Ken supportive verbal feedback by uttering *yeah*. In this example Diana was successful in bringing a new speaker into conversation and she

had a role of a conversation initiator. Up to this moment Ken had a listener role and with Diana's help he switched his role from listener to speaker.

Topic change is a complex action in everyday interaction and "changing the topic means closing the old topic with the agreement of the interlocutors and introducing a new topic" (Bublitz 1988:67). There are three occasions when topics are changed in conversation: a) after a small talk in the beginning of a conversation, b) during the course of conversation by closing the previous topic and introducing a new one and c) after a digression or interruption in conversation. In addition, reintroducing a topic is also possible in multiparty interaction, because all the participants might not have had a chance to contribute to the topics discussed and they might want to readopt the previous topic if they have something to add. In all of these occasions the interlocutors follow the rule of acting by mutual consent, which means that every participant agrees and aligns with the participant who wants to change the topic. There are also exceptions to the rule, but I am not going to analyse them further at this point.

## **7. RECIPIENT DESIGN IN MULTIPARTY INTERACTION**

### **7.1 Recipients and their role in interaction**

I have observed in my video-recording that participants act as major and minor speakers. Some of them are talking all the time and others remain listeners and talk only when somebody directly turns to them. Therefore, I have looked at recipient actions, especially the roles of hearers and other minor speakers, also called bystanders.

Recipient actions are important to investigate, as these reflect the interaction to a great extent. Recipient actions are comparable to speaker actions and together they form a participation framework. Recipient actions are classified as hearer signals and recipient contributions in conversations.

To carry out a conversation there has to be at least two participants: speaker and hearer. Speaker and hearer roles can change during a very short period of time and usually the current speaker occupies a dominant position in controlling the course of the conversation and the hearer is adopting a passive position. Although it seems that the hearer is not doing anything, but listening, he is performing different kind of actions.

In previous chapters I have been dealing mainly with different speaker roles, concentrating on primary or current speaker and secondary speaker. It has been quite obvious that the primary speaker occupies a dominant position in conversation and is very often responsible for topic change and speaker selection. Nevertheless, he/she does not shape the participation framework alone, recipient's corresponding communicative actions and their contribution to the conversation is essential.

In addition to speakers there are participants in conversation that hold a hearer role and they have a very important role to play in forming up a conversation. Goodwin (1981) used the term 'hearer' to denote three kinds of objects:

The term 'hearer' can thus refer to three quite different objects. First, it might designate the complementary position to 'speaker' provided by the activity of conversation. Second, it might refer to the addressee of an act by a speaker. Third, it might designate a party performing acts in his own right relevant to the position of the hearer. If these distinctions are not kept in mind, confusion results, since, for example, a party may be an addressee without acting as a hearer.

(Goodwin 1981:5)

Hearer roles can be divided into active and passive and the difference lies in corresponding actions that they perform during the interaction. For example, active hearers express their active listenership by providing the primary speaker with different verbal responses (such as *mhmm*, *yeah* etc.) and nonverbal responses (e.g. nodding) whereas passive hearers remain in passive position without uttering anything or performing any nonverbal actions.

The role distribution in multiparty interaction is constantly changing. Speakers become hearers and vice versa. A participant does not gain the role of the hearer and remain a hearer throughout the conversation. In mundane conversation participants by common consent agree who is going to adopt the hearer role and who is going to adopt the speaker role. "Thus, the distribution of the participant roles presupposes a kind of joint handling by mutual consent which is reminiscent of the procedure of performing topical actions, i.e. a participant becomes hearer either of his own accord or because this role is assigned to him, yet in both cases he may only exercise his right as a hearer if the other participants tacitly tolerate and accept the assignment" (Bublitz 1988:170).

The following example illustrates the theory very well. There are five active participants in this episode. In line 105 Ivan brings a new topic into discussion by asking a question. He waits for a recipient signal, as he himself has not addressed anyone to be the next speaker. Ron, being a hearer so far, takes the floor in line 109 and starts telling his opinion to Ivan's question in line 105. Ken is a non-addressed recipient (as no one has appointed him directly to be the next speaker). It can be said that his role change from hearer to speaker is accomplished by mutual consent (meaning that everybody agrees with him taking the turn). In this case Ron and Vova, who were the primary and secondary speakers in line 98-104, adopt hearer

roles. In my opinion, the role of the hearer was assigned to them, because with the change of the subject in line 105, new speaker roles are created and also new hearer roles arise as a result of that. Ron and Vova are giving active hearer signals to Ken and that also means that they are satisfied with their hearer roles, otherwise they would have tried to get the floor back. After saying his point in line 114-116 Ken desists his speaker role and gets back his role as a hearer and Ron returns to his role as a speaker. Ivan's role exchanges also from the questioner to hearer during the lines 109-116, until he asks another question and self-selects himself to answer that. Diana remains hearer throughout this episode and provides hearer signals (e.g. line 118, in which she also tries to add a comment which was inaudible and therefore remained un-analysed). In this example the role distribution between speakers and hearers is clearly observable and participants are performing topical and nonverbal actions according to their role.

(10)

98 Ron were you actually born in Armenia too  
 99 Vova yeah  
 100 Ron ah ok  
 101 Vova I was born in the same hospital mm as my father was was born  
 102 eheheh  
 103 Ivan family tradition  
 104 Vova yeah of course (0.3)  
 105 Ivan but actually I wanted to ask you when you came to Estonia (.) for  
 106 example was it difficult for you to distinguish who is Russian  
 107 who is Estonian and if it was then after which time you started to  
 108 do it  
 -----*Ivan gazes towards Ron first-----then towards Diana*  
 109 Ken I think it is (.) can't tell the difference just like if I'm: in the St: if  
 110 you all to come to United States and I saw you walking on the street I  
 111 would think that you are from another country other than the United  
 112 States I mean it's just  
 113 Vova yeah but here-  
 114 Ken I think it's really hard especially for Americans (.) seeing the variety  
 115 of people we do to come to another country and be able to  
 116 distinguish nationalities  
 117 Ivan but when for example somebody speaks Russian or Estonian  
 118 Diana yeah than I (text)  
 119 Ivan yeah because I've met some people for example in Pepleri in  
 120 international students' dormitory there I spoke to some- someone in  
 121 Russian and so (.)the person asked what language are you speaking  
 122 Estonian or Russian somebody really for some people it's not so easy to=  
 123 Ron =for some people it sounds like noise ah I've heard a bunch of=  
 124 X =yeah (text)  
 125 Ron well I've heard a bunch of different languages it takes me a while to  
 126 just a few minutes to distinguish between Finnish and Estonian



The following chapter describes further the recipient actions observable in my data and investigates what conversational rules are used in maintaining harmonious shifts in interaction.

## 7.2 Active vs passive listeners and knowing vs unknowing listeners

In excerpt (11) interesting participant roles are created. There are 11 participants in this conversation and a half of the interlocutors: Ivan, Vova, Ron, Anna, Diana and Marina are involved in handling the current topic. Jane, Kate, Olga, Ken and Sue are not actively involved in discussing the topic. Participants are debating over the issue of a town called Narva and its reputation. Two participants, Vova and Anna, are originally from Narva and thus can be called knowing participants, by having first hand knowledge of this town. Their communicative actions are in accordance with their knowledge, meaning that they share the information that they are about to tell and they also share the role of the primary speaker in the following conversation:

(11)

170 Vova that's that's why Estoni: Narva is said to be like very dangerous town=  
 171 Diana =dangerous=  
 172 Anna =it's as dangerous as any capital European capital not capital but any  
 173 European city if if like some people they see like you are tou: tourist  
 174 Ron yeah  
 -----*nodding enthusiastically*-----  
 175 Anna and you are walking somewhere my god of (0.1) course if you have a  
 176 woolly hair  
 -----*gazing at Ron*-----  
 177 Diana yeah yeah  
 178 Anna wuuua  
 -----*waving hands*-----  
 -----*laughter*-----  
 179 Ivan take your money and (text)=  
 -----*laughter*-----  
 180 Ron = it is not my wallet show me it's nothing there  
 -----*laughter*-----  
 181 Anna at the same time most of the Estonians-  
 182 Vova we'll see your cards  
 183 Ivan just put something in there  
 184 Anna most of the Estonians have never visited Narva they just heard about it  
 185 from the news and newspapers  
 186 Diana yeah  
 187 Anna and their opinion is created an:d (0.1)  
 188 Ron well I went there and what it is a castle by the river  
 189 Vova mhmm  
 190 Anna mhmm  
 191 Ron and I mean that was that was a pretty good place an:d I was driving  
 192 round the city I don't remember that much of it but it seemed like a

193 nice kind of town an:d (text)=  
 194 Vova =it is (0.2) when it is day it is (text) a very quiet town but in the night  
 195 sometimes happening things happen  
 -----*nodding*-----  
 196 Ron (text) ha  
 197 Marina but they have enough towns anyway  
 198 Ron yeah  
 199 Diana what do they doing with em I know we talked about this em in one of my  
 200 Baltic transition class like how are they intervening like the Estonian  
 201 language like did you guys speak Russian when you were in your  
 202 schools or did you (text)=  
 203 -----*Ivan is changing his sitting position*-----  
 204 Vova actually I was studying in Russian school so ( 0.2) I was speaking  
 205 Russian= -----waving hands, gazing at Diana-----  
 206 Anna =you're speaking Russian perfectly  
 207 Vova speaking Russian fluently  
 208 Anna we were at the same school  
 209 Vova yes we were from same-  
 210 Diana but like most schools are spoken (.) taught like in Russian like since  
 211 1980s (text) Russia  
 212 Anna [in Narva?] (0.1) there's just one Estonian school=  
 213 Diana [yeah]  
 214 Vova yeah just one Estonian school  
 215 Anna and most of the children here they: they have maybe Estonian mom and  
 216 Russian dad  
 217 Diana and-  
 218 Anna so they can speak both languages  
 219 Diana that's good

It is quite common in multiparty interactions that some of the participants remain in passive position during the conversation. The same phenomenon was observed in this excerpt. Although all the participants are not participating actively in conversation, they are still in different ways involved in developing and handling the topic. In the beginning of this extract Vova and Diana are discussing whether Narva is a dangerous town or not. In line 172 Anna grabs the floor and expresses her opinion over the issue. In her opinion Narva is not a dangerous town. Here I must point out that Anna is probably not the most objective person to debate over the issue, because Narva is her hometown. Nevertheless, she is quite clearly stating her position as a knowing recipient and other interlocutors around her agree with her. For example, Ron in line 174 is nodding enthusiastically and utters 'yeah' to support Anna's claim. After being verbally supported by Ron, Anna's non-verbal behaviour is directed mainly to Ron as she is gazing at him and waving her hands towards him (line 178). It seems that she is talking to Ron alone. Starting with the line 177 others join in the conversation and find the subject very amusing e.g. there is much laughter between lines 178 and 181. It even seems that they got carried away by the subject

and start joking about the previously discussed topic. Anna's turn or utterance in line 181 is neglected by Vova and Ivan and she only gets the floor in line 184 and where she is able to finish her previously started utterance. In line 181 and 184 Anna is trying to rescue the topic they have been discussing about. Up to this point Anna was the primary speaker and Ron, Diana, Vova and Ivan were sharing the role of active hearers by giving verbal and nonverbal feedback to her. In line 187 and 188 there is a shift in participation framework and Ron gets the role of the primary speaker and he starts telling about his visit to Narva. Anna's turn in line 187 ends with the word 'and' and a short pause after that and that is a sign to other participants that she has completed her turn. The word 'and' might be confusing here and some might speculate that Anna has not completed her turn, but her non-verbal behaviour reveals that she has nothing more to add, as she leans her head down and utters 'and' quite silently. Ron in line 188 continues the same topic but is acting now as a knowing recipient as he has visited the place himself. Vova and Anna in line 189 and 190 are active hearers and their action is not limited just to listening, but they are also giving verbal responses to the primary speaker Ron. Diana and Anna are also hearers, but passive ones at this point. Starting with the line 191 Ron strengthens his position as a primary speaker by telling his views about Narva. Vova has a role of the secondary speaker and as mentioned before, he is a knowing recipient; Narva being his hometown as well. Therefore it is only normal that those participants that have first hand knowledge of the subject are more actively involved in conversation than those that just follow the interaction from aside.

Some of the participants can be called bystanders, as they take no verbal or non-verbal action during the interaction. In line 197 Marina suddenly takes the floor and utters something that I cannot really categorize anywhere. She has so far remained as one of the passive hearers and she has just followed the conversation and not commented on anything. What is also strange is Ron's 'yeah' in line 198. It seems to me that it is quite common to support fellow speakers even if there is no actual meaning in utterances. The purpose is to keep conversation going and everybody satisfied – another conversational rule being followed.

### 7.3 The importance of active hearer signals

In describing the recipient action of the interlocutors, the relevancy of hearer signals comes up. Hearer signals are characterized by several typical features. Firstly, their placement is very often in ‘breathing’ pauses of the primary speaker e.g. example (11) lines 174; 177; 186; 189; 190 and example (12) lines 252; 259; 261; 264. Some of these hearer signals occur simultaneously with the primary speaker’s utterance ending and that is another typical placement of hearer signals. Sometimes primary speakers might interpret the hearer signal during the utterance ending as a hearer’s attempt to make a speaker contribution and might offer him or her to take the floor. Bublitz has explained it as follows: “If the primary speaker reacts to a hearer signal by pausing, this is usually interpreted as a sure indication that he has understood his interlocutor’s verbal expression not as a hearer signal but as a speaker contribution (e.g. an objection), or else because he has expected speaker contribution and is surprised that – from his viewpoint – his expectation has not been fulfilled” (Bublitz 1988:184). Secondly, hearer signals comprise short forms and are produced with reduced loudness. In addition, they can be accompanied by body-motion or body language, which I evidenced in my data in few occasions. Hearer signals function as agreements or disagreements in interaction and “each hearer is normally obliged to take an active part in the conversation by finally adopting a speaker role, if not that of the primary speaker” (Bublitz 1988:196).

The following chapter deals with an interesting phenomenon of active hearer signals. In chapter 7.1 hearer roles were briefly discussed and divided into active and passive ones. Reviewing my data I realized the importance of the hearer response. It can be said that the flow of conversation depends on the hearer responses. Moreover, the primary speaker’s contribution is dependant on the hearer response, i.e. the more verbal or nonverbal response the speaker gets the more he contributes to the current topic. To prove my point let’s look at the example:

(12)

240 Ron in the ecology class (.) was it ecology class?

241 Diana I don’t know

242 Ron well I’m not sure one of the one of the classes said that basically the

243 Estonian crown the kroon is is back by the force (.) the whole Estonian  
 244 the whole economy collapsed and crumbled the (text) everything and (.)  
 245 paid the bills with the force  
 246 Vova mhmm  
 247 Ron (text) the currency really is back (0.5)  
 248 Ivan also that was interesting that Vova said that he didn't learn Estonian so  
 249 much in the school I wanted to say that (coughing) I learned pretty much  
 250 basically all I know about Estonian maybe (text) we had some kind of  
 251 mixed community so basically all I learned about Estonian I learned at  
 school  
 252 Ron mhmm  
 253 Ivan so basically now I can go to classed in Estonian no problem for me and I  
 254 don't have any prejudices against Estonian  
 255 -----constant eye contact with Ron-----  
 256 Ivan for example my mom sh: I don't think she knows Estonian any worse  
 257 -----eye contact with other participants-----  
 258 Ivan than me  
 259 Ron mhmm  
 260 Ivan but when she goes to shop or something she always speaks Russian  
 261 Ron mhmm  
 262 Ivan also at the working place she always speaks Russian  
 263 -----gazing at Ron----  
 264 Ron yeah  
 265 Ivan although she knows Estonian (0.1) well enough  
 266 -----gazing at Ron----  
 267 Diana why do you why do you think that is  
 268 Ivan I don't know because Soviet people they have prejudices (.) it's really so  
 269 maybe they are afraid (.) I don't know but I don't have any prejudices  
 270 in that respect for example if I go 200 kilometers anyway everybody-  
 271 I'll speak to a person and they say you are Estonian nobody will say  
 272 you are Russian say Estonian that's interesting  
 273 ----gazing at Ron----  
 274 Ron mhmm  
 275 Vova are you afraid they will say you are Russian  
 276 Ivan no (.) no problem  
 277 Vova I know-  
 278 Ivan = but nowadays for example if I go to St. Petersburg or Latvia or to Finland  
 279 -----gazing at Ron----  
 280 Ivan they'll say you are Estonian not Russian  
 281 Ron yeah  
 282 Ivan because I think Russians speak quite different language from us

The excerpt starts with the discussion of the previous topic (lines 240-247) in which Ron was a primary speaker. This part of the conversation is included to show the topic change and shifts in participant roles. In line 247 Ron's utterance ends with a pause of 0.5 seconds, which is a sign to other participants that from his part the subject is completed. His role up to this point was a primary speaker. In line 248 Ivan brings a new topic into discussion and thus adopts the role of the primary speaker. He starts discussing his own experience of learning Estonian and refers back to Vova's experience and compares them with each other. Here the distribution of the role of the primary speaker is well-balanced and smoothly achieved.

In this excerpt I want to pay special attention to Ron's verbal hearer signals and their impact on the primary speaker. In this particular interaction Ron has a role of an active listener and his nonverbal contribution to the subject is significant. As a primary speaker, Ivan does most of the talking but at the same time he is in need of encouragement from the fellow-participants, and thus he is looking for someone to keep an eye contact with. In the beginning of his turn he is looking at all of the participants and not anyone particular until the line 252 when Ron utters *mhmm*. This was the sign to Ivan that Ron is actively listening or taking note (term used by Bublitz, meaning that "the participant has taken a note what the speaker has said and meant and understands it" (Bublitz 1988:174) and after this hearer signal Ivan starts keeping a constant eye contact with Ron (lines 255, 263, 266, 273, 279) and gets further supportive feedback from him (lines 252, 259, 261, 264, 274, 281). In line 257 Ivan is trying to get eye contact with other participants, but once again Ron is providing him a verbal hearer signal in line 259 and thus maintains the role of an active hearer. It is possible to conclude from this excerpt that Ron was signalling throughout the conversation that he is listening; other participants were so called bystanders without commenting on the primary speaker's contribution. Also Diana and Vova are signalling their active listenership, but they do it differently. In line 267 Diana asks Ivan to clarify his comment on his mother's behaviour concerning speaking Estonian. Although the question comes from Diana, Ivan is gazing at Ron at the end of his utterance (line 273). I have also noticed that Ron produced a hearer signal every time Ivan was gazing at him. It can be said that nonverbally Ivan was asking Ron to signal that he is listening and understanding what has been said and gaze can be interpreted as a signal for some kind of hearer response. Similarly in line 275 Vova is asking Ivan to clarify his claim that he is treated as Estonian not Russian. Ivan is answering Vova's question in line 276 but interrupts Vova in line 277 and provides a longer utterance to prove his point. In line 279 Ivan is gazing at Ron once again and is provided with hearer signal by him.

In this excerpt clear role distribution was observed. Ivan was a primary speaker and Ron an active listener. Ivan and Ron were collaboratively creating a participation framework and were helping each other to maintain their positions by providing non-verbal and verbal signals accordingly. Diana and Vova entered the conversation as

questioners and were sharing the role of a secondary speaker and thus made a minor speaker contribution. The rest of the participants were bystanders.

Both speaker contributions and hearer signals are important in characterizing participant roles, as they together have an important function in participation framework.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In the present thesis I have studied shifts in participation framework in multiparty interaction and found that participants indeed create various participant roles during the interaction. I have concentrated on examining participation frameworks in relation to conversational narration, topical organization and recipient design. My main focus has been on different participant roles: how these roles are created, maintained and distributed among the participants and how participants interpret each other's communicative actions and know that it is their turn to speak. In my study I have tried to describe the participant roles and participant actions within the participation frameworks.

In chapter 5, I examined storytelling within multiparty interaction. In these data several different participant roles were created through storytelling. Usually there was a request to hear the story, which was conducted by asking a question by one of the participants and normally no speaker selection was made by the questioner. After self-selection the one that took the turn became a teller and the rest adopted the role of recipients. In addition to the roles of the teller and recipients, the role of the conversation initiator was created and his or her task was to encourage the teller. Asking question was very common in storytelling, because it gave the teller the possibility to start and end his or her story depending on the audience reaction. In storytelling sometimes shared knowledge is used, which means that some of the participants might have first-hand knowledge about the current topic and thus they adopt the role of the secondary speaker and support the primary speaker and very often get the role of the teller. Everybody's contribution, even a minor one is important in establishing the framework for participants to participate.

Requests are quite usual in these data. For example request to hear the story (chapter 5.1), request to clarify or explain further (chapter 5.2). These requests are directly connected with the forming of various participation frameworks. I found out in these data that for example the role of the teller can be created through request to hear a story and maintained through telling the story and distributed further by requesting someone else to tell a story or explain some issue further.



My findings also show that providing some kind of reaction to the current speaker is very important in conversational interaction. Any kind of involvement is welcomed. In chapter 5.3 I have illustrated with an example how expressing agreement with interlocutors and enthusiastic involvement in conversation created a new participant role e.g. co-teller. The findings showed that sometimes shared knowledge was used as a resource to participate collectively, but at the same time the interactants had the possibility to participate as individuals, which they very often did in these data. Therefore, it is important to point out that participation framework provides various options for the participants to choose how to participate.

Chapter 6 dealt with topical organization and speaker selection. In these data topics are usually introduced by asking questions. By asking questions the questioner has an opportunity to select the next speaker or, he or she can leave the floor open to anyone. I noticed in my data that the participants followed the precondition of topic change, which was the closure of the previous topic and they did not change topics at random. All the participants were taken into consideration and no one was abruptly interrupted.

When topical movements take place there often involve shifts in the participation framework. When a new topic is initiated new participant roles are created and distributed e.g. tellers, recipients, knowing and unknowing participants etc. Among the most interesting findings in my data was the role distribution in conversation. For example, there were conversation initiators (chapter 6.2) whose task was to encourage a listener to become a speaker by directly naming them to be the next speaker. This way the change in participation framework was carefully planned by some participants and role distribution successfully accomplished.

The findings show that shifts in participation frameworks were established through topics of talk and various states of knowledge of the participants determined the role distribution. Usually the participant who has direct knowledge about the topic discussed becomes the expert and thus adopts the role of the teller and less knowledgeable participants adopt the role of the recipients.

When investigating speaker-selection in chapter 6, I found that in these data topics of talk were closely connected to speaker-selection. In many cases topics determined the next speaker. It was often the question of knowledge of topic matter e.g. knowing participant was selected to be the next speaker or self-selection took place in case the topic left the selection of the next speaker open. In speaker selection nonverbal activities played an important role, especially gaze and head movements. These nonverbal elements helped the participants to select the next speaker when the topic itself did not determine the next speaker.

Chapter 7 dealt with recipient design in multiparty interaction. The findings show that not only the speaker shapes the participation framework but recipients' contribution to the conversation matters in great extent. It is clear that the primary speaker occupies a dominant position in conversation and is quite often responsible for topic change and speaker-selection. Nevertheless also recipients' are having a special role in forming up a conversation and are involved in developing and handling the topics. In these data recipients actions were expressed mainly through nonverbal activities such as gaze and head movements.

The findings show that the flow of the conversation depends on the recipients' response. Recipients were categorized as passive and active hearers, and especially the contribution of active hearers was emphasized. Recipients' actions are taken into account by speakers in their production of their talk and they collaboratively create the participation framework.

The research reported here is quite relevant to the study of human interaction as it provides one perspective to people's communicative behaviour. I have tried to describe some central practices through which the participation framework is formed and how participants display their understanding in everyday interaction. My findings show that the participation framework is dynamic indeed and it changes constantly during the ongoing interaction and it provides multiple options for the participants to participate.

A problem that I confronted when writing this study was the availability of previous studies on participation framework. I realized during the process of writing the

theoretical part of my thesis that there is actually relatively small number of research conducted on the participation frameworks. Several studies have mentioned the participation framework being central in understanding human interaction, but the study itself has concentrated on something totally different. There are studies that have concentrated on some specific aspect of participation framework, for example gaze, nods and headshakes etc. but not on participant roles. Therefore it was quite a challenging task to study something that has not been studied thoroughly before. On the one hand it provided me freedom to study the subject from the perspective I chose to be most suitable, but on the other hand it was quite difficult to focus on the subject matter that was not very familiar. Despite some minor setbacks with the video-recording, self-collected authentic data proved to be the most applicable for this kind of study. I think my thesis provides an interesting description on how participant roles are created during the interaction. In my thesis I touched upon some discourse identities, but in the future it could be approached in more detail and from the different perspective perhaps.

Utterance interpretation by participants is an interesting, but at the same time complicated matter. Furthermore, issues of participant role have central importance to the study of verbal interaction in multiparty settings and therefore further serious attention should be regarded towards the analysis of participant role.

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## Appendix 1

### TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

I have numbered all examples one after the other in round brackets. The remaining symbols used in the analysis are explained on this page.

X	X indicates that the speaker is unidentified
(text)	indicates that the material is inaudible or impossible to make out
eheheh	indicates laughter
[	single left-hand bracket indicates the beginning of an overlap
]	single right-hand bracket indicates the end of an overlap
=	equal signs indicate latching (i.e., no interval between the end of a prior and the start of the next part of talk)
(.)	indicates a tiny gap within or between utterances
(0.0)	indicates elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds, so (0.2) is a pause of 2 seconds
<u>word</u>	underlining indicates emphasis
<u>WORD</u>	underlining and capital letters indicate especially loud sound relative to the surrounding talk
::	colons indicate that sounds are stretched
...	three dots indicate omitted talk
-	a dash indicates a cut-off
-- <i>word</i> --	text written in italics indicates non-verbal behaviour
?	indicates a rising tone of voice