Dimensions of empathy in relation to language

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This article approaches the relationship between empathy and language, describing the ways in which different dimensions of empathy can be attested in naturally occurring interactional data. The authors adopt the definition of empathy as a multidimensional phenomenon: emotional contagion, as well as the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy, are all understood to be central to the empathetic process. The article promotes the view that studying the relationship between empathy and language should be grounded in the analysis of real-life interactions. Language evolves in social interaction both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, and is not only an important product but also a means of human sociality. The authors suggest that the best approach for analyzing the empathy–language interface combines the theoretical insights of cognitive grammar with the method of conversation analysis. The paper shows that when empathy is analyzed in natural conversation, we can do sequential and linguistic analysis of the ways in which affect is shown, and through a careful analysis of grammatical devices, offer an explanation of whether the displays of affect are derived from the other person's situation. By analyzing the complex ways in which the interactants orient to the different dimensions of empathy, the paper shows how linguistic analysis can give us concrete tools for forming a deeper understanding of how empathy takes place in real-life encounters.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been an upsurge in the study of empathy in several fields of science, especially in biology, anthropology, developmental psychology and social neuroscience. Biologists are rethinking the role of pro-social behavior in human evolution: whereas evolutionary studies have traditionally laid heavy stress on competitiveness, the last decades have emphasized the role of co-operation and mutual help in the survival and development of the human species. It has been suggested that empathy functions as the key mechanism in understanding other people and co-operating in an intelligible manner; it can thus be seen as a core mechanism of intersubjectivity (Zlatev 2008:223).

According to the sociobiologist and anthropologist Hrdy (2009), the human ability to empathize and co-operate can be traced back to our model of co-operative reproduction. Human mothers typically parent more than one child at the same time: children can be born even once a year, but a child needs to be taken care of for many years after its birth. Hrdy suggests that Homo sapiens could not have evolved if mothers had been required to raise their offspring on their own. Children of different ages needed to be cared for by other close members of the group as well, typically by close relatives, and this complicated and contingent form of child caring required both males and females to invest heavily in social skills for co-operation. Such behavior required empathy: the ability to take into account the actions and intentions of other individuals, as well as the will to co-ordinate actions jointly and to behave in a pro-social manner for the benefit of others.

The developmental psychologist Tomasello's concept of cultural intelligence also stresses the importance of co-operation: all cultural evolution and the accumulation of knowledge has been made possible by the human ability to take others into account, to set mutual goals and co-ordinate joint activities. According to Tomasello et al. (2005), the ability to co-operate and have joint intentions sets humans apart from other species, and has required an ability to read other individuals' intentions, as well as cultural learning. Foremost, it is made possible by the presumably unique ability and will that humans have for sharing psychological states. The ability to participate in joint actions has provided the setting for forms of cultural cognition that we now see as essentially human. Furthermore, it has made possible the use of linguistic symbols in the construction of social norms and individual beliefs, as well as social interaction, social relations and social institutions (Zlatev 2008:236, 238; Enfield 2013:xviii).

Within linguistics, the importance of empathy as a core mechanism of intersubjectivity has come to be studied only in recent years (Itkonen 2008, 2009; Zlatev 2008; Herlin & Visapää 2011). Even in these studies it has mostly been approached in a purely theoretical way, e.g. with respect to the evolution of language. In this article, we wish to make a contribution to this discussion by exploring empathy both from a theoretical and from an empirical perspective. While the data is mostly analyzed using methodological tools from conversation analysis (CA), we will also make use of theoretical concepts from cognitive grammar (CG) such as the concept of GROUND (on combining CA with CG, see Etelämäki et al. 2009, Etelämäki & Visapää 2014). In what follows, we will briefly discuss the ways in which cognitive linguistics and CA address issues related to language and empathy.

Inspired by phenomenology, cognitive linguistics approaches human beings and their relationship to language by stressing the bodily basis of experience-in-the-world. Human cognition is seen to depend fundamentally on the body and its neuro-physiological mechanisms, as well as on the bodily-based experience of the world

(e.g. Talmy 2000, Levinson 2003). Cognitive linguistics can be seen to have a body-based theory of meaning, which describes cognition as inherently dependent on embodiment, the sensory and motor systems of the body, as well as bodily experiences and interactions with the world (Violi 2008). A radical version of an embodied understanding of meaning can be found in Lakoff & Johnson (1999), who claim that human cognition and language are organized through an image-schematic model: our conceptual structure emerges with respect to spatial relations and the settings we find ourselves in, and in this way, the spatially constructed image schemas function as the tools with which we conceptualize all of our experience, e.g. through metaphoric extensions.

It has, however, become increasingly more common in cognitive linguistics to underline the fact that human interaction precedes all image-schematic models. After its birth, the human child comes to be embraced not only by 'the world' but also, and perhaps more essentially, by other human beings. Stressing this, Kimmel (2007) suggests that the cognitive theory of language should widen its perspective by exploring the inherent relationship between embodied intentionality, agentivity and the human self, and then focus on the 'shared' and 'distributed' essence of embodiment. Since all meaning is created in interaction, embodied experience can be understood only by investigating the ways in which perception is grounded in human sociality.

Studying the relationship between empathy and language should thus also be grounded in the analysis of real-life interactions. Language evolves in social interaction both phylogenetically and ontogenetically (Schegloff 1996, Zlatev 2008), and it is not only an important product but also a means of human sociality. In the words of Zahavi (2014:107), 'any convincing theory of social cognition should be able to account for our face-to-face encounters with others'.

In our view, the best approach for analyzing the empathy–language interface combines the theoretical insights of cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987, 2008) with the method of conversation analysis. We find that some concepts of CG are useful in analyzing the ways in which empathetic sharing is related to the linguistic construal of the speech situation, but these tools do not give us access to the interactional side of the process. CA, on the other hand, analyzes human interaction in naturally occurring settings, where talk-in-interaction is understood as a form of joint action (Sacks 1992, Schegloff 2007). In this framework, language is treated as a vehicle for carrying out actions in interaction, and the interpretation of actions is seen to depend on the constantly renegotiated context. That is, no conversationalist can decide alone what the 'meaning' of their turn is, or what it is that they are doing. Each next turn is interpreted as displaying an understanding of its prior turn: every 'second' turn thus provides the speaker of the 'first' turn with an understanding of what is going on and, at the same time, renews the context for the talk to come. In this way, the conversation analytic method provides important tools for scrutinizing mechanisms

of intersubjectivity. Combining it with the cognitive tradition therefore offers a fruitful starting point for broadening the study of empathy to encompass interactional phenomena, which are, in fact, deeply intertwined with our more 'general' cognitive capacities. (See also Croft 2009.)

Although the study of subjective emotions has been scarce within CA (Peräkylä 2012:282–283), the notion of empathy comes up rather frequently (Jefferson 1984, 1988; Ruusuvuori 2005, 2007; Hepburn & Potter 2007, 2012; Heritage 2011; Couper-Kuhlen 2012; Heritage & Lindström 2012a; Voutilainen 2012; Kupetz 2014; Voutilainen, Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori 2015).[1] Due to the methodological principle of relying on the interpretations presented in the next turn, a considerable amount of attention has been given to the ways in which interactants react to each other's emotions (Peräkylä 2012:282–283), and therefore empathetic reactions have fallen under the scope of CA. However, the concept of empathy tends to be used as if it referred to an indivisible phenomenon; the complex nature of empathy is rarely discussed (see Heritage 2011, Kupetz 2014).

In this article, we suggest that the multidimensional nature of empathy should be studied in the context of natural conversation. Furthermore, we will suggest that combining the methods of CA and the theoretical insights of CG can help us better understand how we can get hold of the multidimensional and sometimes even evasive nature of empathy, as it unfolds in real-life encounters. In what follows, we will first go through the various definitions of empathy, as well as the way in which we understand empathy (Section 2). In Section 3, we analyze a troubles-telling sequence with the methods of CA and then proceed to look at the same data through the lens of CG (Section 4). In the last section of the paper, we will present a summary of our main findings.

2. DEFINITIONS OF EMPATHY

The definitions of EMPATHY vary significantly across fields, often with conflicting tones even within one discipline. Empathy is generally used to refer to the cognitively complex process in which one is able to stand in the shoes of another person: to understand their perspective, emotions and the situation they are in. For a long time, empathy was considered a distinctively human ability, but lately it has been suggested that some primates, especially chimpanzees, are able to behave in an empathetic manner, too (e.g. Koski & Sterck 2010). It has been proposed that the ability to empathize requires the ability to distinguish between the self and the other, and it would thus require a theory of mind. An empathetic individual understands that other individuals have a consciousness, thoughts and feelings different from their own (Hoffmann 2000, Preston & de Waal 2002, Tomasello 2003, Blair 2005). (For a critical discussion on the theory of mind, see Zahavi 2014:99–102.)

A crucial question has been whether empathy should be described as a primarily cognitive or affective phenomenon. Many psychologists have defined empathy as the ability to enter the other person's mind, as 'the intellectual or imaginative apprehension of another's condition or state of mind' (Hogan 1969), or as a process of 'entering another's world without prejudice' (Rogers 1975:4).

If we conceived of empathy as an ability to understand the other person's perspective, we could easily detect a display of empathy in the following excerpt:

(1) (sg.346)
01 Kirsi: sis:, (0.4) omii   henkilökohta#sii juttuja#   mitkä niin#ku#,
              PRT   *own.PAR.PL private.PAR.PL thing.PAR.PL that like*
              'I mean (0.4) own personal things that like'

02 Saila: joo,
              PRT
              'yea'

03   (.)

04 Kirsi: m (0.4)   käsittelyssäh, (0.4)   kestää   k(h)au(h)an,
              PRT   process.NMLZ.INE   last.3sG   long*
              'm, (0.4) in process (0.4) will take a long time'

05   (0.4)

06 Saila: joo.
              PRT
              'yea'

In this example, Kirsi is starting to share a troublesome experience: she is explaining to her friends why she has not been able to participate in the events that are being talked about. She describes her experience with generic noun phrases ('own personal things that like, in process' ll. 1, 4) together with the so-called zero person construction ('will take a long time'). These constructions are grammatically unspecified with regard to whose experience is being talked about, although the context makes it clear that Kirsi is sharing her own experience. With these constructions she can, however, open up her own experience so that it is recognizable to the other recipients (Laitinen 2006).

Saila responds to Kirsi's turn twice with the particle *joo* (ll. 2, 6). Sorjonen (2001) suggests that when *joo* is used as a response to an affiliation-relevant utterance, such as the one Kirsi produces on lines 1 and 4, it merely registers the prior utterance as understood but does not affiliate with it. The *joo* response is thus, in this context, a linguistic resource with which the participant registers the prior turn and shows acknowledgment of what has been said without treating the utterance as one to

be affiliated with (Sorjonen 2001:132). If empathy were defined as the ability to understand the other person's perspective, Saila's *joo* responses could be seen as empathetic. As a matter of fact, if we accepted this as the full definition of empathy, any utterance that claimed an understanding of the other person's turn in a coherent manner would fall under the notion of empathy.

Within psychology, the research line that stresses the affective component of empathy has been more influential than the one focusing on the cognitive side of the process. Rather than seeing empathetic experience as a process of understanding the other's perspective, it has underlined the centrality of 'feeling with the other'. According to Stotland (1969), when emapthizing, the recipient reacts in an emotional manner because he or she perceives another person experiencing a certain emotion. This definition made the concept too wide, however, as it made it cover such emotions as pity and schadenfreude ('malicious pleasure'). Since the 1980s, careful conceptual differences have been established between different kinds of emotional reactions, especially with regard to whether an emotion involved in an empathetic experience is automatic, whether it is cognitively processed or whether it can be seen to be primarily oriented towards the self or the other (*SEP* 2010; Ruusuvuori 2005:205–206). Today, several leading psychologists define empathy as a multi-level process, which requires emotional involvement in the other's feelings (Preston & de Waal 2002, Hoffman 2000, Singer 2006). In this view, empathy consists of a cognitive representation of the other's feelings but it also contains an emotional component (Blair 2005, Preston 2007, Preston et al. 2007).

An important part of this multidimensional process is the primary, automatic orientation to another person's emotional state, which is commonly referred to as emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is based on the functioning of mirror neurons, a sequence of events in which people transfer their emotions to others (Rizzolatti & Graighero 2004, Arbib 2012). This kind of emotional experience is based on an automatized copying of the others' emotions. People can end up feeling the same emotions simply because of their physical proximity and the neurological processes thus activated: a smiling face makes one smile, laughter catches on easily, and euphoria and panic spread quickly. Unlike cognitively processed empathy, emotional contagion does not require an understanding of the other person as the source of the emotion; on the contrary, people often think that these emotions originate within themselves (Scheler 1973:22). Emotional contagion has been used to explain, for instance, the process in which a baby starts to cry as a reaction to another baby's crying (see Darwall 1998). The underlying assumption is that children of this age are not yet capable of distinguishing between the self and the other (Hoffman 2000:65; see also Zahavi 2014), but that they start to imitate the emotional reactions of their surroundings (Zlatev 2008:222–224; Hari & Kujala 2009:466).

In this article, we adopt the definition of empathy as a multidimensional process in which all of the dimensions listed above are intertwined (see also Preston & de Waal

2002a, Hoffman 2000, Preston 2007). That is, the empathetic process includes an affective and a cognitive dimension as well as the dimension of emotional contagion. We find our position to be in line with that of Eisenberg (2010; see also Eisenberg & Fabes 1990), who defines an empathetic phenomena as follows:

> An affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and which is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel.

We thus understand empathetic phenomena as reactions to the other's emotional state or condition that involve both an affective and a cognitive dimension. Some kind of affective reaction stemming from the other's situation is always a requirement for a reaction to be empathetic. However, there also needs to be an understanding of the affect stemming from the other's situation; any display of such an understanding is what we refer to as the cognitive side of the process. A less conscious orientation to the other ('mirroring') can, however, also function as a dimension of the affective side of the empathetic process. In this sense, we will operate with the same dimensions as discussed earlier in this section: (i) emotional contagion, (ii) the cognitive dimension, and (iii) the affective dimension.

What is central to our approach is that we are dealing with a multidimensional phenomenon where one of these dimensions can be foregrounded in a given context, and that the orientations to the dimensions can be attested in different combinations. Here, we agree with the conversation analyst Kupetz (2014:27), who states:

> [I]n order to account for the different types of resources which can be used to display empathy in social interaction, it may be useful to conceptualize empathy displays not only as displays of understanding the other person's emotional situation, but as displays that range from more affect-oriented - - to more cognition oriented comprehension.

She also underlines an important fact that comes up clearly in our own data as well: the empirical correlates for the affective and cognitive sides of empathy are not attestable as dichotomies, but are constantly renegotiated in the unfolding of the sequences (Kupetz ibid.).

While we rely on an affect-oriented definition when analyzing the displays of empathy in interaction, we also want to underline the role of empathy as a crucial element of the larger intersubjective machinery at play in all interaction. In addition to analyzing empathy as observable affective displays, we see empathy as a key mechanism in understanding other people and co-operating in an intelligible manner (Zlatev 2008:223; Hrdy 2009; Zahavi 2014). Our linguistic ability is primarily based on joint activity, as well as our ability to understand the other individual's perspective, intentions and emotions; and the core mechanism that enables this is our ability to empathize with the other (Zlatev 2008:223). Joint activity can thus be seen to rely on

empathetic processing, irrespective of whether we actually display empathy or not. In this sense, empathy can be seen as a key element in joint activity and language use: language and interaction 'force' us to be empathetic to a certain degree, whether we show any signs of our relating to the others or not.

When empathy is approached from this perspective, it comes close to the definitions of intersubjectivity (compare the way the concept is defined in this special issue). To highlight this larger understanding of empathy is to suggest that empathy does not only involve displays of affective and/or cognitive involvement, but is also a key mechanism in the way that participants manage joint activities and joint agency (see Enfield 2013:35). Although this idea needs to be developed further in another setting, we will briefly come back to the ways in which the construal of the ground (including the relationship between the participants) is related to the sharedness of the ongoing action (see Section 4).

3. THE DIMENSIONS OF EMPATHY IN LIGHT OF CONVERSATION

We will now analyze an excerpt of conversational data to investigate the ways in which the dimensions of empathy are present in everyday interactional encounters and how this can elucidate our understanding of the language–empathy interface. Some observations have been made about empathic 'devices' in previous studies on conversation. Couper-Kuhlen (2012:126) has pointed out in her study on the affiliative responses in complaint stories that prosody is a 'primordial' way of expressing empathy. Kupetz's (2014) in-depth study of empathy describes various response types that can be seen to display empathy in the affect-laden tellings of personal experiences. (On empathetic responses, see also Ruusuvuori 2005, 2007; Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2012; Voutilainen 2012.) While we find all these studies highly relevant and will adopt their sequential approach, we want to underline in our analysis the different dimensions of empathy and how they can be foregrounded and oriented to in various ways at different phases of interaction.

In the following analysis, we focus on activities and gestures and, especially, on the grammatical structures that are used when empathy is expressed. As Stivers (2008) has noted when studying how storytellers convey stance and how their hearers respond to it and convey affiliation, no response type can be said to be affiliating as such (also Couper-Kuhlen 2012:114): what is crucial is the sequential context of the response. This is certainly true about grammatical structures involved in expressing empathy as well (see Kupetz 2014:22). In other words, even though we are analyzing certain grammatical structures or response types, we are not claiming that they are empathic as such. Our aim is rather to make some observations about the sequential contexts in which the different grammatical and prosodic features can be used to orient to the different dimensions of empathy.

Our data consist of a one-hour of video-recorded face-to-face conversation between two middle-aged Finnish women, Kati and Taru, who are celebrating New Year's Eve at Taru's.[2] They are sitting in armchairs, drinking champagne and talking about various matters. In the middle of the conversation, and at the beginning of the extract we are focusing on here, there is a troubles-telling sequence where Taru starts to complain about a strange rash on her hand. We will analyze this single extract segment by segment, as we want to show in detail how the interaction unfolds; that is, instead of pointing out parts of the conversation where a certain dimension of empathy can be detected, we will go through the entire extract highlighting the complex ways in which the dimensions come into play in different sequential contexts.

At the beginning of the extract, Kati starts to talk about how she does not like to eat crayfish in wintertime because her skin gets very dry (ll. 1–7):[3]

(2)   (sg.440)
01   Kati: mulla (.) tulee (.) talvella   =siks   mä en
                I.ADE   comes   winter.ADE   therefore I   NEG.1SG
                'in the winter I get that's why I'

02   talvella   tykkää syödä rapuja   kun   to:ta: mulon
                winter.ADE like.3SG eat   crayfish.PL.PAR because   PRT   I.ADE have.3SG
                'don't like to eat crayfish in the winter because I'

03   talvella   aina   nä[ä sellaset #e
                winter.ADE always DEM like
                'always have these like that in the winter'

04   Taru: [mullaki   on.   joo,
                                    I.ADE.CLI have.3SG PRT
                                    'me too. yea'

05   Kati: hh kuivat ja   pahat
                   dry.PL CONJ bad.PL
                'dry and bad'

06   Taru: =.h mä: ihme>ttelin<   mikä mul   on   tullu
                1SG wonder.PST.1SG what I.ADE have.3SG   come.PAST
                'I was wondering what I have'

07   niinku <täältä>   <kuivaa> kato.
                PRT   here.ABL   dry.PAR   look.IMP
                'like it's so dry here you see'

08   (0.5)

09   Kati: >joo<. (0.8) hhh (0.3) muon   kaikki (.)
                 PRT   I.ADE.3SG all
                'yea I have all'

10   [siis ihan #e-eö:# ahh hilseilee.
            PRT   PRT   *peal.off.3SG*
            'like it #e-eö:# ahh peals off'

11   Taru: [siis mul   on (.)   mä   ##o   rannekellon   heittäny
            PRT   I.ADE have.3SG   I   be.1SG wristwatch.GEN   throw.PST
            'like I have (.) I have thrown my wristwatch'

12   po:is =kun (0.2) >mmul<(.) m tiedä   mistä,
            away   CONJ   I.ADE   know.NEG where
            'away because I don't know where,'

At the beginning of the extract, the women realize that they both experience dryness of hands in the wintertime. Kati delivers her observation about her dry hands (ll. 1–3), and Taru produces an overlapping turn in which she says that she shares the experience (l. 4), followed by Kati's specification that her hands are 'dry and bad' (l. 5). Taru then repeats that she has been wondering what she has on her hands: she looks down to her hands and says that they feel very dry (ll. 6–7). This turn is followed by a 0.5-second pause, which is followed by Kati's *joo* (l. 9), a recognition of what has been said. Kati does not encourage Taru to elaborate on her rash, but goes back to her own initial worry. At this point she uses an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) *I have **all**, like it peals off*: she is still talking about the dryness of her hands, now saying that ALL of her skin is dry.

What becomes clear later in the conversation is that Taru is initiating a troubles-telling sequence by calling attention to her rash. Here we refer to Jefferson (1984, 1988), who has shown the intricate ways in which troubles-telling sequences are organized, calling attention to the ways in which the participants delicately navigate through these sequences by moving from business-as-usual to trouble, and then back to business-as-usual. According to Jefferson (1988:420), troubles-telling consists roughly of the following segments: A) Approach, B) Arrival, C) Delivery, D) Work-Up, E) Close Implicature, and F) Exit. In the extract seen above, Taru is producing turns that are ambiguous in their trouble-implicativeness; in fact Kati either fails to recognize the approach or, due to the ambiguous nature of Taru's turn, chooses to react to it in a neutral way, still keeping the possibility open for a 'neutral' business-as-usual (Jefferson 1988:422–423). (For a more detailed analysis of the same conversation as a troubles-telling sequence, see Etelämäki & Visapää 2014:481–486.)

Nevertheless, when examining this extract from the perspective of empathy, the way in which the women mimic each other's movements becomes a focus of interest. When Kati first talks about her dry hands, she is looking down at them, moving them and rubbing them softly. Taru almost immediately starts to simulate these movements: she lifts her hands, starts to rub them and looks down at them. She is thus imitating Kati's movements, and then starts to talk about the irritating rash in her own hands.

This could be used as a textbook example of mirroring, which might or might not lead to emotional contagion. As discussed previously, the mirror-neuron system can make us mimic each other's movements, expressions and emotional states. In the example discussed above, mirroring seems to have an interactional consequence: the women first imitate each other's hand movements, and then end up negotiating whose experience will be the focus of talk. Although emotional contagion is hard to track through linguistic and interactional analysis – we cannot know whether the participants are truly emotionally synchronized –, we suggest that the ways in which participants imitate each other's behavior, body postures, prosody and linguistic structures can be a fruitful starting point for observing the synchronization involved in all empathetic understanding. (On resonance, see Du Bois & Giora 2014; also Schegloff 1998.)

As the conversation continues, Taru describes her rash more specifically and announces the trouble (ll. 11–14) (see Jefferson 1988:423–424). Here, Kati drops her own project, leans over to Taru and produces an announcement response (l. 15), which displays empathy and thus commits her as a troubles-recipient (see Jefferson 1998:425):

(3)

11 Taru: [siis   mul   on (.)   mä   ##o   rannekellon   heittäny
         PRT   I.ADE   have.3SG   I   be.1SG   wristwatch.GEN   throw.PST
         'like I have(.) I have thrown my wristwatch'

12   po:is   =kun   (0.2)   >mmul<   (.)   m   tiedä   mistä,
         away   CONJ   I.ADE   know.NEG   where
         'away because I don't know where'

13   mä   en   tiedä   mistä   tää   taas   on   tullu
         I   NEG.2SG   know.NEG   where   DEM   again   be.3SG   come.PST
         'I don't know where this has come from again'
         (Kati leans forward to better look at Kati's hand)

14   tämmös[t   ihme   (pahaa).
         this.kind.PAR   PRT   bad.PAR
         'this kind of like weird bad'

15 Kati: [se   on   ihan   pahana?   herrajjumala
                  DEM   be.3SG   PRT   bad.ESS   lord.god
                  'it's really bad oh my god'

16   ku   se   on   paha.
         CONJ   DEM   be.3SG   bad
         'it's so bad.'

We can thus see how the troubles-telling sequence is arrived at and responded to in an empathetic way. We suggest that Kati's turn shows an empathetic orientation to

the trouble at hand in both a cognitive and an affective manner. First of all, the lexical choices in Kati's turn are affective as such, but it is the prosody in her turn – the turn is produced with a whispering sound – and the way in which she leans closer to look at Taru's hand that suggest affective involvement (see Jefferson 1988:420). The cognitive orientation to the fact that this affect stems from the other's situation can best be explained by analyzing the pronouns. By using the demonstrative *tää* in line 13, Taru offers her rash as an observable and interpretable object (Etelämäki 2009:34); it is at this point that Kati leans forward to look at it more closely. With the pronoun *tää*, Taru also indicates that she has primary access to the symptoms on her hand: when she refers to her hand and her worry with *tää* and *tämmöst*, she marks it to be her subjective experience which she is sharing with the other (Etelämäki ibid.). When Kati then produces her response 'it is quite bad oh my god it's bad' (ll. 15–16), she uses the pronoun *se*, which construes the hand as known enough for present purposes (Etelämäki 2009:34). The worry about the hand is now a shared, known referent for both of the interactants, and Taru's rash has become the shared object of concern.

Taru continues to describe the symptoms more carefully and thus moves to the exposition phase of the sequence (ll. 18–19). According to Jefferson (1988), the exposition is typically followed by 'affiliative turns' ('with expressions of "empathy"', p. 42). Here, however, Kati gives advice: Taru should go and see a doctor (l. 20).

(4)

18 Taru: >n< vähän   aikaa.   hetken   oli   poissa ja
      some time.PAR moment.GEN be.3SG.PST away CONJ
      'for some time now. for a moment it was gone and'

19   ny[t taas
      now again
      'now again'

20 Kati: [käy   lääkäris   näy[ttämäs,
      go.IMP doctor.INE show.3INF.INE
      'go show it to the doctor'

21 Taru: [mä oon   käyny
           I be.1SG go.PST
           'I have been'

22   eikä   se   osan[nu   sanoo   mitään
      NEG.3SG.CL 3SG can.PST say.INF anything
      'and s/he wasn't able to say anything'

23 Kati: [eikä   tiedä.
        NEG.3SG.CL know.INF
        'and doesn't know'

Kati delivers her advice by using an imperative construction *käy lääkäris näyttämäs* ('go show it to the doctor', l. 20). With the imperative, she can be seen as imposing her own perspective to suggest an action that Taru controls (see Lauranto 2013:181). She does not adopt Taru's perspective but rather gives advice, which instantiates an asymmetry between the advice giver and the recipient (see Heritage & Lindström 2012b:170). Her turn could, in other words, be seen as having a pro-social, sympathetic motivation that aims to help the other, but it cannot be considered to be empathetic.

Taru responds by saying that she has already visited the doctor but that he or she didn't 'have anything to say' (ll. 21–22). Kati responds to this turn with a subjectless third person construction *eikä tiedä* ('and doesn't know') (l. 23). After the advice seen in the previous excerpt, she is now producing an 'affiliative response' to Taru's exposition (Jefferson 1998:428). Jefferson considers this to be typically the emotionally heightened segment of the troubles-telling sequence. Kati's turn is interpreted in an affective way due to its sequential position, and through linguistic analysis, we can see how she adopts Taru's perspective. Semantically, she reformulates Taru's turn: she produces a turn with an anaphoric person reference where (an implied) third person 'does not know what's wrong'. The fact that she uses a subjectless third person construction echoes the perspective of Taru's turn: the subject of Kati's turn is interpreted to be the same as that of Taru's; Kati has thus syntactically adopted Taru's perspective. Although Kati's turn is syntactically similar to Taru's and adopts the same subject, she changes the tense from past to present, thus marking her affiliation's relevance for the ongoing moment. Her turn thus orients both to the affective and cognitive dimensions of empathy. Also, the fact that Kati designs her turn to echo Taru's turn can be seen as an example of the synchronization of grammatical structures (see also Du Bois & Giora 2014), which is possibly related to emotional contagion.

After this, Taru reformulates what she has said before: although she went to the doctor, it is not exactly that the doctor didn't have a diagnosis but that she has not remembered to call for the results (l. 24–25):

(5)
22   eikä   se   osan[nu sanoo   mitään
               NEG.3SG.CLI   3SG   can.PST   say.INF   anything
               'and s/he wasn't able say anything'

23 Kati: [eikä   tiedä.
                         NEG.3SG.CLI   know.INF
                         'and doesn't know'

24 Taru: =tai se   (v)otti   verikokeet   >mut mäen   o
            or   3SG take.PST blood.test.PL   but   I.NEG.1SG be
            'I mean s/he took bloodtests but I haven't'

25   muistanu<   soittaa   niit   tuloksii   =mä   valitin
        remember.PST   call.INF   DEM.PAR   result.PL.PAR   I   complain.PST.1SG
        'remembered to call for the results I was complaining about'

26   koko   kättä   ku(.)tämä,.hhhhh   ja   sitte
        whole   hand.PAR   PRT   DEM   and   then
        'the whole arm because this .hhhh and then'

27   ku   tätä   jomottelee   pitkin   #täältä#   ja,
        CONJ   DEM.PAR   hurt.3SG   along   here.ABL   and
        'because this hurts all the way here and'

28   (3.7)

29 Taru: :e-   ei   taas   nyt   just.   mut   et   jossai   vaihees
        NEG   NEG   PRT   now   right.   but   PRT   some   point.INE
        'n-not right now. but like at some point'

30   aina   niingu (.)   niinku   koko   käsi   on   sellane#.
        always   like   like   whole   hand   Is   like.that
        'it always like like the whole arm is like that'

31   (1.4)

32   #tekis miel#   niinkun hh (0.3)   vaan   (.)
        feel.like.3SG   like   just
        'you just feel like (0.3) like(.)'

33   kietoa   se   johonki   [villaan ja #(antaa olla)#
        wrap.INF   DEM   some.ILL   wool.ILL   and   let.INF   be.INF
        'wrapping it in something like wool and let it be'

34 Kati   [toittavast   toi   ei   liity   nyt
        hopefully   DEM   NEG   be.connected   PRT
        'hopefully it is not connected to

35   jotenki   si[ihen
        somehow   DEM.ILL
        'somehow to that'

36 Taru: [mniim[mm
        'jeammmm'

37 Kati: [kammottavaa.
        dreadful.PAR
        'dreadful'

38   (1.7)

What becomes of special interest here are the body positions and the gaze of the women. Throughout her lengthy exposition (ll. 24–33) Taru mostly looks down, changing her position, touching her hand and arm, whereas Kati sits like a Sphinx,

leaning back, looking at Taru without a break (see Sacks 1984; Rossano 2012:310; see also Ruusuvuori & Peräkylä 2009), not moving or reacting in any way. In line 28, Taru's reaction shows that a response is indeed missing: after 3.7 seconds, she raises her gaze from her hands to quickly look at Kati. When Kati still does not move or say anything, Taru continues to describe her symptoms. After another long pause (1.4 seconds) in line 31, Taru again takes the turn, this time describing how she feels like wrapping her hand in something woolen. Here, Kati produces an overlapping turn *toivottavast toi ei liity nyt jotenkin siihen* 'hopefully it is not connected to', a diagnostic turn that she does not finish. Taru shows, however, with her response *nii mm m* (l. 36) that she orients to shared knowledge; she claims to recognize the scenario implied in Kati's turn, and the women are thus diagnosing the rash together. The lexical choice of Kati's next turn *kammottavaa* 'dreadful', as well as the way in which the turn is prosodically produced, displays strong affect and suggests that the shared knowledge refers to something unpleasant. As the pronoun *toi* in Kati's turn (l. 34) construes a shared access to the referent and as Taru does not deny the diagnosis and affect displayed in Kati's turns, both the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy are oriented to.[4]

4. THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUAL OF THE GROUND AND THE DEGREE OF EMPATHETIC SHARING

Next, we look at the same conversation from a cognitive grammar perspective, paying attention to the construal of the GROUND. In CG, ground is the term for the speech event, including its immediate physical circumstances (place and time) as well as the participants and their shared knowledge (Langacker 1987, 1999). We are especially interested in whether the ground is SYMMETRICALLY or ASYMMETRICALLY construed, since it has been suggested that the more symmetrical its construal, the more it offers a place for a shared, affective perspective, as the participants (speaker and recipient) merge as a single conceptualizer (Etelämäki & Visapää 2014).

The process where linguistic expressions are linked to the ground is called GROUNDING. Languages have a set of elements for this purpose: grounding elements. Grounding elements are the means for specifying the relation between the expression and the speech situation (Langacker 1999:219–220). These include tense markers, pronouns, demonstratives and particles. In what follows, we focus on the use of demonstratives (*tämä* 'this', *se* 'it'), tenses and pronouns and the ways in which they construe the relation between the participants, the utterance and the speech event.

While mainstream CG analyzes the grounding of individual NPs (ungrounded *dog* vs. grounded *the dog*) or finite clauses (ungrounded *to speak* vs. grounded *he speaks*) produced by a single speaker who construes the ground by him/herself, our starting point is that the ground is dynamically co-construed

(Etelämäki et al. 2009; Etelämäki & Visapää 2014: 493–495; also Langacker 2014). What is of interest then, from the perspective of empathy and 'feeling together', is to what degree the participants conceptualize the ground and themselves as part of the expression, and how they open up places for other interlocutors.

The two other concepts of CG we need to bring up are the notions of SUBJECTIVITY and OBJECTIVITY. These concepts call attention to the role of observation by highlighting whether an entity has a role as an object or a subject of observation. When an entity is construed objectively, it is the focus of attention; when it is construed subjectively, it remains implicit, and has a role as part of the observation process. Langacker (2008:77) illustrates this with an analogy: when one wears glasses, the glasses are part of one's visual system and therefore subjectively construed and non-salient. The glasses become salient, however, when taken off the nose, looked at and thus construed objectively.

Similarly, the ground can be construed objectively or subjectively in a linguistic expression. The ground gets objectified when deictic expressions that make specific reference to the speech event are put 'onstage', that is, when they are profiled in the expression. Expressions that focus the attention to the aspects of the ground – such as the participants (especially first and second person pronouns), the place of the speech event (e.g. *here*) or the time of speaking (e.g. the temporal adverb *now*) – construe the ground objectively. The ground can also be activated with less explicit grammatical markers – grounding predications (in English, e.g. tense, articles and demonstratives). Here, some aspect of the ground functions as the reference point of the utterance without being explicitly mentioned; it is thus construed more subjectively. The third group is formed by non-deictic elements that include no conventionalized indexical reference to the speech situation (e.g. *table*, *between*); this is what is referred to as the maximally subjective construal of the ground (Langacker 1999:219–220)

When the ground is objectively construed by, e.g. first-person and second-person personal pronouns, the conceptualization of the participants becomes asymmetrical: with the pronoun *I,* it is the currently speaking participant that profiles him/herself in the ground as the focus of attention. Similarly, even the more subtle ways of referring to the ground always suggest an asymmetrical construal of the ground (Etelämäki & Visapää 2014). Conversely, the less a turn is grounded, the less an expression posits grammatical asymmetries between the participants; that is, the construal is open for a fleeting 'shared' perspective, and can thereby invite shared understandings of the evaluated situations.

What we would like to suggest is that there could be a correlation between the linguistic construal of the ground and the degree of empathetic sharing between the interactants. On the basis of our observations, the more symmetrical the ground between the participants, the more the participants are 'feeling together'. The construal of the ground could thus provide one solution to the me–us problem pointed

out by Enfield (2013), a solution that shows how the separateness and boundedness of the participants is navigated through grammatical means.

Let us revisit the data. From the perspective of construal, the first phase of the conversation can be seen in lines 1–14. In the entirety of this extract, both participants profile themselves as part of their turns using first person pronouns (e.g. *mä* 'I' in Taru's turns in lines 6, 11, 13; *mu*(*l*)(*l*)*on* 'I have' in Kati's lines 2, 9, and Taru's lines 4, 6, 11, 12). They thus explicitly objectify themselves in the ground. They both also objectify their hand as part of the ground, putting it onstage as the focus of attention; however both are markedly talking only about their own hands. From the perspective of grounding, the participants can be seen as construing themselves in a maximally asymmetrical way; both underline their own perspective on the matter. This is further supported by the use of the demonstrative pronoun *tämä* in Taru's turn in line 13, as well as Kati's *nää* (plural from of *tämä*) in line 3; Etelämäki (2009) has shown that *tämä* typically indexes speaker's primary access to the referent.

The way in which the participants profile themselves in their expressions changes in line 15. Here Taru's hand becomes the primary object of concern for both participants. In lines 15–16, Kati produces a turn (*se on ihan pahana herrajjumala ku se on paha* 'it is quite bad oh my god it's bad'), where the ground is more symmetrically organized. Here, the object of concern is referred to with the pronoun *se*, which indexes that the referent is symmetrically accessible to both participants (Etelämäki 2009). After this, however, Kati uses the imperative construction to give advice to Taru: with the imperative verb, she profiles the interaction of the speaker and hearer onstage, but does this markedly from her own perspective. In Taru's response 'I have been to the doctor', she profiles herself in the utterance, contesting Kati's suggestion by saying that she has already done what Kati told her to do.

The perspectives merge again in line 23, when Kati produces the turn *eikä tiedä* 'doesn't know' as a response to Taru's turn (l. 22) *eikä se osannu sanoo mitään* 's/he wasn't able say anything'. Here, Kati builds the interpretation of her anaphoric utterance on what Taru has said before, and the personal reference of the turn is interpreted with respect to the ground construal of Taru's turn. Interestingly, though, Kati uses the present tense unlike Taru. This positions the temporal reference of the utterance somewhat differently with respect to the ground, objectifying the present moment and thus marking the affiliation's relevance to the ongoing action.

After this, Taru produces a longer telling about visiting the doctor, and when Kati reacts to this (ll. 34, 37), she construes her turns again in a symmetrical fashion: first by using the pronoun *toi* 'that' in *toivottavasti toi ei nyt liity siihen* and then, in line 37, by producing the adjectival phrase *kammottavaa* which can be seen to be maximally subjective in Langackerian terms. As this free-standing phrase (*kammottavaa* 'dreadful') is grounded only by the larger indexical setting of the ongoing action, it construes the ground in a maximally symmetrical way, thus offering a place for shared perspective and affect (see Etelämäki & Visapää 2014:492–493).

Our analysis of the ways in which the participants construe the ground and its connections to the ways in which they are 'feeling together' needs to be elaborated further. We hope to have shown, however, how the way in which the sequences unfold has its reflection also in the grammatical organization of the ground. Whereas empathy can undoubtedly also be displayed with grammatical structures that profile the participants in an asymmetrical position (e.g. 'I feel for you', 'I think your situation is horrible'), our data invites us to see how moments of empathetic sharing are often built on a symmetrical construal of the ground.

4. DISCUSSION

In this article, we have approached the relationship between empathy and language, especially aiming at discussing the ways in which the different dimensions of empathy can be attested in naturally occurring interactional data. Also, we have tried to show what tools linguists have to analyze such phenomena; in doing this, we have combined theoretical notions from cognitive grammar with the methodology of conversation analysis. Our main points can be summarized as follows: Empathy is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon. All of its dimensions – emotional contagion, the cognitive and the affective dimension – are central to the empathetic process. For a phenomenon to be empathetic, it needs to have an orientation to both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the process. We have shown how the methods of CA and the theoretical insights of CG can help us better understand the empathy–language interface. When analyzing natural conversation, we can do sequential and linguistic analysis of the ways in which affect is shown (the affective dimension of empathy), and through a careful analysis of the grammatical devices, we can show whether the displays of affect are derived from the other person's situation or not (the cognitive dimension of empathy). It is important to see how the dimensions can be foregrounded in different ways: sometimes the cognitive dimension is highlighted, sometimes the affective dimension is. Analyzing the complex ways in which the participants orient to these dimensions, linguistic analysis can give us concrete tools for forming a deeper understanding of how empathy happens in real-life encounters.

In this article, we have also wanted to underline the pervasive nature of empathy in all language use and interaction. In addition to analyzing empathy as observable affective displays, we see empathy as a key mechanism in understanding other people and co-operating in an intelligible manner. Studying the architecture of everyday interactions shows in a tangible way that all intersubjective understanding requires empathetic involvement.

In our view, if we want to do justice to the complex nature of empathy, various complementary accounts have to be integrated. In this article, we have presented one possible theoretical and methodological combination. Here, by combining the

methodology of CA with the theoretical insight of CG, we have shown that it is through language, gaze, body and other conventionalized interactional practices that we can enact and display empathy. Furthermore, the concept of empathy cannot and should not be analyzed as a unitary, indivisible phenomenon: it consists of several dimensions, which are constantly renegotiated. Consequently, empathy cannot be seen only as a characteristic of individual constructions or turns but as a complex process that takes place in the interaction between the participants.

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NOTES

1. Similar phenomena have been discussed under different terminology. The most used concepts are ALIGNMENT or AFFILIATION, the latter of which comes close to our definition of empathy. According to Sorjonen (2001), alignment shows that one understands what the other person says, whereas affiliation requires emotional, affective involvement. In a similar vein, Couper-Kuhlen (2012:113) defines affiliation as 'the display of support and endorsement for a conveyed affective stance'. Stivers (2008), on the other hand, uses the concepts somewhat differently, stressing that alignment should be understood as alignment with the other person's action, whereas as an affiliative turn is emotionally empathetic with the action. See also Kupetz (2014:6–9).
2. The data comes from the Conversational Data Archive at the University of Helsinki, and the abbreviations used (such as 'sg.440') refer to the code name of the conversation.
3. Assumed cultural knowledge is that one eats crayfish with one's hands.
4. Kati seems to be behaving almost 'like a therapist', refusing a reaction in order to make the other speak. She does not display empathy, but a better description might be that she is being non-empathetically empathetic. Instead of displaying empathy, she is oriented to making her friend go and see a doctor.

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