

## Shared Affective Stance Displays as Preliminary to Complaining

JOHANNA RUUSUVUORI

Faculty of Social Sciences, 33014 Tampere University, Finland, johanna.ruusuvuori@tuni.fi

BIRTE ASMUS

Department of Management, Aarhus University, Fuglesangs Allé 4, DK-8210 Aarhus V, Denmark, asmuss@mgmt.au.dk

PENTTI HENTTONEN

Department of Psychology and Logopedics, Faculty of Medicine, P.O.Box 63, 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland, pentti.henttonen@helsinki.fi

NIKLAS RAVAJA

Department of Psychology and Logopedics, Faculty of Medicine, P.O.Box 63, 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland, niklas.ravaja@helsinki.fi

### Abstract

In this chapter, we examine how vocal and non-vocal affective displays are enacted in concert when moving into the delicate action of complaining. We specifically analyze complaining about third parties in the institutional situation of performance appraisal interviews. Reciprocal affective displays contribute to the organization of the activity of complaining, specifically, to the building of joint understanding in relation to the appropriateness of complaining activity and the relevancy of affiliating with complaining. To finish, we discuss the role of affective displays as managing social relational aspects of institutional interaction, with some methodological problems of analyzing emotion in interaction.

**Keywords:** emotion, affect, stance, delicacy, complaining, complaints, performance appraisal interviews, action formation, action recognition, institutional interaction

**Running head:** Shared affective stance displays

## 1. Introduction

Emotion is an omnipresent feature of interaction (cf. Goffman 1961) but it is rarely explicitly displayed through words and grammar. Rather, it is regularly observable through combinations of vocal and non-vocal cues, such as subtle changes in facial expression, gesture, and prosody (Goodwin, Cekaite, and Goodwin 2012; Ruusuvuori and Peräkylä 2009). This renders emotion a challenging target of analysis. Within the conversation analytic tradition, knowledge on sequential implicativeness with regard to spoken interaction concerning affect has accumulated, but comparatively less is known about the relevancies evoked by non-spoken modes of affect displays, and how these relate to spoken interaction. There are prosodic patterns that are treated as displaying some specific emotion, though these have been found to be language specific (Couper-Kuhlen 2009), and some observable regularities concerning the reciprocation of facial expressions such as turn-opening frowns and smiles (Kaukomaa, Peräkylä, and Ruusuvuori 2013, 2014). Regularities concerning displays of emotion or affect (the terms are treated as interchangeable here), as a combination of various semiotic resources (Goodwin, Cekaite, and Goodwin 2012), are difficult to tease out using conventional CA methods, such as next turn proof procedure. The challenge here lies in the difficulty to trace how different semiotic resources are oriented to (either in sum, or individually) by co-participants.

Researchers have tried to solve this analytic difficulty by studying emotions when they occur as, or in the context of, responsive actions, such as responses to directives (Goodwin, Cekaite, and Goodwin 2012), requests (Couper-Kuhlen 2012), tellings of stories (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori 2012), or news (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006; Maynard and Freese 2012). There are also studies where an emotion display in itself constitutes a first action, this way directly influencing the repertoire of possible next actions (Hepburn and Potter 2012; Heath et al. 2012). However, in many occasions, affective displays may also appear as pre-actions that indicate and pave way for upcoming other actions or affective stances. They may be signaling to other participants about an upcoming change of affective stance (Kaukomaa, Peräkylä, and Ruusuvuori 2015), or, as we will show in this chapter, they may be preparing the ground for a delicate action, namely, a complaint.

For the current paper, we use the term *stance* to depict any displayed valence towards a specific aspect, thus entailing an affective treatment of events (see Stivers 2008). We follow Goodwin, Cekaite and Goodwin (2012, 16) in proposing that "...the display of emotion is a situated practice entailed in a speaker's performance of affective stance through intonation, gesture, and body posture", but will also include verbal actions as resources for displaying emotion. We use the term *display* in order to address the showing or making publically available some kind of valence

towards a specific aspect. Whenever we talk about *showing stance*, we refer to the publically available *display of stance*, so we use these terms interchangeably. Following Sorjonen and Peräkylä (2012), we also use the terms *emotion* and *affect* interchangeably (see Ruusuvuori 2012, 331, for the grounds of this choice.) We also take the position that in the context of affiliation-relevant utterances such as troublestellings and complaints (that entail a display of stance), the term affiliation refers to actions that contain an element of affect, (see Lindström and Sorjonen 2013; Sorjonen 2001, 132; Stivers 2008), and that view the displayed situation from a similar perspective as the first speaker (Ruusuvuori 2005; Stivers 2008; Voutilainen, Peräkylä, and Ruusuvuori 2010). The latter involves recognizing and validating the first speaker's negative stance, for example by claiming or showing access to a similar situation, thus also involving affiliation with the epistemic stance taken (see Sacks 1992, 252; Stivers 2008). In sum, an affiliative response to a complaint or troubles-telling is considered as an act of taking a similar – or as we will call it here – shared affective stance towards the preceding telling.

Following previous conversation analytic literature, we define complaints as expressions of negative stance about a specific issue, the complainable (Drew and Holt 1988), for which another person or party can be held responsible (Heinemann and Traverso 2009). As expressions of negative stance, complaints are regarded as socially delicate actions, demanding extra effort to arrive at the complaint proper: they are often embedded in other activities, such as troubles-tellings, and further, they are developed collaboratively in moment-by-moment conversation (Ruusuvuori et al. 2019) building sufficient common ground to launch the complaint proper. Drew and Holt (1988) point to complaints' important role for troubles management: “making a complaint is the stage at which sometimes vague perceptions of something being wrong are cast into the public domain, in an effort to mobilize help in remedying the trouble” (Drew and Holt 1988, 399).

In addition to displaying affective stance, complaints also include an information delivery that changes the epistemic state (Heritage 1984; Heritage and Raymond 2005) of the recipient. A number of studies have shown that epistemics, that is who know or should know what at a given point of time, and morality are closely intertwined (Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig 2011). In regards to complaints, this becomes observable in the different ways knowledge about the complained-about matter is being negotiated and made relevant by the participants when responding to complaints (Drew 1998; Holt 2012), and further, in the cautious co-construction of complaints (Monzoni 2009; Ruusuvuori and Lindfors 2009). For the current study, this is of particular relevance due to the institutional nature of complaints, where the negotiation about who knows what about the complained-about matter is part of constructing a manager-employee relationship. In

affiliating with employees' complaints, the managers need to endorse not only the *affective* stance of the complainer, but also the *moral* stance taken in the complaint. The affiliation is further complicated by the notion that the recipients of the complaint do not often have firsthand knowledge on the events complained about (see Heritage 2011). We recognize that all these aspects of stance taking are intertwined in the activity of complaining and responding to complaints, but here, we focus mainly on affective stance and how it figures in the process of launching the activity of complaining.

In this chapter, we study emotional displays in sequences of complaining in an institutional context of performance appraisal interviews (PAIs from now on). In PAIs, the manager and employee evaluate past employee performance and discuss about employee needs and possibilities to develop in their work. Additionally, PAIs allow the managers to get insights into work conditions and situations that they might not have access to as part of their managerial position, such as work team relations. Emotional displays are usually more restricted in institutional situations as compared to conversations between friends and acquaintances (Asmuß 2013; Ruusuvuori and Lindfors 2009, Weatherall and Stubbe 2015). As part of an institutional setting, a PAI always entails a hierarchical constellation in that a superior, the manager, with one set of rights and obligations, engages in dialogue with a subordinate, the employee, with another set of rights and obligations. This hierarchical constellation presumably also has consequences with regard to how and to what extent the participants orient to displaying emotion, and consequently the delicacy of complaining is upgraded. Even though PAIs are partly designed to generate discussion about challenges and problems at work, orientations to the institutional roles of manager and employee may render complaining difficult. In complaining about non-present third parties, which is our focus in this chapter, it is often the case that the managers are treated as responsible for solving the complainable matters. Thus, employees' may avoid complaining in order not to obligate managers to perform tasks as this goes against the institutional hierarchy at hand. Furthermore, complaints about a non-present party, often a colleague, put the managers in an awkward position in terms of loyalty, as their institutional status requires them to treat their employees equally: while accepting the complaint could risk appearing not to be loyal towards the non-present employee, rejecting the complaint could be problematic in terms of support to the co-present employee.

In the following analysis, we will describe the closely coordinated vocal and non-vocal procedures through which participants display their affective stance when moving into delicate actions like complaining and how they respond to these displays. Specifically, we will show how exploring the possibilities for building shared affective stance preceding the complaint projects the

launching of delicate actions, such as complaining, and makes relevant affiliation with these actions.

## **2. Data and Method**

For the purpose of the following analysis, we investigated in detail 30 complaint sequences (13 Finnish and 17 Danish) from our larger set of PAI-interactions consisting of in total 138 PAIs from both private and public organizations amounting to more than 150 hours of video taped data. These complaint sequences were chosen as they all had a similar kind of complaint which is an employee complaint towards the co-present manager about a non-present colleague. In total, in the data sets, fourteen managers and fifteen employees participated in the PAIs, and each organization used a different interview form as a basis for the PAI. The Finnish data was collected in the context of a psychological research project named “Managers’ affective competence and its correlation with successful leadership” (Salminen, Henttonen, and Ravaja 2011). The Danish data was collected as part of a larger research project on “managerial conversations at work” (Aggerholm et al. 2009). Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with the Statement of Ethical Practice (BSA) for Danish data and the Declaration of Helsinki (WHO) for Finnish data. All information making possible the identification of the participants has been changed before the publication of results.

Each excerpt was transcribed in two lines: the first represents the original one (either Danish or Finnish), and the second one is an intelligible translation into English. In cases, where it is relevant for the argumentation, we provide an additional glossing line showing the word order. We used the standard conversation analytic transcription symbols (Hepburn and Bolden 2013). Furthermore, we marked the gaze directions and gestures in the transcript with manager’s gaze and gesture above the transcription line and employee’s gaze and gesture below it. Information about transcription symbols including the transcription of non-vocal behavior can be found in the chapter appendix.

In analyzing affective interaction, multimodal conversation analysis (CA) helps us to describe the sequential structure of the complaining activity within the data. Thereupon we are able to locate the subtle changes in facial expression (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori 2012), body posture (Goodwin and Goodwin 2000), gesturing (Mondada 2013) and prosody (Couper-Kuhlen 2012) that may be treated as displays of affective stance by the participants.

We have shown elsewhere (Ruusuvuori et al. 2019) how when moving into delicate actions like complaining, the complainer and the complaint recipient collaboratively facilitate this entry by means of building joint epistemic access and affective stance towards the complainable in PAIs. In

this chapter, we will concentrate more closely on the ways in which shared affective stance is built, and how affective displays are locally situated and sequentially organized. Furthermore, we will show how the reciprocal display of affective stance paves way for the upcoming complaint, which then projects the relevance of affiliating with the complaint.

### 3. Analysis

For our analysis, we have selected five excerpts. The first three ones describe the sequential organization of shared displays of affective stance when moving into delicate actions like complaining. In these cases, reaching shared affective stance preceding the complaint projects affiliation with the complaint. The last two excerpts illustrate that when no shared affective stance is reached preceding the complaint, affiliation with the complaint may remain pending. In these cases, affiliation is pursued by upgrading the complaint, or the complaint is abandoned.

#### 3.1 Reaching Shared Affective Stance

In the following Excerpt 1a, the participants, manager (M) and employee (E), build a shared affective stance just preceding the start of a complaint. The manager has asked a question that makes relevant a negative assessment (Ruusuvuori et al. 2019), gets a no problem answer, and continues with a new question concerning the helpdesk, in the same frame of possible causes of development. For the first five lines both gaze down at the papers.

##### **Excerpt 1a, Finnish ("I didn't get Nokia Suite")**

¤ for gaze by M

§ for gaze by E

01 MAN No sitte työvälineissä kehitettävää,  
*Well then something to develop in the tools,*

02 (1.5)

03 EMP: No ei oikeestaan muutah.  
*Well not anything else actually.*

04 (0.2)

05 EMP: Tai mitääh.  
*Or anything.*

06 MAN: .thh miten se (.) helpdeski. (0.2) mä on sitä joutunu  
*.thh what about (.) the helpdesk. (0.2) I have had to*

07 itte käyttään viime aikoina aika väh¤än.¤  
*use that very little lately myself.* ¤quick turn to the  
right--¤

08 EMP: .hh (Joo) §mh§eh¤ he¤h heh, heh  
*.hh (Yeah) mheh heh heh, heh*

```

m                $..$at M----->
                a...at E----->
09 MAN:  £Et  oo käy#ttäny. £
          £You haven'#/t used.£

fig                #fig.1

```



Figure 1: The participants sharing laughter and smiling

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10 EMP:  £En.£
          £No.£

11 MAN:  hæeh  æ
          ->ædown,,æ

12 EMP:  æEn. E$ñ.  $
          No. No.
          -->$down,,, $
m        ædown----->>

13      $(3.0)
e        $gazing down while smiling-->>

```

Following the manager's comment on not having had to use the helpdesk (lines 6-7) the employee states something inaudible, lifts his gaze to the manager and starts to laugh (line 8). The manager reciprocates the affective display by lifting his gaze to the employee and starting to smile (see Glenn 2003, 80). He continues with a smiley voice by uttering his interpretation of the employee's laugh, making a presupposition that the employee has not used the helpdesk (line 9) (Figure 1). Here, the manager's statement that he has not *had* to use the helpdesk implies a negative stance towards it. The employee's laughter can be interpreted as displaying that he treats the manager's comment as ironic. This interpretation is verified by the manager as he treats the employee's laughter as an indication that he has not used it either, implying that the helpdesk may not be working in the best possible way. The manager's interpretation 'You haven't used' (line 9) is uttered in a smiley voice, and similarly received by the employee (line 10). During this heightened moment of affectivity the participants share laughter and smiling, while gazing at each other. Following the closing of the sequence (line 12), they turn to gaze on papers and the employee starts a complaint

concerning the poor quality of the new tools he has to use and a person whom he treats as responsible for the problem (see Excerpt 1b below). In this excerpt, the employee's laughter, as a display of affect, seems to embed an affiliative negative stance towards the helpdesk, implied by the manager. Further, it also seems to be a way of glossing over a potential complaint: the employee does not answer the manager's question verbally by describing helpdesk in one way or another, but laughs instead, picking up the subtle cue of a negative aspect implicit in the manager's preceding turn.

### Excerpt 1b (continuation of 1a)

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

§ for gaze by E

Δ for gestures done by E

- 14 EMP: †Yks (0.2) mikä on noissa työvälineissä se< (.) jotta tuota: (0.7)  
 †One thing (0.2) that is in those tools that< (.) so tha:t (0.7)
- 15 .hh öö: (.) on §erilaisia tarpeita erilaisilla ihmisillä niin tuota  
 .hh eh: (.) different people have different needs so erm  
 Sup----->
- 16 täällä nii se §ottaa mua< esimerkiksi mun puhelimessa nii §mul on§  
 here so that annoys me< for example in my phone like I have  
 -->§down-----§.....§
- 17 §toistatuhatta puhelinumeroah ¤(.)tal¤lessa ni edelleenkkää:  
 almost two thousand numbers (.) saved but still:  
 §at M----->  
 m ¤.....¤at E----->
- 18 EMP: esimerkiks niin tuota< nyt ku kone vaihtu (0.2) ni en saanu Nokia  
 for example like< now as the machine was changed (0.2) so I didn't
- 19 suittee että pystysin tallentamaan kato  
 get the Nokia Suite so that I could save you know
- 20 varmuus[kopioita ( ) ( ).  
 back up[copies ( ) ( ).
- 21 MAN: [>Mikset saanu.  
 [>Why not.
- 22 EMP: No kun kuulemma kaikilla pitää olla samat ohjelmat.¤  
 well as they say that everybody has to have the same programs.  
 m -->¤
- 23 ¤(0.2)¤  
 m ¤down,, ¤
- 24 MAN: %¤@E:i: hei< (0.2) jos: †sult häviää tuhat ¤nume¤roa niin  
 @N:o: hey< (0.2) if: †you lose a thousand numbers then  
 ¤down-----¤....¤at E---->  
 %writing----->>  
 sää oot iΔhan<@ ¤ Δ  
 you are totally<@  
 -->¤



e                                   Δnods twiceΔ

25                   α(0.3)α  
m                   ->α,,,,,αdown-->>

26 EMP:   Se §Nuotio lupas palata siihen jo kuu§kaus§ sitten viikon kuluttua  
          *That Nuotio promised to get back to that in a week already a month*  
          -->§down-----§....§at M----->

27                   muttah (.) pitää meillä pystyä yksilölliset tarpeet huomioimaan  
          *ago but (.) we do need to tend to individual needs*

28                   (.)

29 MAN:   Ky:llä.  
          Ye:s.

30 EMP:   enempi.  
          *better.*

31 MAN:   Joo joo.(0.4)§(0.2)§  
          *Oh yes.*

e                                   -->§,,,,,§down-->>

The complaint is shown at lines 14-20. We can also see a clear affiliation by the manager with the employee's complaint (lines 21 and 24). At line 21 the manager asks for an explanation for the employee not getting a better phone, whereupon he treats the situation described in the complaint as accountable. With regard to the negative stance he has shown earlier towards the it-services of the company whereupon they have built a shared affective (ironic) stance concerning the quality of the service, the manager's question can be interpreted as holding the it-services accountable for the source of complaint, this way siding with the employee's complaint. The interpretation gets confirmed when at line 24, the manager starts his turn with 'No', countering the claim of the person the employee is complaining about. His turn is pronounced with an animated tone of voice, and he includes affective markers such as 'hey' within his turn. , Furthermore, he gives details of an equivalent situation that the employee is complaining about stating that 'if you lose a thousand numbers...' , showing that he has shared access to the problem, and thus, showing, instead of just claiming, understanding of and affiliation with the employee's difficult situation (Sacks 1992; Ruusuvuori 2005).

The excerpt shows how the reciprocal display of affective stance leads to the employee moving into the complaint proper. The display of affective stance is initiated by the manager. His implication that there is something wrong with the helpdesk gets supported by the employee's ironic treatment of the manager's implicit complaint, which then leads to shared laughter. Through the shared laughter, the participants have created common epistemic and moral ground for the

employee to launch the delicate activity of complaining about a third party. The manager (who may be seen as representing the organization, and thus responsible for solving the potential problems) has himself evoked criticism towards a certain department of the organization. They have shown that they share similar affective (ironic and critical) stance towards it, which then makes it possible for the employee to continue by complaining about the same department (the it-helpdesk), without making the manager accountable for the problem. Thus, by evoking an ironic, affective stance towards a third party the manager has created an environment where he has positioned the participants in a situation where they can share a similar viewpoint to a third party. The shared affective stance preceding the complaint seems to pave way for the employee's complaint, and to the following display of affiliation with the complaint by the manager.

In the following Excerpt 2, we can see another example of how a manager initiated display of affective stance leads to mutual display of affective stance, which then leads to the employee moving into complaining. Directly prior to the excerpt, the manager has invited the employee to tell about her experiences related to a recent change in teams, where the employee had to find her role and position in the new work environment she has been part of. With his question in line 1, the manager implies that he is aware of a potential competition in the new team in relation to who is to be in charge of which work task.

**Excerpt 2a, Danish, ("overly ambitious")**

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

\$ for gaze by E

Δ for gestures done by E

01 MAN: Bliver der taget noget fra os i forhold til,  
*Is anything being taken away from us in relation to,*

02 (1.8)

03 MAN: Har du mærket noget?  
*Have you noticed anything?*

04 (2.2)

05 EMP: \$¤.hmt altså jeg ¤synes ¤det- det går sådan lidt \$op\$ og ned;(.) me'  
*.hmt well I think it goes a little up and down;(.).with*  
\$to window-----\$.\$.Sat M----->  
m ¤...¤at E-----¤,,,,,¤down----->

06 med det >ka' man siges<.\$=Lige\$ den[gang uhm, vi fik vores nye  
*with it >so to say<. =Right [when uhm we got our new*

07 MAN: [ja  
[yes  
e -----\$,,,,,,\$to table----->

08 branding manager, .hh \$der\$ var hun: j-¤hun¤ var meget aktiv med

branding manager, .hh there she was, she was very active about  
 -->\$....\$At M----->  
 m -->α...αat E----->

09 o' gerne [vil ind over tingene o' så vid[ere,  
 wanting to be involved into things and so on

10 MAN: [hm [hm.  
 [hm [hm

11 (0.2)

12 EMP: αøhm;  
 αuhm  
 m ->αlooks down-->

13 (0.6)

14 EMP: αmt αs- d- der tror jeg nok jeg følte måske at æh jam'n s::å nu blev  
 there I think PRT I felt perhaps that uh right so now  
 m ->α...αat E----->

15 det hele sådan set taget (0.4) fra mig og de:t jo sådan set også  
 the whole so to say has been taken from me and this is so to say also

16 rimeligt n[ok.  
 reasonable.

17 MAN: [((nods))

18 (0.2)

19 EMP: .hh og så ku' jeg så komme ind i: nogle projekter αogα så'n noget.=  
 and finally I could become part of some projects and the like.=  
 m -->α..αdown----->

20 MAN: =Ja. Så αku'α du komme ind [(ad porten) når=  
 =Yes. So you (SG) could come in [(the door) when=

21 EMP: [Ja.  
 [Yes.

m -->α,,,αat E----->

22 MAN: =[nu der sku arbej(h)des.  
 =[work needed to be do(h)ne.

23 EMP: [Ja ja.  
 [Yes yes

24 EMP: α%SåαΔ#[dan et ellerΔ andet.  
 So[meting like that.

25 MAN: Δ#[Ja.  
 [Yes.

e Δsmiles-----Δ

m ->α,,,αdown at table----->

m %smiles----->

fig #fig.2

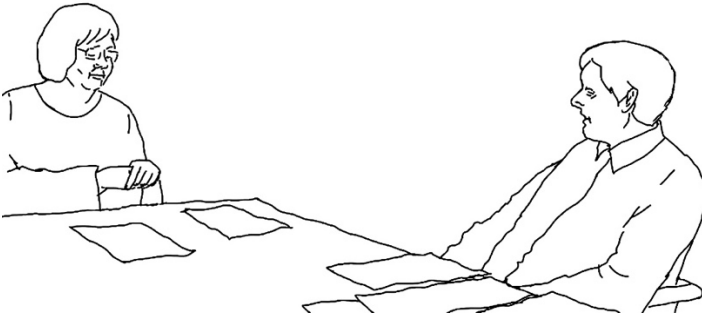


Figure 2: Employee's smile in response to manager's smile

26 MAN:        ǻ§Ja.ǻ§%  
                   Yes  
 ->ǻ....ǻat E-->>  
                   -->%  
 e               ->§,,,,§

In line 1, the manager poses a question to the employee about the situation in a recently restructured team, which the employee has become a part of. By his formulation ‘Is anything being taken away from us’ in line 1, the manager displays epistemic access to a possible problem related to this situation and he invites for a negative telling on the side of the employee. Moreover, by doing so he lowers the hierarchical distance between himself and the co-present employee, and thus also the potential threshold to say negative things about others. His question ‘Have you noticed anything’ in line 3 goes for an objective description of the situation, and by doing so, the manager signals trust in the employee’s description of the situation (instead of e.g. saying “how do you see the situation”). In response to this question, the employee in lines 5-9 produces first a statement that due to its general character indicates that there is more to come (‘it goes a little up and down’, line 5). The employee then continues with a report, where she elaborates that the new branding manager, Annika, started out involving herself in many projects, and that the employee got the feeling that many tasks were taken away from her. The manager produces tokens of acknowledgement (ll. 7, 10), thus showing support for the problems, the employee reports. The employee takes over again and concludes that the brand manager’s behaviour was reasonable (‘and this is so to say also reasonable’, lines 15-16). She frames her report by use of the particle Danish *jo*, which indicates it as something that is common knowledge and undebatable (Steensig, Heinemann, and Lindström 2011).

In turn final overlap (l. 17), the manager then responds by nodding, showing affiliation (Stivers 2008) with the prior, and after a short gap, the participants engage in mutual gaze. The employee continues her report with a concluding remark initiated by ‘and finally’ marking a latch to

the prior while at the same time indicating some kind of conclusion. Here she points out that she ended up being able to join the projects that were left over. Right at turn completion (l. 19), the manager now takes over (l. 20). He does so by using a formulation format that indicates summing up the gist of the prior speaker's turn, and thereby he displays his understanding of the prior turn. Here, the manager points out that the employee was invited into a project whenever work had to be done. The turn serves as an indirect formulation of praise for the employee, as it indicates that there might be others in the project who did not join the project in order to actually contribute to the work. The manager displays a supportive affective stance towards the problem presented in that he places laughter tokens in the final part of his turn in line 22, which invite for a shared affective stance about the matter at hand (Glenn 2003).

Throughout the manager's turn, the employee has marked alignment by means of acknowledgement tokens (ll. 21, 23), and in response to the prior turn and the manager's smile in line 24, she starts smiling slightly (l. 25) (Figure 2) while also verbally mildly agreeing with the prior ('something like that', l. 24). At this point, the participants have mutually displayed a shared affective stance, which opens up a space for a complaint to come.

#### Excerpt 2b, (continuation of 2a)

¤ for gaze by M  
 % for gestures done by M  
 \$ for gaze by E

27 ¤\$(0.5)  
 m ¤>>at E----->  
 e \$>>on table-->

28 EMP: =>.hh Nu synes jeg \$jam\$nn- jeg har ¤for¤nemmelsen på at a' hun m- .hh  
 Now believe I PRT I have feeling=the in that that she p-  
 .hh Now I believe I have the impression that she p-  
 -->\$...\$at M----->>

29 => måske: alligevel .hh tager (0.4) ¤>mun¤den %lidt for fuld<.= %  
 perhaps anyway takes mouth=the little too full.  
 perhaps anyway is somewhat (0.4) >overly ambitious<.=  
 m -->¤,,¤down----->  
 m %moves forw., takes  
 roll in r. hand %

30 =fordi at hun (.) ¤%ege¤ntlig ikke ka' klare helt så meget som  
 because she somehow cannot fully cope with just as much  
 m -->¤....¤at E----->>  
 m %moves roll to mouth----->

31 [hun har regnet med i starten.  
 as she had thought she could.

32 MAN: [ja.  
 yes.

33 MAN: .hj%a. %

- yes.  
 m -->%puts bread roll into his mouth%
- 34 EMP: %men det er kun en fornemmelse %jeg har.%  
*but this is just an impression that I have.*  
 m %puts roll deeper into mouth---%takes bite from roll.%
- 35 EMP: æ%[hm::=  
*uhm*
- 36 MAN: %[m.  
*m.*  
 m %chews on roll-->
- 37 EMP: =%j- synes måske ikke at jæ: det er ikke alle de ting vi sådan (.)  
*believe not that it is all the things that we*  
 m ->%suspends chewing, leans back in his chair----->
- 38 lige har snakket om fra starten% der >egentlig er blevet gjort noget  
*had talked about in the beginning actually have been done sth.*  
 -->%
- 39 [ved og:<  
*about and*
- 40 MAN: [ja.  
*yes.*
- 41 MAN: ne%j. % jamn %den % er god nok.  
*no. but you are right.*  
 %nods% %nods%

After this reciprocal display of positive affective stance, the employee takes over after a short gap in line 27. She now moves into the actual complaint: she frames it epistemically as her own experience (l. 28: ‘believe’, ‘an impression’), which from the start marks the upcoming complaint as not requesting a generic claim for truth, but instead focusing on the subjective side of the complainable (Edwards 2005), thus downgrading her complaint epistemically. While the complaint on the one hand is produced with several mitigating devices (restart, l. 28, particle (Danish *jamn*, l. 28) lexical items (‘perhaps’, ‘little’), the central part of it is made in the form of an idiomatic expression (‘take the mouth too full’ = to do or promise more than you are capable to actually accomplish). The idiom indicates here that the branding manager has been overly ambitious and has not managed to live up to her promises. Idiomatic expressions invite for agreement (Drew and Holt 1988), and thus make a display of shared affective stance towards the complaint relevant as a next action. In that way, the prior display of joint affective stance towards the complainable serves as a reassurance that the co-participant shares the same perspective on the matter at hand. Consequently, the idiomatic expression is not as much at risk of being rejected or challenged as it could have been without the prior display of shared affective stance.

While the employee produces the complaint about her non-present co-worker, the manager leans forward and takes a roll in his hand (l. 29). In response to the complaint, the manager does not take over, but instead he continues this process of getting ready to take a bite in that he places the roll in his mouth in line 30. The employee elaborates on the complaint by producing an account (l. 30, 31), which reformulates the idiomatic expression. In response, the manager produces first one affiliative response token (yes) and then a second in the form of an ingressive one indicating no more to follow. While doing so, he places the roll deeper into his mouth (l. 33). Thereby, the manager withholds a clear affiliative response. In response, the employee continues her turn, now downgrading her complaint epistemically by highlighting that this observation is based on her own impression. The manager responds with a minimal acknowledgement token while still chewing. In response the employee continues (l. 37-39), still pointing to the same critical behaviour of her colleague as in the initial complaint, thus not indicating that she either is going to abandon the activity of complaining or to transform it into another activity. In line 37 the manager suspends eating, and in line 40 he in overlap with the employee produces another acknowledgement token. He then takes over, and while nodding distinctively, he marks his clear support with the employee to the complaint. He thus affiliates by means of nodding and a clear statement supporting the prior with the employer's affective stance.

In sum, the prior Excerpt 2, in line with the first Excerpt 1, shows how the neatly structured display of shared affective stance on the way into the complaint seems to project an affiliative stance in response to the complaint.

The following Excerpt 3 is yet another example of how a shared affective stance paves way for the launching of complaining, also projecting the relevance of affiliation with these actions. Here, the shared affective stance is achieved through vocal rather than non-vocal resources. The employee has reported on her dilemma on feeling guilty about either not working enough or overworking. The manager has asked about the employee's need for physical rehabilitation – a particular instrument of enhancing work-ability and wellbeing at work called rehabilitation holiday. The employee has showed a positive stance towards the suggestion but claimed that her life situation outside work does not allow to do that as she has two small children to take care of. Thereafter, the employee has described having an occasional pressing feeling and not knowing its origins. She has told how she monitors her health by measuring blood pressure and heart rate and has mentioned her puzzlement on 'whe(h)re this strange anxiety I have comes from'. Thereafter, she has returned to the issue of rehabilitation holiday and indicated that following some discussions with occupational health staff they can go forward with applying for the holiday. At this point the

manager suggests a possible reason for the employee's anxiety, this way bringing the discussion back to the mental wellbeing of the employee:

**Excerpt 3a, Finnish ("stress from the outside")**

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

\$ for gaze by E

Δ for gestures done by E

- 02 MAN: ¤@Ootsä     ↑e\$päilylly ↑stresssiä,@\$  
           @Have you ↑suspected that it would be stress,@  
           ¤>>at E----->  
       e                                 \$at M-----\$
- 03            \$%(0.5)\$(.)  
       m        %head and chin move forward, purses lips-->  
       e        \$down--\$up, left diagonally.....-->
- 04            Δ(0.2)%(.)    %\$                                 Δ  
       m            -->%,,,,,%  
       e                                 -->\$  
       e        Δpursing lips, narrowing her eyesΔ
- 05 MAN:    \$Siinähän on mitä \$mielen\$kiintosisimp\$[ia oireita mitä ( )<  
           There are of course most     interest[ing symptoms that ( )<  
 06 EMP:   \$[Joo.=.hh  
   [Yeah.=.hh  
       e        \$up left-----\$,,,,,,\$down.....\$down----->
- 07 EMP:    KYL%lä mulla varmaan stress%siä on.  
           SUREly I do probably have stress.  
       m        % nods twice-----%
- 08 EMP:    =Vaikka mä kyllä yritän kaikin tavoin niinku estää sitä,  
           =Although I do try to like prevent it in every way,
- 09 MAN:    Mm.
- 10 EMP:    Ja rastittaa kalenterista ja viivata et\$stä\$  
           And cross out of my calendar and strike over that  
   -->\$..\$at M-->
- 11            mulle ei tulis lii\$kaa\$ ¤kaiken¤ maailman hommia.¤  
           I would not get too much all sorts of tasks.  
   -->\$,,,,\$down----->  
       m                                 -->¤,,,,,¤down-----¤
- 12 EMP:    ¤.hh¤ Ja il↑man syyllisyyttäh (.) olen menemät\$stä,  
           .hh And wi↑thout guilt (.) I'm not engaging,  
   -->\$at M-->  
       m        ¤...¤at E----->
- 13 MAN:    Nii.¤\$  
           Right.  
           -->¤  
       e        -->\$
- 14 EMP:    \$¤A\$siioihin että.



- With things so.  
 \$,, \$down----->  
 m         ¤down----->
- 15         (0.2)¤(0.3)¤  
 m         -->¤down at papers..¤
- 16 MAN:   ¤Mutku to\$ta\$ (0.3) voisko olla sitte semmosia¤ (0.3)¤  
*But like (0.3) could it then be the kind of (0.3)*  
 ¤down at papers----->¤.....¤  
 e         -->\$..\$at M----->
- 17         ¤henkipuo\$len asioi\$ta jotka sitteh<  
*issues on the mental side that then<*  
 ¤at E----->  
 e         -->\$,,,,,,,,, \$down----->
- 18 EMP:    Ei. Ne on< [ ( )  
*No. They are<[( )*
- 19 MAN:    Vaik            sä kuinka tyhjen- tyhjentäisit  
*even if you-PAS how much empty+would*  
 No matter how much one would empt- empty
- 20         kalenter [in ja sit sä katot  
*calendar and then you-PAS look*  
 one's calen[dar and then one
- 21 EMP:         [.hh Nii. Nii.  
                [.hh Right. Right.
- 22 MAN:    sä[ngyssä \$kat\$toon \$ ja mie\$tit sitte [niitä.  
*bed+in ceiling+into and think+you-PAS then [ those*  
 lo[oks into ceiling in bed and thinks about [them then.
- 23 EMP:    [Joo. ON.\$ [Joo.  
            [Yes.It IS. [Yes.  
 e         -->\$...\$at M--\$,,,,,,,,, \$down----->>
- 24 EMP:    Nii ne vaan tulee sitte jostain tai (0.2) .hh tai (.)  
*So they just appear then from somewhere or (0.2) .hh*
- 25         tai sitte joku soittaa tai joku niinko (0.2)  
*or (.) or then someone calls or someone like (0.2)*
- 26         aiheuttaa sitä stressiä ulkopuolelta,  
*causes that stress from the outside,*
- 27 MAN:    %mm.            %¤(0.5)¤  
 m         % nods twice%  
 m         -->¤,,,,, ¤down-->>

With her question at line 1, the manager prompts a troubles telling by the employee, thus evoking an activity frame where shared affective stance becomes possible, as troubles tellings make relevant an affiliation (Jefferson 1988). As they have just agreed upon a procedure to be taken to attend to the employee's potentially lowered physical work-ability, the manager's question concerning stress can be interpreted as opening up another aspect of the previous topic, that of *mental* work-ability.

After a gap during which the employee gazes at middle distance, narrowing her eyes and purses her lips (line 4), as if thinking about her situation, she admits (line 7) that she probably has stress, following which (at lines 8-14) she rapidly continues to describe how she has dealt with it and how she has not felt guilty about not overworking. By referring to her solutions concerning the stress she seems to move away from further troubles-talk. At this point, the manager again brings the talk back to the employee's mental workability, suggesting mental issues as a possible reason for stress (lines 16-17). As the employee seems first to reject the suggestion (line 18), the manager gives a description showing that she has access to the kind of state that they are discussing: being stressed out (lines 19, 21). She does this by listing activities that are common in a state of stress, using a "YOU-passive" or generalized YOU, which can be used as a zero-person construction where the subject is elided (Hakulinen et al. 2004, 1299). Such zero-person construction is often used to treat one's own experience as generalizable and shareable (Hakulinen et al. 2004, 1284–1285). The manager is thus implying that she may have experienced such a state herself and that she and the employee share a similar perspective towards being mentally stressed out. This way, she invokes a shared sphere of experience (Ruusuvuori 2005) and creates an environment where the employee can continue her talk about problematic issues. The employee receives this as a valid description of her experiences with 'Right. Right' (line 20) and 'Yes. It IS.' (line 22), and continues the manager's description of stressing issues by referring to their origin. She finishes her utterance with a continuing intonation (line 26), whereafter the manager nods (line 27), affiliating with the employee's description and aligning herself as a recipient of her story (see Stivers 2008). As a continuation of her utterance, at line 28, in a stage where they have reached a shared affective stance towards the employee's experienced mental stress, the employee engages in the complaint proper.

### Excerpt 3b (Continuation of 3a)

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

- 28 EMP: ¤Että niinku entinen mieheni on  
*So like my ex husband has*  
 m ¤>>down----->
- 29 aiheut¤ta¤nu tähän ¤e¤lämäntilanteeseen  
*caused in this life situation*  
 m -->¤..¤at E-----¤,, ¤down----->
- 30 TYÖn ulkopuolella sellasta ¤st¤ressiä että  
*outside WORK such stress that*  
 m -->¤..¤at E----->
- 31 hänhän on armoitettu tutkija ja väitöskirjan teki¤jä

*he is you know a researcher full of grace and  
preparing a dissertation*

m

%lifts chin up--&gt;

32 *ja vaik%ka mitä?% ja nyt hän on keksiny ja  
and what not? and now he has thought of and*

m

--&gt;%lowers chin (a slow nod)%

33 *hänet on kutsuttu töihin Arabiemiraatteihin?  
he has been invited to work in Arab Emirates?*

34 MAN: %Mm hm? %

m

%nods twice and purses lips%

35 EMP: *Perustamaan jotaki sairaalaa? .hh ja (0.4)  
To establish some hospital? .hh and (0.4)*

36 *siitä hän saa rahaa? Ja mainetta?  
that's how he makes money? And gets glory?*

37 % (0.2) % nii hänhän haluaa mennä.  
(0.2) so he of course wants to go

m

%nods twice%

38 MAN: Mm.

39 EMP: *Ja sitte puhuttiin siitä että  
And then we talked about the thing that*

40 *jos lapset sinne menee nii kuin kauan ne voi olla  
if the children travel there so how long they can stay*

41 *ja miten hän järjestää koulut ja iltapäivät ja nämä,  
and how will he arrange the schools and afternoons and these,*

42 *.hh Ja (.) siitä puhuttiin kaks kertaa ja< ja sitte hän:  
.hh And (.) that we talked about twice and< and then he:*

43 *↓vai↑keni? ja sitten minä kirjoitin ykkösrivivälillä  
turned silent? and then I wrote with dense line spacing*

44 *ko:1me sivua miten hän oli ajatellut hoitaa tämän  
three: pages on how he had thought about dealing with this*

45 *ja tämän haluan tämän ja tämän ja voidaanko keskustella  
and this I want this and this and can we talk about it,*

46 *asiasta,=hän ei ole kommentoinut miten°%kään°.  
=he hasn't commented on it in any way.*

m

%nodding--&gt;

47 EMP: *Eli sekin on ihan niinku (0.2)%  
So this is also quite like (0.2)%*

m

--&gt;%

48 MAN: % ¢Mm¢-mm? %  
->¢,, ¢down-->  
%nods twice%

49 *se on semmonen stressitekijä joka ¢niin¢ku*

*it is the kind of stress factor that like*  
 m -->¤....¤at E-->>

50 tupsahtaa jostakin ja mä en voi sille mitään.  
*appears from somewhere and I cannot avoid it.*

51 MAN: Joo.=Ja kun se liittyy lapsiin nii se on aika semmonen  
*Right.=And as it has to do with children so it's quite the kind of*

The complaint targets the employee's ex-husband and depicts him as the cause of her stress (line 28 onward). She depicts the complainable as outside the sphere of work. Thus, the manager cannot in any way be held responsible for the issue complained about (unlike in Excerpts 1 and 2). However, as in Excerpts 1 and 2, preceding the complaint the manager has clearly prepared the ground for shared affective stance that enables further talk about problems by pursuing talk about the employee's stressed situation, and by viewing the stressing situation from an equivalent situation as the employee (as someone who cannot be in peace and not think about work-related matters). This way, she has somewhat evened out the hierarchical relationship between the participants. It is noteworthy, though, that although the employee affiliates with the manager's perspective taking and admits that the described activity is valid in her case, she avoids continuing talk about work-related stress but shifts the target to life outside work. The manager affiliates with the complaint by nodding at lines 30 and 46 (Stivers 2008), and by upgrading the grade of the possible stressfulness of the situation (line 49).

Here, as in the previous two Excerpts 1 and 2, the participants have established a shared affective stance, which then paves way for the employee to enter into complaining. Furthermore, in such cases in our data in general, the complaint is followed by the manager displaying affiliation with the complaint.

### **3.2 Lack of Shared Affective Stance**

In the following two excerpts, we will show how the lack of building shared affective stance prior to the launching of a complaint leads to difficulties in entering the complaining activity and in finally affiliating with the complaint.

The following Excerpt 4 shows a case where the manager prompts negative evaluations from the employee, but no shared affective stance is established preceding the complaint. We can see how there is some hesitating from the part of the employee in entering into complaining (line 3) – even though the manager has explicitly asked about complainable matters, and even though the employee has already listed other negative issues preceding this fragment.

**Excerpt 4, Finnish ("careless way of working")**

α for gaze by M  
 % for gestures done by M  
 \$ for gaze by E  
 Δ for gestures done by E

01 MAN: α\$No mikä muu \$[(0.5)\$ puhuttaa ja [(0.2) harαmitαtaa.  
 Well what else [(0.5) raises conversation and [(0.2) annoyance.

02 EMP: [.hhh [No vähän semmonen  
 tota, [.hhh [Well a bit the kind of  
 like  
 m α>>down-----α...αat E-->  
 e \$>>down-----\$......\$left, away from M----->

03 EMP: ähhh (0.2) mul on vähän sellanen (1.0)  
 ehhh (0.2) I have bit the kind of (1.0)

04 mieli että täs on vähän semmosta mhhh  
feeling that here is a bit the kind of mhhh

05 (.) no ne johtuu varmaan siitä et  
 (.) well those are probably caused by the thing that

06 on vähän niinku välin\$pi\$%αtämä\$αtön\$αtä αtouα%hu%a,%ja  
 there's a bit like careless way of working,  
 -->\$..\$right-\$,,, \$at M----->  
 m -->α,,,,,α....αat E-α,,, αdown to papers-->  
 fig #fig3a #fig3b #fig3c  
 m %moves head down  
 m %writing---->>

07 MAN: (njaa/njoo,)  
 (nyeah,)

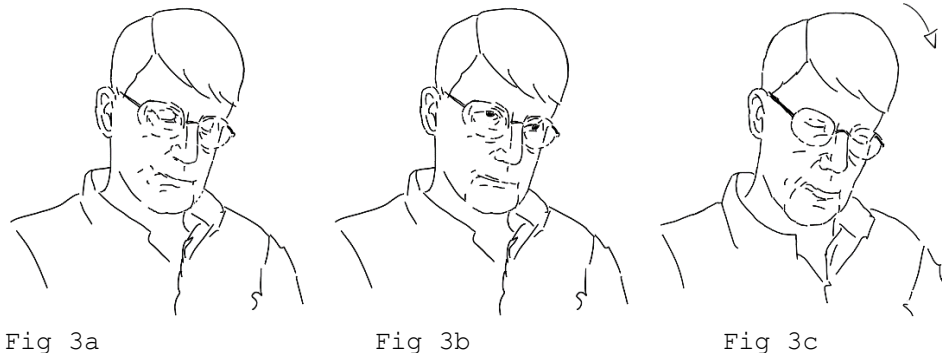


Figure 3: Manager's gaze and expression in receiving the complaint

08 EMP: Ja Δse on vähän niinkuΔ \$jo\$ka (.) puolella sem\$mos\$ta ettei\$Δ  
 And it's a bit like every (.) where the kind that there's  
 -->\$..\$right-----\$,,,, \$down----\$  
 Δ.....Δgesturing with both hands-----Δ

09 \$niinku\$ (1.0) [oo\$ te\$skemisen meininkiä  
 like (1.0) [not enough of that spirit of getting things done  
 \$.....\$up right diagonally--\$...\$left-->

10 \$mu\$N mielestä tarpeeksi.  
*in my opinion.*  
 \$..\$at M----->

11 (2.0)

12 EMP: Ja se on niinku (.) jopa niinku \$voi\$ sanoa Vehmaanki\$  
*And it's like (.) even like you can say in Vehmas factory*  
 -->\$,,,,\$right-----\$

13 \$teh\$taasta ni sielläki on vähän se muuttunut semmoseksi  
*so even there it has changed into a bit like into*  
 \$...\$at M----->>

14 (0.3) et @eihän tätä nyt tartte niin tarkkaan ajatella  
*(0.3) that @we don't really need to think and ponder about*

15 ja mieltä että@.  
*this so closely so@.*

16 MAN: No (.) toi kuulostaa Heikin (0.8) huonolta (.) huumorilta mutta,  
*Well (.) that sounds like Heikki's (0.8) bad (.) humour but,*  
 -->#.....\$at E----->

17 MAN: [Vaikee kuvitella et Matti olis sanonut,  
*[Hard to imagine that Matti had said,*

18 EMP: [Joo mut-  
*[Yeah but-*  
 m -->#,,,,#,

19 EMP: #Kyllähän se tulee (.) Marjaltakin semmosia.  
*But even (.) Marja talks like that.*  
 m #down-----#...\$at E-->

20 MAN: °Aijaa°.#(0.5)%  
*°Oh°.*  
 -->#down-->>  
 %nods--%

21 (1.5)

We can see here how the manager shows no signs of affiliating with the employee's complaint at line 6. At the closure of the employee's complaint he shifts his gaze down to papers, briefly glances at the employee and moves his head slightly down and his gaze back to papers. He starts to make notes (end of line 6) and utters a minimal acknowledgement (line 7). Following this, the employee upgrades his complaint by referring to the problem existing in other locations as well, using an extreme formulation 'every' (8-10). This way, he renews the relevancy of the manager's response. Even though the employee has hearably finished his utterance, the manager does not take the turn but continues making notes (line 11). He may be recording what the employee has stated, but this is not treated as a sufficient response by the employee, as at lines 12-15 he further upgrades his complaint by giving details on the problem and by using the intensifier "even" in referring to a

particular factory. At lines 16-17 the manager provides a no problem response indicating that the last complaint by the employee can probably be attributed to a particular employee's bad humour, implying that the negative situation is only hearsay and not real. The employee resists this interpretation by adding that also another colleague has been talking in the same way (line 19) As the employee upgrades his complaint just following the manager's silence and the alternative, more benign explanation to the problem at issue, he can be seen as pursuing similar affective stance towards his complaint, that is, as pursuing affiliation from the manager.

Whereas in the first three Excerpts 1–3, the participants established a shared affective stance both preceding the complaint, and following it, and the manager displayed affiliation with the negative stance embedded in the complaint, in Excerpt 4, there was no observable sharing of affective stance by the manager in response to the complaint. This was the case even when the employee pursued affiliation. Following yet a further upgrade of the complaint (not shown in the transcript), the manager provides an explanation for the situation by referring to recent organizational changes and a temporary situation resulting from this. He refers to the complained about employees' way of reacting as understandable in this situation and depicts this way of reacting as normal and as something he shares often himself in an equivalent situation. Thereafter, the employee starts to downgrade the complaint and talk about his own attitude and the need to stop worrying about all possible issues. As a response to this statement, the manager affiliates by describing an equivalent situation where he also worries too much. This way they manage to mend the relationship problem that was occasioned by the lack of affiliation with the complaint.

In the following Excerpt 5a, we can see another example where the lack of display of shared affective stance prior to the complaint projects a non-affiliative response to the complaint. Here, the employee is in the course of reporting about his collaboration with colleagues in a specific production location of the company (Anonymized name: Blommeby).

#### **Excerpt 5a, Danish ("to get furious again")**

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

§ for gaze by E

```
01 EMP:  $¤J:#a# det mi::- generelle:#:# det mit (.) generelle billede.=
          Y:#e#s this is my::- genera:#:#l this is my (.) general picture.=
          $>>down----->
          m      ¤>>down----->

02      =altså jeg ha::#r# lige sådan lidt det de:r
          =well I ha::#v#e like a little bit about this

03      æ Blommeby det har der har været så meget i .HHH igennem
          uh Blommeby this has there has been so much f .HHH for
```

04 æhm \$mån\$ederne o' nåreåne.  
*uhm months and years.*  
 -->\$...\$at M----->  
 m -->å...åat E-->

05 (.)

06 EMP: at at nåde:r=l- de:r lidt æ#:# (.) mt æ de:t \$for\$kert  
*that that there is=l-there is litte u#:# (.) mt uh it is wrong*  
 -->\$,,, \$left->  
 m -->å,,,ådown----->

07 at si::ge å.hh (.) nådårligt, men de:r sådan et=  
*to så::y .hh (.) bad but there is such an=*  
 m -->å.....åat E----->

08 =å\$kunstigt (.) %å\$æ: (.) forhold. %  
 =artificial (.) u: (.) relationship.  
 \$.....\$at M----->  
 m ->å,,,,,,,,,,,,,ådown----->  
 m %puts papers down, gets ready for filing%

09 (0.6)

10 EMP: % \$for\$di at .hhh at i modsætning til alle mulige andre  
*because .hhh in contrast to many other people*  
 ->\$,,, \$down----->  
 m %writes----->

11 så er jeg meget klar på hvor langt je:#:#g  
*I am very clear about how far I:#:#*

12 \$går (.) i forhold til \$Peter.  
*go (.) in relation to Peter.*  
 ->\$.....\$at M-->>  
 m -->%

13 (0.2)

14 MAN: Mhm.  
 Mhm.

15 %(0.8) %  
 m %takes notes%

16 MAN: å.h%h  
 17 EMP: => %[Og du har jo selv været med (.) til en af%  
 [And you have PRT yourself been present at one of  
 [And you have been present yourself (.) at one of  
 m -->ålooks up----->  
 m %puts down pencil, leans backw., rubs eyes-----%

18 =>de séancer hvor det var  
*these gatherings where it was like*

19 =>sådan han var lige ved at nålete på låget igen.  
*such he was just about to lift up the=lid again.*  
*he was just about to get furious again.*  
 m -->å...åat E----->>



20 MAN: hhhh#%hm  
 hhhh#%hm  
 %smiles-->>  
 fig #fig.4

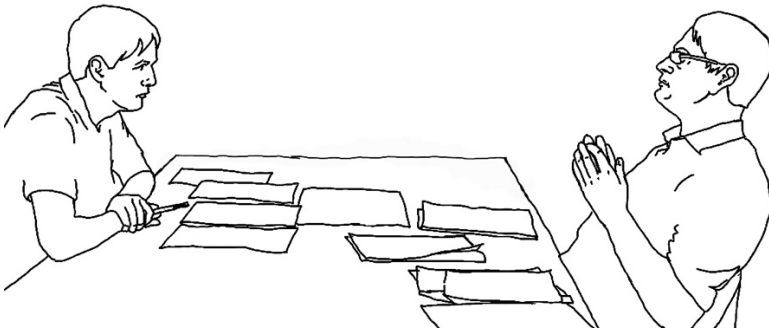


Figure 4: Manager smiles minimally

The employee starts out pointing to the fact that what he reports about is a general picture (l. 1), thus indicating that there might be something more specific to come. Thereafter, the employee cautiously designs a turn filled with mitigations ('a little bit', l. 2), restart (l. 1), and hesitations (l. 3 and 4), in which he points out that the problem, he is going to talk about, is not a recent one but has been around for years (l. 2-4). The formulation 'so much' projects something more to come and this is what happens in that the manager does not take over in line 5, and instead the employee continues with a specification of the 'so much' in his next turn (l. 6).

During this transition, the participants exchange mutual gaze. When the employee continues with 'that' in line 6, the manager starts to look down on the meeting table into his paper documents. The employee then moves into raising a problematic issue. As in Excerpt 4 l. 2-6, this turn has a number of restarts, pauses and hedges, and when the employee starts addressing the main problem, the artificial relationship with the distant company location, he withdraws gaze from the manager. He first points to the positive fact 'it is wrong to say bad', and then points to the negative part, which is that the relationship is not a naturally friendly one. While he says so, the manager shortly looks at the employee, but withdraws gaze and looks down into his papers.

The manager then starts writing (line 11), thus marking his non-availability to progress the ongoing conversation about the prior. As in Excerpt 4, this writing activity is not treated as a sufficient response, and consequently the employee continues his prior turn. He does so by providing an account ('because', l. 11) for what is meant by an 'artificial relationship'. Here, he points out that in contrast to others, he knows how to handle a specific person at the distant company location, Peter (l.11-13). In response, the manager produces a minimal acknowledgement token (line 16), and keeps on taking notes. He thus still displays that he is not going to evaluate the presented problem.

The employee does not provide any verbal or embodied moves at this point. In line 17, the manager stops writing and moves back in his chair while rubbing his eyes, clearly indicating that he no longer is involved in the writing activity. The employee now starts to launch the complaint: he appeals to a joint understanding of the situation by referring to their joint epistemic access to the presented problem (l. 18), in that the manager was present himself at some of the meetings, the employee refers to. This heightens the relevance for the manager to respond with affiliation. The employee then launches the complaint proper by describing Peter as a person that cannot steer his temper and that this happens recurrently ('again', l. 20). He does so by using an idiomatic expression ('lift up the lid'), which also invites for affiliation on the side of the manager. The manager responds with a short and minimal smile (l. 21, figure 4) together with a minimal acknowledgement token. He thus affiliates minimally, but taken into consideration the strong invitation to affiliate by means of epistemic and idiomatic means, it is a rather weak display of affiliation and shared affective stance.

**Excerpt 5b (continuation of 5a)**

¤ for gaze by M

% for gestures done by M

§ for gaze by E

21 EMP: §¤og f:Ør det har jeg ople¤vet¤ noget der har været meget værre;  
*and before that I have experience sth that was much worse*  
 §>>at M----->  
 m ¤>>at E-----¤,, ,¤down----->

22 (.)

23 EMP: plus at jeg har taget min egne ¤%inter¤ne konflikter%  
*plus that I have taken my own internal conflicts*  
 m -->¤.....¤at E----->  
 m %raises eyebrows-----%

24 EMP: med ham direkte=æh dog ( ) jeg sådan at jeg .hh jeg  
*with him directly yet ( ) I such that I*

25 af ham og Helene blevet overfuset og  
*by himself and Helene was verbally attacked and*

26 fået at vide jeg bare sku' passe mig selv.  
*got to know that I should not get involved.*

27 %(.)  
 m %nods slightly several times-->

28 EMP: .hhh=æ[:\*:¤\*h med sådan nogle (.) sådan nogle  
*with such kind of*

29 MAN: [hm.  
 [hm.  
 m -->%

30 EMP: *synspunkter som jeg havde.=*  
*points of views as I had.*

31 MAN: *=.hh mt »jeg vil sige (.)§ såd§an noget som det at*  
*I will say that something like this that*  
*-->»looks down on table----->*  
 e *-->§....§left----->*

32 *det kommer tilbage på min MÜS-samtale »selvfølgelig med §Pet§er.=*  
*this will be taken up at my PAI with Peter of course.*  
*-->»looks up at E----->>*  
 e *-->§...§at M->>*

The employee treats the manager's response as insufficient in that she continues with an upgrade of the negative telling about his co-worker (l. 22). He does so by engaging in a telling that he has experienced even worse things by the co-worker, and adding another aspect, which implicitly entails self-praise on behalf of the employee. Here, he points out that he is not afraid of taking a direct confrontation with the co-worker even though this person and another co-worker have treated him in an inadequate manner (24-27). Even though strong affiliation is made relevant here, the manager produces a number of nods without any additional display of affective stance (l. 28) or any sign to take over the turn. The employee continues to expand on his prior turn explicating the unreasonable reason for his colleagues to act the way they did (ll. 29, 31). He does so by designing his turn as a natural continuation of his prior turn. Without any sign of recognition or display of affective stance, the manager then takes over, and refocuses the topic. He does so by pointing to his managerial position in that it is him who will take up this problem during his next performance appraisal interview with the person complained about. While he this way indirectly acknowledges the relevance of the problem raised by the co-present employee, he does not mark any affiliative affective stance towards the employee and the problem he has presented.

In the last two Excerpts 4 and 5, the participants launched a complaining activity without establishing shared affective stance preceding it. In the first case the complaint was prompted by the manager while in the second case it was employee initiated. In both cases, the complaint was launched in a cautious way, with hesitations and pauses preceding it. Furthermore, in both cases, the complaint did not receive affiliation by the manager, or the affiliation remained brief and minimal, such as the slight smile (Excerpt 5), as compared with the first three excerpts. The affiliation remained missing, even though in both cases, the relevancy of affiliating with the complaint was made explicit by upgrading the complaints.

#### 4. Discussion

Complaints are delicate, socially problematic actions where it becomes important for the participants to collaborate in moving into the complaining activity (Drew and Walker 2009;

Ruusuvuori et al. 2019). We have shown here how establishing shared affective stance preceding the complaint facilitates moving into complaining. The shared affective stance thus seems to serve as “interactional oil” that smoothens the way into the complaint. Further, it implicates the relevance for affiliating with the affective stance expressed in the complaint once the complaint has been launched. This way, shared affective stance preceding the complaint foregrounds the affective aspect often present in delicate actions like complaining, and highlights the importance of taking the complainer’s affective stance into account in responding to complaints. Managers initiating the sharing of affective stance preceding complaining thus show preparedness to orient to emotional aspects of the issues complained about and to treating the experience of the complainer as valid (cf. Voutilainen, Peräkylä, and Ruusuvuori 2010).

In the context studied, when no shared affective stance has been established, complaints may either be oriented to as irrelevant, or they may be treated as mere problem disclosures where the relevant and only response presents a solution to the problem (either by means of verbal actions or by filing). Establishing shared affective stance preceding the complaint, on the other hand, brings to the fore the relevance of affective affiliation with the complaint. So emotional displays, here, can be seen as implying the relevance of the social relational aspect of the conversation, of reacting not just to the informative content of the complaint but also orienting to the experienced delicacy embedded in the action of complaining.

The study showed that affective displays play an important role in managing social relational aspects of social interaction. Apart from agreeing on the content and terms of the complaint, shared affective stance preceding the complaint enabled the participants to display their mutual orientation to the relevance of attending to their social relationship in this specific institutional context of a PAI. Here, shared affective stance went along with support of the co-present employee by the manager, and simultaneously non-support of the non-present complained-about co-worker. This way, the co-participants, by means of shared affective stance can display a more or less close relation towards each other. In the institutional context of a PAI this means that pre-defined hierarchical structures in terms of the superior and subordinate can be replaced by a more even relationship of two participants that are united in their shared affective stance towards the complaint.

According to an edited volume on emotion in interaction by Sorjonen and Peräkylä (2012, 275) “displays of emotion emerge as integral parts of the organization of particular social actions”. They may appear as actions themselves, making a response relevant, or they may be constitutive of specific actions. The latter description is valid with regard to our case of complaining. Here,

displays of emotion play an important part in entering into the process of complaining, and shared affective stance preceding the complaint contribute to recognizing complaining as an activity that makes relevant an affiliation. While our study supports this observation, it also feeds into the discussion on what specifically is meant by “an integral part” (Peräkylä 2012, 275) and how various semiotic resources applied in combination by participants can be analytically argued to perform individual actions or to play a role in accomplishing specific actions (Goodwin, Cekaite, and Goodwin 2012, 24).

The multilayeredness of affective displays makes it difficult to establish arguments concerning the data with the help of the fundamental CA concept of next turn proof procedure. While the method of the next turn proof procedure can show *a* next speaker orientation to the prior action, it does not provide a tool to point to *how* a specific resource actually contributes to an overall action. What we have tried to do here, is to make use of the idea of next turn proof procedure by spotting possible reciprocal actions with regard to the participants’ observable displays of affect. We could identify possible reciprocal actions consisting of the same resource used in the display (such as in reciprocal smiles and laughter), as well as reciprocal actions constructed by other resources (such as in showing affiliation by positioning oneself in a similar position with the other participant). However, due to the multilayered nature of affective displays in interaction, we are not always able to give sound evidence to our claim that “second” actions really are reciprocal to the “first” from the participants’ perspective. We tried to substitute for this limitation by providing an analysis that allows for accessing the multiplicity of semiotic resources that are at stake at any given moment of the interaction. This complexity points to the need to be very specific with the focus and context of our analysis in order to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of emotion in interaction.

Complaints have been regarded as one of the actions that inherently involve an emotion (Heinemann and Traverso 2009; Sorjonen and Peräkylä 2012, 9) in the sense that a display of negative emotion is needed for recognizing an utterance as a complaint (Couper-Kuhlen 2012). We have shown here, how affect is also present in complaining in another sense. Shared affective stance facilitates moving into the delicate action of complaining and highlights the relevancy of affiliating with the complaint. Such pre-complaining affective displays may be especially important for managing the social relations in an institutional situation, where affiliating with negative affect may be treated as a delicate (and even inappropriate) action (cf. Jefferson and Lee 1992; Ruusuvuori 2005).

In performance appraisal interviews where employees should be able to present concerns and problems concerning their work environment, displays of shared affective stance serve to even out the hierarchical relationship between the participants, and may this way facilitate engagement in delicate actions such as complaining. In this context, it is essential for managers to be aware of possible problems within the work environment in order to build the basis for reaching the ultimate goal of improving performance. While managers almost routinely ask questions on negative issues in PAIs (at least in our data), more attention should be paid to ways of reaching shared affective stance in preparing for the negative informings by the employees. Here we have shown how practices such as implied irony or humour or validating the employee's affective stance preceding the actual complaining, may help to achieve such shared affective stance and this way lower the threshold of complaining.

There are a number of issues that we think this study points to, and that might be relevant to pursue in further studies. One of these issues relates to social relationship building and how this is an integral part of collaboratively pursuing a delicate activity like complaining. Moreover, it could be relevant to look at other delicate actions than complaints, such as blamings, troubles tellings, and the like, in order to better understand the similarities and differences between these related, yet different actions. Another aspect to be pursued in future studies has to do with the specific institutional setting we investigated, that is performance appraisal interviews. It would be interesting to compare our findings about the multimodal accomplishment of affective stance when moving into complaining with other institutional or non-institutional contexts in order to see, whether our findings are valid across different settings. Moreover, such a comparison could provide important insights into the role of hierarchical positions for the ways affect is used in the interactive accomplishment of delicate actions.

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## Transcription Glossary

Embodied actions are transcribed according to the following conventions for multimodal transcription developed by Lorenza Mondada (2019).

<https://www.lorenzamondada.net/multimodal-transcription>

\* \* Descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between

+ + two identical symbols (one symbol per participant and per type of action)

Δ Δ that are synchronized with correspondent stretches of talk.

\*---> The action described continues across subsequent lines

---->\* until the same symbol is reached.

>> The action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.

--->> The action described continues after the excerpt's end.

..... Action's preparation.

---- Action's apex is reached and maintained.

,,,,, Action's retraction.

ric Participant doing the embodied action is identified when (s)he is not the speaker.

fig The exact moment at which a screen shot has been taken

# is indicated with a specific sign (#) showing its position within turn at talk.