

Abstract for AILA

***Situated and embodied expertise in social interaction:
encounters between food connoisseurs***

Lorenza Mondada

This plenary deals with embodied knowledge and expertise as they emerge, are displayed and negotiated in social interaction. These topics are of wide importance for a range of research areas, tackling issues of learning, socialization, and situated competences in interaction. They also concern a variety of forms of knowledge and expertise – especially related to *know how* and not only *know what*. The paper discusses how these forms of knowledge are made publicly observable and even disputable in social interaction on the basis of a particular and original data set: a rich comparative corpus of shop encounters between amateurs and professionals buying and selling cheese in a diversity of European cities.

Issues of knowledge in interaction are currently widely discussed in interactional studies, and particularly in conversation analysis (namely in terms of *epistemics*). Despite large discussions on this topic, research on *embodied* forms of knowledge, as well as on their relations to situated expertise and skills as they are exhibited, established and renegotiated within specific socio-cultural settings and activities remain less frequently addressed.

This paper tackles these questions through an empirical study of a large corpus of shop encounters in the field of gastronomy. More particularly, interactions between customers and sellers in cheese shops constitute an exemplary setting to study lay and professional expertise: sellers display not only general knowledge about the products (e.g. relative to their origins, producers, qualities) but embody it in the way they manipulate them (e.g. in touching, cutting, showing them); clients may ask for help and advice, but alternatively may also manifest they know well the products they request by exhibiting specific demands and expectations, as well as while smelling and tasting products, thereby building their identity as more than *amateurs*: as *connoisseurs*.

The paper studies these encounters as an exemplary locus for tackling more general issues regarding mutual displays of expertise, mutual adjustments of relative expertise, and the achievement of the identity of “expert” and “connoisseur”, which in turn occasion instructing, learning and socialization. More generally, this opens up opportunities to study how expertise is manifested and recognized in specific sequential environments within social interaction, paying attention to the selection of linguistic resources but also to embodied actions of gazing, touching, tasting and smelling, as they are publicly treated by the participants.