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Searching for Trouble: Recruiting Assistance through Embodied Action[1]

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The recruitment of assistance constitutes a basic organizational problem for participants in social interaction. The methods of recruitment that we have identified include embodied displays of trouble which create opportunities for others to give or offer assistance. In this report, we examine one coherent set of such embodied displays in detail: visible searches of the environment. We first distinguish between looking and searching as different forms of embodied action and then describe the specific embodied practices that participants use to produce visible searches.

1. Introduction

Requests and offers have generally been treated quite separately, as constituting independent and distinct actions, each with its own morphosyntactic construction, sequential and interactional environments, its own habitus, and its own conditions as a speech act (e.g. Searle 1969, and for a critical review of such conditions, Drew and Couper-Kuhlen 2014). For instance a distinction between them is often made in terms of benefactives, the speaker taken to be the principal beneficiary of a request whilst the recipient is considered to be the beneficiary of an offer (Clayman and Heritage 2014, Couper-Kuhlen 2014). However, our explorations initially of the claims made that requests are preferred over offers (Kendrick and Drew 2014) have resulted in our beginning to conceptualise them as connected symbiotically as alternative methods for *the recruitment of assistance* (Kendrick and Drew 2016). When someone experiences a difficulty, for instance opening the lid of a jar, they may ask for another's assistance – they may request it, verbally; or they may simply pass the jar to someone standing nearby. It may happen that the person nearby does not wait to be asked, but instead (verbally) offers to open the jar lid, or again simply stretches out their arm to take the jar to open the lid (i.e. without making a verbal offer). In some situations someone may *anticipate* that another person is about to encounter a difficulty; they may not yet have run into trouble but they are about to, so that assistance is rendered in such a way that the difficulty is averted. The recruitment of assistance embraces the variety of embodied forms of conduct through which assistance may be solicited or provided, through verbal, vocal and non-verbal conduct, to resolve difficulties that are experienced, manifest or anticipated, which disrupt the progressive realization of

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practical (embodied) courses of action. It is evident that recruitment of another's assistance requires us to broaden our analysis, to understand how a fuller range of linguistic and semiotic resources are deployed and engaged – together with gesture, bodily movement, gaze and so forth, in a physical setting – to do what we have traditionally and colloquially termed 'requesting', and indeed 'offering' (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen 2014, Floyd et al. 2014, Käkkäinen and Keisanen 2012, Keisanen and Rauniomaa 2012, Rossi 2014, Mondada and Sorjonen 2016, Stevanovic and Monzoni 2016).

A fuller account of the theoretical importance of recruitment as underpinning social co-operation and cohesion – in part through the shared practices for manifesting or expressing trouble, for recognising or anticipating that another is experiencing or is likely to experience difficulty, and for soliciting or providing assistance to remedy those troubles – is beyond the scope of this report. So too is a consideration of how the recognition or anticipation of another's difficulty, and the provision of assistance to resolve the difficulty, is a key form of pro-social altruism (on anticipation see Enfield 2014). The central matter in this report is the conduct through which a difficulty is manifest or expressed in such a way that another may recognise that assistance might be needed. Here we amplify our initial observation that embodied displays of trouble constitute a central method for the recruitment of assistance (Kendrick and Drew 2016) and examine one coherent set of such embodied displays in detail: visibly *searching* the environment. When one person, Self, displays that he or she is searching for something, Other may recognise that Self's conduct manifests a difficulty he or she has. It happens quite regularly in interaction that participants display, through visibly searching, that they are having trouble finding a symbol on the computer keyboard, finding a teapot, finding their fork (at the dinner table), locating their piece on a game board, or finding an object in the kitchen. In some respects this is akin to or parallels studies of the embodied practices involved when speakers search for words (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986, Hayashi 2003).

In this report we explore, from a conversation analytic perspective, how participants' conduct manifests that they are having trouble finding something, through their visibly searching for something. Our analytic focus here is how 'searching' is done in such a way as to be understood or recognised by others as searching, and thereby as manifesting a trouble they have e.g. finding or locating something.

2. Looking vs. searching

Gaze direction is a fundamental resource for action in interaction (see Rossano 2013). To begin with, for our purposes, it will be worth distinguishing between someone's look across a space, a look that is followed by another to its possible or likely object, from Self's conduct that is understood as looking *for* something, as searching for something that Self is having difficulty finding or locating (for a different though related treatment of the relevance of gaze, and the affordances for recruitment of sight lines in an environment, see Backhouse and Drew 1992). In other words, among the various gazing actions that participants perform (see, e.g., Kidwell 2005 on a "mere look" vs. "the look"), there is a difference between looking and visibly searching. Looking does not seem to indicate or manifest trouble, whilst the embodied conduct associated with searching exposes to public view that Self has some trouble finding or locating something. For instance in this first example in which three women are sitting together, the one in the middle – Self (Marie) – looks across and downwards to her right. She does so in a slightly delayed response to having been asked by her friend on the right, Rachel, *do you have to leave soo:n (.) for a cla:ss?* The friend

sitting on the left, Lex, then follows Self's gaze down towards an object on the floor close to her (i.e. to Lex), which turns out to be a cell phone; Lex checks the time then displays or passes the phone to Self in such a way that she can see for herself what time it is. The recruitment of assistance resulted from Lex having followed the direction of Self's gaze and having discerned what Self was looking at – though that look did not indicate any particular trouble or difficulty on Self's part; Lex simply anticipated Self's need to know the time, in order perhaps to be able to answer Rachel's question about when she has to leave.

Video 1: Marie (middle) turns to looks at her phone which Lex (left) then picks up and shows her. https://youtu.be/fqG1WLAYwok

```
Extract 1 [GB07_76]
1  RAC:   Do you have to leave soo:+n?
2  mar                              +averts gaze-->
3         (.)
4  RAC:   for a cla:+ss?
5  mar           -->+gazes to phone-->
6  MAR:   .tk U::hm*
7  lex              *picks up phone-->>
8         (1.5)
9  MAR:   °°+you guys haven't been talking for half an hour.°°
10        °°+gazes to RIG-->>
```

It should be noted with respect to Self's glance having occasioned a recruitment that whilst that look did not signal or express trouble, nonetheless there are intimations of something akin to a difficulty in Self's conduct. First, as was noted above, Self does not respond immediately to Rachel's question; at the first possible completion of the question Self averts her gaze (line 2), which projects a dispreferred response and occasions an increment by Rachel (cf. Kendrick and Holler 2017). Self then utters a click (Ogden 2013) and says "u::hm" (line 6), both of which are further indications of trouble in responding (Kendrick and Torreira 2015), as she turns her head to gaze towards the ground to her right. Note also that Self looks across at something she knows or anticipates will be in that location; the certitude embodied in her look contributes to the recruitment of assistance by Lex.

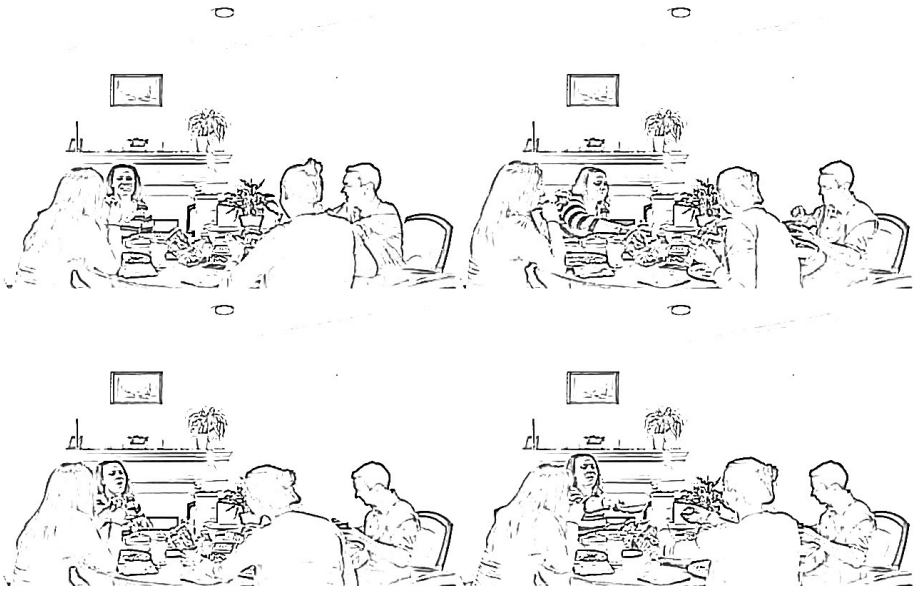
But in other cases Self does much more than look; in Extract 2 Self (Anne) visibly searches for an object, through first peering over her computer, in what is evidently a search for something she cannot see or find.

Video 2: Anne (left) visible searches for the teapot. https://youtu.be/NkyYFX59EUE

```
Extract 2 [RCE14 00:00]
1          (1.0)
2          +( 0 . 3 ) + ( 0 . 9 ) + ( 0 . 5 )
3  ann     +.....+peers over computer+,,,,,,,-->
4  ANN:    °'s uh+ tea been st°ewing long enough?
5             -->+
6          (0.2)
7  ANN:    .hhh hhh
8          (0.3)+(1.1)+
9               +peers over+
10 ANN:    °Give it a°
11 JOH:    °It's okay°
```

Whilst Self's searching is embodied primarily in her head movements and associated gaze, these are accompanied by her enquiry about the tea stewing (line 4), which follows a first full scan of her immediate environment, presumably to find the teapot. During the focal phase of her action Other looks to his right, away from Self; Self asks *'s the tea been stewing long enough?*, then reaches for her mug. So whilst her enquiry does not directly indicate that the teapot is not visible to her, nonetheless it serves to account for her visible bodily action, specifying 'teapot' as the object of her search.

It is evident that Self does more than glance or look; she embodies and thereby *enacts* looking. Through her head movements she displays that she is searching for something. That is evident also in this next example, in which Self (Kelsey), the one right of centre with her back to the camera, likewise displays that she is searching for something on the dinner table.



Video 3: Kelsey (third from left) visibly searches for an object on the table.
https://youtu.be/CwU6YKKIZ34

```
Extract 3 [LSIA Never 52:26]
1  BRA:   [heh heh huh
2  COU:   [every like event, that we have, Tina's in the:
3         (0.2) she's a [(       )
4  TIN:                 [(          )
5         (1.0)
6         *(0.4)
7  kel    *reaches for bowl-->
8  X:     °°heh heh heh°°
9         (0.3)
10 TIN:   you're the* one putting me in the* spotlight.
11 kel           -->*,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,*suspends-->
12 TIN:   *I don't even wanna *be in the spotli:ght.
13 kel    ->*,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,*searches-->
14 COU:   It's cause you're not from* here.
15 kel:                          -->*......
16        (0.2)
17 TIN:   EH*H: don't say I'm [(foreign).
18 COU:                       [what'd y*ou ne[ed.
19 kel    ..*moves bag---------------->*,,,,,,,,,-->
20 KEL:                                       [can I have
21        the avocado*:s [please?
22        ,,,,,,,,,,,*
23 COU:                 [↑mmhm
```

In contrast to the previous example, here Self's visible search alone effectively recruits Other to offer assistance (*what'd you need* at line 18). Thus a visible search of the environment creates a systematic opportunity for Other(s) to give or offer assistance even though it does not guarantee this outcome. We continue our analysis of this example in the next section.

3. Recognisability of searching

We have described searching as embodying and thereby enacting and displaying 'looking for something' that Self has trouble locating. The embodied conduct through which Self implements a search is precisely what enables Other to recognise that Self is having trouble, in response to which they may be recruited to assist resolving the

trouble, that of locating whatever it is that Self is searching for. What precisely then are the physical properties of Self's conduct that enable them to be recognised or understood as 'doing searching'? In this section we document a set of practices that Self employs in visibly searching. We have arranged these bodily practices from those involving the HEAD + NECK, to those in which the ARMS + HANDS (manual search) are the primary 'perceptors', finally to conduct involving the BODY + TORSO (adjusting body position) and whole body movements such as walking. Although we focus on each of these embodied 'zones' of conduct separately, in particular examples, often, indeed generally, we find that more than one zone is involved in a given example. That is, whilst we may focus on head movements in one example, there may be hand gestures (second zone) that contribute to the enactment of searching. Hence actual cases involve complex multimodal gestalts (Mondada 2014a) in which multiple articulators in a range of embodied zones are combined in displays of searching for what Self is having trouble finding. The various embodied practices that enact visibly searching do not constitute different types of search per se, but rather reflect local contingencies of the physical environment in which the search takes place, Self's position within that environment, and the nature of the object being sought (e.g., its size or visibility). The examples shown below have been selected to foreground particular practices of embodied action associated with particular zones of the body, that contribute to the recognisability of searching.

3.1 Searching through head and neck movements

3.1.1 Visual sweep

Returning to Extract 3, we can see that Self begins her search when she extends her right arm, seeming to reach for something; she then raises her arm so that her hand remains stationary for an instant. The suspension of an embodied action which halts its progressive realization can itself be an indication of trouble (Lerner and Raymond, frth.). She glances briefly to her right, then across to her left, retracts her hand/arm, then whilst rubbing her hands together turns her head more distinctly from (her) left to right – thereby doing a visual sweep across a portion of the table in front of her. She reaches with her left hand to lift slightly a packet that is a little in front of her. As she lifts the packet, she leans to her left in such a way that her head is in a position enabling her to peer under the packet.

The trouble she is evidently having finding whatever she is looking for, manifest in her sweep and peering, is recognised by Other (facing camera wearing a stripy top) who asks *what do you need?*, which is the first step in the recruitment of Other's assistance which resolves Self's difficulty.

This visual sweep in Extract 3, evident also in Extracts 6 and 7 below, is common in our data, and is sometimes accompanied by a 'thinking face' (see Kendrick and Drew 2016:12, Goodwin and Goodwin 1986). However, the visual sweep is only one aspect of Self's conduct that results in the recruitment of Other's assistance; another aspect of Self's conduct is that she leans forward and to her left, thereby (literally) closing in on – or 'zooming' in on – whatever she might be looking for. We explore zooming in the next section.

3.1.2 Zoom

In some of our cases, Self *zooms in* on a quite restricted search domain, a specific domain of scrutiny (Goodwin 1994), thereby reducing the distance between the sense organ (eyes) and the objects in the environment. This happens in this next example.

Video 4: Megan (on the computer) extends her head and leans forward visibly searching for the pound sign on the keyboard. https://youtu.be/atrlPBWBor4

```
Extract 4 [RCE22b 10:28]
1  OWE:   I tried doing a three point tu:rn,
2         [and it was like shocking.
3  MEG:   [ehehh
4         (0.2)
5  OWE:   in (    ) car.=
6  MEG:   =This is my (Facebook       ).
7         +(0.4)
8  meg    +gaze to keyboard-->
9  MEG:   Uhm::
10 RAC:   °Heh heh°
11        (0.7)
12 ME?:   +°en:°
13 meg    ->+leans forward-->
14        (0.4)+(0.8)+(1.9)+
15 meg      -->+     +turns head, leans forward+
16        (0.9)
17 MEG:   +Ooh where's the pound si:g+n?
18        +turns head, leans forward +
19        (0.3)
20 RAC:   Oh there isn't on:e s+orry.
21 meg                          +sits back-->
22        (0.6)+(0.2)
23          -->+
24 RAC:   Uh(h)m[:
25 MEG:         [Wha?
26        (0.3)
27 RAC:   You- e-there is no pound sign.
```

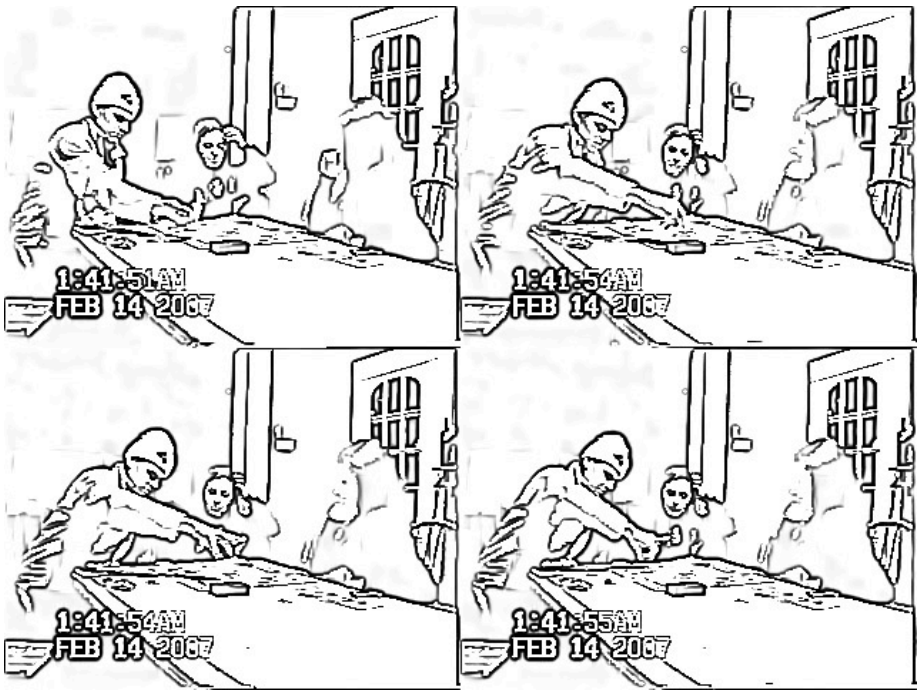
The woman in the back left of the frame, Self (Megan), is using the laptop of her Canadian friend, the woman sitting next to her. Self is evidently looking for but cannot find the British pound sign (£) on the keyboard. But before she verbally articulates her difficulty finding this symbol, she leans in slightly towards the computer, then does the slightest (her) right-left visual sweep – following which she leans forward and extends her head even closer and downwards to peer at the keyboard, saying as she does so *ooh where's the pound si:gn?*, in doing so specifying the source of her

difficulty. The relevant visual domain is restricted to the keyboard, for which the zoom – produced the forward extension of the head together with the lean – is the most effective visual means of displaying Self's difficulty, though that difficulty is expressed difficulty by her "uhm:" in line 9 and the suspension of her turn; a difficulty which is resolved when the Other, whose laptop it is, explains that it, a North American laptop, doesn't have a pound sign.

3.2 Searching through arm and hand movements

3.2.1 Searching gestures

The next bodily 'zone' employed in search displays or enactments is the hands, so necessarily also the arms. We saw in Extract 3 that Self reached out across the table at the beginning of her search, then at a later stage stretched out her other arm, using her hand to lift the packet sufficiently for her to look under it. Stretching out an arm and displaying 'searching' through the use of the hand/digits is particularly visible in this next example. The participants are playing a board game (Monopoly) and in this excerpt, having thrown the dice, Self (Nick), the man on the left of the screen, searches for his piece, to move it forwards a certain number of spaces along the board.



Video 5: Nick (left) wiggles his fingers visibly searching for his game piece.
https://youtu.be/DkxeRmepzao

```
Extract 5 [GB07-2]
1          +(0.5)     +(0.6)     +(0.5)+
2  nic     +rolls dice+raises arm+holds+
3          +(0.7)
4  nic     +lowers arm-->
5  NIC:    Seve+n.
6           -->+
7          +(1.0)+
8  nic     +wiggls fingers, sweeps hand above board+
9          +*(0.3)*+
```

```
10 nic    +reaches for gamepiece+
11 sha    *points at gamepiece*
12        (0.3)
13        ±(0.6)±
14 reb    ±points at gamepiece±
```

Self stretches his arm out diagonally to the right, as though to alight on his piece, which evidently is not at the location to which his hand moves; instead his hand hovers over the area on the far right of the board and he wiggles his fingers in a gesture of 'searching'. The gesture indicates that a search is in progress and thereby accounts for the disruption in the progressive realization of his course of action.

When reaching for an object, one has that object in view (in direct sight line, or metaphorically 'in view' as when one reaches behind to take something out of a bag, without looking where one is reaching). However, here Self did not have the object in view when he reached and thus encountered trouble; his finger wiggling, accompanied by his visual search, render his conduct visible as 'searching for' his piece in this restricted search domain, i.e. the game board. Parenthetically it might be noted that both the Others are recruited to assist, each by pointing at the 'missing' piece, though the point of one, on the right, is a kind of 'post recruitment' (i.e., recruitment of assistance after the resolution of the trouble) – Self already has his piece in hand and has begun moving it by the time she points.

3.2.2 Tactile sweep

In a final example to illustrate how conduct involving arm/hand movement visibly enact searching, an Italian family is sitting down to dinner when the boy on the right, Self, discovers that he does not have a fork with which to eat his food, a difficulty that he announces in no uncertain terms. However, immediately before he verbalises the trouble, the missing fork, he begins a visual sweep moving his head from left to right. As he does so he holds his knife in his right hand, whilst concurrently with the trouble report *hei ma io non ce l'ho la forchetta* 'hey but I don't have the fork' (line 3), he sweeps his right hand around and just under the rim of his shallow dish, in a tactile search for whether the fork might be hidden under/behind his bowl (line 4). As his hand sweeps around the bowl, his gaze follows his hand movement.

Video 6: The boy (right) sweeps his hand around the rim of his dish visibly searching for his fork. https://youtu.be/F9J1IUobumI

```
Extract 6 [9OAW_IT_10]
1  C:   +MA:MMA[:
2  p    +looks around-->
3  P:         [Hei m+a io #non ce l'ho la #forchetta.#
               Hey but I don't have the fork.
4                   +sweeps hand under rim of bowl-->
   fig                    #fig.1a         #fig.1b    #fig.1c
5  M:   *Ah+ (scusa tieni)
        Ah (sorry take it)
6       *picks up fork, gives to P-->>
7  p    -->+
```

Self's visual, verbal and embodied (manual) displays of searching for the fork which he cannot find (the trouble) promptly occasion the recruitment of his mother sitting to his right, who picks up a fork that was to the (right) side of her dish and passes it to him (line 6).

3.3 Searching through torso and leg movements

3.3.1 Leaning

In most of the previous examples it is evident that alongside visual sweeps and zooms, with manual sweeps and with verbal reports of the trouble, Self quite regularly makes adjustments to her/his corporeal deportment, which is to say to their body position. Generally such body movements bring Self closer to the presumed location or zone of the sought-for object. For instance compare the body position of the boy in the previous example as he begins to say *hei* 'hey', with his position a little over a second later as he passes his right hand round and under the rim of his dish (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The boy leans forward has he begins his search in Extract 6.

In the second still he is clearly leaning forward, in contrast to his upright posture in the first still. Similarly in Extract 2 Self leans forward and to her right in her recognisable search for the teapot.

Figure 2: Anne leans forward as she searches for the teapot in Extract 2.

And in Extract 3 Self leans forward and to her left as she reaches out to move and look under the packet on table in her search for whatever she's looking for.

Figure 3: Kelsey (third from left) leans forward and to her left as she searches the table in Extract 3.

In each of these and other examples, the participants are sitting down, to dinner, to play a board game, at a table or at desks discussing a presentation. Their body movements are thereby rather restricted to leaning, forwards or sideways, and possible body torques from the waist. They are, though, pretty much rooted to the chairs or whatever they are sitting on.

3.3.2 Exploring

However, participants in a natural environment just as readily move around that environment; they get up out of their seats to fetch something, they move around a kitchen whilst cooking, they stand, walk about and suchlike. Such movements of the body

constitute conduct providing some of the most vivid embodied displays of searching, through participants *exploring* their environment in search of something missing (searching for the trouble). Extract 7 illustrates the combined forms of conduct through which someone may visually sweep and explore a space in such a way as to be visibly, recognisably searching for something.

Video 7: Ben (white) walks around the kitchen visibly searching for the oven mitt. https://youtu.be/OFADD84seM4

```
Extract 7 [RCE09 13:34]
1          +(1.6)
2          +walks fwd, scans-->
3   BEN:   I don't know why you+ started talking no:rthern+ then.
4                              -->+.........................+opens cabinet-->
5          (0.6)+(0.6)
6            -->+holds-->
7   JA?:   +((clears throat))
8   ben    +closes cabinet-->
9          (0.5)
10  BEN:   I don't know why+ you started talking no:rthern then.
11                         -->+walks around, scans room-->
12         (0.5)
13  JAM:   No me neither.
14         (0.4)
15  BEN:   I do:n kno:w where's- where's the (.) glove.
16         (0.3)
17  BEN:   Where's the oven mitt.
18         (0.8)
19  BEN:   Give me the oven mitt.
20         (0.4)
21  KER:   Sorr+y I don't kno:w.
22          -->+.............-->
23  BEN:   +You don't know where the- +oh the:re's one.
24         +opens drawer-->            +picks up oven mitt-->>
```

In this example, Self (Ben), the man in a white shirt, who begins in the middle of this kitchen scene, begins by walking across to a cupboard; he opens the cupboard door (line 4), looks inside and evidently does not find whatever he might have been looking for (i.e. he closes the door without having retrieved anything from the cupboard at line 8). He then turns as though to move to his right, but turns again to his left, then back to his right, all whilst in a relatively stable (standing) position. He then takes two steps forward, in the direction of the sink, and as he finishes his second step asks, loudly, *where's the (.) glove (0.3) where's the oven mitt. (0.8) give me the oven mitt* (lines 15-19) – thereby nominating and requesting the object for which he's search-

ing. He moves to his left, and with knees slightly bent and leaning forward posture, opens a drawer from which he takes an oven mitt (line 24). The recruitment is completed after Self has explored his environment (i.e. part of the kitchen) in evident search for the oven gloves; through his conduct – his body movements and gaze, including looking into a cupboard – he enacts searching for something.

4. Discussion

We distinguished between two kinds of gaze, *looking* and *searching*. When someone gazes at something or in a certain direction, another may understand that person to be *looking at* something; the Other may further infer that Self (the one gazing) is looking at something he or she needs for a course of action to progress. A look in a certain direction conveys knowing that something or someone is to be found in the direction of the gaze. By contrast, when a participant visibly *searches* for something, they may be recognised as having *trouble* knowing where something is, having trouble finding something. On occasions that trouble may be verbalised by Other in response to Self's glance, as in Extract 3 when Other asks *what'do you need?*; or the trouble may be verbalised by Self, as Ben does in Extract 7 when accompanying his searching conduct, he asks *where's the oven mitt?* Across the collection it is generally the embodied display of trouble that precedes such verbalisations, however (cf. Kendrick and Drew 2016). Recognising Self's difficulty, Other may assist in some way to resolve that difficulty, in which case they are recruited to assist and the course of action in which Self is involved can move forward. At the heart of what we have investigated here is that searching enacts having trouble finding what one is looking for, and thereby manifests trouble in an embodied display.

In some respects searching might be considered an exaggerated way of looking for something (cf. Kendrick and Drew 2016:16). We have preferred instead to describe that as enacting having trouble finding what one is looking for, or a version of 'doing looking for', in which one is accountably and recognisably, or visibly, having difficulty finding something. In this study we have identified the practices in participants' (Self's) embodied conduct through which they enact or display that trouble. Through such conduct as visual sweeps, zooming, tactile displays of searching, adjusting one's body position to bring one closer and hence reduce the search domain, and finally exploring the environment both visually and through movement, Self manifests their difficulty in finding what they are looking for. In this way searching is one of the key practices in the recruitment of assistance.

5. Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Galina Bolden, Renata Galatolo, and Erika Vassallo for permission to use specific examples in this report. We are also grateful to Leah Wingard for the Language and Social Interaction Archive (2014), from which data have been drawn for this research.

6. Conventions for multimodal transcription

Embodied actions are transcribed according to the following conventions developed by Mondada (2014b).

* * + +	Gestures and descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between ++ two identical symbols (one symbol per participant) and 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 retraction.
ali	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.

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