

## Pointing and Placing

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Communication is ordinarily anchored to the material world—to actual people, artifacts, rooms, buildings, landscapes, events, processes. One way it gets anchored is through pointing. One day I went into a drugstore, picked out some soap and shampoo, and laid them on the counter for the clerk to ring up (see Clark, 1996). As it happened, the clerk had not seen me put them there, so when she looked for the items to be purchased, I pointed and said, “These two things over here.” I used two expressions, “these two things” and “over here,” that she could not understand without anchoring them to our material surroundings. I created the anchor by pointing at the soap and shampoo, and she acknowledged the action by picking them up.

Pointing is often thought to be the only, or prototypical, way to anchor communication, but it is neither. In the drugstore, the clerk and I created many other anchors by *placing* things in just the right manner. I identified myself as the next customer by placing myself in front of the counter, and she identified herself as a clerk by standing behind it. I tried—although I failed—to identify the soap and shampoo as items I wanted to buy by placing them on the counter. Later I identified a \$20 bill as payment for the items by placing it on the counter, and she identified certain bills and coins as my change by placing them on the counter, and so on. Our transaction might have succeeded without pointing, but it could not have succeeded without placing.

At the heart of the issue is the notion of context. Every act of communication takes place in a material situation that plays an essential role in that communication. In the drugstore, it was essential that the clerk and I placed ourselves where we did, that I placed the soap and shampoo on the counter, that we were in a drugstore, and so much more. Most theories of language use are happy to acknowledge these actions, but as presuppositions of the communication. The actions are not considered part of the communication proper. Why not? If pointing is a communicative act, I argue, then so is placement. Yet if it is, we must revise our views of both communication and context. Much of what is now called *context* are really acts of communication.

Pointing and placing are indicative acts—forms of indicating—but they are only two of many possible forms. My goal here is to develop the notions of *directing-to* and *placing-for* as two basic techniques of indicating. The indicative acts that are prototypical of directing-to and placing-for are simple pointing and placing, but directing-to and placing-for are part of other communicative acts as well. I first consider the foundations of indicative acts and then show how these lead to directing-to and placing-for as two basic indicative techniques. At the end I return to the notion of context and how we must revise our understanding of what it is.

**WHAT IS INDICATING?**

Indicating has fundamentally to do with creating indexes for things. When I pointed at the soap and shampoo, I used my finger—*index* in Latin—as an index for them. To understand indicating, we must understand indexes, and for that I turn to Charles Sanders Peirce and his analysis of signs.

**Indexes and Indicating**

Signs, according to Peirce (Buchler, 1940), come in three basic types: icons, symbols, and indexes. Every sign “stands for something, its object” and “addresses somebody,” creating in the mind of that person an idea that Peirce called the *interpretant* of the sign. Every sign is part of a three-place relation, sign, object, and interpretant, as illustrated in Table 10.1.

What distinguishes symbols, icons, and indexes is the relation between the sign and the object (Table 10.2). Symbols are *associated* with their objects *by rule*; in traffic signals, the red light is conventionally associated with the command to stop. Icons bear a *perceptual resemblance* to their objects; Picasso’s sketch of Gertrude Stein is a selective depiction of Gertrude Stein.

Indexes are yet another case. An index, in Peirce’s view, designates its object “because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with

TABLE 10.1  
Three Types of Signs

Type	Sign	Object	Interpretant
Symbol	Red light	Stop	Command to motorists
Icon	Sketch of Gertrude Stein	Gertrude Stein	The author Gertrude Stein
Index	Weathervane pointing north	North	The direction wind is blowing

TABLE 10.2  
Relations of Signs to Objects

Sign	Relation of Sign <i>s</i> to Its Object <i>o</i>
Symbol	<i>s</i> is <b>associated by rule</b> with <i>o</i>
Icon	<i>s</i> <b>resembles <i>o</i> perceptually</b>
Index	<i>s</i> is <b>physically connected</b> with <i>o</i>

the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand” (Buchler, 1940, p. 109). One such index is a weathervane. When it is pointing north, it is an index for north: It bears a “dynamical (including spatial) connection” with north and with you and me, the people “for whom it serves as a sign.” The connection between index and object can occur naturally, or it can be arranged or engineered. The calluses on a shoemaker’s thumb are a natural index to his occupation, but weathervanes are engineered to index the direction of the wind.

People communicate, I suggest, by creating signs by which they mean things for others (Clark, 1996). The act of creating such a sign I call a *signal*. Table 10.3 shows three *methods of signaling* that correspond to Peirce’s three types of signs.

When I *describe* something as a dog, as in “I have a dog,” I am producing *dog* as a symbol to signify a category of things. When I demonstrate a pear by drawing its shape in the air, I am producing an icon to signify a pear. And when I indicate my car by pointing at it, I am creating an index to that particular car.

Note that describing-as, demonstrating, and indicating are not *types* of signals, but *methods* of signaling. Most signals are *composites* of one or more

TABLE 10.3  
Three Methods of Signaling

Signaling Method	Signaling Schema
Describing-as	Using <b>symbols</b> to signify categories of things
Demonstrating	Creating <b>icons</b> , or selective depictions of things
Indicating	Forming <b>indexes</b> to individual things

of these methods (Clark, 1996; Engle, 1998). Consider this utterance, recorded on videotape by Charles Goodwin, of a man named Gary telling his friends about a driver who had stopped just after a car race:

- (1) Gary: and he takes his helmet off and "clunk" it goes on the top of the car.

As Gary says "clunk" he demonstrates the driver in the car swinging an imaginary helmet out of the car window onto the top of the car. So with "clunk" we have a composite of three things (see Clark & Gerrig, 1990): (a) a *description* of the sound as "a dull sound," (b) a demonstration of the sound by means of an exaggerated pronunciation of the word *clunk*, and (c) a demonstration of the driver's action of striking the helmet on the top of the car. These actions are all of a piece. They are three parts of the composite signal of saying how the driver slammed his helmet on the top of the car. So it is with many signals.

### Prerequisites for Indicating

Every indication must establish an *intrinsic connection* between the signal and its object. When we think of signs, we tend to think of symbols such as *dog* and *run*, which are associated with their objects "canine animals" and "move swiftly on foot" by rule. These rules happen to be arbitrary conventions, and they could have been different (Lewis, 1969). Indexes, in contrast, are based on *intrinsic connections*. One day when a woman named Kay and I were in a parking lot, she asked, "Which car is yours?" and I responded by pointing to a nearby car. With that gesture, I expected her to work out a nonarbitrary link between my finger and that car. For an indication to work, addressees must be able to work out that connection with ease. Generally, the more transparent the connection, the easier it is to work it out.

Indicating an object in space must also lead the participants to *focus attention* on that object. As Peirce put it, "A rap at the door is an index. Anything which focuses the attention is an index" (Buchler, 1940, pp. 108–109). In pointing my finger at the car for Kay, I was trying to do more than designate it as the object. I was trying to draw her attention to it at its particular location.

Finally, every indication must establish a particular *interpretation* of its object. When people indicate an object, they do not designate it *simpliciter*. They designate it under a particular description or construal. When Kay asked, "Which car is yours?" and I pointed at a nearby car, I was indicating the thing I was pointing at as "a car," not as "a piece of junk" or as "a good example of modern technology." What I was bringing to her attention was

not the thing as nothing in particular, but as "a car." This, it seems, is what Peirce meant by interpretant. The index is my pointing; the object is my car; and for Kay and me, the interpretant is "a car." Most accounts of indicating neglect interpretations, and they do so at their peril.

Taken together, these prerequisites give us a picture of what it takes to be an effective indicative act—at least for objects in space. Each indication must establish an intrinsic connection between the act and the object—for Peirce, a defining feature of indexes. That connection must focus the addressee's attention on the object, and on that object under a particular description. What is remarkable is the number of ways we have for doing that, and pointing is just one.

### DIRECTING-TO VERSUS PLACING-FOR

Indicating is a matter of social engineering. Speakers arrange for their addressees to locate and focus attention on a particular object, relying on intrinsic spatial connections between the index and object. When I pointed at my car for Kay, she and I relied on a directional vector that ran from my finger to the car. What forms does this social engineering take?

### Two Techniques for Indicating

Many forms of indicating exploit one of two basic techniques—directing-to and placing-for. To see how these differ, let us begin with two prototypical examples:

- (2) Clark to Kay: [Points at car]  
 (3) Clark to clerk: [Places soap and shampoo on drugstore counter]

In 2 and 3, the index, object, description, and connection are as follows in Table 10.4. In both 2 and 3, my index consists of performing an action; in both, I signify an object under a particular description. The difference lies

TABLE 10.4  
Four Properties of Pointing and Placing

	<i>Pointing</i>	<i>Placing</i>
Index	Pointing finger at car	Placing items on counter
Object	Car	Soap, shampoo
Description	"A car"	"Items to be purchased"
Connection	Vector from finger to car	Location of items on counter

in how I achieve this signification. In 2, Kay is to find a vector from my finger to the car. In 3, the clerk is to see the items as being on the counter.

What, then, is the essential difference between pointing and placing? In pointing, speakers try to *direct* their addressees' attention to the object they are indicating. In 2, I tried to direct Kay's attention to my car. In placing, speakers try to *place* the object they are indicating so that it falls within the addressees' focus of attention. In 3, I placed my soap and shampoo on the counter before the drugstore clerk. Briefly:

1. Directing-to: Speaker's signal directs addressee's attention to object *o*.
2. Placing-for: Speaker's signal places object *o* for addressee's attention.

In directing-to, speakers try to move the addressees' attention to the object. In placing-for, they try to move the object into the addressees' attention. Schematically:

1. Directing-to: A's attention → object *o*.
2. Placing-for: object *o* → A's attention.

The two techniques contrast on what speakers try to manipulate: the addressees' attention, or the object of the indication.

Directing-to and placing-for are designed to get addressees to focus on the *object of the indication*—on the car, soap, or shampoo. I call these *signaling techniques*. These are distinct from the techniques speakers have for getting addressees to focus on the *signal* itself—on the pointing finger, or on the act of placement. I call these *presentation techniques* (see Clark, 1996). Most signals require addressees to attend to the signals themselves. When Kay asks, "Which car is yours?" she must get me to attend to her vocalization so that I can identify the sentence she is presenting and understand the question she is asking. The same goes for indicating. When I pointed at my car, I had to get Kay to attend to my *finger* so that she could identify it as a communicative gesture and determine what I was pointing at. Likewise, when I laid the soap and shampoo on the drugstore counter for the clerk, I tried to get her to attend to that action in order to see the items as "items to be purchased." Presentation techniques are an important part of signaling, but my focus here is on the signaling techniques themselves.

What is the relation between directing-to and placing-for? One proposal is that they are strictly complementary. In most of the phenomena I survey here, speakers exploit directing-to, or placing-for, but not both in the same signal. Another proposal is that they are independent techniques, so they may both be used in the same signal. When I handed the drugstore clerk a \$20 bill, I might be taken as simultaneously placing the bill for the clerk and directing her attention to it. At this point, I lean toward the second view.

If directing-to and placing-for are really different techniques, they should contrast in the way they satisfy the prerequisites for indicating—intrinsic connections, focus of attention, and interpretation. Let me consider the three prerequisites in turn.

### Intrinsic Connections and Indexing Sites

In directing-to and placing-for, speakers try to establish a connection, often spatial, between the index they create and the object of that index. They do that in part to focus their addressees' attention on the object of that index. But what connections do they establish, and how? It is on these questions that the two techniques differ.

When Kay asked, "Which car is yours?" I could indicate the car in several ways. If I had been some distance from the car, I could have waved vaguely in its direction. I would have directed Kay's attention to a 50-square-meter area with the car at its center. If I had been standing next to my car, I could have tapped on its hood, directing Kay's attention to a 2-square-centimeter area on its surface. Let me call these areas *indexing sites*, or simply *sites*. With both gestures, I intend to bring Kay's attention to an indexing site and get her to identify the referred-to car by its intrinsic connection to that site. In one case, the car is at the site's center. In the other, it contains the site.<sup>1</sup> There was also an indexing site when I placed the soap and shampoo on the drugstore counter, and it was the one-meter-square countertop. Here, again, I intended the clerk to recognize the intrinsic connection between my referent and the site. In this case, the items are in the middle of the site. Both techniques, then, rely on an intrinsic relation between the indexing site and the object of the index.

The difference between directing-to and placing-for is this. With directing-to, speakers *create* the indexing site with respect to the referent. My tapping on the hood of my car created an indexing site where none existed before. With placing-for, speakers *presuppose* an existing indexing site and establish the referent with respect to it. In the drugstore, I took advantage of an indexing site, the countertop, that was already available, and established a connection from the soap and shampoo to the site by placing them on it.

1. Directing-to: Speaker's communicative act creates an indexing site that is connected with object *o*.

<sup>1</sup>I could have used the same two sites to answer "What color is your sister's car?" "What's the make of your car?" or "How are you getting home tonight?" I need only assume that Kay will recognize the different intrinsic connections between site and referent (Clark, Schreuder, & Buttrick, 1983; Nunberg, 1979).

2. Placing-for: Speaker's communicative act exploits a preexisting indexing site and connects object *o* with it.

As indicative acts, directing-to is *site-creating*, whereas placing-for is *site-exploiting*.

### Interpretations

In directing-to and placing-for, speakers must get their addressees to view the object under a particular description. Kay was to view the object pointed at as "a car," and the clerk was to see the shampoo and soap as "items I wish to purchase now." How speakers and addressees establish these descriptions is different for the two techniques.

All indications require a description. Suppose Kay and I are walking in the woods when I suddenly and silently point in a particular direction. "What is it?" she asks. "A squirrel, that oak tree, the curious branch on that oak tree, a hidden nuthatch, or what?" Even if I point with care, she still needs to ask, "Do you mean the bark of the tree, its color, the mold, or what?" To complete my indication, she and I must arrive at a joint construal of the object, so I might reply, "the oak tree," and she might nod in acknowledgment. Only then will I have completed my indication.

Directing-to ordinarily gets its description from outside, usually from the accompanying talk. Pointing, for example, is typically part of demonstrative references, as when I pointed at the shampoo and soap and said "those two things." The demonstrative reference provides the intended description of the object, "two things." At other times descriptions may come from other sources. When Kay asked "Which car is yours?" it was her question that provided the description "a car." These are just two of many ways of establishing a joint construal.

In placing-for, speakers and addressees usually establish joint construals by other means. In the drugstore, the checkout counter is a special place. It is conventional for customers and clerks to designate articles as part of their transaction by placing them on the counter. So, for example, I tried to designate the soap and shampoo as "items I wished to buy" by placing them on the counter at the start of our transaction. This way the clerk and I could be assured that we would mutually construe the purchasable items on the counter at that point in our transaction as "items I wished to buy." The description was derived from conventions about how things *at that site* are to be interpreted. Placing-for often doesn't rely on accompanying talk for its interpretation.

We are now in a position to examine directing-to and placing-for more closely. How do they work, and what are they good for?

### DIRECTING-TO

Pointing is often assumed to be in a class by itself. It may vary conventionally with the body part used (forefinger, thumb, or lips), the distance of the objects, or the type of object indicated. Otherwise, it is a coherent category: If I want to indicate a thing, I can point at it. Let me call this the *standard view of pointing*.

The standard view has problems. For one thing, pointing is just one form of directing-to, and its use contrasts with other forms. For another, directing-to is often part of composite signals. These forms are easy to overlook or treat as distinct from pointing. We must look at directing-to in its many forms if we are to see the system behind indicating—even how it works in standard pointing. I next briefly survey many varieties of directing-to with two questions in mind: How do speakers direct their addressees' attention, and how do they use directing-to as a part of composite signals?

### Devices for Directing-To

Speakers can direct their addressees' attention to objects via any number of devices. The most obvious of these, among North Americans at least, are the fingers and hand, but they are hardly the only ones. In principle, speakers can exploit any body part with which they can create a vector (Clark, 1996). Table 10.5 provides a few examples, each listed with an utterance to aid in imagining the gesture. Just how addressees are to direct their attention varies with the gesture. With the pointing finger, they are to treat the major axis as a vector that they are to follow from the body to a site at the object. But with a tapping finger, they are to ignore the major axis and attend to the site being tapped. With nodding, they are to compute the vector of the head's back and forth motion and follow that vector from the body. With the face and torso, they are to follow a vector that is not along but per-

TABLE 10.5  
Methods of Directing-To

<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Index i</i>	<i>Example</i>
Finger	Pointing at <i>o</i>	" <b>That</b> is the book I want."
Arm	Sweeping <i>o</i>	" <b>All this</b> is yours."
Head	Nodding at <i>o</i>	"She was standing <b>there</b> ."
Finger	Tapping on <i>o</i>	" <b>This</b> is the book I want."
Foot	Tapping on <i>o</i>	[of carpet samples] "I like <b>this</b> best."
Torso	Turning to <i>o</i>	"Let <b>us</b> talk."
Face	Directing at <i>o</i>	[looking up from papers on desk] "Can I help <b>you</b> ?"
Eyes	Gazing at <i>o</i>	"I want <b>you</b> [person A] and <b>you</b> [person B] to come with me."

pendicular to the major axes of the body. Vector calculation isn't as trivial as it first appears. And it is not part of the repertoire of dogs or very young babies.

Eye gaze is special (Goodwin, 1981; Kendon, 1967). People use the direction of their gaze to designate the person or thing they are attending to and, thereby, to imply, among other things, that they are attending to that person or thing. Take an example simplified a bit from Goodwin (1981):

- (4) Elsie: See first we were gonna have  
           [gazing at Ann] Teema, Carrie and Clara, (0.2) and myself.  
           [gazing at Bessie] The four of us.  
           The four [gazing at Clara] children.  
           But then—uh:: I said how is that gonna look.

Elsie directs her gaze in turn at Ann, Bessie, and Clara, designing her references to fit the person she is addressing. "Teema, Carrie, and Clara and myself" is for Ann, "the four of us" for Bessie, and "the four children" for Clara. Eye gaze isn't effective unless it is registered by the person being gazed at, so it is usually grounded by *mutual* gaze. This is one reason why not just gaze, but mutual gaze is so important in managing face-to-face conversation. Gaze is often used along with face and torso direction and even pointing.

Another attention-directing device is the voice. Speakers can use it to indicate themselves as *speakers*, their precise location as *here*, or the time of utterance as *now*. Table 10.6 offers some examples. Vector calculation seems simpler in these cases. Addressees are to locate the site from which the voice emanated. Sounds are ideal for this purpose because they are easy to localize at least to a certain degree of precision. The voice is often used along with directing the face and torso.

People also indicate with artificial devices. Lecturers can use wooden or laser pointers. They can use chalk or other markers to underline or circle things, leaving behind a semipermanent indication. At track meets, officials generally use starting guns to indicate the starting moment of races. Artificial pointers are common.

TABLE 10.6  
Vocal Methods of Directing-To

Instrument	Index i	Example
Voice	Locating <i>o</i>	To roomful of people: "Whose keys are these?" " <b>Mine.</b> "
Voice	Locating <i>o</i>	In the dark: "Where are you, Helen?" " <b>Over here.</b> "
Voice	Identifying <i>o</i>	On telephone: "It's <b>me.</b> "
Voice	Timing <i>o</i>	At start of race: "Ready, set, <b>go.</b> "

### Directing-To in Composite Signals

Directing-to is rarely used on its own. It ordinarily comes as part of composite signals as in "That car [pointing at a car] is mine." It is a genuine part of these signals because it is *essential* to their interpretation. I illustrate with five types of composite signals—demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative adjectives, summonses, emblems, and iconic gestures.

Take the English demonstrative pronouns *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. When speakers point at things in using these pronouns, their indications become an essential part of the composite signals. Two examples are:

- (5) Duncan: [Pointing at a painting by Picasso] **That's** beautiful.  
 (6) Helen: [Tapping on a box of cookies] **These** are delicious.

Without their directing-to, Duncan's and Helen's references to the painting and cookies would be incomplete. Directing-to can be used with other pronouns as well, as in these examples:

- (7) Duncan: [Pointing at a painting of Henry VIII] **He** looks frightening.  
 (8) Helen: [Nodding at a diver] **She's** doing a half gainer.  
 (9) Ken: Where are you, Margaret?  
       Margaret: I'm upstairs.  
 (10) Ken: Where's our car?  
       Margaret: [Pointing at a car] **There** it is.

Paradoxically, *I* and *we* appear to be the only pronouns that require directing-to as part of their composite signals, even though they are not normally considered demonstrative pronouns. All the rest can be used with or without directing-to as a composite part.

But what are the speakers pointing at—what are they indicating? Consider 11 and 12:

- (11) Duncan: [Pointing at a man in a photo] **That's** the guy who robbed me.  
 (12) Duncan: [Pointing at a man in a photo] **That** robbed me.

In 11, Duncan could not be indicating the actual man pictured in the photo. If he were, he would be able to say 12, which he cannot. What he is indicating is not a person or object, but a location, which he intends to be taken under the description of "a part of the picture before us." I call that

location a *perceptually conspicuous site*, or *PCS*, a site that is perceptually conspicuous relative to the speaker and interlocutor's current common ground (Clark, Schreuder, & Buttrick, 1983).

That, however, isn't the end of the story, because the PCS is not the referent of the demonstrative pronoun in 5, 6, or 11. To get those referents, we must treat the PCS as a second index with its own object. References with demonstrative pronouns take two steps (Clark, 1996). Here are the two steps for 6:

Step 1: By tapping on a box of cookies, Helen is indicating a PCS, to be taken as "a box of cookies."

Step 2: By indicating the box of cookies, she is indicating the cookies in that box, to be taken as "cookies in this box."

We need these two steps if we are to make sense of examples like these:

(13) Helen: [Pointing at a single cookie] **These** are delicious.

(14) Helen: [Pointing at an ad for Mom's Cookies] **Those** are delicious.

In using demonstrative pronouns, people do not point at the referents of the pronouns. They point at locatable indexes to those referents.

Demonstrative reference is in general a two-step process. Suppose that Ken is tapping on a copy of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. He could say:

(15) **This book** is heavy.

(16) **This novel** is great.

(17) **This author** was born in Hannibal, Missouri.

(18) **This character** is one of the most interesting in American literature.

By tapping on the book, Ken is indicating a PCS, but that is not what he is referring to with *this book*, *this novel*, *this author*, or *this character*. Indeed, he could not be pointing at the novel, author, or characters because the novel is an abstract object, Twain is dead and gone, and Huckleberry Finn is fictional. Rather, he is using the PCSs as indexes to other referents. In 15 through 18, these referents are to be taken as "the physical book at this PCS," "the novel represented in this PCS," "the author of the novel represented in this PCS," and "the main character of the novel represented in this PCS." Ken intends his addressees to come to these descriptions, largely from the head nouns *book*, *novel*, *author*, and *character*. Demonstrative references, then, are a composite of an indication to a PCS and a description of the referent in the demonstrative noun phrase.

Summonses are another composite signal that makes essential use of directing-to. Here are two characteristic examples (see Schegloff, 1968):

(19) Duncan: Helen [with raised voice].

Helen: Yes?

(20) Alan: Hey, you!

Barbara: What?

In 19, Duncan uses Helen's name and raises his voice to direct her attention to him. But why? To indicate himself as "a person who wishes to enter a conversation with her now." Once again, he does this via a two-step process. His voice directs her attention to a PCS at his body, and that indexes him in turn as "a person who wishes to enter a conversation with her now." Much the same analysis holds for 20. Summonses are composites of an indication to a PCS plus a description in a vocative or an interjection.

Emblems, too, rely on directing-to. An emblem is a conventional gesture that can stand on its own, like a good-bye wave, a thumbs-up, or a shoulder shrug (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Kendon, 1981; McNeill, 1992). Suppose I wave good-bye to Barbara and Peter as they are about to board a train. I flap my hand first toward Barbara and then toward Peter as they both watch. In this way, I indicate Barbara as "the addressee of the first wave" and Peter as "the addressee of the second wave." With the timing of my waves, I indicate the moments at which I mean "farewell": I bid them good-bye at precisely the moment they are about to board the train, Barbara first and Peter second (cf. Wilkins, 1992). Many emblems are like good-bye waves and rely on directing-to for indicating a nearby person, object, or place. All emblems appear to rely on directing-to for indicating a moment in time.

Directing-to also turns up in iconic gestures. As illustration, consider a gesture made by a person explaining to another how a cylinder lock works (Engle, 1998). While the explainer held an actual lock in his left hand, he used his right index finger to trace the movement of the cotter pins within the tumbler, or stator, of that lock: "the pins are going down like that." During "going down like that," he traced his finger from the top of the keyface down to the keyhole. That is, he did not do the tracing just anywhere. He did it on the lock he was holding to indicate the actual location and direction of cotter pin's movement. The explainer's gesture was a composite of at least two methods: (a) *demonstrating* the motion of the cotter pins, and (b) *indicating* their location in the actual lock.

Directing-to, then, turns up in a number of composite signals, from demonstrative references to iconic gestures. In each case, speakers indicate by directing their addressees' attention to a mutually conspicuous site in their

perceptual field, and they use that site as an index to other objects, real or fictional, material or immaterial.

## PLACING-FOR

Placing-for is different from directing-to. For one thing, it works not by directing a person's attention to an object, but by placing an object for that person's attention. Also the objects of placement usually get their interpretations from the place where they are placed. The principles behind these interpretations are very different from those behind the interpretations of directing-to. And signals based on placing-for can endure, making their potential uses different from those of directing-to. In this section, I take up three dimensions of placing-for—what objects get placed, where they get placed, and by what actions they get placed. In each case, I begin with the drugstore transaction and move to other examples.

### Objects of Placement-For

Placing-for is basically about manipulating material things. People place two basic types of things: (a) themselves, and (b) material things other than themselves. I call these *self-objects* and *other-objects*. In the drugstore, we find people placing a plethora of other-objects (Table 10.6). We also find people placing themselves (Table 10.7). These are only a few of the objects people place in the drugstore.

TABLE 10.6  
Methods of Placement in Drugstore

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Placement</i>	<i>Description of Object</i>
Manager	Shampoo	On store shelf	"Shampoo for sale"
Customer	Shampoo	On counter	"Shampoo to be purchased"
Customer	Money	In clerk's hand	"Payment for purchase"
Clerk	Money	In customer's hand	"Change for payment"
Clerk	Shampoo	In paper bag	"Shampoo already purchased"

TABLE 10.7  
Methods of Self-Placement in Drugstore

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Placement</i>	<i>Description of Object</i>
Clerk	Self	Behind counter	"Available clerk"
Customer 1	Self	In front of counter	"Current customer"
Customer 2	Self	Behind customer 1	"Next customer"

TABLE 10.8  
Methods of Placement

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Placement</i>	<i>Description of Object</i>
Waiter	Plate of spaghetti	In front of customer	"Food for customer"
Student	Exam	On teacher's desk	"Completed exam"
Secretary	Memo	In Ann's box	"Memo for Ann"
Card player	Card	Face-up in center of table	"Card in play"
Pedestrian	Candy wrapper	In litter basket	"Waste"

People place other-objects in many types of communication. Table 10.8 is a small sample. In a restaurant, a waiter might place a plate of spaghetti on the table in front of Ken and a bowl of soup in front of Margaret. In doing that, he would indicate the spaghetti as "food for Ken" and the soup as "food for Margaret." He could be mistaken, but he communicates his intent by his placement of the dishes. So it goes with the other examples.

People also place themselves across a variety of situations. Examples are everywhere (Table 10.9). When I place myself at the end of a queue in a bank, I indicate myself as "the next customer for service after the person in front of me." I indicate this not only to the bank teller and the customers in front of me, but to anyone who arrives after me; I expect them to indicate themselves as later customers by getting into the queue behind me. People communicate by placing themselves in a variety of circumstances.

The idea, in brief, is that people can place either themselves or other objects as a way of indicating these for their addressees.

### Placement Sites

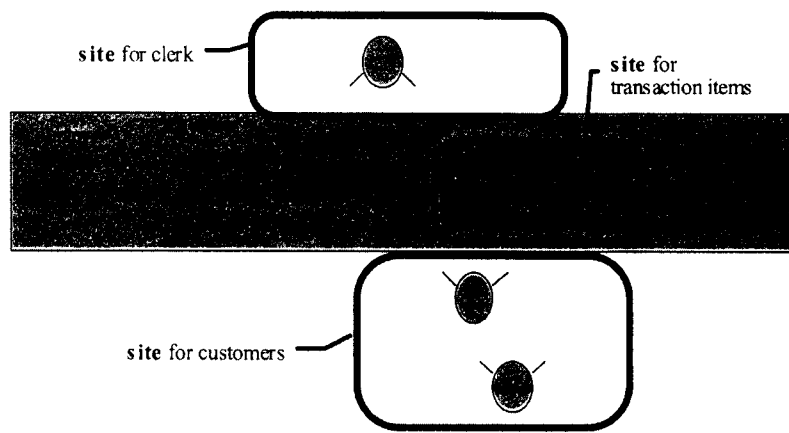
The sites where people place objects are the usual basis for the interpretations of those objects. Drugstores, for example, have a highly differentiated and conventional set of such sites. The store's shelves, for example, are sites where managers place merchandise to indicate them as "available for purchase." Some shelves are reserved for vitamins, others for hair care prod-

TABLE 10.9  
Methods of Self-Placement

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Placement</i>	<i>Description of Object</i>
Customer	Self	In queue at bank	"Nth customer for service"
Pedestrian	Self	In crosswalk	"Person with right-of-way"
Speaker	Self	At podium	"Person ready to speak"
Tennis player	Self	At service line	"Player ready to serve"
Secretary	Self	Behind desk	"Person at work"

ucts, and still others for headache remedies. Areas such as the back room and the space below the checkout counter are sites where managers place merchandise that is not available for purchase.

The placement sites around the checkout counter are worth a closer look. Some are pictured here:



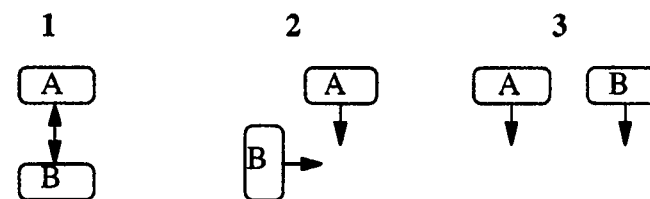
The counter has a front and a back. People place themselves in front of it to indicate themselves as “current customer” or “waiting customer,” and other people place themselves behind it to indicate themselves as clerks.

The counter top is special. Parts of the clerk’s and my transaction took place in a delimited space next to the cash register. That is the site where I placed the shampoo and soap, and where the clerk expected to find them. That is also the site where I placed my payment, where she placed my change, and where she placed the bag with the goods and receipt in it. If I had placed a bottle of vitamins next to the shampoo and soap, she would have had reason to believe that I was indicating them also as “items I wish to buy.” The cash register is also special. Once the clerk places money in the cash drawer, it is designated the property of the drugstore. By convention, only the clerk has access to items at that site. There are still other sites on the clerk’s and my persons. If I place a \$20 bill in her hand, I am indicating that bill as “sufficient payment for my purchases,” and if she places change in my hand, she is indicating that as “change for overpayment.”

The drugstore shelves, checkout counter, and cash register are what I call *absolute* placement sites: They impose particular interpretations on objects more or less independently of where the participants are—within limits. Most of these sites get their interpretations from well-developed conventions about drugstores, checking out, cash registers, and monetary exchange. But absolute sites can also be ad hoc. A tour leader in Paris might

say to her charges, “Those of you who want to visit the Louvre today stand here, and those who want to visit the Tuilleries stand there.” Once she has stipulated the two places, people signal which museum they want to visit by placing themselves in one place or the other. Finally, placement sites can be *relative* to the location of the speaker, addressee, or other landmarks. A person’s place in a queue, for example, is relative: When I take my place behind Kay, I am indicating myself as the customer immediately after her.

Placing-for is closely related to orienting-for. Consider a study by Kendon (1990) on the way people stand in conversation. If we limit ourselves to two people, they typically assume one of three arrangements:



Kendon called these arrangements *vis-à-vis*, *L*, and *side-by-side*. In the conversations Kendon analyzed, people placed themselves in one or another of these arrangements based on a number of factors, one of which was topic. People signaled their orientation to the same topic by maintaining, say, a *vis-à-vis* arrangement, and they signaled the move to a new topic by rearranging themselves in an *L*. As Kendon demonstrated in detail, it takes the tight coordination of *both* parties to maintain such an arrangement, so in circumstances like these, placement and orientation are jointly achieved.

### Phases of Placement

Most objects of placement persist in the same location and orientation until they are replaced or abandoned. Placing-for, therefore, divides into three phases:

1. *Initiation*: placing an object per se.
2. *Maintenance*: maintaining the object in place.
3. *Termination*: replacing, removing, or abandoning the object.

When a hostess asks, “Who’d like some coffee?” and I nudge my cup forward, it is the initiating phase, the nudge, that counts. She may not otherwise notice the cup’s new location, which was relative to where it was before. In many venues, the initiating phase is essential in indicating who did the

placing. A supermarket clerk who wants to know who to charge for a melon on the counter may need to see the act of placement itself. In contrast, when a drugstore manager places items on the shelves, we don't need to know when or how they got there. All we need to recognize is their presence on the shelves—the maintaining phase of the manager's placement.

The terminating phase is important for repairs. Suppose I had placed a bottle of vitamins on the drugstore counter along with my shampoo and soap. I could have revoked my indication by removing the bottle from the counter. That would terminate my placement and signal that I no longer intended the bottle to be taken as "an item I wished to purchase." My placement is in effect only as long as I am taken as maintaining it.

Speakers and addressees apply the same logic in grounding what speakers are doing. In the drugstore, the clerk moved my shampoo and soap to a new area on the counter as she rang them up. In doing that, she signaled that she had understood my placement of the shampoo and soap; by terminating the continuing phase of my signal, she was reaching closure on it. Her move also prevented me from revoking my indication—from backing out of buying the shampoo. Likewise, at the party, once I have nudged my coffee cup toward my hostess, she can signal that she has understood the act by filling the cup with coffee. By initiating the next relevant action, she terminates the continuing phase of my placement, preventing me from terminating the indication myself—say, to repair it or back out of it.

### Preparatory Principle

Most acts of placing-for prepare for the next joint action. When I stepped up to the drugstore counter, I put myself in an optimal place for the next step in the clerk's and my joint activity—the beginning of our transaction. Then, when I placed the shampoo and soap on the counter, I put them in an optimal place for the next step after that—the clerk's ringing up of the two items, and so on. Each time I intended the clerk to interpret my placements by recognizing them as preparation for what she and I were to do next. The principle I wish to propose is this:

*Preparatory principle.* The participants in a joint activity are to interpret acts of placement by considering them as direct preparation for the next steps in that activity.

The clerk should reason as if she had read Grice (1957, 1968, 1991): "That man has just placed himself in a location that is optimal, and conventional, for beginning a business transaction with me. Moreover, he seems to have done it with the intention that I recognize his very intention in doing that.

He must therefore mean that he wishes to begin a business transaction with me now."

The preparatory principle helps explain the evolution of conventional places. Why did the front, back, and top of checkout counters become conventional places for the placement of customers, clerks, and the items of transactions? Because these are the optimal sites for customers, clerks, and items in such transactions. Why did the queue become a conventional way of ordering people at bank windows, cinema windows, and airline counters? Because it satisfies these constraints, among others: (a) It delivers one person at a time to the server, (b) it delivers people in the order in which they chose to be served, and (c) the first person in the queue is optimal for engagement with server.

The preparatory principle also helps account for people's interpretation of relative placements. When the hostess asked, "Who'd like some coffee?" and I nudged my cup forward, I was making the cup more accessible for the next step in our joint activity—her pouring coffee into that cup. I could therefore be confident she would interpret my action as signaling, "Yes, I would like some coffee." I could have signaled, "No, I wouldn't like any coffee" by pulling my cup back, making it less accessible for the next step. This example illustrates an adjunct to the preparatory principle:

*Accessibility principle:* All other things being equal, an object is in a better place for the next step in a joint activity when it is more accessible for the vision, audition, touch, or manipulation required in the next step.

Nudging my cup forward made it more accessible to the hostess for pouring; pulling it back would have made it less accessible. The same principle applies to customers in bank queues, customers stepping up to drugstore counters, waiters stepping up to restaurant tables, and two people in a vis-à-vis versus L arrangement.

For an action to be an indication, there must be an intrinsic connection between that action and its object, and it is the preparatory and accessibility principles that provide that connection. When I stepped up to the drugstore counter, my action was causally connected to beginning a transaction with the clerk. I could therefore intend my action to be an index to me as "a customer wishing to begin a transaction with the clerk." Likewise, when I nudged my cup forward, my action was causally connected to a place where the hostess would find it easier to pour coffee into it. That way I could intend my action to index the cup as "a cup in which I wanted more coffee." With placing-for, there is a direct spatial relation between the object and the site it is placed at, where that site has a natural interpretation in the current joint activity.

## DIRECTING-TO VERSUS PLACING-FOR

Directing-to and placing-for are two techniques for indicating objects, but they differ in how they do that. The primary distinction between them is in whether they direct a person's attention to the object or place the object for a person's attention. Other differences go along with the primary distinction. Directing-to tends to be transitory, and placing-for, continuing. Also directing-to generally gets its interpretation from language associated with the indication, and placing-for, from its indexing site. The two techniques also differ in how they get extended to new domains. Let us look at these differences.

### Time Course

Pointing tends to be a transitory signal and placing a continuing signal. Suppose I buy a cake in one of two settings. In Setting 1, it is in the display case of a bakery, so I must point at it while the clerk is looking. My signal is transitory. In Setting 2, the cake is on a shelf of a supermarket, so I pick it up and place it on the checkout counter. This time my signal is continuing. Technically, pointing and placing both have initiating, maintaining, and terminating phases, but with pointing, the maintaining phase tends to be brief.

The maintaining phase of placing-for gives it certain advantages over directing-to. The most obvious are these:

1. *Joint accessibility of signal.* The place of the object is accessible to everyone in a conversation for an extended period of time, and during that time, they can check on it as often as they wish. That makes the placement of the object ideal as a basis for their mutual belief that the speaker has performed precisely that signal.
2. *Clarity of signal.* The continuing presence of an object makes it easy to resolve disputes about what is being indicated. In Setting 1, the bakery clerk might ask "Did you want this cake or that one?" or "Do you want the cake or not?" In Setting 2, the clerk can resolve these questions by noting the continuing presence of the cake on the counter.
3. *Revocation of signal.* Placement is usually easier to revoke than pointing. To revoke my choice in Setting 1, I would have to tell the clerk, "Oh, forget the cake—I've changed my mind." To do so in Setting 2, I would simply remove the cake from the counter.
4. *Memory aid.* The continuing presence of the object is highly effective as a memory aid. In Setting 2, the cake on the counter is both a re-

minder to me that I am committed to buying it, and a reminder to the clerk that he or she has yet to ring it up.

5. *Preparation for next joint action.* Placement generally leaves the object in an optimal place for the next step in the joint activity. In Setting 2, I left the cake in a convenient place for the clerk to ring it up.

These five properties work together to establish, maintain, and make accessible crucial pieces of the participants' common ground in the current joint activity.

Directing-to, however, also has certain advantages. These include:

1. *Immovable objects.* It is easy to indicate objects that are difficult, impossible, or inappropriate to move or place—such as houses, cars, roads, trees, and other people.
2. *Dispersed objects.* It is easy to indicate objects one by one that are dispersed over a wide area.
3. *Directions.* With directing-to, speakers can indicate a direction—such as which way a car went. This is not easy to do with placing-for.
4. *Complex referents.* I can point at a bottle of shampoo and, by saying "that company," refer to Procter & Gamble, the company that made it. I cannot do anything comparable by placing the same bottle on the countertop in a drugstore. In placing-for, I am ordinarily limited to conventional interpretations associated with the indexing site.
5. *Precision timing.* Many indications depend on precise timing, and it takes the beat of a gesture or the timing of the voice to achieve that. If I tell the baker, "I want that, that, and that, but not that," I must time my pointing to coincide with the right *that's*. That is harder to do with placement. Directing-to is usually quicker and more evanescent, and that has advantages in the right settings.

As a result of their comparative advantages, directing-to and placing-for tend to be used for different purposes.

### Interpretations

Recall that directing-to and placing-for differ in how they establish the interpretation of the indicated object. In directing-to, the interpretation ordinarily comes from an external description, but in placing-for, it tends to come instead from the object's new site. Let me call these interpretations *adjunct-based* and *site-based*.

Site-based interpretations are advantageous in some settings, and adjunct-based in others. Site-based interpretations, for example, can be estab-

lished without language. In the drugstore, the clerk and I could have carried out our entire transaction by means of placement. The drugstore could have been in Tokyo or Istanbul, and we still could have succeeded. Adjunct-based interpretations, in contrast, can be established with greater precision by the careful choice of the adjunct language. In a clothing store, I could point and say, "I'd like that tie with the floral pattern that is just next to the tie with black and yellow stripes." Or I could add an epithet, as I point at a car and say, "That idiot almost ran over me." Neither of these seems possible with placing-for without language.

### Chains and Extensions

Directing-to and placing-for can both be used in chains of indications. First consider 21:

- (21) Clark: Did you know that *he* [tapping on a copy of *Angle of Repose*] won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972?

In 21, I used my finger as an index to the book. But by indicating the book, I used it as an index to the author of the book Wallace Stegner. Briefly:

- (21') finger → copy of *Angle of Repose* → Wallace Stegner

Next consider 22:

- (22) Clark: [leaves his coat on seat D13 in movie theater to save the seat]

In 22, I used the chair as an index to my coat, which I used in turn as an index to myself, briefly as follows:

- (22') seat D13 → Clark's coat → Clark

In other circumstances, I might have pointed at Wallace Stegner himself or sat in the seat myself, avoiding the chain of indications. Directing-to and placing-for are as useful as they are in part because they allow complex chaining.

Societies have evolved extended systems of chaining based both on directing-to and on placing-for. Those based on directing-to use *buttons*, broadly conceived. In 21, I tapped on a book as a way of indicating its author. Likewise, I can ring a doorbell or activate a telephone or beeper to indicate both the people I wish to summons and me as the person making the summons.

The extensions of placement are far more striking. These systems are built on *markers*. In 22, I used my coat as an artificial index, or marker, for me: Rather than placing myself in seat D13, I placed a marker for myself. Society has evolved a truly astonishing number of markers for such purposes, and they each belong to their own conventional system of indexing. Here is a small sample:

Commerce: coins and paper money; checks; credit cards; bills; receipts; tickets; coupons.

Government: drivers' licenses; car number plates; passports.

Armed forces: uniforms; insignias; flags.

Games: cards in card games; chips in gambling; chess pieces; balls in ball games; batons in relay races; markers in Monopoly.

In the drugstore, I laid down a \$20 bill in payment for the shampoo and soap. I used that bill as a marker for the value of \$20 within a monetary system; by moving the marker from me to the clerk, I changed the possessor of that value from me to the drugstore. Games such as poker and Monopoly would be impossible without markers.

Graphical user interfaces on computers rely on two basic operations, clicking and dragging. These are simply extended notions of directing-to and placing-for. The metaphor for these interfaces is a desktop on which icons correspond to files, folders, or applications. Users can select a file by pointing and clicking on its icon, and once they have selected the file, they can open it, print it, and do other things to it. They can initiate an application (such as a mail program) in much the same way. Clicking is a virtual form of pointing. Users can also drag a file's icon, say, from one folder to another, thereby changing its location in the virtual filing system. Dragging is a virtual form of placement. If directing-to and placing-for are the two basic techniques for indicating, it is no accident that they evolved into the two basic operations of clicking and dragging.

### CONCLUSIONS

Whenever we communicate, we anchor what we do to the material world around us. Not only do we direct our partners' attention to things, as in pointing, but we place things for their attention, as in placement. Directing-to, or at least pointing, has long been accepted as a part of communication, but placing-for has been almost totally disregarded. And yet placing-for is just as valid a technique for indicating as directing-to, and it may even be more common.

Placing-for adds a great deal to the analysis of communication. Take my encounter with the clerk in the drugstore. In one tradition, our communicative acts consist entirely of the turns at talk, and the first three turns were these (in boldface):

- (23) Clerk: **I'll be right there**  
 Clark: **Okay.**  
 (15 sec pause)  
 Clerk: **These two things over there.**

The turns at talk might suffice in an analysis of gossip or telephone conversations, but they don't suffice here. Why did the clerk say that she would be right there, and why did I answer okay? Our utterances seem to have come out of the blue. They didn't, of course. The clerk and I were doing something else communicatively. But what?

Let us now add pointing—or, more generally, directing-to. Here are the same three turns expanded to include directing-to (in brackets and boldface):

- (24) Clark: [**gazes at clerk**]  
 Clerk: [**returns eye gaze**] I'll be right there.  
 Clark: Okay.  
 (15 sec pause)  
 Clerk: [**manifestly looks for items to be rung up**]  
 Clark: [**points at soap and shampoo**] These two things over here.

We now discover much more communication. I gazed at the clerk to indicate her as addressee and to imply that I was ready to be served. She gazed back at me to acknowledge me as a person requesting service, and she said "I'll be right there" in response to that request, and so it went with the pointing. But this analysis still has holes. How did the clerk know I wanted service? What was she looking for, and why?

Let us finally add placing-for. The problem is, placing-for has three phases—initiation, maintenance, and termination—and these are hard to represent in a transcript. The transcript here represents only the initiating and terminating phrases, so we must remind ourselves that the signal is in force in between. Here are the three turns with placing-for in brackets, italics, and boldface:

- (25) Clerk: [***maintains standing far behind counter***, checking an inventory sheet]

- Clark [*initiates standing at counter*]  
 [*initiates placement of soap and shampoo on counter*]  
 [gazes at clerk]  
 Clerk [returns eye gaze] I'll be right there.  
 Clark Okay.  
 (15 sec pause)  
 Clerk [*initiates standing just behind counter, facing Clark*]  
 [manifestly looks for items to be rung up]  
 Clark [points at soap and shampoo] These two things over here.  
 Clerk [*picks up soap and shampoo*, terminating Clark's placement]

The transcript reveals several new pieces of communication. First, the clerk had placed herself away from the counter, signaling that she was unavailable for service. Second, I tried to open the transaction by placing myself at the counter, by placing the soap and shampoo on the counter, and only then by catching the clerk's eye. Third, although she read my intentions, returned the gaze, and promised to "be right there," she maintained her distant placement throughout the 15-sec pause to signal that she was not yet ready to serve me. Fourth, when she was ready, she signaled that she was ready by replacing herself just behind the counter, and only then did I say "These two things over here." Fifth, she showed that she recognized my placement of the shampoo and soap by picking them up. In short, knowledge of what the clerk and I placed for each other is essential to a full understanding of what we did.

The lesson is clear. People have at least two basic techniques for indicating: directing-to and placing-for. We will never understand indicating and its role in communication without recognizing both.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## From Pointing to Reference and Predication: Pointing Signs, Eyegaze, and Head and Body Orientation in Danish Sign Language

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### THE FUNCTIONS OF A POINTING GESTURE

Once a deaf mother signed CHARLOTTE WHERE (“Where is Charlotte?”), Charlotte being her daughter standing right next to her. Charlotte responded by pointing energetically to herself. She did not point to the ground where she was standing as a way of answering the request for a location. Neither did she point first to herself and then to the location to indicate who was where. A point to an entity X in a location Y as a response to the question *Where is X?* can be seen as a condensed way of saying *X is at Y*; the point has the same communicative function as a simple proposition used to refer to X and predicate of X its existence at Y. But while the pointing gesture simply links two entities, X and Y, Y is predicated of X in the linguistic expression *X is at Y*, and in this sense Y is subordinate to X (Greenberg, 1985, pp. 277–278; Lakoff, 1987, pp. 489–491; Lyons, 1977, pp. 646–657). When we point to entities in locations, we do exactly that: we point to the entity, not the location. We focus on entities, but use space to keep track of them. The indexical aspect of a pointing gesture is its use of a location in space, but in a pointing gesture the two functions, reference and predication, are expressed by one form.

In this chapter I demonstrate how the referring and predicating aspects of a holophrastic pointing gesture are differentiated in pointing signs in a language that is intimately connected with space—namely, Danish Sign