The interactional profile of a placeholder: The Estonian demonstrative see

Running head: The interactional profile of a placeholder


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Abstract

Fillers are used to delay the next due unit in talk. The study argues that there may be interpersonal advantages in the delay of key items in turns, such as easing the processing for the recipient, announcing structural boundaries in conversation, and displaying orientation to the sensitiveness of the action. The subject matter of the paper is the Estonian pronoun and demonstrative see, which is also used as a placeholder. See projects a noun as the next due item and locally organizes the actions of the participants so that either the speaker or the recipient will produce it. Its particular interactional affordance is one of enabling the ordering of elements of noun phrases in ways that breach the rules of grammatical well-formedness.

Keywords: demonstrative, grammar in interaction, projection, Estonian, filler
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1. Introduction

The implication of using a filler is that the production of the next upcoming language item is delayed, as one of the main functions of fillers is to inform recipients that the speaker is going to continue. Fillers show that the speaker has a reason for initiating a delay, as well as that she may have a reason for the announcement (Clark and Fox Tree 2002: 88). Why a delay needs to be announced has generally been explained from the perspective of the speaker and her cognitive limitations. The reasons have included a planning or formulation problem, memory search, doubt, uncertainty or hesitancy (see the summary in Clark and Fox Tree 2002: 90). It has been assumed that the speaker is in general unable to proceed with talk at the current moment. In contrast, this study will explore the possibility that a filler may be implemented as a conscious strategy for achieving certain interactive ends. The focus of the analysis is the Estonian filler see.

The main function of see appears to be a specific type of projection. Human languages provide interlocutors with sedimented and shared ways of organizing projection in interaction (Auer 2005: 8). It works in systematically different ways depending on where the speaker is in the production of the utterance and the turn. The focus here will be on see used for projection on a micro-level, when it targets the next due item in talk. These cases occur only in the middle of ongoing utterances and because of the nature of see, which will be clarified below, it is demonstrably clear for the recipient that it is the micro-level projection that is
involved. As a projector, *see* is a part of recipient design of the talk and a device for organizing interaction.

Demonstratives are notorious for their multifaceted usage. Estonian *see* is a pronoun, a demonstrative, and sometimes also a marker of the recognizability of the referent for the recipient (Pajusalu 1997). Very often, it is used as an anaphora. In interactional data, the functions of *see* and the related item *se* in Finnish have been studied in terms of recognizability of the upcoming referent for the participants, in terms of referent introduction and referent-tracking (Pajusalu 1997, 2005; Laury 1997; Duvallon 2005) and in regard to different speaker roles (Seppänen 1998). *See* has also been characterized as an appositive form accomplishing emphasis (Sahkai 2003). This paper builds on the above studies but explores the use of *see* as a filler. Since *see* has not yet been described as a filler, a part of the paper will be devoted to distinguishing its functions as a marker of recognizability and as a specific kind of filler, a placeholder. Placeholders inhabit particular syntactic slots with accompanying morphology (Fox, this volume). Quantitative and qualitative methods will be suggested for the separation of functions.

Demonstratives have recently been shown to function as placeholders in a number of languages, including Korean, Japanese, Mandarin, Indonesian, Ilocano, Russian, Romani, and Maliseet-Passamaquoddy (Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 490-499). The Estonian *see* can be added to this list. However, the particulars of the demonstrative placeholders differ between languages. Since they are part of the syntactic structure of the language, their placement within the stream of speech will differ in terms of word and morpheme order. In terms of placement, the most important feature of the Estonian *see* is that it is a pre-positioned determiner, which means that it regularly occurs before nouns. Another language-specific
feature of placeholders is inflection, which may occur in inflectional languages (Podlesskaya, this volume). Estonian *see* can be inflected, as can any noun in Estonian. The general label *see* (nominative singular) will therefore be used only as a general shortcut reference to the item in any of its inflectional forms.

Another type of usage of demonstratives as fillers, when they appear as interjective hesitators, is even more likely to vary cross-linguistically. Interjective hesitators are pragmaticized demonstratives that are not syntactic constituents and can be used freely to delay talk in various positions (Hayashi and Yoon 2006). When a language displays a contrast between distal, medial, or proximal demonstratives, and some of them have pragmaticized as fillers, they probably display different interactional functions, as has been demonstrated for Korean (Suh 2000; Kim and Suh 2002). Estonian, however, does not have contrastive demonstratives. In the most common spoken variety of Estonian, only one demonstrative *see* is used (Pajusalu 2006), which is why it is probably less specified in its functions than, for example, the different demonstratives in Korean. At the same time, the wide functional spectrum of *see* makes it a comparatively interesting challenge to analyze. The pragmaticized *see* as an utterance-initial interjective will be touched on below. The main focus of the paper, however, will be on its usage as a placeholder, particularly on its interactional affordances as such.

The following analysis is predominantly qualitative, focusing on the function of fillers in sequences of conversation, displaying and accounting for the specifics of each conversational segment in its own right. A close analysis enables the clarification of the workings of *see* as implemented and experienced by the participants of the event in real time. The data for the study include both telephone calls and face-to-face conversations. The telephone call corpus consists of 324 calls of two types: telemarketing calls from a daily newspaper and everyday
calls between family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues. It includes more than ten hours of conversation and more than 100,000 words. This has been the primary basis of the study. Additionally, examples from face-to-face interaction have been used from the publicly available Tartu corpus of Spoken Estonian (http://www.cl.ut.ee/suuline/Korpus.php), which includes shorter excerpts of talk from a wider variety of situations. The corpus is constantly growing but the version for this study included about 300,000 words. Examples from the Tartu corpus will be marked with a special note.

In the following, the usage pattern of *see* as a placeholder will be outlined. After that, the question of the relationship between the article-like determiner *see* and the placeholder *see* will be discussed. Even though there is no distinct boundary between the two usages, there is evidence that these are two separate functions. Finally, the interactional affordances and advantages of the projective practice with *see* will be discussed, showing that the occurrence of the ‘filler’ may in fact be a strategic choice by the speaker.

2. *See* as a placeholder

Placeholders have been defined in linguistics as special hesitation markers that signal production difficulties and serve as a preparatory substitute for a delayed constituent (Podlesskaya, this volume). They temporarily substitute lexical items that have eluded the speaker and are used to hold the turn while the speaker looks for some lexically specific noun (Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson 1996: 204-206; Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 499). More precisely, Hayashi and Yoon (2006: 489) suggest that the term placeholder should only be used for cases when the item participates in the syntactic structure of the utterance, when it functions
as a syntactic constituent. The latter definition will be used in the current study. In Estonian, employing the position of a syntactic constituent implies appearing in a specific grammatical case. When see takes the syntactic role of a subject, it stands in the nominative, the cases used in the object role and in other syntactic functions are varied. There are no restrictions as to the occurrence of see as a placeholder in any of the fourteen cases in Estonian.³

Example (1) shows a typical case of see used as a placeholder. The speaker initiates the syntactic unit but at the moment when the object is due, he initiates a delay. There is a hesitation vocalization (ee), a swear word (kuradi), a hesitation particle (noh), a pause, an inbreath and the demonstrative see with a sound stretch before the speaker actually manages to produce the target noun ‘poisoning’. Both the demonstrative (selle) and the target noun are in the genitive case. The demonstrative can be analyzed as a syntactic constituent of the ongoing utterance, just like the target noun. It is rendered in bold in both the original Estonian talk and in the English translation. In the translation, the exact form of see is retained in all the examples to avoid misconceptions due to approximate counterparts.

(1) 1 T: .hh kurat eile ma sain napilt ee kuradi
   devil yesterday I get:PST:1SG almost damned
   ‘Damned, yesterday I almost got uh damned’

2  selle: noh, (0.3) khh mürgituse noh, /---/
this.GEN NOH poisoning:GEN NOH
   ‘selle: you know, (0.3) khh poisoning,‘

The speaker indicates problems with formulation already before the placeholder see is produced, the placeholder itself is lengthened at the end, and the problem indications continue after its production. There is a whole variety of delay items in this single utterance. The
demonstrative is thus a part of the speaker’s display of a problem with accessing the right word. By using see, he shows that he is aware of the delay but still carries forward the syntactic projection of the sentence-so-far, as has been described for the English uh (Schegloff 1979: 273). It is clear that an object is still due to complete the initiated syntactic unit. During the whole segment, the recipient withholds talk, displaying her understanding that there is more to come and that the speaker will continue until an object, a noun, has been uttered. Similarly to other delay indicators, the placeholder projects a continuation. However, the placeholder see here specifically shows that a noun is due and that the noun will be in the genitive case. It is not possible to project a member of any other word class with see and the morphological case of the placeholder that matches the syntax so far projects the case of the target noun. Finally, the turn in (1) is characteristically an initiation of a new topic in the ongoing conversation, which is where many delays and many placeholders occur (this will be discussed in section 4.3 below).

In a somewhat different example (2), the placeholder is in the partitive case and is produced at the very beginning of the delay segment. It reflects the grammatical case of the target word but in contrast to the prior example, the rest of the clause is still to come after the target word has been produced. There is no prior syntactic structure that would trigger the necessary case of the placeholder. The excerpt comes from a telemarketing call, where the potential client asks for some time to consider the offer.

(2) 1 K: no vaja natukene mõelda, sellepärast seda: - h ööö,  
NO need little think:INF because this:PRT  
'Well, (we/I) need to think a bit, because the amount of'

2 (0.2) kirjandust koguneb tõesti liiga palju, /---/

See is a placeholder that delays further talk but shows a number of crucial features of the next due item. It delimits the word class of the target word and shows its grammatical inflection. In this way, it contributes to the progressivity of the utterance towards completion, although it simultaneously shows that it is not yet completed. One affordance of see as a delay item is that it may be terminally stretched in most of its morphological cases, as it ends in a vowel, which is useful for temporally prolonging the delay. In both above examples, the speakers lengthened see. In the next example (3), see is furthermore repeated.

(3) 1 P: aga see::, see: kutt elistas millal,
   but this this guy call:PST:3SG when
   ‘But when did see::, see: guy call,’

The option of repetition is a particular affordance of the placeholder see, because not all fillers can be repeated. As the main reason for using a placeholder is to delay the next due item while keeping the turn for the speaker herself, repetition may be an advantage. Repetition is different from lengthening because it affords even longer delays. In most cases, the item is only repeated twice. There are, however, extreme instances when see gets repeated a number of times, such as in example (4), where see is a placeholder for a name.

(4) 1 M: Eeva on kuus neli kaks kolm, (0.8) .hh ääää,  
   ‘Eeva is six four two three (0.8) uh::’

2 seitse viis viis.  
   ‘seven five five.’
3 T:  seitse five ↑five.
   'Seven five five?'

4 M:  jah,=
   'Yeah.'

5 T:  =minute: proua  proua  see andis.
   I:ALL misses misses this give:PST:3SG
   'Misses see gave (it to) me.'

6  see see see see.=
   this this this this
   'see see see see.'

This example displays another crucial feature of the placeholder see. Namely that the item projected by see does not have to be produced as the next fully lexical item after it. Instead, there may be other constituents produced between the placeholder see and the actual production of the target noun that it projects. In the above example (4) in line 5 the speaker continues to terminate the utterance after the first see, as he adds the verb and thereby brings the syntactic unit to its completion. Only after syntactic completion the speaker displays an attempt to retrieve the name with repeated instances of see. By first completing the syntactic unit, the speaker provides a considerable amount of information about what kind of an action he has embarked on, disregarding the fact that he is momentarily unable to provide one of its crucial parts. In the excerpt in (4), the speaker has called the wrong number and in line 1 his current interlocutor is providing him with the correct one. The turn in lines 5-6 is T’s account for having the wrong number in the first place. Even if the name is not yet provided, the
speaker has managed to convey information about there being another person who is responsible for giving him the wrong number.

In the above examples, the demonstrative *see* is used as a placeholder to project that a noun will be produced but for some reason, the speaker does not provide it immediately. *See* is not used anaphorically to refer back to something that has already been mentioned. It is used referentially, as is characteristic of demonstratives in general, but not to point out something in the physical context of talk. Instead, *see* temporarily holds the position of a forthcoming noun. *See* as a placeholder is a syntactic constituent of the ongoing utterance, it is used at the syntactic position that the noun would have occupied, had it been provided at once, and it displays the morphological features of the noun. The speaker may produce the noun within the same syntactic unit as *see* or after the syntactic unit has been brought to completion. In order to extend the delay in production, *see* can be lengthened and repeated.

3. Recognizability and delay

The Estonian demonstrative *see* may among other things mark the recognizability of the upcoming noun for the recipient. As in many other languages, the Estonian demonstrative has come to mark definiteness, but it has not yet developed into a downright definite article (Pajusalu 1997; Sahkai 2003). *See* is thus used adnominally, anaphorically and as a placeholder. This makes the separation of different functions especially challenging.

The identical morphological features of *see* with the following noun can on the one hand be seen as a proof of the identical syntactic role of these two items (Sahkai 2003: 123). On the
other hand, they can be seen as a display of congruence, rendering see as a part of the upcoming noun phrase (Pajusalu 1997: 157). In the first case, see is understood to be in an appositional relationship with the noun (Sahkai 2003: 123) or subsequently replaced with a full lexical word, showing their paradigmatic relationship. In the second case, see is a determiner in the noun phrase, which is in a syntagmatic relationship with the noun. The possible difference in the analysis of example (1) is schematically the following.

Table 1. Two alternative analysis of example (1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject + Predicate</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) selle ‘this thing’</td>
<td>mürgituse ‘poisoning’</td>
<td>(placeholder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eile ma sain napilt</td>
<td>‘Yesterday I almost got’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) selle mürgituse ‘this poisoning’</td>
<td>(determiner marking recognizability)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a determiner, the demonstrative see marks recognizability. In examples (3) and (4) above, see clearly has the connotation of marking recognizability of the upcoming person name for the recipient. In example (3), the speakers have earlier talked about the guy who called, and in example (4) the speaker is looking for the name of a mutual colleague. In accordance with that, see can be seen as tracking the reference and indicating that the referent has been mentioned already (as in example (3)), or showing that the upcoming referent is co-recognitional (Pajusalu 2000: 55). Recogntional use of demonstratives in various languages draws on specific, ‘personalized’ knowledge that is assumed to be shared by the communicating parties due to a common interactional history or to supposedly shared
experiences (Himmelman 1996: 233). This can certainly be the case with the name of the mutual colleague in example (4).

The recognizability argument is harder to make in cases when the upcoming noun denotes a very general concept, as in examples (1) and (2). *Ad absurdum*, any word in the language can be projected as something recognizable for any speaker of that language at any moment. In many cases it is not clear-cut whether *see* has been implemented primarily as a preface to a recognitional or as a placeholder. In example (5), the speaker may well mark the recognizability of the concept of ‘academic leave’ for the recipient, implying that the upcoming noun is something that the recipient has access to as the speaker of Estonian. But as Estonian does not regularly mark definiteness, the above utterance would be perfectly grammatical even without *see*. Also, as this is the very first mention of the ‘academic leave’ in this conversation, the *see* cannot be anaphoric.

(5)1 K: *jaa, ja selle õppimisega on niimoodi ta-*
Yeah and this.Gen studying:COM is like.this he
‘Yeah, and what concerns studying, he—’

2 *u eee noh:, (0.3) võttis selle, .hh ee*
NOH take:PST:3SG this.Gen
‘uh uh went on selle .hh uh’

3 *selle akadeemilise puhkuse.*
this.Gen academic:GEN leave:GEN
‘selle academic leave.’
At the same time, by using see after the transitive verb ‘took’ the speaker is delaying the next fully lexical word that has to fulfill the role of the syntactic object. Marking recognizability of the upcoming item and delaying it are two facets of the Estonian see. In fact, it can be analyzed as the more subtle counterpart to the English what-d’you-call-it. Enfield (2003: 104-105) outlines three important facets of the use of what-d’you-call-it: 1) it’s something; 2) the speaker expresses that he can’t say the word for this thing now; 3) by saying what-d’you-call-it the speaker thinks that the recipient will know what the speaker is thinking of once he has said the word. All of these factors are to an extent valid for the above implementations of Estonian see, but see is shorter and thereby a less appealing device. Also, see implies that the speaker, in the first hand, aims to continue herself. Most importantly, it is not as obviously suggesting recognizability by the recipient (and resembles in this sense more the English uh(m)). This is the semantic-pragmatic argument tilting the analysis of see and the upcoming target noun towards the co-referentiality alternative a in Table (1), instead of see restricting the denotation of the noun.

3.1. Quantitative arguments for delay vs recognizability

Regardless of the general ambiguity between recognitional and placeholder functions, some evidence may be put forward that the latter is not only a coincidental secondary feature of the recognitional deictic usage. The first piece of evidence is quantitative. A considerable share of all the cases of adnominal see collocate with hesitation markers, such as sound stretches, repeats, hesitation particles, vocalizations, audible breathing and pauses. The count is presented in Table (2). The percentage of the overall occurrence of adnominal see is given in parenthesis. Note that these calculations still include many anaphoric cases, as well as time deictics, such as ‘this year’ that are much less prone to co-occur with delay.
Table 2. The collocations of adnominal *see* with delays in the main corpus.\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td><em>see</em> (132; 26.1%)</td>
<td><em>need</em> (23; 26.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td><em>selle</em> (57; 27.7%)</td>
<td><em>nende</em> (11; 45.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partitive</td>
<td><em>seda</em> (47; 35.0%)</td>
<td><em>neid</em> (16; 23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inessive</td>
<td><em>selles</em> (3; 21.4%)(^7)</td>
<td><em>nendes</em> (0; 1 case in all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elative</td>
<td><em>sellest</em> (5; 33.3%)</td>
<td><em>nendest</em> (1; 16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allative</td>
<td><em>sellele</em> (6; 60.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adessive</td>
<td><em>sellel</em> (6; 33.3%)</td>
<td><em>nendel</em> (1; 100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td><em>sellelt</em> (1; 100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translative</td>
<td><em>selleks</em> (0; 11 cases in all)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First of all, Table (2) is informative in terms of relative frequencies of the different morphological cases.\(^8\) In principle, it is possible that merely one morphological form of a demonstrative or a couple of them would be used as placeholders. This does not seem to be the case with the Estonian *see*. Morphological cases that constitute major grammatical relations in a sentence, subject and object, occur more frequently than others according to the table, but this corresponds to the general distribution of cases in spoken Estonian. Singular forms are markedly more frequent than plural forms, which also corresponds to the general distribution of cases. As can be seen in Table (2) nominative singular has by far the highest overall frequency, while its share of collocations with other delay items is similar to other forms.
Table (2) also shows that more than a quarter of all the instances of see co-occur with other delay items immediately before, after or during the production of see in the form of lengthening or repetition. In contrast, adnominal possessive pronouns, which are also frequent in spoken language and occur in syntactically identical positions, co-occurred with the same delay items considerably less often, as shown in Table (3). Delays occurred about twice as often in close proximity of the demonstrative, as compared to pronouns (28.1% and 14.9% respectively). A quantitative comparison between the delay collocation patterns of these two adnominal categories can thus function as a first test of the specificity of see.

Table 3. The collocations of adnominal possessive pronouns with delays in the main corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>mu/minu (13; 18.8%)</td>
<td>meie (19; 15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>su/sinu (5; 12.5%)</td>
<td>teie (8; 11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>ta/tema (5; 17.2%)</td>
<td>nende (1; 9.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different types of delay have different functions in interaction, and counting can therefore hardly even be an endpoint for a proper analysis. As was discussed above, these are not necessarily unambiguous cases either. Even together with delay, see can still mark recognizability. Nevertheless, when see occurs in a delay segment, there is more reason to consider it as a placeholder. Besides, the mere frequency of these collocations may indeed suggest a significant pattern. In a cross-linguistic study of five languages, Himmelmann (1996: 236) found that demonstratives tend to occur in hesitations and false starts, and that they were often preceded by pausing and hesitation. He considered hesitation simply a secondary feature of recognitional use (Himmelmann 1996: 235). As was discussed above,
when it comes to very common words, it is harder to argue that the speaker marks recognizability by using the demonstrative. We will therefore explore other possible reasons for why the delay and the demonstrative so frequently go together.

3.2. Qualitative arguments for delay: word search, error avoidance, number and case mismatch

The quantitative observations about see being part of a delay can be substantiated and elaborated with qualitative analysis. Several patterns in the data tilt the analysis toward understanding see as a placeholder. To start with, it can be used in the middle of the noun phrase, where marking definiteness or recognizability is highly unlikely and in many cases ungrammatical. A delay or a word search may occur anywhere in the utterance, including in some tight-knit noun-phrase-internal positions. See may be used whenever a noun still has to be produced.

In example (6), the telemarketer explains the terms of a special offer to a potential client and uses see before the head of the noun phrase, in the respective grammatical case. Note that the word order in the Estonian example is different from the English translation, so that the dependent noun ‘subscription’ is produced before the delayed head noun ‘price’.

(6) 1 M: .hh sis ühe kuu maksumus, see kuuskümmd viis
then one GEN month GEN cost this sixty five
‘the cost of one month, the sixty five’

2 krooni on muidu kuu hind, see läeb
kroon FRT is otherwise month GEN price this go:3SG
‘kroons is otherwise the monthly price, this will’
The modifier ‘subscription’ designates the type of the price and therefore, marking definiteness or recognizability in the middle of this phrase is ungrammatical. See is thus used prior to the noun that is delayed and not at the beginning of the noun phrase, where a recognitional demonstrative could occur. The noun ‘price’ is also a common one and can hardly be subject to recognitional problems (cf. Himmelmann 1996). Moreover, the prefacing see cannot be implemented for reference-tracking purposes, as the previous mention of the ‘price’ is a different one. The price mentioned in line 2 is the monthly price, and in line 3, the speaker is referring to the price of the subscription. Last but not least, the see is accompanied by other delay items, which is always the case in this position. The first word of the noun phrase tellimise ‘subscription’ has already been lengthened, then there is an outbreath and a hesitation sound ee. Only after that the speaker uses the demonstrative placeholder.

The pattern of see-usage in the middle of a noun phrase is recurrent. In example (7), the speaker repeats the first modifying word of the noun phrase before she uses the placeholder see that projects the head of the noun phrase ‘diploma defence’.

(7) 1 P: täna on ee (.) konsikatel see diplomi -
today is conservatory.student:PL:ADS this diploma:GEN
‘The conservatory students have their diploma—’

2 noh diplomi: see:. mhh mts kaitsmine onju.
NOH diploma:GEN this defence ONJU
Example (7) also shows that see may terminate the intonation unit during the delay. The intonation on see falls very low. The same has been noticed for the Finnish counterpart se in identical function (Laury 1991: 112). It has been suggested that the terminal prosody is used when the speaker initially plans to use only the pronoun but there is no evidence of that in the Estonian examples (see also Sahkai 2003: 134). In example (7) above, the speaker is simply making repeated attempts to find the word ‘defence’ and the low fall on see rather constitutes the specific action of a word search. Particularly, it seems to indicate that the search will take a while, as a low fall see is regularly followed by further delays. Crucially, the low fall does not imply that a transition relevance place is provided where another participant could take the turn. This is because see as a placeholder strongly projects a noun. The low fall is a characteristic of see in this particular social action. Rather than showing to the recipient that the upcoming common word will be recognizable, the main motivation of using see in examples (1-2) and (5-7) seems to be finding the right word. The speaker announces to the recipient that a search is going on and displays problems with terminating it.

From a somewhat different angle, the English definiteness marker thee in the format thee uh as well as uh alone have been characterized as devices directed to avoiding a foreseen error, used in advance of arrival at the problem (Jefferson 1974: 194-195). There is no erroneous item produced in the above cases, but trying to find the right word in itself implies attempts to avoid the wrong ones. The speaker’s concern with error avoidance may be an especially fruitful explanation when it comes to prefacing proper nouns, which is recurrently done by see in the Estonian data. A mention of a name requires special cognitive processing from the speaker, who has to figure out how the recipient may know the referent and which form of reference would accordingly be appropriate. A name has to be carefully ‘recipient designed’
based on what the speaker knows that the recipient knows about the particular referent of a name (Sacks and Schegloff 1979). However, when prefacing names, the recognitional deictic and postponing/placênt function of see are especially hard to disentangle. Although names are recognitionals and should therefore not need a preface to mark their nature as recognizable, many studies have shown that demonstratives before names convey social matters, such as the participants’ relation to the referent, as well as the status of the referent in the conversation (Auer 1984; Laury 1997; Pajusalu 1997, 2000; Duvallon 2005). At the same time, the placeholder and delaying function of the Estonian see can not be ruled out even when see is used before a target name. Also in this position, the demonstrative often co-occurs with other delay devices, such as lengthening (8).

(8) 1 P:   vot, (0.3) mis see:: (.) Kristo poiss teeb ka.
      VOT what this NAME guy do:3SG KA
      ‘Yeah, (0.3) what does see:: Kristo guy do?’

Crucially, this is not the first mention of the name Kristo in the conversation. The recipient has recently mentioned the same person with the same name in his talk. It is therefore out of question that the demonstrative would mark the reference as in some way problematic for the recipient (Auer 1984; Himmelmann 1996). Instead, there seem to be interpersonal advantages of using see before names. The recipient is alerted to the upcoming unit being different from prior talk and requiring different kind of work to understand (Schegloff, personal communication). Rather than listening to the content of the ongoing talk, the recipient has to search his memory for the appropriate referent of the name that the current speaker may refer to in this particular way for him. The use of see before various proper nouns may thus be at least partly motivated by the concern for avoiding erroneous or inadequately recipient-designed items and the interpersonal concern for different kinds of processing needs.
Another regular position, where recognizability is unlikely to motivate the use of *see* is in self-repair, where the speaker is demonstrably concerned with replacing an erroneous word with the correct one (this is exemplified in Hennoste 2001: 192). *See* is used as a placeholder while the target word is being searched for. In example (9), the speaker initiates a word that she cuts off in the middle. Thereby the word becomes the trouble source of the upcoming repair. Cut-off is a non-lexical initiator of self-repair, which together with lengthenings and fillers constitutes the basic format of self-repair (Schegloff et al. 1977: 376). After the cut-off, the speaker produces the placeholder and lengthens it (with the characteristic falling intonation) before providing the repaired item. The example comes from a telemarketing call, in which a client is providing her address.

(9) 1 K: (*ja:: aad- see:®, tänav on Pal- de- ri.*)
   and add- this street is NAME
   ‘And the add- see:, street is Pal-de-ri.’

The Estonian *see* is a regular placeholder filler used in self-repair. The recurrent occurrence of *see* within the repair segment before the repaired word shows that it is used for the projection of the next word rather than marking its recognizability. A corroborating argument for that analysis is the lack of *see* in front of the original item, the trouble source, evidencing the speaker’s lack of concern with marking of the upcoming item as recognizable. Instead, when saying *see*, she is looking for, replacing, and projecting the correct item.

The position of *see* in the repair segment is before the repaired item. One regular pattern of its usage is that it immediately follows the lexical repair initiator *või* ‘or’, as shown in example (10). In (10A) the speaker repairs the name of the newspaper and in (10B) a person’s name.
The example (10A,B) is particularly interesting, as it once again shows that see before a name does not have to indicate recognizability or anything about the referent at all. The names are first produced without see, which only prefaces the repaired instance. These cases of see are purely in the service of arriving at the correct word, and thus analyzable as placeholders projecting it.

Because of the regular operation of replacement, placeholder demonstratives have been considered a part of the practice of self-repair in several different languages (Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson 1996, Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 500). Indeed, as in placeholder usage in general, in the repair segments, see is used as a syntactic constituent. It displays the grammatical case of the target word. In example (10A), see is used in the partitive and then replaced with the
name of the newspaper in partitive, in (9), it is used in the nominative and the target word is in the nominative. The person names in (10B) also match the genitive see prefacing them. All of the cases thus correspond to the usual replacement pattern in the placeholder usage, with one exception. The selle in (10B) stands in singular, while there are two names produced after it. We could therefore have expected it to be in plural.

This is not an isolated case of a momentary grammatical lapse. It is apparently appropriate to use the Estonian see as a projector in one grammatical case or number and then produce the target noun in another. This may reflect the fact that the speaker does not always know in advance what the case and number of the target item will be. Sometimes the utterance so far, particularly the verb, requires a certain case (see Duvallon 2005 on Finnish in that respect), but in other cases there is a choice of case and/or number. When the projecting see is in a different case and number than the target noun, the grammatical linkage of see to the upcoming noun is of course minimal. This reduces the possibility of considering see a part of the noun phrase, and an adnominal.

In example (11), the speaker is constructing a three-part list describing what kind of preparations she will do for Christmas. When she comes to the third item in line 2, she apparently runs into problems with providing the noun. She thus postpones its production with several hesitation vocalizations, a sound stretch, an inbreath, a pause, and a singular see. However, the target word ‘presents’ is in plural.

(11) 1 E: =jah .hh jaa, aga igatahes e m:a toon   kuuse,  
yeah yeah but anyway I bring:1SG Christmas.tree.GEN
‘Yeah. .hh yeah, anyway, I’ll bring the Christmas tree’
In cases like this, the see is used as a general projector of a noun. It is still a placeholder in the sense that it displays the case of the target noun, but its singular form does not get repaired into a plural one. There are, indeed, other instances where see does get repaired into a congruent form and in many of these cases see can be considered a determiner (Pajusalu 1997: 157). However, when it is not replaced, it cannot be a determiner, but it still projects a noun.

There seem to be two general tendencies, when it comes to this kind of more general noun projection. The first is that the singular form is more likely to project a noun that ends up being in the plural, as happened in example (11), rather than the other way round. The second tendency is that the nominative case is used for projection, while the target noun is in another case. In example (12), the speaker is listing different kinds of milk products that she can purchase for her daughter. The projecting plural form need is in the nominative case, while the target noun is in the partitive.

(12) 1 E: j sis on dieetkohupiimapasta, .h ja siis on

And then there is the diet curd mixture. And then there are'
The grammatical form of the placeholder as well as that of the target noun in this example match the initiated syntactic structure. Nominative as well as partitive can be used in this syntactic position in Estonian, the placeholder and the target noun simply display these two different syntactic options. Apparently, when projecting a noun, see does not have to hold the syntactic position in the very same way as the target noun does. It thereby allows the speaker more freedom in terms of mismatching the projection and the target noun. An implication of this finding for the cross-linguistic concept of placeholder is that it should probably incorporate cases where both the placeholder and the target item function as syntactic constituents but not in an identical way. Further work on inflectional languages is needed to substantiate this suggestion.

Among the instances when there is a mismatch of number and case, the singular nominative see stands out as it often projects a target noun in another case (altogether 16 instances in the corpus). Some examples are given in (13).

(13)    see soodusreisile     ‘special.offer.journey:ALL’
        see mõõdistamise h aruannet     ‘measuring:GEN report:PRT’
        see prohveti sõnu       ‘prophet:GEN words:PRT’

The above pattern suggests that particularly the nominative and particularly in the singular can project a noun without marking its grammatical characteristics. While nobody talks in grammatically well-formed units all the time and a certain amount of incongruence can be
seen as a natural feature of informal talk, the frequency suggests that the singular nominative see specializes in the projective function. The singling out of a specific form for a particular function is well known in the process of grammaticalization, where one form broadens its functional scope. An example among the determiners that have developed specialized interactional functions in a specific form, is the English definite article, which is characteristically used to display production problems in the form of the phonological variant thee (Fox Tree and Clark 1997). Indeed, if only the instances in example (13) are focused on, an argument could be made about an emerging definite article in Estonian in the phonological form of see, which is a common developmental pattern for demonstratives. However, the bigger picture presented in (11-13) suggest that so far this is simply a reflection of the tendency for nominative and singular forms of see to project a noun with mismatching grammatical features.  

Since see is a frequent functional item, it is definitely easier for the speaker to access than content words. This is why it may be produced quickly in both recognitional and delay usage, while the following items may take some time. Demonstratives and articles that preface noun phrases as determiners generally project a noun as a next word in talk. See projects a noun both in its capacity as a placeholder and as a determiner. It is therefore likely to be a cognitively distinct noun projector for the speakers of Estonian.

Taking into account both quantitative and qualitative evidence, we can conclude that delay of a noun or noun phrase is a regular motivation for the implementation of the Estonian demonstrative see. It seems to be used in at least two different functions. On the one hand, it is an article-like determiner showing recognizability, and on the other it is a placeholder and a noun projector. As was discussed above, it is not always possible to disambiguate the usages
in every single occurrence. The speakers can mark referents as recognizable, even though it is not obligatory, and the projection may be done without other delays of production. The word see itself may instantiate the delay. Nevertheless, the clearcut cases, such as noun-phrase-internal pattern, name-prefacing, repair, and morphologically mismatched usage demonstrate that the delay pattern is separate from the recognitional one.

4. The interactional affordances of the placeholder see

As has already been hinted above, the placeholder see may be implemented by the speakers to achieve interactional aims. There seem to be three major functions in which see is especially useful: in accomplishing a collaborative word search, in guaranteeing the continuous production of talk, and in dealing with interpersonal issues of conversation structure and sensitivity. They will be discussed separately.

4.1. Searching for the projected noun

Projection is one of the basic features of spoken interaction by which the speaker indicates something about the nature, type or length of her upcoming talk. It works on different levels, from words to turn completions, from clauses to larger conversational entities, including topical ones (Auer 2005; Ruiter et al. 2006). In the case of see, as described above, the projection is delimited to single words and more specifically nouns. The ultimate proof of projection is that other participants treat the talk so far as having projected a particular continuation. For example, recipients regularly withhold their own talk when they understand that the speaker will continue. In many of the above examples, the recipients of the turns that
included *see* waited through pauses and other items after *see* until the noun was provided. This shows that *see* projected more talk, specifically one more noun from the same speaker.

A further evidence of the projection of a noun is that the recipient may attempt to provide it himself. If the speaker is unsuccessful in producing the word, the recipient of the utterance can offer a candidate. Word searches are places in interaction where the recipient can “enter” the turn of the speaker in this way (Lerner 1996: 261). Placeholders in other’s talk are regularly used by the recipients in order to show their understanding of where the talk was going by offering a candidate word (Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 514-515). In example (14), one of the speakers produces a demonstrative placeholder and the other one provides the noun. These interlocutors take the same course at the university and M initiates an utterance about what will be the most important thing at an upcoming exam. When she comes to the point where she should voice “the most important thing”, she produces *see* instead and lengthens it. After a long pause, her interlocutor provides a candidate word in line 3, which the first speaker then confirms.

(14) 1 M: .hh a kőige tähtsam on *see::* -
   but most important is this
   ‘But the most important thing is *see::*’

2 (0.8)

3 L: ajalugu.=
   ‘History.’

4 M: =e jah,
   ‘Yeah.’
The speakers here collaboratively construct an utterance. M’s first turn is clearly unfinished and her last word see indicates trouble with the continuation. It is lengthened and there is a long pause after it. This halt in the progressivity does provide the possibility for another participant to produce the completion of the turn construction unit (Lerner 1996: 261). An important part of the design of the word search is the implementation of the placeholder see. Similarly, the related item se in Finnish is frequently used for word searches in aphasic conversation, together with other demonstratives tuo ‘that’ and tämä ‘that’ (Helasvuoto et al. 2004: 14-15).10 The demonstratives manifest the lack of a noun that the speaker is targeting and shows that a search has been launched, which is proven by L’s offering of a noun in line 3 in the above example (14).

When the recipient makes an attempt to provide the target noun, it need not always be the one the speaker had in mind. In example (15), the word offered turns out to be wrong. Here, two colleagues are discussing a research project that a third person has written. The speaker O explains that it would be difficult to suggest a reformulation to the original author. He then initiates an explanatory clause in line 2. Right before the explanation itself is due, he pauses and provides the noun projector-placeholder see. After another pause, his interlocutor offers a candidate noun. O briefly confirms the suggestion but then restarts the explanatory clause and provides a different reason. What is important for the analysis here, however, is E’s behavior in line 4, where she demonstrates her understanding that O’s see indeed projected a noun.

(15) 1 O: selle selle punkt ühe ümbertegemine
this:GEN this:GEN point one:GEN remaking
‘Reformulating point one’
These word search examples confirm that see projects a noun. By providing candidate words in the same case and number as has been projected by the other speaker, the recipients display their understanding of the type of item that was searched for. See is a means of designing word searches and, while doing that, potentially eliciting help from the interlocutor. There is some evidence from other languages that demonstratives and other determiners can be used in this way in interaction. In Korean, the medial demonstrative *ku* invites the interlocutor to join the collaborative search for the projected referent (Kim and Suh 2002: 195). In Japanese, the distal demonstrative *are* can be used in word searches (Hayashi 2003). In English, the definite article *the* may be used in a similar way in word searches (see example (29) in Lerner (1996:
In Finnish aphasic conversation, premodifying demonstratives are used for word search (Helasvuoto et al. 2004: 14-15). Demonstratives and articles seem to be especially fitted to the task of designing searches for nouns, providing interlocutors the greatest possible information about the features of the item, thereby expanding their opportunities for temporary turn entry.

4.2. Achieving progressivity

In other cases, see seems to be mainly in the service of achieving continuous production of speech without replacements and major hitches. One interactional advantage of placeholders in general is that they may enable the speaker to bring the ongoing turn construction unit to a completion, albeit in a semantically underspecified manner (Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 500). This may be done completely fluently, so that the progressivity of talk is not severed. The target item that the placeholder replaced may then be produced after the completion of the turn construction unit, as is shown in example (16). The speaker first uses the placeholder in the announcement of news: ‘Do you know what see told me?’. It is clear that see here projects a name of someone. The speaker brings the turn construction unit to the end, and only after that adds the name, prefaced by see. This right-dislocation strategy allows the speaker to produce a continuous stream of speech almost without perturbations, and thus achieve the appearance of a fluent production.

(16) 1 H: .h noo vot nojah, aga ajalehes oili nisun-
      NOO VOT okay but newspaper:INS be:PST.3SG such-
      ‘Yeah, okay, but in the newspaper there was—’

       2 sa tedar mis see: rääkis. see Olavi Kraan. .h /---/
     you know:2SG what this tell:PST:3SG this NAME NAME
     ‘do you know what see: told (me), see Olavi Kraan.’
By producing the turn in this particular way, the speaker on the one hand wins time for the retrieval of the target item. Placeholders are used cross-linguistically to do just that (Kim and Suh 2002: 196; Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 489-499). On the other hand, the postponement of the name may also serve as an alert to the recipient in regard to its different indexical nature, as compared to the rest of the talk (see the discussion above in section 3.2). Moreover, producing the name separately at the end of the turn is in itself a highlight. The prior projection of it with see in the original turn construction unit makes the highlight even stronger because of the lengthened expectation.

In some cases the placeholder can stand for the more specific lexical item without being replaced with anything at all. The semantically underspecified see may be sufficient for the current participants to make sense of what is being conveyed in the turn, efficiently achieving progressivity in the action sequence. The following example (17) includes the placeholder see as part of a postpositional phrase kaartide selle juurde ‘at the cards thing’. The final instantiation of the phrase is produced fluently and the turn is received by the recipient in an unproblematic way, demonstrating that it was understandable for her and that the lexical underspecification is no hinder for progressing to next action.

(17)1 H:  Klaarika p:alus     noh - ta üts     ma
    NAME     ask:PST:3SG NOH     she say:PST:3SG I
    ‘Klaarika asked, well she said I’

    2  vöiksin   talle   appí   tulla     sinna
    can:COND:1SG she:ALL help.ILL come:INF there:ILL
    ‘could come and help her at the’
The placeholder, as it is used here, relieves the speaker of the obligation to produce the content item altogether. It allows the speaker to provide not entirely complete but sufficient information for identifying what the talk is about and fill in the gap with a placeholder in a grammatically appropriate way. The Japanese distal demonstrative are, as well as demonstratives in a number of other languages have also been shown to function in this way (Kitano 1999: 390-397, Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 501-507). However, at least are does not have to be inflected and thus does not display the syntactic-morphological features of the "replaced" noun. Moreover, the pattern in Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and Lao seems to exist for social reasons, such as fear of transgression, and because the speaker consciously avoids uttering certain words. In Estonian, however, completely mundane business may be carried out with this pattern, where the only objective of see-usage seems to be the (momentary) lack of a better word.

In the above example (17), there might in fact be no conventional or easy way to refer to the place the speaker is talking about. It is a temporary arrangement at a church, which involves making Christmas cards with kids. As the speaker E has just asked for H’s help at another location at this very church, H’s mention of the ‘card thing’ is enough to formulate her conflicting obligations at different locations in the church and the reason why she cannot help E. For the purposes of the participants in this sequence, the reference has been successful, even though the placeholder never gets replaced with a noun. This possibility is an
interactional resource for the speakers. *See* takes the place of a noun, provides its syntactic and morphological characteristics, and lets the speaker terminate the turn without a gap in progressivity.

In addition to the above usages, Estonian *see* allows the speaker to provide information in what would not be considered well-formed grammatical units in the language. In the following utterance, the *see* projects a noun but before the target ‘teacher’, the speaker provides information about the place where the teacher works.

(18)1 J:  $ see on nagu meie see (.) ülikoolis see
              this is like our this university:INS this
              ‘It’s like our see (.) at the university see’

2  inglise keele: öppejõud, $ /---/
    English:GEN language:GEN teacher
    ‘teacher of English’ (Tartu corpus)

The resulting noun phrase is ungrammatical but produced with the help of *see*, it does not sound “wrong”. The first *see* projects a noun, and after the syntagmatically mismatching ‘at the university’, the second *see* revives the projection. The placeholder *see* thus enables the speaker to project the noun and provide other relevant information before the noun is actually produced. In this way, information is provided in logically ordered chunks. First the speaker mentions a location and then a personal characteristic, which are designed to pin down a specific person for the current recipient.

There are interactional advantages to this kind of usage of the placeholder. *See* announces early on that the recipient has to expect a noun. Everything else that is produced before the
noun is in the service of providing the recipient with sufficient information for identifying the referent. The particular pattern with see + location + see + person name or description is in fact recurrent in the data. After uttering meie see ‘our see’ in example (18), the speaker can provide a location word ülikoolis ‘at the university’ in a syntactically weird position and case. It does not match the syntactic projection before it. After the location word, the speaker cancels its immediate contingency by using see and providing a categorization of the person. The placeholder is thus among other things a device for dealing with grammatical impasse in noun phrases and getting out of it without doing a replacement repair. Implementing placeholders can thus also be a means of relaxing the grammatical norms of well-formedness. See allows the speaker to produce information in chunks that do not quite go together grammatically but make sense for the participants in terms of information flow. The speaker of the subsequent turn does not display any problems with understanding the above utterance in (18), even though it does not conform to the rules of Estonian grammar.

In general, see may project a noun in a specific grammatical case and urge the recipient to regard what is produced prior to that as subservient to the task of producing the noun. Thus, one may launch into a word search after see, while keeping the projection of a noun alive. In example (19), the speaker is telling about a scholarship holder, whose name she cannot immediately retrieve. She therefore projects it with see in line 3 and after that explicitly comments on the search.

(19) 1 K: nii et meil käis e mhhh m mts .hh eelmine hh
          so that we:ADS go:FST:3SG last
     ‘So we sent mhhh m mts .hh last hh’

2  aasta- või, mis mis eelmine. miina ei mäleta(gi)
By strongly projecting a noun in a certain case, see thus enables the speaker to achieve progressivity in talk either by cancelling out fully lexical items, inserting search comments, or relaxing the grammatical contingency within a noun phrase. Similarly to the Japanese distal demonstrative are, it allows the speaker to avoid repair (Kitano 1999: 383, 393-394, 397). See is a device for dealing with the linear constraints of spoken language, it is used for bringing utterances and turn construction units to completion, preferably without replacements and long pauses. By using see rather than being silent, for example, the speaker can contribute to the progressivity of talk by expressing relevant features of the upcoming linguistic unit.

4.3. Delaying for the interlocutor

Experiments with fillers in English have shown that it is easier for the recipient to perceive talk with items such as uh and um than without them (Fox Tree 2001). Quantitative research has demonstrated that filled pauses are frequent at major discourse boundaries in monologues,
and that they are furthermore more likely to be preceded and followed by silent pauses at major boundaries (Swerts 1998: 485). The stronger the boundary, the longer the delay, which structures the discourse for the recipients. Therefore, rather than displaying cognitive problems of the speaker herself, the implementation of fillers, placeholders among them, can be hypothesized to serve the needs of the recipient.

When it comes to research on conversational data, it has been demonstrated, that the English *uh(m)* is regularly used to preface reason-for-the-call turns or just before the key phrase in it (Schegloff 2010). Demonstrative hesitators in Japanese and Korean have been shown to preface an introduction to a new topic (Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 526-527). In both cases, fillers mark larger structural boundaries in conversation. One plausible reason for this kind of delay with fillers is the cognitive needs of the recipient. It is easier to process information that is not presented in one long chunk involving only fully lexical items, especially when what is said is completely new or unexpected for the recipient. Topic initiations in general tend to be accompanied by different kinds of delays and reasons for the call will as a rule initiate new topics in conversations. Accordingly, the Estonian *see* is regularly used when presenting reasons for the call. Example (20) demonstrates a turn that comes right after the greetings have been exchanged at the beginning of the call. The delay is here achieved with sound stretches as well as different instances of *see*.

(20) 1 K: kule räägi on sul see: m (.) mm selle
    listen.2SG.IMP talk.2SG.IMP is you:ADS this this.GEN
    ‘Listen, tell me, do you have see: m (.) mm selle’

2 ambaarsti see kaart seal kuskil käepärast.
    dentist.GEN this card there somewhere at.hand
    ‘dentist’s see card at hand somewhere?’
The first *see* in line 1 is likely to indicate recognizability of the person description ‘dentist’ for the recipient. The delays are instantiated with *selle* in line 1 and *see* in line 2, before and within the noun phrase, as was the case in example (18). In contrast to the latter, the resulting noun phrase here is grammatically well-formed. Its different parts are simply delayed by *see*. This may well have to do with the speaker’s cognitive problems of accessing the relevant items as quickly as needed. On the other hand, for the recipient of this turn, the request for the dentist card comes out of the blue. She is at work and the caller is her sister with whom she apparently shares the dentist. Therefore, the speaker may well design the turn in a way that puts forward the information step-by-step, delaying crucial information for the processing needs of her sister.

In topic initiations, different proper nouns are frequently prefaced by *see*. As was discussed above, this may have to do with recognizability, especially when it comes to person names, but it may also represent a deliberate delay. In topic initiations, where names are regularly used as the locally initial reference items (Schegloff 1996: 450-451), the additional reason for delay is the need to provide information in a way that would be cognitively processable for the recipient. In example (21), a case like that is presented. The speaker P uses a name that has already been mentioned in prior conversation but she initiates a new topic. Before line 4, the interlocutors have been talking about T’s lost tapes. In line 5, P asks about T’s friend Kristo.

(21, expanded version of (8))

1 T: *jah. nii need kass@et@id lâ@hvad. @=
   yeah so these tape:PL go:3PL
   ‘Yeah, this is how the tapes disappear.’
The \textit{see} that prefaces the name is significantly lengthened, which is very unlikely to be due to retrieval problems, as the name has recently been mentioned in connection with the tapes. Rather, \textit{see} seems to accomplish a delay for interpersonal reason. For the recipient, the lengthened \textit{see} in line 5 is an important indication that a new topic will be initiated. The interactional advantage of this kind of marking is that the alert in the form of a delay is produced right before the crucial element that is going to be in focus from now on. \textit{See} particularly enables the speaker to mark this structural topic break in the middle of the turn, rather than at the beginning, where there are numerous other lexical possibilities of marking topical breaks.

The purely structural function of \textit{see} is most clearly displayed in its turn-initial usage. It regularly prefaces turns that initiate new topics, among them reason-for-the-call turns. Example (22) demonstrates a case in point. Regularly, \textit{see} in turn-initial position carries a whole coherent intonation contour of its own.
This is what has been described as the interjective hesitation usage of the demonstrative, where the demonstrative is not used as a syntactic constituent in an ongoing utterance (Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 512). Interjective hesitators are not referential, as placeholders are. Instead, they function as prospective indexicals, the sense of which has to be discovered subsequently (Goodwin 1996: 384; Kim and Suh 2002: 192), or cataphoric projectors of action (Hayashi 2004). Accordingly, what see points at in the above example (22), will have to be figured out from subsequent talk. Further analysis of the utterance-initial usage will have to wait for a separate study. The important point for the discussion here is that see may mark major boundaries in conversation, whether turn-initially, or when delaying the production of some key noun in the middle of the topic-initiating turn.
Delaying nouns may have other motivations in interaction, such as sensitiveness. Production delay is a regular feature of dispreferred answer format in interaction (e.g. Schegloff 2007: 68). Along the same lines, delaying lexical items may be a part of practices of addressing sensitive issues. Example (23), is taken from a conversation, where E, the director of an amateur Christmas performance, has asked K to play a role in it. She is currently explaining what K will have to do in the performance. In line 1, she initiates the explanation of another of his tasks. After producing the first two words sul on ‘you have’, the rest of the clause is produced fragmentally.

(23) 1  E: =ja: sis:, (. ) sul on selline pikk selline, . h
    and then you:ADS is this.kind.of long this.kind.of
    ‘And then (. ) you have this kind of a long’

2  paabulinnusulgedega see ee lefik, (. ) et sa aeg-ajalt ??
    peacock:feather:COM this fan that you time-by-time
    ‘this ee fan with peacock feathers (. ) so time-by-time you’

3  lehvitad tuult,
    wave:2SG wind:PRT
    ‘make a breeze.’

4  (0.8)

5  sellele
    this:ALL
    ‘to see’

6  (0.6)
In this example, the delay of content words is instantiated with different placeholders, adjectival as well as pronominal ones. They are repeated below together with the projected target items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placeholder</th>
<th>Target word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>selline ‘this kind of’</td>
<td>pikk ‘long’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selline ‘this kind of’</td>
<td>paabulinnusulgedega ‘with peacock feathers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see ‘this’</td>
<td>lefik ‘fan’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sellele ‘to this’</td>
<td>keisrile ‘to the emperor’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E’s turn that involves all these instances is relatively long, but most importantly it is produced fragmentally, not as one single whole. The first transition relevance place (Sacks et al. 1974: 703) occurs after the word ‘fan’ in line 2 and when the recipient does not take the turn, the current speaker continues by explaining what he will have to do with the fan during the performance. At the next transition relevance place at the end of line 3, the recipient does not take the turn either. The current speaker therefore adds an increment ‘to the emperor’, a phrase that is grammatically dependent on the preceding syntactic unit. Only after the increment has been provided, the recipient responds. The director thus provides three transition relevance places before she gets a response.
As withholding or delaying a response is regularly heard as projecting an imminent dispreferred answer, the lack of recipient responses can be interpreted by the speaker as lack of alignment and possibly leading up to a disaligning answer. Especially because fragmentary production of talk is designed to facilitate collaborative action of the participants (Iwasaki 2009), the speaker’s parsing of the information in example (23) appears to witness to her awareness that a disalignment may be coming up. She designs her turn in a fragmentary manner to enable the recipient to take a stance after each chunk. His silences are hearable as disalignments, offering further reasons to for the speaker to proceed with care and resulting in marked and unmarked delays.

This structural analysis may be corroborated by more impressionistic matters. In the just preceding spate of talk, K was faced with the unflattering prospect of having to wear leggings during the performance, to which he displayed subtle resistance. The director of the Christmas performance therefore has a good reason to be careful about presenting K with further details of his future performing role, which may be perceived as eccentric. Delaying the production of content items addresses the sensitivity of the topic for the recipient. In general, halting the production in the middle of an ongoing unit publicly announces that the speaker is for some reason concerned with the component next due (Iwasaki 2009). Among demonstrative fillers used for delay, the Korean distal ce has been characterized as a politeness strategy and as a frame for a pre-sequence or preliminary to potentially face-threatening speech acts (Suh 2000: 901). Thus, delays and fillers can have a social function. This is especially clear in cases where the same utterance in the service of the same socially sensitive action is produced twice in a single telephone call, and it still retains the delay. The last example (24), shows two instances of a request, which is a socially sensitive action. The original request (A) as well as
its later repetition (B) both display identical delay with see, inbreath and lengthening before the key item in the turn.

(24) A. E: /---/ äikki sa elistad sellele: .hh Vellole.
ÄKKI you:SG call:2SG this:ALL NAME:ALL
‘Could you call sellele: .hh Vello?’

B. E: /---/ aga elista sina & sellele .hh eee m Vellole.
but call.2SG.IMP you:SG this:ALL NAME:ALL
‘But you call sellele .hh eee m Vello.’

The first instance of the request does not receive a positive answer but the recipient of the request starts looking for Vello’s phone number, which displays his willingness to comply with the request. Then the speakers jointly search for other phone numbers and when the call is coming to a closure, the speaker E repeats the request. In this second instance, she also redoes the delay with see. This shows that the delay that includes a placeholder see is not due to word access problems of the speaker, particularly not the second time. After first use, the name should be accessible. Neither is see used to suggest recognizability to the recipient. The reference has already been established the first time the request was made. Instead, the demonstrative placeholder displays the speaker’s stance toward the action. Expressing orientation and stance is a regular function of demonstratives in interaction (Laury 1997: 58) and one of the accomplishments of the placeholder see seems to be marking the action at hand as socially sensitive.

The overall argument here is that delay in speech need not always be motivated by cognitive problems of the speaker. Instead, there may be interpersonal reasons for the delay, such as the perceived sensitiveness of the action or providing structural positions for the recipient to
display a stance toward the information being produced. The delay may furthermore ease the perception of new and unexpected information for the recipient and announce structurally larger topic boundaries in conversation, making them salient for others. The placeholder see is one device for implementing this kind of delay. It thus achieves a number of interactionally and interpersonally specific tasks, rather than merely emphasizing the co-referential noun (cf. Sahkai 2003). Primarily, see locally organizes the actions of both the speaker and the recipient in the way that whoever speaks next, will have to produce a noun. It guarantees continuous production of talk even in cases when progressivity is somewhat hindered by temporal lack of lexical items or when the logical information flow does not conform with the grammatical norms of the language. It is an essential device of recipient design in spoken Estonian.

5. Conclusion

The demonstrative and pronoun see has a number of functions in Estonian, among them anaphoric, deictic and recognitional. This study showed that see is also a placeholder, which specifically delays the production of a noun. It is regularly used in places where definiteness or recognizability cannot be an issue, such as before repaired items, and it often co-occurs with other delay devices. Both quantitative collocation and qualitative interactional analysis were implemented to show that the different usages of see can be analytically separated. Uttering see wins the speaker additional time for accessing the target word. Furthermore, it allows the speaker to disregard grammatical contingencies and produce talk in a segmented manner, which may be advantageous for the recipient in terms of information flow. See can also recruit the recipient to provide help with finding the target word and thus co-construct the utterance with the speaker. It is an interactionally relevant unit of talk.
In most ways, the Estonian see is a typical placeholder demonstrative. It occupies the position of a syntactic constituent in an utterance, it is referential, and it usually shows the morphosyntactic features of the target noun that the speaker is aiming to produce. However, it does not necessarily display all the morphosyntactic features of the target word, as it may participate in the ongoing syntactic structure in an alternative way – an issue that does not contradict its status as a placeholder but exemplifies the non-determinate nature of projection (as detailed on a wider syntactic scale by Auer 2005). Further cross-linguistic work, especially on inflectional languages could contribute to the analysis of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the placeholder see always projects a noun. Reflecting its other usages as a determiner and pronoun, see cannot be used at any time during talk. The noun is regularly produced either as the next content item after see, or after the termination of the current turn construction unit. While being a relatively content-empty filler, see actually works for fine-grained projection of next items in talk.

In addition, particularly the singular nominative see has pragmaticized into an utterance-initial item that marks topical breaks. Both utterance-initially and utterance-internally, see structures the conversation as a whole. As a means of organizing conversations or topics in it, see cannot be displaying the speaker’s production problems. Rather, it is planned for, formulated, and used strategically as any other word in the language. The same argument has been made for the English fillers uh and um (Jefferson 1974; Clark and Fox Tree 2002: 99). Also, many ‘placeholder’ instances of see are not cases where the target word has eluded the speaker but where she is purposefully delaying the production of a noun. The reason why a speaker postpones the next due item can be interpersonal, such as considerations of the cognitive processing needs of the recipient, when a new topic is initiated or when a proper name will be
presented next. Another reason for the delay may be sensitiveness of the action, such as making a request. There are a number of interactional advantages to the use of *see*: to alert the recipient to a new topic or a name, to mark sensitivity of the action by postponing the crucial part, displaying lexical access problems and eliciting assistance for that. Rather than being a non-deliberate hesitation, *see* was shown to be a controlled rhetorical device that is a clear cue for the recipients.

This adds an important facet to prior discussion on the functions of placeholders. The use of a placeholder demonstrative has been claimed to be motivated by constraints in cognitive processes, such as difficulty in remembering or accessing an appropriate lexical item when it should be articulated during the course of utterance production (Suh 2000; Hayashi and Yoon 2006: 500). The above discussion suggests that the speaker’s cognitive processes may not be the only reason for the implementation of placeholders. Rather, the issue may be of interpersonal or conversation-structural nature, addressing the needs of the recipient.

6. References


Podlesskaya. This volume.


**Transcription and glossing conventions**

- **underlining** – emphasis
- - – truncation
- [ ] – overlaps
- = – latching of turns or words
- (0.5) – pause length in tenths of a second
- (.) – micropause
- : – lengthening of a sound
- @ – laughter syllable
- <@ smile @> – smiling quality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>&lt;Q quote Q&gt;</code></td>
<td>quotation quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>hh</code></td>
<td>breathing in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>hh</code></td>
<td>breathing out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>%</code></td>
<td>creaky vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>((snort))</code></td>
<td>transcriber’s comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>/---/</code></td>
<td>something has been left out from the same turn in the example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>(parenthesis)</code></td>
<td>item not present in the Estonian original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>.</code></td>
<td>falling intonation at the end of the intonation unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>?</code></td>
<td>rising intonation at the end of the intonation unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>,</code></td>
<td>non-final intonation at the end of the intonation unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>↑</code></td>
<td>markedly high rise in pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ABL</code></td>
<td>ablative</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>ADS</code></td>
<td>adessive</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>ALL</code></td>
<td>allative</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>COM</code></td>
<td>komitative</td>
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<td>conditional</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>ELT</code></td>
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<tr>
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<td>feminine</td>
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<td><code>GEN</code></td>
<td>genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>imperfect</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>IMP</code></td>
<td>imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>IMS</code></td>
<td>impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>INF</code></td>
<td>infinitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The author is indebted to Renate Pajusalu and Emanuel Schegloff for insightful comments on the manuscript and to the Soc 289b class at UCLA 2008 for a great discussion.

In the written language, the distal too has been preserved but in limited functions. Regionally, too is more viable (Pajusalu 2006).

There are, however, certain restrictions in regard to the morphological case of the demonstrative. When the target noun is in Comitative, the preceding see appears in Genitive, as do all the other modifiers in a noun phrase with a head in Comitative. That should intuitively also be the case with target nouns in Terminative, Essive, Abessive but they are rare and do not occur in the corpora. As in the case of Comitative target noun the morphological form of the demonstrative see coincides with that of a modifier, these instances are less clearly analyzable as placeholders and will not be discussed below. Still, following pauses, lengthenings, and particular prosody make many of these instances hearable as placeholders rather than modifiers.

The only exception to this rule is when the speaker reuses an adverb or adjective from prior speaker, as in the following example.

M: mis=kellast te homme lähete. (1.5)
   'What time will you leave tomorrow?'
E: vara. (0.8)
   'Early'
M: mis kell see vara on. (.)(Tartu corpus)
   'What time is see early?'

In this case, the see marks that the concept has been mentioned already and refers to that particular concept as the focus of the current turn. The same “quoting” usage can occur with proper names (Pajusalu 1997). In this usage, only the singular nominative has been registered.

The overall frequency of the items in the corpus is much higher but most of them occur anaphorically or as correlates and do not concern the placeholder pattern.

Some morphological cases were not represented in the adnominal position in the corpus. The complete set also includes: Singular Illative sellesse, Terminative selleni, Essive sellena, Abessive selleta, Comitative sellega, Plural Illative nendesse, Allative nendede, Ablative nendelt, Translative nendeks, Terminative nendeni, Essive nendena, Abessive nendeta, Comitative nendega.

The very frequent pragmaticized phrase selles/ses mõttes et 'in this sense' has been excluded from the count.

The regular shorter variants of see either do not occur adnominally at all in spoken language corpora (e.g. sg. ablativive sellt, pl. elative neist) or when they do, they do not collocate with delay (sg. inessive ses, sg. adessive sel). One conclusion is therefore that only longer phonological variants of see are used as placeholders in Estonian. They are more independent than the shorter forms that are as a rule only used adnominally, which is a
further argument for not analyzing them as determiners in a noun phrase. In addition, they take more time to produce than the shorter ones, allowing a longer delay.

In terms of diachronic development, it has been suggested that definite articles tend to develop into non-generic articles and then into simple noun markers (Greenberg 1978: 61) but the current Estonian data show that while *see* can in a way mark a noun by pre-shadowing a noun, it has never been a full-fledged definite article. *See* rather functions partly as both a noun marker and an article-like marker of recognizability, without displaying the reported developmental tendency.

Since there are more demonstratives in Finnish, one of them, *tuo*, has particularly specialized on the word search function (Helasvuoto et al. 2004: 14, referring to personal communication with Marja Etelämäki).

Reused names from prior talk tend to be prefaced by *see*, which in this case is a reference-tracking device (Pajusalu 2000: 55-56). This usage pattern also shows that the demonstrative is not used for try-marking names in Estonian, as has been described in German (Auer 1984). Instead, it may be used to mark that the name has already been used in the conversation and thus does not need try-marking.

Adjectival placeholders abound in spoken Estonian usage and deserve a study on their own.