

# An interactional approach to proper names: working with a corpus of 'natural' data

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1. The study of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction
2. Recording and working with natural data
3. Some examples
4. Values and problems of this approach
5. Conclusions

# 1. The study of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction

- > Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967)  
Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff: 1960s)
  - emic perspective
  - "seeks to describe methods persons use in doing social life"  
(Sacks 1984: 21)
  - study of situated interaction (in context)
  - study of the resources interactants use (vocal and bodily)
  - investigation of how social actions are organised and accomplished
  
- > Interactional Linguistics (a.o. Selting & Couper-Kuhlen 2001)
  - investigates how linguistic structures are used in interaction

## 2. Recording and working with data

- > Recording what:
  - spontaneous situations captured with camera/sound recorders
  - maximal visibility of interactional resources (faces, gestures, body posture, artefacts)
- > Recording how:
  - in movement: do not direct but follow the interactant's movements
  - while recording you make choices → this is a first analysis
- > Transcription
  - AUDIO (cfr. transcription conventions in the handout)
    - almost no phonetic symbols
    - inbreaths, pauses (e.g. 0.2 seconds), loudness, speech rate, intonation, sound duration
    - '*jeffersonian*' vs. *GAT* (GesprächsAnalytisches Transkriptionssystem)

- > Transcription:
  - VIDEO (cfr. examples in the handout)  
gesture, gaze, body posture, artefact manipulation
  
- > Working with the data
  - data sessions: 'brainstorm' meetings with other researchers
  - analysis on the basis of video data and transcriptions
  - analysis of single cases (on the basis of a single excerpt)
  - or analysis on the basis of collections, but no quantification



storytelling

220\_sg2bm4\_0155

01 LEA però: boh non è:: (1.0) ea- alle otto va +bene  
but (well) it's not at eight is all right

ins +gz stndt-->

02 (0.2)

03 INS (ah) oc[+chei  
oh okay

-->+

04 LEA [\* (eh) il problema\* è quando (0.5) \*°sai\* si ini\*zia\* pres\*to+°  
the problem is when you know one starts early

ins \*.....\*pp-----\*.....\*pp-\*  
ins \*mvs mth\*  
lea +gz right-----+

0.5 sec. gap + lower voice

deictic direction indication

co-construction

05 (0.6)

06 INS andiamo per favore verso (0.2) [destra  
let's go please to the right

07 LEA [lugano

08 (1.5)

09 INS occhei  
okay

10 (0.9)



- the toponym Lugano is used in the co-construction of the direction indication, in the display of understanding (L. 07)
- the reference to the town is not relevant here but the direction it helps to describe: *lugano* is here used as equivalent to *destra* ('right') (L. 06)



17/11\_sg1VP\_1\_11:46  
(2.7)

INS +↑alla+ rotonda+ (0.3) +dir\*ezione ve+zia inizia:\* ad abituarti^a- a cercare i cartelli  
 at the roundabout direction vezia begin to get used to to look for the road signs  
 ins +.....+pp-----+.....+pp-----+ \*gaze at student-----\* road sign  
 ins (3.6)

place formulation

direction indication with toponym

instruction about driving skill



- INS points at a road sign while saying *direzione vezia*
- reference is not made to the town Vezia but to the road sign
- reference to the road sign is used
  - within a direction indication
  - within an instruction about a driving practice (looking for the road signs)

→ Here too, the toponym Vezia is not used for referring to the geographical site but as a resource to: (1) indicate direction and (2) to explicitate a driving skill (orienting in the surrounding space)





rr\_cd\_071231/21:16-21:40

1 HOS prendiamo un po' di telefonate io direi: e lo chiedo anche a  
let's take some calls i would say and i ask it also  
2 stefano chiarelli ch'è da^altra parte del vetro sta↑sera di  
stefano chiarelli who is at the other side of the glas this evening to  
3 prenderne una: ondata d- magari una decina così racco[gliamo] un  
take some of them a (fistful) d- maybe about ten so we collect a  
4 RB [si\  
[yes]  
5 HOS po' di domande 'h e poi ɐ rispondiamo\ ce ne sono già ↑due in  
few questions 'h and then ɐ we answer there are already two  
6 at↑tesa 'h catania e poi roma catania\  
waiting 'h catania and then rome catania  
7 (1.0)  
8 CAL 'h buona sera\  
'h good evening  
9 HOS buona s[era il suo n]ome\  
good evening your name  
10 RB [buona sera]  
[good evening]  
11 (1.0)  
12 CAL io- io sono luca: chiamo da catania .. e:^hm:: .. 'h vorrei  
i- i am luca i am calling from catania e:^hm 'h i'd like to  
13 ... chiedere una cosa ai radicali\ .. 'h che si occ:upino di una::  
ask something to the radicali\* 'h that they would deal with a  
14 .. rinnovo della legge psichiatrica di assistenza psichiatrica io  
renewal of the psychiatric law of psychiatric assistance i  
15 sono psichiatra\ 'h=  
am a psychiatrist  
16 RB =si\  
\*<radio radicali = the radio broadcast

- > place names not used for referring to the cities but for identifying two calls
- > place names used as a resource for the organisation of the interaction

## 4. Values and problems of this method

Difficulties of this approach:

- > time consuming
- > emic point of view
  - description first, also of 'evident' features
  - as less interpretation as possible, unmotivated looking
  - findings might not always be that impressive

BUT: Values of this approach:

- > a strong methodology allows for a detailed, well founded description of the phenomena
- > 'unmotivated looking' allows to discover unperceived methods for everyday social action

## 5. Conclusions

- > Working with corpora of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction allows to synchronically examine names and observe how they are used as resources in interaction.
- > How can the interactional approach contribute to the study of names?
  - The analysis showed that the interpretation of toponyms used in talk-in-interaction can go beyond the pre-established and static referential meaning to which they are commonly associated.
- > Toponyms become 'ad hoc' resources mobilised to accomplish relevant actions (giving direction indications, teaching, etc.) within a broader activity (driving).