Going beyond 'here-and-now': Connecting misconduct to general rules across languages

Our everyday lives in any social community are shaped by rules (e.g., Roughley 2019; Schmidt and Rakoczy 2019). Rules (in a broad sense) are interactionally negotiated, monitored, enforced, and serve as an 'orientation value' in social life. If someone's behavior is treated as norm-violating or problematic in certain way, it may be therefore confronted. Confronting interlocutors can immediately stop, modify, or retrospectively reprimand the misconduct of others in a moralizing manner.

Such confrontations of a problem behavior occur commonly in informal interactions. On the basis of our corpus, specifically in informal interactions at the table, I observed that, for example, in Polish, German and British English, direct confrontations occur on average at least once every three minutes. Participants design these actions in a variety of ways, but like everything in interaction, the design is not arbitrary (Sacks 1984; Enfield and Sidnell 2019). A recurrent feature of such turns is connecting misconduct to some more general concepts.

I ask, when and for what purpose generality, that is, abstracting from a concrete behaviour, is used as a tool while confronting others. The focus is on sequential and linguistic features of abstracting in confronting moments in language comparison. What are the methods to achieve abstraction: i) defocusing the confronted, specific agent (cf. Zinken et al. 2021; Siewierska 2008), e.g. *nur derjenige der dran ist der darf die bedingungen für den handel stellen* (only the one whose turn it is may set the conditions for the trade); using ii) extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986), e.g. *na siostrę zawsze można liczyć* (you can always count on a sister); iii) referring to stable character traits, e.g. *Matylda bardzo chetne by podala. (.) Ona jest taka skora do pomocy* (Matylda would be very happy to pass (it to you). (.) She is so eager to help); or iv) broader categorizing of the given referent, e.g. *do not build (.) do do not build do not build swastikas (when a) German guy is filming us*? Sometimes, even several locus of abstraction are combined in the same turn. Can we identify language-specific and cross-linguistic patterns?

What are the interactional consequences: enforcing a compliant behavior in the future, eliciting an apology or cognitively simplifying complex problems? From a comparative perspective, I ask whether going beyond the here-and-now while confronting others is a practice that unites speakers across languages and is thus a human cognitive strategy to display normativity.

This ongoing study is based on new comparable data from four European languages from informal interaction during activities around the table. The phenomenon was coded systematically in each of the four languages. In the talk, I will show exemplarily Polish and German evidence. I use the methods of Conversation Analysis (Sidnell and Stivers 2012) and Interactional Lingustics (Imo and Lanwer 2019).

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