Syntactic Complexity of Confrontation Turns Across European Languages

In this presentation I show first results from an ongoing study about syntactic complexity of confrontation turns in spoken language. This study is part of a larger project on the direct confrontation of misconduct in social interaction in different European languages (English, German, Italian and Polish). For the study I use video recordings of different everyday settings (family breakfasts, board games interactions and car rides) with three or four participants. These data come from the Parallel European Corpus of Informal Interaction (Kornfeld et al., 2023; Küttner et al., submitted).

I focus on confrontations with more than one turn-constructional unit (see among others for TCUs: Sacks et al., 1974; Clayman, 2013). The study asks how often TCUs are linked to each other in the different languages, for what function, and how language diversity enters into this. Note that complex confrontations do not always come as complex sentences. Consider the following example (1):

Ex. 1 (PECII_DE_20160703_ 1421593):

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01 DAD: dieter

02      (1.34)

03      ich möchte frühstücken
        I would like to have breakfast

04      hör bidde auf an meinem stuhl rumzuklettern
        please stop climbing my chair
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By contrast, in the next example (2) we can see that Susanne links the second part (line 02) with a "weil" (engl. *because*) to the first part of the utterance (see e.g. Scheutz, 2001 on *weil* in spoken German):

Ex. 2 (PECII_DE_Brkfst_20161025_ 1573431):

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01 SUS: und das ist jetzt unfair
        and that is now unfair

02      weil Timon jetzt schon was hatte und ich noch nicht
        because Timon now already had something and I haven't
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The presented study explores complex confrontations cross-linguistically, asking how they are formulated and when speakers link elements of a confrontation syntactically. The study examines how frequently different elements of a confrontation attempt are syntactically linked, and whether there are specific contexts for such syntactic complexity.

References:

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