

Availability, Grammar, and Action Formation: On Simple and Modal Interrogative Request Formats in Spoken German

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English Abstract

This study builds on a large body of work on the use of linguistic forms for requests in social interaction. Using Conversation Analysis / Interactional Linguistics, this study explores the use of two recurrent linguistic formats for requesting in spoken German – simple interrogatives ('do you do..?') and *kannst du VP?* ('can you do..?') interrogatives. Based on a corpus of video-recorded, naturally occurring data of mundane data, this study demonstrates one of the interactional factors that is relevant for the choice between alternative interrogative request formats in spoken German – recipient's embodied availability before and during the request initiation. It is shown that simple interrogatives are used to request an action from a recipient who is either available or involved in their own project, which, however, does not have to be suspended or interrupted for the compliance with the request. In contrast, *kannst du VP?* interrogatives occur in environments in which the recipient is already engaged in a project that must be suspended in order to grant the request.

Keywords: availability – request – action formation – interactional project – contingencies – benefit – Conversation Analysis – Interactional Linguistics.

German Abstract

Dieser Beitrag schließt an zahlreiche Studien zur Auswahl von linguistischen Formaten für Aufforderungen in der sozialen Interaktion an. Die Studie untersucht mithilfe der Konversationsanalyse / der Interaktionalen Linguistik die Verwendung von zwei rekurrenten sprachlichen Formaten für Aufforderungen im gesprochenen Deutsch: einfachen Interrogativen und *kannst du VP?*. Auf der Basis von Videodaten von privater Interaktion werden in diesem Beitrag gezeigt, inwiefern die leibliche Verfügbarkeit des Rezipienten vor und während der Aufforderungsinitiierung für die Wahl von interrogativen Formaten im gesprochenen Deutsch relevant ist. Es wird gezeigt, dass die mit einfachen Interrogativen realisierten Aufforderungen an RezipientInnen gerichtet sind, die entweder leiblich verfügbar sind oder sich mit ihrem eigenen Projekt beschäftigen, das jedoch für die Ausführung der aufgeforderten Handlung nicht unterbrochen werden muss. Im Gegensatz dazu wird das Format *kannst du VP?* in Kontexten eingesetzt, in denen der Rezipient in ein Projekt involviert ist, das für das Nachkommen der Aufforderung unterbrochen werden soll.

Keywords: Verfügbarkeit – Aufforderung – Handlungskonstitution – interaktionales Projekt – Kontingenzen – Nutzen – Konversationsanalyse – Interaktionale Linguistik.

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1. Introduction

As requests lie at the heart of human cooperation (Tomasello 2008; Kendrick/Drew 2016), they belong to the most extensively explored actions in social interaction. Many previous studies dealing with requests within philosophy, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, psychology, and Conversation Analysis (henceforth: CA) / Interactional Linguistics (henceforth: IL) have been primarily concerned with the following question: What do speakers orient to when they design requests with different formats? While in Politeness Theory (Brown/Levinson 1987) the use of different forms of requests was explained through stable sociological variables, recent research in Conversation Analysis and Interactional Linguistics has primarily been concerned with two issues:

- (i) action formation (Schegloff 2007:xiv; Levinson 2013) of requests, i.e., how linguistic, embodied, and contextual resources are used by a speaker to implement requests (Drew/Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Rossi 2015; Rossi/Zinken 2016);
- (ii) identification of local and situational factors that account for request design and that constitute 'home environments' (Zinken/Ogiermann 2013; cf. 'base environments' in Heritage/Sorjonen 1994) of these forms, i.e., typical, or recurrent sequential and interactional environments or contexts in which a specific form is used for implementing requests.

Most previous studies have compared linguistic formats that differ in sentence type (Sadock/Zwicky 1985), i.e., imperatives, interrogatives, and declaratives (e.g., Wootton 1997, 2005; Lindström 2005; Vinkhuyzen/Szymanski 2005; Curl/Drew 2008; Craven/Potter 2010; Antaki/Kent 2012; Rossi 2012; Zinken/Ogiermann 2013; Fox/Heinemann 2016, 2017, among others). However, there is still little work done on comparing different *interrogative* formats used for requesting (Heinemann 2006; Rossi 2015; Rossi 2020; cf. Floyd et al. 2020). While previous research mostly compared different forms of requesting that were the most frequent ones in their data, those earlier studies did not choose the formats for comparison based on grammatical considerations. A comparison of formats of the same sentence type allows showing that participants rely not only on the syntactic mood, but also on more granular distinctions when selecting between different formats for requests. Furthermore, such a comparison can demonstrate that the speakers do not use different interrogative formats interchangeably. Rather, the choice of a specific form can be contingent on finer-grained sequential and interactional factors than previously shown. In spoken German, I identified two interrogative linguistic

formats as being recurrently used for requesting in talk-in-interaction: simple interrogatives (*gibst du mir die Butter?* 'Do you give me the butter?') and modal interrogatives *kannst du VP?* (*kannst du mir die Butter geben?* 'Can you give me the butter?').

This study, thus, aims at answering two questions:

- What are the home environments of the two request formats in spoken German and what socio-interactional factors do requesters orient to when producing different interrogative requests?
- How are the linguistic formats (e.g., the meaning of the modal verb *können* 'can' and the interrogative syntax) fitted to the contexts in which they are produced?

In what follows, I first provide an overview of interactional factors that have been shown to be relevant for the use of alternative forms of requesting within CA/IL (and interrogative request forms in particular) in different languages (Section 2). Afterwards, I describe the data used for this study (Section 3). Sections 4 and 5 present case analyses of simple interrogatives and *kannst du VP?* interrogatives and show what interactional factors the speakers orient to when using these different formats to design requests. Finally, I will describe how these linguistic forms are adjusted to socio-interactional environments in which they are used and discuss some methodological problems revealed in the analyses (Section 6).

2. Prior CA / IL research on request design

The question of how people enlist another's help and choose among a variety of linguistic resources for requesting has gained much attention in different social disciplines. In line with other papers in this Special Issue, I define requests as social actions implemented by speakers to get some practical action done by the recipient (cf. *directives* in Craven/Potter 2010; *recruitment-related actions*, Kendrick/Drew 2016; Floyd et al. 2020). As there are already quite a few detailed overviews of previous research on requests in different disciplines (see, e.g., Drew/Couper-Kuhlen 2014), in what follows, I concentrate on recent findings from CA/IL research concerning interactional factors that are relevant for the use of interrogative forms for requesting.

The first two factors relevant for request form selection which will be covered here were best described by Curl and Drew (2008) in their seminal comparative analysis of two request forms in English: *I wonder if...* and interrogatives *can/could/would you²...*. They identified two dimensions that are relevant for the request form selection – *entitlement* and *contingencies*. By *entitlement*, the authors mean the *right* to have something done by someone, while *contingencies* refer to situational or local difficulties that could prevent the recipient from granting the request. In their analysis of deferred requests, Curl and Drew (2008) showed that *can you...* requests are produced when the requesters do not orient to any contingencies of granting the request, i.e., they assess the request as likely to be granted. In this way, by displaying little orientation to contingencies, the speakers position themselves as entitled requesters (Curl/Drew 2008:149; cf. Craven/Potter 2010).

² In their data, the authors did not find any differences between the formats *can you...?* and *would you...?* (Curl/Drew 2008:133).

Their results, i.e., that requesters orient to entitlement and contingencies when choosing a specific format, are also supported by findings from Swedish and Danish: Lindström (2005) demonstrated that when senior citizens requested some action from their home-help providers by using interrogative requests, they displayed themselves as not entitled to ask for this action. Heinemann (2006) also found that when requesting a certain action from their home-helpers by using 'positive' interrogatives, senior citizens display low entitlement and high orientation towards contingencies. It must be pointed out that while the Curl and Drew (2008) analyses are based on both mundane and institutional talk-in-interaction, the other two studies focused on requests produced in institutional contexts in which requesters and recipients had asymmetrical deontic rights (see also Antaki/Kent 2012; Fox/Heinemann 2016, 2017). Moreover, while Curl and Drew's study concentrated on deferred requests, Heinemann and Lindström focused on requests of here-and-now actions. Despite all the differences among these studies, they all managed to show that entitlement and contingencies are seen as central for the action formation of requests.

Another important factor for selecting among different request forms is the relationship between the requested action and the recipient's projected line of action. How the request is fitted to the recipient's expected or projected course of action has been first shown by Wootton (1997; 2005), who analyzed how certain linguistic request forms are developed and used by an English-speaking child. The results of his analysis revealed that the interrogative request form *can you VP?* was used by the child when a request didn't go in line with the parental expectations about the projected sequence and constituted a "departure from what the parent was expecting because the act in question was something the child could have been expected to do rather than the parent/the recipient" (Wootton 2005:191). Moreover, through the design of her requests, the child oriented to who was going to benefit from the requested action. Thus, *can you...?* interrogatives were produced to request an action that lay solely in the child's own interest (Wootton 1997:147).

That interrogative requests are used in interactional environments in which the request compliance would make the recipient depart from their line of actions was also confirmed by the results of Rossi's analysis of two request forms in Italian (Rossi 2012). By comparing the uses of imperatives and simple interrogatives, he showed that when selecting between these formats, Italian speakers orient to whether the requested action contributes to a collective outcome (*bilateral requests*) or serves the project owned solely by the requester (*unilateral requests*). Italian speakers use imperatives to request an action that is a part of a previously launched *joint project* to which both the requester and the recipient are already committed. In contrast, simple interrogatives are used when the requested action serves only a project of the requester, but not the requestee, and does not go in line with the recipient's line of action. The modal interrogative *puoi VP?* ('can you VP?') in Italian is also used when the requested action doesn't go in line with the recipient's line of action. However, the grantability of the request is potentially problematic due to the recipient's unwillingness (Rossi 2015:127). Specifically, Rossi demonstrated that the modal request format is used when (Rossi 2015:127; see ch. 4):

- i) the requestee has displayed overt resistance to do the action or to cooperate in the matter at hand before the request is made, ii) the requester's entitlement to make the request is low, or iii) the action requested is costly for the requestee.

Similar results were obtained by Zinken/Ogiermann (2013) in their comparative study of home environments of imperatives and second-person polar questions (like 'can you VP?') in British English and Polish. They showed that while imperatives are used in environments in which the recipient is clearly committed to a larger project or activity in progress, polar interrogatives are used for enlisting help from the recipient by requesting an action which would result in the recipients' departure from their ongoing and unrelated course of action.

While the previous research on requests concentrated mostly on broader socio-interactional factors like entitlement, contingencies as well as the type of project the request relates to, we still know little about how more situated material contingencies may influence the speaker's choice of a particular request format. Furthermore, little research has been done on comparing request formats that belong to one sentence type (in our case, polar interrogatives; cf. Heinemann 2006; Fox/Heinemann 2016; Rossi 2020). Moreover, the previous research on forms of requesting in German has only dealt with imperative turns (Zinken/Deppermann 2017). In what follows, I focus, on the one hand, on the display of embodied conduct of the addressee before and during the realization of the request and how the request is related to the prior sequential context, i.e., to what *kind* of project,³ and *whose* project the requested action contributes to, on the other. Following Rossi (2012:430), a project is defined here as "a series of actions or moves coherently articulated to achieve an interactional outcome". I differentiate between local and global projects:⁴ Local projects are understood here as steps that

- a global project consists of,
- are of instrumental nature,
- are taken by one/several interactant(s) to achieve a specific local goal (which still leads to the achievement of a global goal or outcome).

For example, if you are baking an apple pie together with a friend, it can be seen as a global project with a cake as the global goal of this activity. In order to make a pie, it is necessary to prepare dough (local project 1) and prepare (i.e., wash, peel, and cut) the apples (local project 2). Although in each of these local projects, the participants pursue local goals, the global outcome is contingent on successful outcomes of these local projects (cf. Clark 1996:ch.12). Each of these local projects can also consist of multiple *local* projects or *sub-projects*, such as cutting apples or beating the eggs. In this paper, requests are analysed on a local level of an activity organisation, i.e., I concentrate on the relationship between the requested action and momentary, visible involvement or availability of the recipient before and during the request initiation as well as local projects the requested action contributes to. Previous research has already revealed the importance of the notion of *availability*

³ Although the previous studies considered *adjacency pairs* as the most minimal type of a (joint) local project (cf. Clark 1996:ch.7; Linell 2009:188ff.), for the sake of clarity, in this paper I will not apply the notion of project to a well-elaborated and established notion of adjacency pairs (cf. Couper-Kuhlen/Selting 2018:27ff.). Instead, by *projects* I mean specific tasks that participants undertake in order to achieve a specific goal (see Schütz 1962:67ff.).

⁴ I understand 'activity' as a synonym for a global project meaning a set of multiple local, inter-related projects which all lead to the achievement of a global goal (e.g. having a cake baked, a room renovated etc.; cf. Levinson, 1979; Clark 2006; see also Rossi 2012:430 on the distinction between the terms *activity* and *project*).

for the design of imperative requests in Polish and German (Zinken/Deppermann 2017). In this paper, I will dwell on embodied display of availability, i.e., whether the recipient is involved in any competing engagements or not.

Like Rossi (2012), I also distinguish between local projects that are owned by the requester individually (*individual project*) or by several interactants (*joint project*; see Clark 1996:191-220; Deppermann 2014:251; see also Enfield 2013:114ff. on joint vs. distributed agency). The owner of the project is defined here as a participant or social unit who controls the course of action and is accountable / responsible for it (Rossi 2012:432). Although the owner of the project is often understood as a beneficiary of the project's outcome (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1976:31f.; Wootton 1997:147; Rossi 2012:430; Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Clayman/Heritage 2014), the analyses presented in sections 4-5 will show that who owns a project does not necessarily imply who profits from its accomplishment. Rossi (2012:439) considers the notion of benefit "to be subsumed by ownership". However, the question 'whose benefit?' (Couper-Kuhlen 2014:525) is often not that easy to answer and the relationship between the owner and the beneficiary of the project seems to be more complex than previously described. The complexity of this notion as well as its analytical relevance will be addressed in Section 6.

The main argument of this study is that when choosing between the two interrogative formats, speakers orient to what the recipient's embodied conduct displays. In particular, I will show what role the embodied display of the recipient's availability plays in how speakers format their requests.

3. Data

The findings that I present here are based on the close examination of the multi-modal, sequential context of request turns, the recipient's embodied orientation before and at the moment of the request initiation, the design of the request turn as well as the ownership of the project the requested action contributes to. The study is based on video-recorded mundane and institutional talk-in-interaction from the FOLK corpus⁵, an in-progress corpus of spoken German compiled at the Leibniz Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim (Schmidt 2016). In order to have a set of comparable data, I focused only on instances of the two interrogative formats that occurred in joint activities (like having breakfast, renovating a room, cooking dinner, helping a patient etc.). Furthermore, I concentrated only on cases of here-and-now requests that concern some practical targeted action that can be implemented immediately. Although these requests can occur in a second person plural *ihr* as well as in a second person formal *Sie*, such forms were excluded for the current analysis because the formats with a second-person plural pronoun are very rare in the FOLK-corpus and are mostly used in learning contexts. The formats with a third-person plural pronoun *Sie* are specific for public contexts (e.g., public mediation sessions) as well as for medical contexts like physiotherapy, which were not used for this analysis due to specific constraints of these activity types.

⁵ The corpus is publicly available for scholars after registering at <<http://dgd.ids-mannheim.de>>.

This resulted in a collection of 72 request sequences in the 2nd person singular (*du* 'you') drawn from 39:37 hours of video-taped data of mundane and institutional talk-in-interaction:⁶

Format	Mundane	Institutional	Total
simple interrogatives	18 (32%)	8 (53%)	26 (36%)
<i>kannst du VP?</i>	39 (68%)	7 (47%)	46 (64%)
Total	57	15	72

Table 1: Distribution of cases by format and setting

After extensive case analyses aimed at determining the pattern, the data used for the current study were coded according to the features that were identified as relevant in the previous case analyses (cf. Floyd et al. 2020). The transcripts presented in the following sections are transcribed according to the GAT 2 conventions (Couper-Kuhlen et al. 2011) and Mondada's conventions for multimodal transcription (Mondada 2019).

4. Simple interrogatives

4.1. Grammatical description

Simple interrogatives that are used for requesting in German do not contain any modal verb (cf. Rossi 2015:85f. on Italian and Zinken/Ogiermann 2013 for Polish). The format is characterized by a V1-word order, which is typical for interrogative formats in Germanic languages (König/Siemung 2007:298f.), and, hence, just asks whether the recipient is going to do a certain action:

- (1) **gibst du mir mal den BU+terdeckel bitte;=**
give-2SG you.2SG me.DAT PRT the.M.ACC butter.cover please
do you give me the butter cover please
(see extract 1 below)

The verb is inflected for second person singular in the indicative (simple present) mood. The rest of the arguments that occur in such utterances (like the first-person personal pronoun in dative *mir* 'to me' as well as the direct object in accusative – *den butterdeckel* 'the butter cover') belong to an argument structure of the main verb used in this format. It should be mentioned that in German the 2nd person subject is often cliticized to the verb in V+PRO or even omitted. When used for requests, this format occurs only with agentive action verbs like 'to do', 'to give', 'to take', 'to bring' etc. Such requests can be uttered either with a falling or rising turn-final intonation. The interrogative nature of such utterances is marked through the word order.

⁶ In this paper, however, only data from mundane talk-in-interaction will be shown.

In the extracts presented below, the format will be translated into English as 'will you do...'. Although the English translation of this format contains the modal verb 'will', which is missing in German and might thus be misleading, the English modal format is chosen as the most suitable corresponding idiomatic format in English.

4.2. Analysis

In my collection, simple interrogative requests are typically used to launch a new course of action that is unrelated to what the recipient has been doing in an immediate previous interactional context before the request is made. This, however, does not imply that requests formulated with this format never relate to a project shared by both participants. Such requests can contribute both to local projects that are owned solely by the requester, and to joint projects that lead to a goal shared by both the requester and the recipient. In what follows, I will show that regardless of the ownership of the project the requested action contributes to, one of the most relevant interactional criteria that constitutes the home environment of simple interrogatives is the displayed embodied orientation of the prospective recipient before and during the request initiation.

Typically, simple interrogative requests are directed to recipients who are bodily available for carrying out a certain practical action and are not engaged in any other local project before the request is made (n=20/26). An example is extract 2. Shortly before the extract begins, the family finished having breakfast. The mother, Christina, together with one of her daughters, Anne, started to clean up the table. Her other daughter Maja as well as the father Lothar continued sitting at the table. In this extract, the mother approaches the table, takes the butter into her hand and names the object (1.06):

Extract 2: FOLK_E_00355_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c1204

CH: Christina; LK: Lothar; MK: Maja; AK: Anna

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01          (1.09)

02  CH      so;*
          so
          ch      *approaches the table--->

03          (0.25)

04  AK      &°h
          mk-g  &gaze at CH--->

05          (3.13)

06  CH      *die BUTter,
          the.F butter
          the butter
          ch      -->*grabs the butter--->

07 => CH      *h° #gibst   du      mir      mal   den
          give-2SG you.2SG me.DAT PRT  the.M.ACC
          will you give me PRT the
          ch      -->*points at the butter cover--->
          #fig.1

```


08 => CH %**BUT**+terdeckel bitte;=
 butter.cover please
 buttercover please
 mk-g --->%gaze at the butter cover--->>
 mk-b⁷ +tries to reach out for the butter cover--->



Figure 1: Christina points at the butter cover

09 CH +=sei so LIEB;
 be.IMP so kind
 be so kind
 mk-b --->+stands up, grabs the butter cover and gives it to
 CH--->

10 (0.36)

11 CH **ich muss dann noch die ganze SPÜLmaschine wieder**
 I have.to then PRT the whole dishwasher again
 austräumen; *+
 empty-INF
 I have to PRT empty the whole dishwasher again
 afterwards
 ch --->*takes the cover--->>
 mk-b --->+

12 (1.07)

In line 06, Christina initiates an *object-centred sequence* (Tuncer et al. 2020): The referential expression *die BUTter*, draws the attention of Lothar and Maja still sitting at the table to the butter, setting up a new focus of attention or *domain of scrutiny* (Goodwin 1994:606). Christina turns her head towards the butter cover, starts pointing at the object and formulates a request with a simple interrogative (1.07-8). Though the addressee of the request is not explicitly named, it seems to be directed at the daughter who sits closer to the requested object and, thus, has a better spatial access to it than the father. The daughter looks at the mother, shifts her gaze to the butter cover and starts reaching out for the object before the request is fully produced (see Deppermann/Schmidt 2021 on early responses in request and

⁷ mk-b: body; mk-g: gaze.

instruction sequences). However, she cannot reach it and has to stand up in order to grab the object and give it to her mother. Let us analyze this sequence in more detail.

1) Participation framework before the request initiation

Before as well as at the moment of the request initiation, the recipient is available and is not engaged in any other shared or individual projects. Although the project of cleaning up the table is a ritualized phase of more global joint activity of having a breakfast together, this local project was initiated by the mother and her daughter Anne who are actively engaged in this course of action. Lothar and Maja are not involved in the project at the point of the request initiation,⁸ which is also embodied in their conduct (see fig.1). Thus, the requested action is a part of a project which is not shared between the requester and the requestee and in which the requestee is not engaged.

2) Turn design

The argument of the verb is produced with a full noun phrase, which designs the requested action or the referent as not projectable to the recipient (Ariel 1990; Rossi 2015:93ff.). The beneficiary of the local project is indicated by the personal pronoun in Dative *mir* ('me'⁹; l. 07). The request is formulated with the particle *mal*, which can be produced in environments in which "the addressee of the request is committed to the local project, but is not attuned to the requested action" (Zinken/Deppermann 2017:44). The request is produced together with a mitigating device *bitte* ('please') and a following TCU *sei so LIEB*; ('be so kind'; 1.09) that seem to serve as compliance pursuits and orient to the recipient's potential unwillingness to carry out a requested action. This could be explained by the fact that Maja doesn't grant the request immediately and is hesitant: Although the request could have been anticipated after the object, which the request refers to, is already mentioned and seized by the requester in line 06, she still has to scan the table for the object. Moreover, Christina might be interpreting Maja's displayed hesitation and delayed response as lack of commitment, which would otherwise be expected from her in this activity.

3) Compliance

The request is complied with by a nonverbal response of the recipient.

⁸ As the sequence unfolds, the father starts cleaning the table together with Christina and Anne, while Maja leaves the dining room.

⁹ Although in extract 2 the grammatical marking of the beneficiary coincides with the actual beneficiary of the requested action, which serves a unilateral outcome, this is not always the case (cf. extract 7). While the use of a pronoun 'me' in German can be motivated by the argument structure of the verb used in the request (like 'give', 'help', or 'share'), in spoken German it is not compulsory and can be omitted. However, in my data, there are no cases in which the grammatical marking of the beneficiary is not motivated through the argument structure. Neither are there cases in which the benefactive marking is missing although it is expectable due to the argument structure of the verb. All in all, in my data, the benefactive marking occurs in 11/26 instances of simple interrogatives and in 15/46 instances of *kannst du VP?* modal interrogatives. The benefactive is marked through the use of a first-person pronoun in dative *mir* ('me'), accusative *mich* ('me', e.g., *Lässt du mich raus?* 'Will you let me you') or a prepositional phrase (e.g., *Teilst du den Text mit mir?* 'Will you share the text with me?').

Most requests constructed with simple interrogatives like the one in extract 2 are directed at recipients who are bodily available for carrying out a certain practical action. However, there are a few cases like extract 3, in which simple interrogatives are produced while the recipient is occupied with his own project.

In the following example, a couple Zoe (ZF) and Norbert (NG) are having a fondue together with their friend Gero (GS). In lines 1-5, Zoe tells the others how she and her family used to eat a lot of meat fondue at Christmas:

Extract 3: FOLK_E_00293_SE_01_T_03_DF_01_c108

GS: Gero; ZF: Zoe; NG: Norbert

- 01 ZF aber des ham wir bei bei uns an (.) ähm (0.71)
 but that.N have.AUX.1PL we at at us on uhm
 an weihnachten beim fleischfondue AUCH immer
 on christmas with-the.N.DAT meat.fondue also always
 gemacht,
 do-PST.PTCP
*but on Christmas we did the same thing with meat
 fondue at home*
- 02 ZF °h gegessen bis zum UMfallen;
 eat-PST.PTCP till to-the.N.DAT passing.out
(we) ate until we passed out
- 03 (0.23)
- 04 ZF wenn ma schon nich mehr KONnte,=
 when one already no more can-PST.3SG
as soon as one couldn't (eat) anymore
- 05 ZF =das schÄälchen des man hatte mit fleisch
 the.N bowl-DIM that.N one have-PST.3SG with meat
 *&#!MUS!ste LEER werde[n.]
 have.to-PST empty become-INF
the bowl with meat that one had had to get empty
 zf *gaze at the bowl with mushrooms--->>
 ng &takes a piece of cucumber--->
 #fig. 2.1



Figure 2.1: Zoe looks at the bowl with mushrooms, while Norbert takes a piece of cucumber

06 GS [HM]_hm?

07 NG HM_hm, &
ng --->&

08 => ZF *#<<p>gibst du mir die CHAMPignons &mal*;
give-2SG you.2SG me.DAT the mushrooms PRT
will you give me the mushrooms
zf *points at the bowl with mushrooms*
ng &takes
the bowl and gives it to Zoe--->>
#fig.2.2



Figure 2.2: Norbert holds the piece of cucumber with both hands and gazes as Zoe

09 ZF =#ich hab immer keine LUST we ma über den (.)
I have.1SG always no desire PRT over the.M.ACC
sterni drüber zu
NAME over.ADV to
I never like when one over Sterni ((nickname GS))
#fig.2.3



Figure 2.3: Norbert leaves the cucumber in his right hand and reaches out for the bowl

nickname), making clear that the request is directed to Norbert.¹¹ However, Norbert starts complying with the request *before* the initiation of the account.

It's important to note that the recipient's suspension of the pursued *line of action* caused by granting the requests produced with simple interrogatives does not necessarily mean the suspension or interruption of the *project* they are responsible for, as can further be seen in extract 4. Here, Déspina and Penelope (Déspina's mother) are making lasagne together. In the previous context, Déspina started frying minced meat, while Penelope is now going to cut onions. Before the extract begins, Déspina told Penelope that her friend, who has been invited to the dinner, was allergic to flour. Afterwards, Déspina says that he sometimes eats breadcrumbs and it works fine for him (l. 02-03). Penelope makes an assumption that, perhaps, small amounts of flour don't make a big difference for him (l.05), which is confirmed by Déspina in l. 07:

Extract 4: FOLK_E_00327_SE_01_T_01_DF_01_c180

PC: Penelope; DP: Déspina

- 01 * (1.71)
pc *washes her hands and wipes her hands with a kitchen
 towel-->
- 02 DP also er isst auch manchma:l (1.11) paNIERmehl un SO
 so he eat.3SG also sometimes breadcrumbs and so
 zum beispiel.=
 to-the.N.DAT example
 so he also sometimes eats breadcrumbs and stuff for
 example
- 03 DP =des geht SCHO*N;
 it.N go-3SG PRT
 it works fine (for him)
pc --->*turns left and approaches DP--->
- 04 (0.48)
- 05 PC vielleicht (.) *machen ihm geringe mengen nicht SO
 maybe do.3PL him small-PL amounts not so
 viel aus,
 much PRT
 maybe small amounts don't make any difference for him
pc --->*

¹¹ By producing an account via rush-through (Couper-Kuhlen 2012; Schegloff 1982; Walker 2010), the requester shows that her request does not fit to the previously launched activity (i.e., storytelling) and that the requestee is not pre-oriented to the requested action (Baranova/Dingemanse 2016). It also pre-empts a possible misunderstanding from others why she wouldn't take the champignons herself if she can actually reach out for them. Zoe's orientation to the lack of sequential fit of her request is also supported by the way her turn in lines 08-9 is prosodically framed: Her request is produced in a lower volume treating the requested action as a sort of "side sequence" which constitutes a departure from the previous 'main' activity going on. Such accounts are not produced frequently in my data and do not seem to depend on who is responsible for the project that the requested action contributes to (simple interrogatives: n=7/26; *kannst du VP?*: n=8/46).

06 (0.38)
 07 DP ja.
 yes

08 => PC #machste mal en schritt nach HIN*ten?
 do-2SG-you.2SG PRT a.M.ACC step to back
 will you make a step back

pc *opens the
 cabinet below the stove--->
 #fig.3



Figure 3: Penelope has just approached Déspina

09 % (1.66)
 dp %steps back-->

10 PC (THANKs : :) -%*
 dp --->%
 pc --->*

11 * (3.1) * (5.78)
 pc *takes out a coaster for spatulas and puts it on the
 work surface near the stove*

During her turn in l. 5, Penelope turns around, approaches Déspina and remains standing near her until she asks Déspina to step back (fig.3). In this case, when the request is initiated, the requestee is frying the minced meat. This local project surely contributes to the global project of making lasagne, but at this moment, only Déspina is responsible for this step. In order to comply with the request, she has to interrupt her ongoing course of action. However, it is important to note that as Déspina takes a step back, her project does not get interrupted as the person who is responsible for frying meat doesn't have to be stirring the meat the whole time. If the requestee changes the embodied trajectory of her actions, the frying pan still remains on the stove and the process of cooking, hence, is not being suspended. Moreover, Déspina is able to monitor the frying pan even after she steps back, which makes this suspension of her course of action less problematic. After Déspina's nonverbal compliance, Penelope opens the cabinet below the stove, takes

out a coaster where spatulas can be put during cooking and places it on the work surface near the stove. Afterwards, she continues doing her own share of work, namely cutting the onions. In contrast to previous cases, where the request concerned the object transfer, in this case, Penelope requests Déspina to alter her line of actions in order to be able to carry out an intended action. Based on this case, it can also be clearly demonstrated that for an analyst, it is sometimes quite complicated to determine who exactly is going to benefit from the outcome of the requested action. On the one hand, Penelope could be seen as a beneficiary of the request compliance as she is able to carry out the action of opening the cabinet and taking out the coaster. On the other hand, the coaster is going to be used by both Penelope and Déspina during the cooking, which is why they both are going to share the outcome of Penelope's local project.

Although extracts 2-4 differ concerning whether the request serves an individual outcome of the requester or a shared outcome of all interactants, all these cases are similar in relation to the recipient's embodied orientation and course of action at the moment of the initiation of request: In all the cases shown in this section, the request is directed to recipients who through their embodied conduct are not pre-oriented to the requested action or the project to which the requested action will contribute. Still, granting the request does not result in the interruption of the recipient's line of action

- (i) because they are not engaged in any other projects and are bodily available (extract 2),
- (ii) because their own project does not have to be interrupted (extract 3), or
- (iii) because the recipient's embodied conduct functions merely as a preparatory step to the pursued project (extract 4).

Hence, one of the most important criteria that accounts for the use of the simple interrogative seems to be the requester's orientation to local material, or practical contingencies, i.e., the recipient's embodied conduct displaying availability before and during the initiation of the request. Furthermore, the presented case analyses showed that simple interrogatives are used for requesting actions which do not go in line with what came before. In extracts 1 and 2, evidence for this discontinuity can be found in the turn design, i.e., naming an object before producing a request in extract 2 (l. 06) as well as the use of the particle *mal* in the turn-final position in extract 3 (l. 08). Also in extract 4 the request is sequentially discontinuous from the prior talk and what the recipient was doing before. Thus, simple interrogatives seem to be used for discontinuous requests that make only a small bodily adjustment relevant from the recipient.

5. *kannst du VP?* interrogatives

5.1. Grammatical description

The format *kannst du VP?* consists of a modal verb *können* which denotes the other's ability. Like simple interrogatives, it is a V1-format. The modal verb *können* is placed in a turn-initial position, while the main verb typically occurs as an infinitive in a turn-final position, or as the so-called 'right sentence bracket' after the

realization of all the arguments (German: *Satzklammer*). This right sentence bracket is necessary for a (possibly) complete syntactic structure of an interrogative (although some incremented elements like *please* or vocatives may be positioned after the main verb infinitive):

- (5) **kannst du die BUTte:r einmal RÜBerreichen bitte,**
can.2SG you.2SG the butter once hand.over-INF please
can you hand over the butter please
(see extract 7 below).

The modal verb is inflected for second person singular in the indicative (simple present) mood. It can also be used in the conditional mood (*könntest du VP?* 'could you VP?'), but there are no cases of this format in my collection. The arguments that occur in this format (like *die BUTter* 'the butter') belong to the argument structure of the main verb used in the format. The subject of the utterance – a second-person singular pronoun *du* – is placed after the modal verb in the second position.

5.2. Analysis

Like simple interrogatives, *kannst du VP?* interrogatives are often used to request low-cost actions. Moreover, both these formats are used for implementing unilateral requests as well as for requesting an action that will promote a project shared between the requester and the requestee. However, the crucial difference between the use of these formats lies in requestee's display of availability before the initiation of the request, as will be shown in this section.

We shall begin with *kannst du VP?* interrogatives that are used to request an action which will benefit only the requester, like shown in extract 6, which is taken from the same interaction as extract (2). Before the extract begins, Lothar told Maja that all horses have brand marks. Maja questioned this information, which is why Lothar asks her whether she has ever seen a horse without a branding mark (l. 05). Christina is participating minimally in this conversation, for example, through laughing in l. 01. As the following interchange takes place, Anne is trying to scrape Nutella out of the jar with a knife in her left hand and holding the jar with her right hand, and she is not participating in the following conversation:

Extract 6: FOLK_E_00355_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c124

CH: Christina; LK: Lothar; MK: Maja; AK: Anne

- 01 CH +((laughs))
ak-g +scrapes Nutella out the jar--->
- 02 (0.31)
- 03 CH °hh h°
- 04 (0.3)

05 LK oder hasch du mal n pferd ohne BRANDzeichen
 or have.AUX-2SG you.2SG PRT a.N horse without branding.mark
 *gesehen;
 see-PST.PTCP
 or have you seen a horse without a branding mark
 ch-b *gaze at AK--->

06 (0.45)

07 MK ja;+#
 yes
 ak-g -->+
 #fig. 4.1



Figure 4.1: Christina monitors Anne

08 LK [EHrlisch,]
 really

09 => CH &<<p> kannst du mir [mal die *BU]tter&
 can.2SG you.2SG me.DAT PRT the butter
 ch-g &head point at the butter-----&
 ch-b ----->*

10 => CH #%geben [#anne]
 give-INF NAME
 can you give me the butter please NAME
 ak-b %shifts gaze to the butter----->
 #fig. 4.2 #fig. 4.3

11 MK [der PR]I%+::N[Z;]
 the.M NAME
 ((the)) Prinz
 ak-b --->%
 ak-g +takes the butter and gives it to
 Christina--->>

12 LK

[der prinz] hat KEIN
the.M NAME have.3SG no

brAndzeichen,
branding.mark

Prinz doesn't have any branding mark



Figure 4.2: Anne shifts her gaze towards the butter and initiates the requested action



Figure 4.3: Lothar's head turn during Christina's realization of her request

Let us consider in detail how (and when) the request is initiated, produced, and complied with:

1) Participation framework before the request initiation

After monitoring Anne's actions for approximately 2 seconds (fig. 4.1), Christina initiates a *sideplay* (Goffman 1981:133ff.) and asks her daughter Anne to pass her the butter (l. 09-10). Previous research has already shown that requesters monitor potential addressees before initiating a request in order to control the recipient's line of action, and identify the moment at which the recipient would be at best prepared for carrying out the requested action (Schmitt/Deppermann 2007; Rossi 2015:57ff.;

Keisanen and Rauniomaa 2012). The request is produced at the very moment Anne has finished taking Nutella out of the jar and moved her right hand away from the Nutella jar. When Christina initiates the request, Anne's own project – putting Nutella on her bun – is not finished yet. Thus, in order to comply with the request, she has to suspend her own project and bodily depart from her projectable line of action (Zinken/Ogiermann 2013).

2) Turn design

The *kannst du VP?* request is in many ways designed in a similar way to simple interrogatives from the previous section, namely with the particle *mal* and a first-person dative pronoun *mir* ('to me') marking, in this case, the beneficiary of the requested action. The realization of the object with a full NP indicates that the referent is not projectable to the recipient in the momentary interactional context (Ariel 1990). Moreover, the request is produced in a low volume and acknowledges the status of the initiated sequence as *sideplay* (Goffman 1981:133ff.). While the turn is produced with a vocative ("anne"), the position of the vocative is crucial: When a vocative is used at the beginning of the turn, it can function as summons (Schegloff 1968:1080; 2007:48ff.), i.e., it aims at securing the recipient's attention and availability, which haven't been established yet (Lerner 2003:183; Kidwell 2013). However, in this case, the vocative appears in a turn-final position, despite the fact that Anne shifts her gaze towards the butter and initiates the requested action before the vocative is produced (fig. 4.2). Hence, the use of the vocative seems to be motivated by Lothar's head turn towards Christina during her realization of the requesting turn (fig. 4.3). Thus, by producing the vocative at the end of her turn, Christina aims at "uphold[ing] the (already adequately established) intended recipient" (Lerner 2003:185f.), disambiguating the actual addressee of the request and 'informing' other interactants at the table who the request is directed at.

3) Compliance

The addressee of the request reacts with an early response: As soon as the argument (*BUTter*) is produced, the requestee shifts her gaze at the requested object and starts to comply bodily before the request is finished.

As is true for simple interrogatives, modal interrogatives *kannst du VP?* can be produced to request an action which is not projectable to the recipient in the given interactional context and is discontinuous in relation to the prior interactional context, or to what the requestee has been doing before the request initiation. Moreover, the request is only initiated when the recipient seems to be physically able to carry out the action, despite the current involvement in her own course of action. However, unlike simple interrogatives, *kannst du VP?* requests suspend the recipient's line of actions as well as their individual project.

In extract (6), the beneficiary of the requested action is marked by the first-person dative pronoun *mir*. Extract 7 will show, though, that the grammatical marking of the beneficiary does not necessarily coincide with the *actual* beneficiary of the project to which the requested action contributes and, hence, doesn't provide enough evidence as to who *owns* the project. Here, another family is having breakfast together. At the beginning of the extract, Tobias asks his daughter Sarah whether she wants a caraway breadstick with butter (1.01). She accepts the offer (1.02) and continues spreading the jam on her plate that she put there a few minutes

ago. On noticing that, Tobias offers to give her a new plate (1.04) or, more precisely, to swap their plates (1.6). After Sarah's confirmation, he takes her plate, moves his toast onto it, puts the caraway breadstick on a clean plate and gives it to Sarah (1.08-13):

Extract 7: FOLK_E_00309_SE_01_T_01_DF_01_c654

TM: Tobias; SM: Sarah; JM: Johanna

- 01 TM (.) °h ((schmatzt)) sarah möchtest du en bisschen
NAME would-like.2SG 2SG a bit
 KÜmmelstange (.) [mit BU] [Tter?]
caraway.breadstick with butter
 ((smacks)) NAME would you like some caraway breadstick
 with butter
- 02 SM [((schmatzt))][ja-]+
((smacks)) yes
 jm +starts putting
 jam on her bun--->
- 03 (5.78)
- 04 TM solln wir soll ich ? möcht (.) wolln wir
should-1PL we should.1SG I would.like want-1PL we
 den tell ich ((Sprechansatz)) soll ich
the.M.ACC pla I should.1SG I
 dir ma nen sAuberen TELLer geben,
you.2SG.DAT PRT a-M.ACC cleaner plate give-INF
 should we should I ? shall we the pla- I ? should I
 give you a cleaner plate
- 05 (0.38)
- 06 TM [komm dann TAU]schen wir eben;
come.IMP then swap-IMP we PRT
 come on then let's swap
- 07 SM [HM_hm,]
- 08 *(0.56)
 tm *takes Sarah's plate and puts his own food on it--->
- 09 SM äh <<h> schau de> (.) °h ↓↓ MIR.=
uh look the me.DAT
 ((singing))
- 10 ==<<h> schau de> (.) ↓↓ MIR;*
look the me.DAT
 ((singing))
 tm --->*

- 11 TM *so.
 so
 tm *takes his own clean plate, puts a caraway breadstick on it and gives it to Sarah--->
- 12 SM ka k °h h° °h h°
- 13 (1.3)*
 tm --->*
- 14 => TM *kannst #du die *BUTt+e:r #einmal
 can.2SG you.SG the.F butter once
 +RÜBerreichen bitte,
 hand.over.INF please
 can you hand over the butter please
 tm *points at the butter----*makes room for it on the table--->
 jm --->+puts spoon back to the jar+takes the butter and gives it to TM--->
 #fig. 5.1

#fig. 5.2



Figure 5.1: Tobias points at the butter



Figure 5.2: Johanna puts her spoon back into the jam jar

- 15 (1.49) * (0.1) +
 tm ---> *
 jm ---> +
- 16 SM mir [AU:CH;]
 me.DAT too
 me too
- 17 TM [<<pp> DANke>;]
 thanks
- 18 (0.21)
- 19 TM ja;=ich GEB dir;
 yes I give.PRS you.DAT
 yes I'll give (it) to you
- 20 (1.05)

After placing the plate in front of Sarah, Tobias shifts his gaze to the butter, which is on Johanna's left (fig. 5.1). While Johanna is putting some jam on her toast, Tobias asks her to pass him the butter (l. 14). At the beginning of the request turn, Tobias points at the butter and shifts several jars which stand in front of him aside in order to make some room on the table near his plate. Before the request is fully produced, Johanna already puts her spoon back into the jam jar (fig. 5.2) and grabs the butter, before Tobias' request is completed. Like in extract 6, the requestee has to suspend her own project in order to comply with the request. The use of the verb *rüberreichen*, which is a synonym for 'give' and occurs in the collection only once, as well as the use of the particle *einmal* as a version of the particle *mal* both reflect Tobias' orientation towards the granting of request as being potentially problematic for the addressed recipient (cf. Zinken et al. 2020). The momentary beneficiary (cf. Couper-Kuhlen 2014) of the requested action is marked by the first-person personal pronoun *mir*: In case of compliance, the requester gets the desired object and can bring his project to the end. The problem arises, however, if we examine the outcome of Tobias' project initiated in l.01: While he is responsible and accountable for the project of making a caraway breadstick with butter for Sarah, he is not going to 'partake of the [practical] outcome' of his course of action (Rossi 2012:431), as the only person who is going to get the result of the project and benefit from it is Sarah. On the other hand, it should be noted that being Sarah's father, he is also going to benefit from this project because his daughter will get something to eat. Following this perspective, this project could also be seen as a *shared* project and responsibility of both parents. The requestee's nonverbal compliance is followed by an appreciation token *DANke*¹² as a sequence-closing third (Schegloff 2007), which seems to serve for acknowledging the imposition.

Another example of the *kannst du VP?* request which leads to the achievement of a shared goal is demonstrated in extract 8. Here, two sisters – Pauline and Tamara

¹² In my data, appreciation tokens like *danke* ('thanks') or *dankeschön* ('thank you') are produced very rarely by the requester after the recipient has carried out the requested action (simple interrogatives: n=2/26; *kannst du VP?*: n=3/46; cf. also Zinken et al. 2020).



Figure 6.2: Tamara picks up the plastic sheet

When the request is being initiated, Tamara is still sticking one side of the plastic sheet to the floor, which is her task in this joint project. While she is still involved in this share of work, Pauline asks her to bring a piece of film that she cut off earlier (see Lerner/Kitzinger 2007 for repair of individual/collective self-reference). Interestingly, the request is formulated with a temporal adverb *dann*¹³ ('then'), which, in this case, presupposes a deferred character of the requested action and seems to orient to a possible delay or sequentiality of the tasks (i.e., as soon as the requestee is done with her task). However, Tamara starts standing up (fig.6.1) and, in this way, suspends her line of action while Pauline is still producing her requesting turn (l. 02). Through her embodied conduct, Tamara displays her understanding of the request as making an immediate response relevant, not a deferred one. After Pauline's turn has been fully completed, the requestee produces a type-conforming response token *ja?* ('yes'; l.03) that has the function of a *compliance projector* (Keevallik/Weidner 2021), i.e., it only projects the nonverbal compliance, but is not a compliance itself. Rauniomaa and Keisanen (2012:838) showed that response formats to requests that consist of a verbal acceptance and a nonverbal fulfilment are used when "the requests cannot be fulfilled immediately as another activity is under way". In my data, response tokens as compliance projectors are found in cases in which there is not necessarily another activity underway, but rather in which the requestee needs some time to comply with the request either due to the complexity of the requested action or due to the multimodal environment (e.g., the distance between the requestee and the requested object, like in extract 8; compare fig. 6.1 and 6.2). As Tamara stands up and goes towards the bed in order to get the film, Pauline accounts for her request and says that they could then cover the rest of the floor with this film (l. 05). Important in this account is a first-person plural reference *wir* ('we'): By formulating this account in this way, which, at the same time, functions as an instruction or an announcement to Tamara about their future course of action, it indicates that the requested action contributes to a joint project they are going to (and eventually *do*) carry out collaboratively (Lerner 1993; Wootton 1997; Sidnell 2011; see also Rossi 2012:442f.). Thus, the

¹³ This adverb can also mark a transition to a next step/action/project in an activity. However, the necessary condition is that the recipient has finished his/her previous project and is available, which is clearly not the case in this extract.

subsequent account acknowledges the requested action as a *preparatory action* necessary for the initiation of an upcoming local joint project.

Despite the differences concerning the ownership of the projects to which the requestee contributes through their compliance in extracts 6-8, the interactional environment of *kannst du VP?* requests in all the cases remains the same: Such requests are discontinuous from the recipient's prior line of action and are produced when the requestee's ability to comply with the request is restricted due to their active involvement in a different project which cannot be carried out until the end before granting the requested action and, hence, must be 'put on hold'.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The results of this comparative study of simple and *kannst du VP?* interrogative request formats in spoken German showed that in contrast to imperative requests in German (Zinken/Deppermann 2017), both kinds of interrogative formats are used for requesting an action that is discontinuous from the prior sequential context or the recipient's prior course of action, and are used for requests that can actually be granted unproblematically. Still, when choosing among these forms, the requesters seem to orient to (i) whether the recipient is bodily available before or at the moment of request initiation, and if not, (ii) whether the project they are involved in must be suspended for granting the request.

In particular, the study demonstrated that, like in other languages (cf. Zinken/Ogiermann 2013 on Polish and English; Rossi 2012, 2015 on Italian), simple interrogatives and *kannst du VP?* interrogative requests are not projectable for the recipient at the moment of the request initiation, and do not go in line with the requestee's ongoing or prior course of action. In addition, the findings showed the relevance of focusing on whether the recipient's course of action (i) has to be suspended, or (ii) can be unproblematically continued despite granting the request. In particular, requesters use simple interrogatives either (i) when the requestee is bodily available and is "doing nothing" (cf. Rossi 2017), or (ii) if the type of requestee's line of action allows them to carry out a requested action by slightly adjusting their own actions without interrupting or suspending what they are doing. This format fits into the interactional environment in which it is used, as it does not contain any linguistic cues (except for the interrogative syntax and particles *mal* and *bitte*) that would display the speaker's orientation to the requestee's ability to comply with the request, or availability as a possible contingency involved in granting the request.

On the contrary, the format *kannst du VP?* treats the request compliance as contingent on the requestee's ability to carry out some practical action by virtue of the meaning of the modal form *können* ('can'). When requesters produce *kannst du VP?* requests, they can visually perceive that the addressee is involved in a different project and can thus anticipate that the recipient would have to suspend what they have been doing to grant the request. Nevertheless, the speakers still produce a request and, in this way, prioritize their own wish/need over the anticipated contingencies for the recipient. Therefore, by selecting the format *kannst du VP?*, requesters display their awareness that the granting of the request will be potentially problematic for the recipient because the latter would have to suspend their own line of action.

All requests presented and analysed in this study do concern the overall activity, e.g., when you ask somebody to pass you the butter while having a breakfast together, it relates to an overall activity structure as passing shared goods during the meal is a routine and projectable action during this activity type (Zinken 2015). However, in my data, the requesters seem to orient to a more momentary and local level of activity organization, i.e., to local projects and the recipient's course of action at the moment of the request initiation (Zinken/Ogiermann 2013; Rossi 2012; 2015; see Zinken/Deppermann 2017 on local vs. global projects), which, of course, could also be a side-effect of the type of data used for this study. Therefore, further research might be necessary to compare the use of the formats in other settings, i.e., where participants are *not* involved in joint projects.

Another important issue raised in the current study concerns a problematic relation between the notions of the *owner* and the *beneficiary* of the project, i.e., in whose interest is the requested action (or, as Wootton noted, "whose problem is this", 1997:167), as well as the role of the division of benefits for selecting a specific request format. Examples like extract 4 and 7 posed an important question: How do we methodologically approach the notion of benefits that do not become explicit during the interaction in the conversational-analytic framework and what role do such benefits play for action formation and ascription in general? Previous research has shown that interactants *do* orient to who is going to benefit from a certain action (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1976:31f.; Wootton 1997:147; Clayman/Heritage 2014; Couper-Kuhlen 2014). These studies primarily focused on practical and momentary benefits of some action as well as on how participants orient to such benefits through language. However, it is also important to bear in mind that the question 'whose benefits' (Couper-Kuhlen 2014:625) also depends on the interactants' social roles in a specific type of talk-in-interaction, background information about their interactional history as well as other social motives the participants might have. Of course, it cannot be denied that the speakers are aware of such benefits, even if they only rarely become explicit in the interaction (e.g., in extract (8), the younger sister is aware of the fact that it is her elder sister's room). Still, an important analytical task is to find evidence that benefit is *relevant* to the participants and is "procedurally consequential for the particular aspect of the talk or another conduct which is the focus of analysis" (Schegloff 1992:196). This study demonstrated that while the beneficiary of the project may often coincide with the owner of the project or, in other words, a person who is responsible for it (Zinken 2016), the benefits might also be distributed among participants not actively involved in the project. Thus, the analyses presented in this paper showed that the notion of benefit does not have an analytic relevance for how speakers select between simple and modal interrogative requests in spoken German. Still, further CA research is needed in order to further elaborate the notion of benefits and its role for action formation and ascription in interaction.

To sum up, this paper contributes to a better understanding of a 'requesting system' (Rossi 2015) in spoken German: While imperative turns are used for requesting actions within a project or activity that the recipient is committed to, this paper revealed that interrogatively-formatted requests in German are employed for initiating requests that are discontinuous from the prior sequential context or the recipient's course of action. These results go in line with previous findings on interrogative requests from other languages (e.g., Zinken/Ogiermann 2013; Rossi

2012, 2015). Thus, further cross-linguistic research is needed in order to see whether the interrogative sentence type is used for similar kinds of requests in other languages and/or occurs in similar interactional environments as other languages, like, e.g., English, German, Italian, or Polish. Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrated how the speakers orient to different stances displayed by different formats belonging to the same sentence type and how these formats are fitted to situated interactional contexts in which they are produced (cf. Fox/Heinemann 2016; Rossi 2020). Finally, this study showed how a momentary display of embodied conduct of the recipients (i.e., display of bodily availability) affects the way in which speakers design their actions, i.e., requests (cf. Goodwin 1980).

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