

## 10. International Contrastive Linguistics Conference (ICLC)

---

Florence Oloff/Martin Havlík

# JOINT UTTERANCE FORMULATION FROM A CROSS-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

## Co-constructions in Czech and German

**Keywords** Conversation analysis; interactional linguistics; multimodal analysis; video data; spoken German; spoken Czech; joint utterance formulation

This presentation deals with collaborative turn-sequences (Lerner 2004), a syntactically coherent unit of talk that is jointly formulated by at least two speakers, in Czech and German everyday conversations. Based on conversation analysis (e.g., Schegloff 2007) and a multimodal approach to social interaction (e.g., Deppermann/Streeck 2018), we aim at comparing recurrent patterns and action types within co-constructive sequences in both languages.

The practice of co-constructing turns-at-talk has been described for typologically different languages, especially for English (e.g., Lerner 1996, 2004), but also for languages such as Japanese (Hayashi 2003) or Finnish (Helasvuo 2004). For German, various forms and functions of co-constructions have already been investigated (e.g., Brenning 2015); for Czech, a detailed, interactionally based description is still pending (but see some initial observations in, e.g., Hoffmannová/Homoláč/Mrázková (eds.) 2019). The first aim of this presentation is to show basic patterns of syntactic co-constructions in spoken Czech, such as in the following example:

(1) Co-construction in Czech (data: Oloff 2015)

```
01 LEN: .hh tak nejdřív jsem popálila nějaké, (0.3) e:: (0.5) nějaké=  
      .hh so first I have burned some (0.3) er::(0.5) some=  
02 PAV: =°rákos°=  
      =reed=  
03 LEN: =r:ákosí, co tam jakože: zbylo z podzimu,  
      =reeds that there like remained from autumn
```

Although the existence of co-constructions in different languages points to a cross-linguistic conversational practice, few explicitly comparative studies exist (see, e.g., Lerner/Takagi 1999, for English and Japanese). The language pair Czech-German has mainly been studied with respect to language contact and without specifically considering spoken language or complex conversational sequences (e.g., Nekula/Šichová/Valdrová 2013). Therefore, our second aim is to sketch out a first comparison of co-constructive sequences in German and Czech, thereby contributing to the growing field of comparative and cross-linguistic studies within conversation analysis (e.g., Betz et al. (eds.) 2021; Dingemanse/Enfield 2015; Sidnell (ed.) 2009).

More specifically, we will present three main sequential patterns of co-constructive sequences, focusing on the type of action a second speaker carries out by completing a first speaker's possibly incomplete turn-at-talk, and on how the initial speaker then responds to this suggested completion (Lerner 2004). Excerpts from video recordings of Czech and German ordinary conversations will illustrate these recurrent co-constructive sequence types, i.e., offering help during word searches (see example 1 above), displaying understanding, or

claiming independent knowledge. The third objective of this paper is to underline the participants' orientation to similar interactional problems, solved by specific syntactic and/or lexical formats in Czech and German.

Considering the more recent focus on the embodied dimension of co-constructional practices (e.g., Dressel 2020), we will also investigate the multimodal formatting of a started utterance as more or less "permeable" (Lerner 1996) for co-participant completion, the participants' mutual embodied orientation, and possible embodied responses to others' turn-completions (such as head nods or eyebrow flashes, cf. De Stefani 2021). More generally, this contribution reflects on the possibilities and challenges of a cross-linguistic comparison of complex multimodal sequences.

## References

- Betz, Emma/Deppermann, Arnulf/Mondada, Lorenza/Sorjonen, Marja-Leena (eds.) (2021): *OKAY across Languages: Toward a comparative approach to its use in talk-in-interaction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. <http://doi.org/10.1075/slsi.34>.
- Brenning, Jana (2015): *Syntaktische Ko-Konstruktionen im gesprochenen Deutsch*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- De Stefani, Elwys (2021): Embodied Responses to Questions-in-Progress: Silent Nods as Affirmative Answers. In: *Discourse Processes*, 58(4), pp. 353–371. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2020.1836916>.
- Deppermann, Arnulf/Streeck, Jürgen (eds.) (2018): *Time in Embodied Interaction. Synchronicity and sequentiality of multimodal resources*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.293>.
- Dingemanse, Mark/Enfield, N.J. (2015): Other-initiated repair across languages: towards a typology of conversational structures. In: *Open Linguistics* 1, pp. 96–118. <https://doi.org/10.2478/opli-2014-0007>.
- Dressel, Dennis (2020): Multimodal word searches in collaborative storytelling: On the local mobilization and negotiation of coparticipation. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 170, pp. 37–54. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.08.010>.
- Hayashi, Makoto (2003): *Joint Utterance Construction in Japanese Conversation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sidag.12>.
- Helasvuo, Marja-Liisa (2004): Shared syntax: the grammar of co-constructions. In: *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36(8), pp. 1315–1336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2004.05.007>.
- Hoffmannová, Jana/Homoláč, Jiří/Mrázková, Kamila (eds.) (2019): *Syntax mluvené češtiny*. Praha: Academia.
- Lerner, Gene H. (1996): On the 'semi-permeable' character of grammatical units in conversation: conditional entry into the turn space of another speaker. In: Ochs, Elinor/Schegloff, Emanuel/Thompson, Sandra A. (eds.): *Interaction and Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 238–276. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620874.005>.
- Lerner, Gene H. (2004): Collaborative Turn sequences. In: Lerner, Gene H. (ed.): *Conversation Analysis. Studies from the first generation*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 225–256. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.125.12ler>.
- Lerner, Gene H./Takagi, Tomoyo (1999): On the place of linguistic resources in the organization of talk-in-interaction: A co-investigation of English and Japanese grammatical practices. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 31 (1), pp. 49–75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00051-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00051-4).
- Nekula, Marek/Šichová, Kateřina/Valdrová, Jana (eds.) (2013): *Bilingualer Sprachvergleich und Typologie: Deutsch – Tschechisch*. Tübingen: Groos.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. (2007): *Sequence Organization in Interaction. A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511791208>.

Sidnell, Jack (ed.) (2009): *Conversation Analysis: Comparative Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Contact information

**Florence Oloff**

Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache  
oloff@ids-mannheim.de

**Martin Havlík**

Ústav pro jazyk český  
havlik@ujc.cas.cz

### Bibliographical information

This text is part of the publication: Trawiński, Beata/Kupietz, Marc/Proost, Kristel/Zinken, Jörg (eds.) (2023): *10. International Contrastive Linguistics Conference (ICLC). Book of Abstracts*. Mannheim: IDS-Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.14618/f8rt-m155>.