

Report on the first International Summer Institute for Interactional Linguistics at the IDS Mannheim, 18th – 23rd of July 2022

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1. Introduction

The first International Summer Institute for Interactional Linguistics (henceforth ISIIL) took place from July 18 to 23 at the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim, Germany. The local organizers, Arnulf Deppermann and Alexandra Gubina, collaborated with five other facilitators in preparing this Summer Institute: Emma Betz (University of Waterloo), Elwys De Stefani (University of Heidelberg & KU Leuven), Barbara A. Fox (University of Colorado), Chase Raymond (University of Colorado) and Jörg Zinken (Leibniz-Institute for the German Language, Mannheim). The goal of ISIIL was to bring together both early-career researchers and established scholars from the fields of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Interactional Linguistics (IL) in order to foster the development of new skills for doing research using IL. The participants and organizers had diverse backgrounds, both in terms of their research interests (e.g., classroom interaction, second language acquisition, cross-linguistic comparison, particles, grammar-in-interaction) and institutional affiliations, with many participants from institutions from around Europe (i.e., Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland) as well as overseas (Canada, U.S.A., South Africa). Because of the compact nature of the Institute, the advanced topics covered, as well as the original research projects the participants would engage in, participation was limited to 24 participants, selected on the basis of their prior training and experience in CA/IL.

The Institute centered around three separate yet complementary daily sessions: plenary talks, data sessions on fundamental research topics in IL, and language-specific project sessions. In their daily plenaries, the facilitators offered a "peek behind the curtain", using their own research projects as examples of the steps that go into bringing a project from data collection, analyzing transcribed data, identifying phenomena, building collections, to publication. In the data sessions, facilitators brought collections from their own corpora to have participants learn about and work with the following fundamental concepts in IL: turn extensions, multimodal packages, membership categorization analysis, turn-initial position, and response particles.

Afternoons at the Summer School were reserved for project sessions. Participants were organized into four groups each working on a specific language (two on German, one on each English and French). Over the course of the Summer Institute, each group worked with the facilitators to develop an original research project. The overarching topic for the group work project was 'fragments', that is, utterances which were in some way 'incomplete', either interactionally (i.e., by abandoning or cutting off a turn/turn constructional unit before reaching a transition relevance place, Ford et al. 1996; Selting 2001) or structurally (i.e., by omitting grammatically

¹ The authors contributed equally to the preparation of the report.

obligatory elements, Deppermann 2020). Each group identified a candidate phenomenon, collected instances of their phenomenon, built a collection and, on the last day of the Institute, presented their project and preliminary findings.

In this report, we summarize each of the plenary talks, data sessions, and group projects. We connect each session to ISIIL's pedagogic goals. In the final section, we cover the ISIIL's closing discussion on IL and its distinction from other related fields of study; we also locate the Summer Institute in the development of IL as a field of study, with outlooks for future Summer Institutes as well as for the discipline.

2. Plenary talks

Each morning of the ISIIL, except for the last day, began with a plenary talk from the facilitators. The plenary talks each presented a different aspect of the research process, including recording data, selecting and analyzing verbal and multimodal interactional phenomena, building collections, and comparing phenomena cross-linguistically.

On the first day, Barbara Fox and Chase Raymond (University of Boulder Colorado) gave their presentation *Some notes on studying morphosyntax in interaction*. The backdrop for their behind-the-curtains presentation was a co-authored paper (Raymond et al. 2020) exploring grammatical formats used to implement requests in a shoe shop. Their presentation detailed the steps involved in both determining their analytical focus as well as in designing and conducting their research study. Fox and Raymond reported that what initially prompted them and their co-authors to embark on the project was the fact that they struggled to apply the canonical sentence types *declarative*, *interrogative* and *imperative* to the request formats they found in their data. With a focus decidedly on action, they collected (although admittedly not exhaustively) cases of offers and requests in their transcribed shoe shop recordings and analyzed them with a specific focus on the format *(do you) want*. Later, they expanded their collection to include *(do you) want*-requests found in other corpora (e.g., Newport Beach). Afterwards, they reviewed what CA/IL literature had already uncovered about the design of offers and requests. This iterative process of analyzing the data and referring to published research led them to redefine their analytical focus, reconsider their initial hypotheses, and redesign their study. Among the many lessons learned from their presentation, here is perhaps the most crucial: CA/IL projects can be generated by questioning pre-established categories from, e.g., traditional grammar, using the empirical data one has at hand.

Elwys De Stefani (University of Heidelberg, Germany) opened the second day of the ISIIL with the plenary talk *Why data are not 'given': The analytical dimension of data collection and transcription*. His presentation touched upon methodological challenges IL/CA researchers face when working with video data. Using one of his latest projects as a backdrop,² De Stefani took the ISIIL participants through each step of the data recording, from ethical considerations that preceded it (e.g., how the ethics committee was contacted) and on-the-field procedures (e.g., letting passers-by know that recordings are in progress) to post-recording proce-

² <https://www.first5words.com>

dures for data management and transcription. The procedures regarding ethical considerations highlighted a pervasive yet not often topicalized issue within IL and CA research, namely, the difficulties involved in complying with ethics committees and protocols, which tend to constrain the use of identifiable personal data (such as video and voice recordings). De Stefani showed the details of the recording environment, showing how cameras were set up in the space, how the signs informing participants of recording were posted in the physical setting and how the field notes were systematized. De Stefani's talk was also especially instructional for newcomers to IL/CA research with video data, as it outlined good practices related to, e.g., synchronizing different cameras and safely storing data. When discussing transcribing the recorded data, De Stefani reminded the attendees that transcripts are "a reduction of complex phenomena" and, as such, can never capture all aspects of the recorded interaction. He proposed three guiding principles that researchers can adhere to when transcribing (video) data:

- 1) *the principle of economy*, which entails transcribing only what is analytically relevant (rather than everything that is visible in the video recording);
- 2) *the principle of reduction and focus*, i.e., one should be selective in terms of which features of talk-in-interaction to transcribe so as to highlight a particular phenomenon (or phenomena); and
- 3) *the principle of audiocentricity*, i.e., talk should be taken as 'modality of reference'.

In the third plenary, Arnulf Deppermann and Alexandra Gubina used their recent study (Deppermann/Gubina 2021) on interactional uses of the German formats *darf/kann ich* ("may/can I") to illustrate an approach to building and analyzing a collection from video data in IL. Based on observations they had made in a previous study, Deppermann and Gubina built an initial sample and extracted some variations of the German "may/can I". They stressed the difference between a "sample" of cases (i.e., an unanalyzed set of cases) and a "collection" (i.e., an analyzed set of cases that are demonstrably instances of the same interactional phenomenon). In order to keep the scope of their study manageable, Deppermann and Gubina narrowed the study's focus by building a collection: Methodologically, they first worked comparatively, comparing cases with minimum and maximum contrast. Following an inductive analysis, they looked for both positive and negative evidence and examined various properties of the cases, e.g., temporal coordination between talk and embodied action, linguistic turn-design and actions accomplished. Deppermann and Gubina demonstrated that (analyses of) video data are indispensable if co-present interaction is to be studied from an interactional linguistic perspective. In particular, considering the interplay of verbal practices *and* embodied behavior (rather than only considering verbal conduct) can put a phenomenon in a completely different light. Besides the distinction between 'data sample' and 'collection', Deppermann and Gubina encouraged the ISILL participants to be aware of the use of comprehensive data treatment in order to avoid premature generalizations, and to work with contrasting cases.

In the fourth plenary talk, *Comparing things*, Jörg Zinken used the project "Norms, Rules and Morality across Languages" as a backdrop to talk about key procedures within IL research. He explained how he and his project team used collection building to compare inquiries made with the modal verb *may* to those made with *can* across languages, with a particular focus on the difference between how

these two deontic verbs check permissibility. He pointed out that a narrow focus is helpful to identify systematics in how word selection enters into the assembly of action. Zinken's collection, however, did not exclude any *may*- or *can*-inquiries based on their turn format or grammatical design. As a result of the research, Zinken noted that, in his collection, speakers used the English "may" for (intuitive notions of) 'requesting permission', whereas the German equivalent "darf" was more narrowly restricted to 'deontic meanings' (however, this does not straightforwardly translate into use for 'requesting permission'). In his conclusion, Zinken reminded the Summer Institute participants that collection building is an iterative process; as researchers analyze more instances of their phenomena, their collections will grow, develop, and also (as they exclude instances) shrink again. When confronted with deviant cases, Zinken argued that IL researchers must "let the data guide them", that "[researchers] are not responsible for the data", and to "trust in the orderliness of social life".

The last plenary talk *Verbal and embodied practices for addressing trouble with an embodied move: On the shifting focus of a research paper*, given by Emma Betz, addressed backstage matters that preceded the publication of a paper focused on adjusting embodied actions during the playing of board and card games (e.g., the position of dice on the table) (Golato et al. in preparation). Betz' talk specifically dealt with the issues of what label to give the phenomenon observed in their data ('repair'? or 'remedial actions?') and how to delimit the phenomenon. With regards to the former, she explained that the initial idea had been to compare the cases of embodied remedial moves found in their data with repair (of talk). However, due to the fact that embodied actions are not structured by a one-speaker-at-a-time turn-taking system as are turns at talk, this approach was later abandoned. In relation to the latter, the question 'Where is the language?', posed by a reviewer of their paper, prompted the authors to redirect the focus of their study. While the authors maintained the focus on embodied moves that become the target of a next adjusting move, they expanded their collection to include not only non-verbal, but also verbal and more complex interventions. In the Q&A that followed the plenary, the affordances and constraints of adjusting a study to comply with discipline-specific, non-members' questions such as 'Where is the language?' were discussed.

3. Data sessions on IL fundamentals

Each morning following the plenary sessions, the facilitators led data sessions on different fundamental topics in IL. This was to give participants insights into different methods of how to approach data sessions and how to ensure everybody's involvement in the analyses and discussions. The groups were different from the project work (see 4.), giving the participants the opportunity to work with different people in international, multilingual groups. As each facilitator presented data focusing on a different topic, the participants of the ISIL were introduced to a number of ways to approach data and work through them.

In their data session, *Barbara Fox* and *Chase Raymond* focused on turn extensions, sharing some of their data from a shoe shop and a meal among friends. Overall, the workshop participants focused on the distinction of two different forms of turn extensions in order to define and delimit the phenomena covered by this term: syntactically dependent increments and syntactically and prosodically independent

new TCUs (Couper-Kuhlen/Ono 2007). They observed both forms to give clarifications concerning the previous turn, the latter notably in contexts where a reaction of the interlocutor is expected but not given.

Elwys De Stefani focused on multimodal packages, i.e., on the (recurrent) combination of verbal and multimodal cues (e.g., mimics, gaze, gestures and other body movements, usage of objects) to form one holistic unit for conveying meaning, also called 'multimodal *gestalt*' (e.g., Mondada 2019). He presented an excerpt with Chinese tourists at a tourist office in Belgium using English as a lingua franca to ask for information about a certain place to visit. Workshop participants observed that the tourists and the office staff used bodily cues to support, clarify, complete or disambiguate verbally expressed information.

In his data session, *Arnulf Deppermann* provided a brief introduction into the history and concept of Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA). While working on data, the prevalent questions were: "Which categories are made relevant?" and "Why are some categories chosen over others when there are several available?". The data excerpts from different contexts revealed the great variety of how identity is constructed in talk – from "extreme case formulations" to belittle or to praise someone up to sexualization of women (Antaki/Widdicombe 1998; Pomerantz 1986).

Jörg Zinken focussed on elements in turn-initial position in Italian and German data. The turn-initial position plays an important role for the interpretation of the upcoming turn. Notably, items in turn-initial position serve to syntactically or semantically project what is to come (Kim/Kuroshima 2013; Schegloff 1987). Turn-initial position can also interrupt and/or get an interlocutor's attention. Zinken used a variety of excerpts in which the turn-initial position was occupied by both verbal and non-verbal (e.g., in-breaths, facial expressions, changes in body position) elements.

Emma Betz and *Alexandra Gubina* invited the participants to explore the use of German negation particle *nein* and its variation *nee*. The range of meanings and effects of the analyzed phenomenon in different types of interactions (e.g., story about an ex-boyfriend or a theory lesson in a driving school) was remarkable. In particular, Betz and Gubina demonstrated the role prosody can play in the case of *nee*; prosody can give a phonetically reduced *nee* an assessing function, even allowing a freestanding *nee* to function as an assessment (see Pomerantz 1984 on assessments).

4. Group work on 'fragments'

The project group work formed a major part of the Summer Institute, with at least half of each day dedicated to project work. Participants were divided into four groups according to their language preferences and competencies, resulting in two groups working with German and one each on English and French data. The goal of the group work was to conduct a study on a phenomenon identified by the groups themselves related to the theme of 'fragments'. Each group was assigned at least one facilitator specialized in the group's language of study for guidance and advice. The groups were also 'visited' by each of the other facilitators, who acted as external advisors and provided additional tips and guidance on the group's project. On the

last day of the Summer Institute, each group gave a short oral presentation of their findings.

4.1. German group A: *Getting out of assessments: The German 'schon'*

Working under the guidance of Emma Betz with data from her personal corpora as well as from the *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch*³ (DGD), the first German group identified a recurring fragment construction *Das ist schon ...* (engl. "That's rather ..."). The structure of this syntactically incomplete utterance projects an upcoming assessment, yet leaves the actual assessment un verbalized. After discussing every selected case, the group could not agree whether the incomplete assessments were to be positive or negative. Therefore, the group concluded that this vagueness and ambiguity in the projection are part and parcel of this practice. The fragmentary 'schon'-structure allows the speakers to avoid the risk of performing a face-threatening action and mark the cut-off assessment as delicate and dispreferred (Li 2021; Park/Kline 2020). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the recipients in the selected cases did not treat the assessment as missing.

4.2. German group B: *From fragments to 'needling'*

The second German group, whose facilitators were Arnulf Deppermann and Jörg Zinken, used the same collection of German data from the DGD and fieldwork data from Emma Betz as a corpus for their work. They observed a recurrent but very short (often syntactically incomplete) form of teasing practice: produced quickly after the turn the teasing targets and, despite syntactic incompleteness, treated as a complete action. The group's main difficulty was naming the phenomenon; they finally settled on the term '*needling*' (suggested by Barbara Fox) to capture this form of teasing that is quick and playful but simultaneously a mean and 'painful' attack. '*Needling*' was thus presented as an unexpected humorous comment on some previous turn or action which opens up a slot for a reaction, giving the 'object of the tease' (the teased person; cf. Günthner 1996) a chance to provide up-take or give an account for the behavior for which they were teased (Drew 1987).

4.3. English group: *Completion with gestures and non-lexical sounds*⁴

The third group worked on English data provided by their facilitators, Barbara Fox and Chase Raymond. The data mostly came from two kinds of interactional contexts: either where participants were preparing food together in their private kitchen, or from a small shoe shop. This group was interested in how an interactant uses gestures to complete a syntactically incomplete verbal turn, especially in cases featuring a combination of gestures and non-lexical sounds. This phenomenon appeared in contexts where the interactant was describing an action and where the

³ <https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/>

⁴ Special thanks to Emilie Nicolaisen for insights into the English group's work.

additional sound conveyed some physical and/or emotional personal feeling of the speaker. The combination of gesture and sound might project the aspect or manner of an action, e.g., amplitude, speed, or frequency. They are communicated only through the bodily movement and the non-lexical sound and not verbally (cf. Keevalik 2014).

4.4. French group: *French frags with (en)fin*

With data and guidance offered by their facilitator Elwys de Stefani, the French group identified uses of the temporal adverb *enfin* (and the phonetically reduced *fin*) "in the end" in syntactically incomplete units. While previous research identified uses of *(en)fin* for self-repair (Beeching 2001, 2011), the French group focussed on *enfin* in listing contexts. In one such use, speakers use *(en)fin* to cut off a list-item-in-progress, insert a parenthetical comment, and then resume the list (often recycling the cut talk before the *(en)fin*). In the other use, speakers utter *(en)fin* at a point where they are projecting a subsequent list item (e.g., after *ou* "or"). However, unlike in the first use, the *(en)fin* ends the list, without the speaker resuming it at a later point. The *(en)fin* thus marks the incomplete list as "good enough" for the speaker's local purposes. Both these uses take advantage of *(en)fin*'s semantic meaning of temporal finality as a resource to (momentarily or permanently) abandon projected syntax and (in the case of 'good-enough-list' *(en)fin*) efficiently close a syntactically incomplete TCU.

5. Concluding discussion and outlook

The 2022 ISIIL exemplifies how far the field has come since the introduction of the term "Interactional Linguistics" with the 2001 publication of Selting and Couper-Kuhlen's edited volume. The diverse lines of research demonstrated in the plenary sessions, fundamental workshops and project presentations of the ISIIL show that besides developing into a fully-fledged field of research (see, e.g., the recent founding of the journal *Interactional Linguistics*⁵), IL has also become rich in terms of potential applications and lines of interest.

IL's development and diversity were front of mind during the ISIIL's final discussion, which took place on the sixth and final day following the project presentations. In this final discussion, participants and facilitators alike reflected on the ISIIL as well as next steps for their own research projects and IL in general. While no definite conclusion was reached, central to the discussion was how to distinguish IL from related fields of research, particularly Conversation Analysis, and whether a clear distinction would be advantageous.

The discussion also included a look into the future, both for IL and for ISIIL. The facilitators were especially interested in hearing participants' experience and feedback to assist in their planning of future institutes. The participants shared their experiences preparing for and taking part in the Summer Institute. One point of contention among the participants was the amount of preparatory work (including readings, becoming acquainted with project data, and participating in pre-institute

⁵ <https://benjamins.com/catalog/il>

Zoom meetings) and the short amount of time the participants had to complete them.

Importantly, participants commented on how useful ISIIL was for their own research. By showing the participants their experiences and the work that is put into producing published research, as well as having participants work on their own group projects, the facilitators equipped and motivated the participants with a toolbox that they can apply to their own IL research. Indeed, it seems that most of the project groups plan on pursuing their topics further, potentially giving birth to new international collaborations and exciting research output.

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