

Interview with Arnulf Deppermann

Entrevista com Arnulf Deppermann

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Abstract: The following text presents an interview with Prof. Dr. Arnulf Deppermann, director of the Department of Pragmatics at the Leibniz Institute for the German Language (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*). The interview was conducted on March 31, 2026, at the Leibniz Institute for the German Language in Mannheim by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Schröder (UFMG). It addresses a range of issues concerning the current state of conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, including their global reception, historical development, and ongoing diversification. It also discusses methodological questions, such as the integration of multimodal resources into transcripts, the use of AI-based automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools for transcription, and corpus construction. In addition, it considers the limitations of conversation analysis, its possible interfaces with other approaches, and broader tendencies in contemporary linguistics. The interview was originally conducted in German. It was subsequently transcribed, revised, and adapted into a written version suitable for academic publication before being translated into English and Portuguese. For the sake of clarity and contextualization, all references to linguists mentioned during the interview have been expanded to include their first and last names, and footnotes with links to their homepages, university profiles, or encyclopedic entries have been added.

Keywords: conversation analysis; interactional linguistics; multimodality; corpora; talk-in-interaction.

Resumo: Apresentamos uma entrevista com Prof. Dr. Arnulf Deppermann, diretor do Departamento de Pragmática do Instituto Leibniz de Língua Alemã (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*). A entrevista foi realizada em 31 de março de 2026, no Instituto Leibniz de Língua Alemã, em Mannheim, pela Profa. Dra. Ulrike Schröder (UFMG). Ela aborda uma série de questões relativas ao estado atual da análise da conversa e da linguística interacional, incluindo sua recepção global, seu desenvolvimento histórico e sua diversificação em curso. Também discute questões metodológicas,

como a integração de recursos multimodais às transcrições, o uso de ferramentas de reconhecimento automático de fala (ASR) baseadas em inteligência artificial para a transcrição e a construção de corpora. Além disso, considera as limitações da análise da conversa, suas possíveis interfaces com outras abordagens e tendências mais amplas da linguística contemporânea. A entrevista foi originalmente realizada em alemão. Posteriormente, foi transcrita, revisada e adaptada para uma versão escrita adequada à publicação acadêmica, antes de ser traduzida para o inglês e o português. Para fins de clareza e contextualização, todas as referências a linguistas mencionados durante a entrevista foram ampliadas de modo a incluir seus nomes e sobrenomes, e foram acrescentadas notas com links para suas páginas pessoais, perfis universitários ou verbetes enciclopédicos.

Palavras-chave: análise da conversa; linguística interacional; multimodalidade; corpora; fala-em-interação.

1 INTRODUCTION TO ARNULF DEPPERMAN

Arnulf Deppermann is an internationally recognized scholar in the fields of conversation analysis and interactional linguistics. His scholarly work has made foundational contributions to the study of the interactional constitution of actions and meanings, grammar in interaction, multimodality, and an empirically grounded pragmatics based on authentic data. He heads the Department of Pragmatics at the Leibniz Institute for the German Language (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*).¹ His body of work comprises 204 articles and other scholarly publications, ten monographs or authored books, and 29 edited or co-edited collected volumes, yearbooks, and special issues. His research career also establishes an important interface with spoken-language corpus linguistics, especially through the investigation and development of resources for the study of German in interaction. Deppermann serves as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Pragmatics*² (Elsevier) and is a member of the editorial boards of *Intercultural Pragmatics* (De Gruyter Brill),³ *Interactional Linguistics* (John

¹ <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/>

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-pragmatics>

³ <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/de/journal/key/iprg/html>

Benjamins),⁴ *Pragmatics*⁵ (John Benjamins), *Research on Language and Social Interaction* (Taylor & Francis)⁶ and the series *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics*⁷ (CUP). He is also co-editor-in-chief of *Gesprächsforschung: Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion* (IDS),⁸ editor of the *OraLingua* collection (Meiner)⁹, and co-editor of the series *Studien zur Deutschen Sprache* (IDS).¹⁰

2 THE INTERVIEW

Ulrike Schröder – Thank you very much for taking the time to give this interview. To begin, I would be interested in your academic background. You studied psychology, philology, and philosophy, correct?

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, psychology, philosophy, and German linguistics.

Ulrike Schröder – And first, you worked in rather different areas. You were employed as a research associate, first in psychology and then in sociology. How did you come to conversation analysis? What led you to take it up?

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, during my psychology studies I was very dissatisfied with the fact that, on the one hand, only quantitative methods were being taught. On the other hand, I worked as a student assistant in a project analyzing biographical interviews with brain-injured veterans of the Second World War. Through that work I came to realize that what primarily interested me was, in fact, language and communication. At first this interest arose from a methodological perspective, and then through theories of narratology, speech act theory, and conversation analysis, to have a better basis for evaluating these data.

Ulrike Schröder – Who was particularly important to you at that time, in the 1980s and 1990s?

⁴ <https://benjamins.com/catalog/il>

⁵ <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/24064238>

⁶ <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/hrls20>

⁷ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/series/studies-in-interactional-sociolinguistics/>

⁸ <http://www.gespraechsforschung-ozs.de/>

⁹ <https://meiner-elibrary.de/book-series/110/oralingua>

¹⁰ <https://pub.ids-mannheim.de/laufend/studien/>

Arnulf Deppermann – I began that work as a student assistant in 1989, and then in 1990 and 1991 I completed an internship here at the IDS with Werner Nothdurft¹¹ and Werner Kallmeyer.¹² That is how I came to conversation analysis. Before that, I had been working on narrative theory, following Fritz Schütze.¹³ [...] I then wrote a dissertation that was already oriented toward conversation analysis, on credibility in conflict talk. I still completed it in psychology, but it was supervised by Johannes Schwitalla,¹⁴ who at the time was a very important figure in the field of conversation analysis in Germany.

Ulrike Schröder – He edited that very fine book with which we can now also work abroad.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, *Gesprochenes Deutsch*.¹⁵

Ulrike Schröder – Exactly.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, and that was also very helpful at the time, because I knew preliminary versions, precisely during the period when I was writing my dissertation. He would occasionally give me chapters to read, and I was supposed to provide feedback. And then I realized that there was no place for me in psychology for this kind of research. During my doctoral studies, I then studied German and philosophy as well, to have a degree in German. But after that I spent the first nine years in sociology. [...] There I had the fortunate constellation that my project leader at the time, Klaus Neumann-Braun in Frankfurt,¹⁶ wanted someone to carry out a project on interaction among adolescents. That gave me the opportunity to do conversation analysis in a sociological context. I also had the opportunity to qualify myself linguistically, because it became clear to me that my future would not be in sociology. I am not a sociologist, and I was not primarily interested in sociological topics either. Then, in 2006, I received a professorship in German linguistics in Düsseldorf.

¹¹ https://pub.ids-mannheim.de/autoren/ehem-ids/nothdurft_werner/

¹² <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/org/personal/ehem-ids/kallmeyer/>

¹³ <https://soz.ovgu.de/Mikrosoziologie/Ehemalige+und+Emeriti/>

¹⁴ <https://www.germanistik.uni-wuerzburg.de/sprawi/team/ehemalige-mitarbeiter/prof-dr-johannes-schwitalla/>

¹⁵ <https://pub.ids-mannheim.de/extern/grg/grg33.html>

¹⁶ <http://klaus-neumann-braun.de/>

Ulrike Schröder – I would be interested in how you would describe the differences between ethnomethodological conversation analysis in the United States and *Gesprächsanalyse* in Germany, and where you would locate yourself, especially in the context of interactional linguistics.

Arnulf Deppermann – Well, in 2000 we founded the journal *Gesprächsforschung*, and we did so quite deliberately, because conversation research in Germany certainly looks somewhat different from what you find in American or Scandinavian contexts. In the United States and Scandinavia, most scholars are still very strongly dominated by classical conversation analysis and its concepts. In Germany, by contrast, *Gesprächsforschung* has always tended to function as a cover term for a whole range of different approaches. These include conversation analysis, of course, but also functional pragmatics, more strongly ethnographic approaches, interactional sociolinguistics, and people who also come from pragmatics.

Ulrike Schröder – That was in the 1980s, right?

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, Franz Hundsniß¹⁷ and those people were always very theory-driven in some way. And I would say that in Germany this has changed over the past twenty years in the sense that scholars now seek stronger connections with international research. That is, more conversation analysis is being done. At the same time, of course, the conception of conversation analysis has also broadened. On the one hand, this is above all due to multimodal research, which has brought new questions, methods, and phenomena to the fore that in fact go beyond classical conversation analysis. The other point is that, in Germany as well as in other countries, conversation analysis has basically tended to move from sociology into linguistics. In sociology, practically no conversation analysis is done anymore. Originally it came from there, including Germany, where it was introduced by Jörg Bergmann.¹⁸ But now I have to say that I do not know any major sociologist who does conversation analysis.

¹⁷ <https://www.germanistenverzeichnis.phil.uni-erlangen.de/institutslisten/>

¹⁸ https://ekvv.uni-bielefeld.de/pers_publ/publ/PersonDetail.jsp?personId=190519

Ulrike Schröder – Perhaps Christian Meyer?¹⁹

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, from ethnomethodology. I would not call that conversation analysis. Ruth Ayaß²⁰ is also more from ethnomethodology. Those are the people who are still closest to it.

Ulrike Schröder – They are also from that first generation.

Arnulf Deppermann – They know it, and both were trained directly by Jörg Bergmann. Of course. Otherwise, however, there have been occasional, rather tentative attempts to revive a kind of sociology of interaction. [...] I also have to say that ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have really developed apart from one another. I think they were always different, but by now there are in some cases extreme oppositions, with ethnomethodologists sharply distancing themselves from conversation analysis and saying that conversation analysts have betrayed the foundations. Methodologically, interactional linguistics is not fundamentally distinguishable from conversation analysis. It has different research questions, because it is clear, of course, that interest in linguistic forms and in the finer distinctions involved in combining different linguistic forms is more central. There is also a tendency for linguists to work with relatively large corpora and databases and to begin with form-based analyses. That is clearly recognizable. They also know less about the sociological heritage of conversation analysis and its sociological roots, I think. Few younger scholars today have really read Alfred Schütz²¹ or Erving Goffman²² or know John Gumperz²³. So, it is clearly more linguistic, although the methodology of sequential analysis and work with collections corresponds to what you also do in conversation analysis. But not in ethnomethodology, of course, since ethnomethodologists do not work with conversations.

¹⁹ <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/centre-for-human-data-society/people/leere-model-1-1-1-1-1>

²⁰ <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/soziologie/fakultaet/personen/ayass/>

²¹ www.kim.uni-konstanz.de/soz-archiv/archivbestaende/bestaende-a-z/schuetz-alfred/

²² <https://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/>

²³ <https://digicoll.lib.berkeley.edu/search?ln=en&p=anthrohub>

Ulrike Schröder – A very prominent colleague in conversation analysis recently told me that he believes *Gesprächsanalyse* is nearing its end because it is losing itself in questions of detail. Would you agree, or would you say that it is diversifying and that this is not necessarily something negative?

Arnulf Deppermann – I think that, if you look at this from the perspective of the history of science, it is a typical development of disciplines that have become established and stabilized. It is clear, of course, that today it is quite difficult to establish a major new topic on which nothing has previously been done. That is one point. Today you can no longer proceed as Harvey Sacks²⁴ did in the 1960s, saying, I will approach the data completely without preconceptions, and then I will find some phenomenon and simply analyze it. I mean, today you are situated within a cumulative research history that has developed over sixty years. And people should know that history when investigating something. But of course, that also shapes how we see things. It is certainly true that we are in part witnessing a miniaturization of research questions. I see that as well, and of course work is becoming increasingly specialized and increasingly fine-grained. This tendency is even stronger in the Anglophone world than in the German-speaking world. If I submit one and the same article—not linguistically, but in terms of content—in German, the response is often that the analysis is too narrow: it should show more variation, account for greater variance, and say more about how the practice works in general. In the English-speaking world, exactly the opposite is the case. Reviewers are more likely to say that it is far too broad, and that one should focus on a specific context of use with one form, or at most two, so that something can be compared more effectively. These are certainly different scholarly cultures. [...] In Great Britain, the United States, Finland, and so on, you see many careers in which people have remained very narrowly within a thematic context, practically from their master's thesis onward, and they also obtain professorships on that basis. So, these are different scholarly cultures. [...] People always say that so-called conversation analysis is an atheoretical approach concerned only with empirical findings. That is not true, but the impression arises because all articles ultimately remain under the methodological premise and foreground the empirical

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Sacks

analysis. It would certainly be desirable to publish more theory-oriented articles as well, articles that show the larger picture and make more explicit what social-theoretical, interaction-theoretical, and understanding-theoretical results and conceptions conversation analysis has produced.

Ulrike Schröder – I know this research tradition from Brazil as well. Many students arrive at the university, then begin an introduction into academic research, called *Iniciação Científica* here, and many continue with the same topic all the way through the doctorate. I come from a background in communication studies in Essen, which is strongly historiographical and interdisciplinary in its orientation, drawing on whatever each discipline had to offer that was relevant to communication. This is why I often ask myself: Can we still work with this terminology? To what extent does it fit the history of science? What does that mean concretely for our own theory or for our methodological approach?

Arnulf Deppermann – I think these really are different scholarly cultures. I mean, American scholarly culture, which is also guiding for conversation analysis, is pragmatist, and it usually does not have any historical depth dimension. Today, of course, you find a rather specific conception of historicity in ethnomethodology. I find it rather enormously orthodox, backward-looking, and quite biblical-exegetical with respect to the writings of Harvey Sacks²⁵ and Gerold Garfinkel.²⁶ But on the one hand this is, of course, only a certain historical depth, and on the other hand there is a limited selection of canonical figures to whom people regularly refer. In conversation analysis, it is of course the case that references are occasionally made to phenomenology and to Goffman. Other references are rare. What is particularly regrettable, of course, is that we also have German traditions of communication-oriented linguistic research: Karl Bühler²⁷ above all, but also Philipp Wegener²⁸ or Hermann Paul,²⁹ who, because of the language barrier, are practically not received at all in the American context.

²⁵ <http://www.garfinkelarchive.com/sacks>

²⁶ <http://www.garfinkelarchive.com/home>

²⁷ <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/en/persons/karl-buehler>

²⁸ https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Philipp_Wegener

²⁹ <https://uni-freiburg.de/hpcl-en/the-centre/>

Ulrike Schröder – Bühler was translated very late.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, and my impression is that he was not much received, either there or elsewhere outside the German-speaking world. And that is, of course, unfortunate. [...] You can see here that the increasing linguistic hegemony of English also leads to a hegemony of theory. At the same time, it does not explain everything. I mean, you see, for example, that many people in conversation analysis are opposed to referring to pragmatics in any way whatsoever—to Paul Grice,³⁰ John Searle,³¹ or John Austin.³² And of course you can say, all right, what these people did methodologically does not correspond at all to what one does in conversation analysis; we do not want to work that way. But there are, on the one hand, certain basic ideas and, on the other, certain lines of research—especially when you move into the area of action formation and action description, which in recent years has increasingly played a larger role in conversation analysis and interactional linguistics. You really ought to take note of what has been done on this in pragmatics. Most people in conversation analysis do not do that. And usually, when you include it in an article, it gets crossed out. The reviewers say: We do not need that; it is all just speculation, and it is not empirical. These are useless approaches. [...] Methodologically, I find that understandable and justifiable, but theoretically I often find it to be a problem.

Ulrike Schröder – I agree. One thing that has concerned me since I began engaging more closely with conversation analysis is, for example, the coherence of the analysis of communication, since that is, after all, one of the claims of conversation analysis: to investigate the “machinery of conversation”.³³ I have not understood why certain terms have still not been changed, for example “recipient” and “recipient design”, but also “speaker” and “hearer”. What exactly is the “emic” approach [...]? In handbooks today, you increasingly find abbreviations or simplifications rather than critical

³⁰ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grice/>

³¹ <https://philpeople.org/profiles/john-r-searle>

³² <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/austin-jl>

³³ See Liddicoat, Anthony J. 2007. *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis*. 3rd ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic, p. 6. This understanding goes back to Sacks “technology of conversation” (Sacks, Harvey. 1984. On doing ‘being ordinary.’, In Atkinson, J. M. & Heritage, J. (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 413–429.

engagement with such foundational questions related to terminology. Charles Goodwin³⁴ also pointed out that conversation analysis can by no means claim an emic approach for itself. After all, the term comes from phonetics and was later adopted by anthropology and the ethnography of speaking. It refers to an abstract concept that members of a community invoke in their metacommunicative reflections on the communication process. So, I ask myself: since conversation analysis places particular value on leaving cognition aside and examining only the machinery, how is it ensured that the participants in interaction are indeed doing the same thing, especially against the background of fragmented communication?

Arnulf Deppermann – Those are many questions, or rather one question that touches on many different aspects at once. Let me perhaps begin this way: I think that a fundamental question of conversation analysis, one that it did not make explicit at the beginning, is the question of how intersubjectivity is established and how it is possible. That question is connected both to this emic aspect and to the question of cognition. These are two things that are, of course, closely related. The initially productive idea in conversation analysis is that intersubjectivity is not guaranteed cognitively in any way, but is instead produced in interaction, and that the sequential organization of interaction is, on the one hand, the instrument for producing intersubjectivity and, on the other, the arena in which intersubjectivity can be displayed at all—through reciprocal practices of showing and through the idea that addressees have the possibility of displaying their understanding, just as the speaker of a turn can show whether he or she feels properly understood. If you want to speak about intersubjectivity, this is methodologically an empirically fruitful approach. This is especially true if I compare it, for example, with frame semantics, which proceeds in an aporetic way because ultimately it provides no criterion for whether frame A or frame B should apply. The same holds for critical discourse analysis, which is usually very theory-driven and often just as prejudice-driven as the prejudices it always attributes to people, beginning already with the idea of which discourses are hegemonic, and so on. With respect to this empiricization of the notion of what intersubjectivity, knowledge, and so forth are, I find conversation analysis successful and

³⁴ <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/clic/cgoodwin/>

necessary. But I consider it completely wrong to adopt an anti-cognitivist stance, because then we can no longer explain much of what happens in interactions. There is no doubt that inference, for example, plays a central role in interactions. Or consider the interactional histories approach, with which I am more closely concerned: people who repeatedly do the same things with one another do them quite differently the second, third, fifth, or twentieth time than they did the first time. And you cannot explain that at all if you start from machinery. The machinery has no history; the machinery has no memory; the machinery knows no intentions and cannot draw inferences. And this is where you can see today where the gaps in conversation analysis lie. I do not want to circumvent them by being eclectic and saying: fine, we have the machinery, and otherwise we have interview methods or psycholinguistic methods. My view is rather that you can try to investigate something like common ground, memory, and so on interaction-historically, beyond the sequence. For that, you need techniques of data sampling and particular methods of data analysis. It is aporetic to try to define cognition out of interaction, because either you can then no longer talk about many things at all, or you proceed as some conversation analysts do, for example in discursive psychology: they constantly draw on cognitive considerations in their analyses, but do not make clear that they are doing so, instead simply claiming that it is all public action and observable. I can see that people draw inferences, but how they draw them and how they describe them is not simply observable.

Ulrike Schröder – That does indeed happen frequently.

Arnulf Deppermann – The other question concerns the emic perspective. I am not particularly familiar with the history of research on this issue. I can only say [...] that the terms conversation analysis uses—beginning already with something like “TCU”³⁵ or “turn-taking”, or also the concept of “repair”—are, of course, scholarly terms that have no direct correlate in any everyday conceptual procedure. The same is true of action categorizations. When a category such as “instruction” is used in conversation analysis, it is not necessarily congruent with what an ordinary person would understand by instruction. Laypersons’ metapragmatic awareness was never really a

³⁵ Stands for “turn-constructive unit”.

criterion in conversation analysis for the correctness of its reconstruction. The understanding of “emic” that conversation analysis has refers to the practical orientations of participants. When you say, “people orient to XY” or “they use a particular practice,” the issue is what is shown in action and what is followed situationally as a kind of action logic.

Ulrike Schröder – The insight is gradually taking hold in conversation analysis that language cannot be analyzed in isolation. You also have to look at what else is happening. This creates points of contact and overlaps with fields of research that have long been concerned with multimodality, such as gesture studies, or early ethnographic research. My impression is that conversation analysis has some difficulty with the question of how this interface is supposed to work. To take another example, the holistic gestalts that are increasingly being investigated also have points of connection with construction grammar. When someone produces a facial shrug, it usually occurs together with further shrugs, a shoulder shrug, and so on. There are already established terms for these phenomena, but you are not really supposed to use them. And that is, of course, a huge problem for transcription. Is that eclecticism?

Arnulf Deppermann – That is a difficult question. From a conversation-analytic perspective, you would say that if you simply import certain concepts from other theories from the outset and say, “I will now use these as an analytic instrument,” things often go wrong. I know examples of this, especially with gestures. There are researchers, for example, who claim that they are doing conversation-analytic work and then say: I am now asking how iconic gestures are used in interaction. That is already the wrong starting point, because iconic gestures as such are not something to which participants in conversation orient. The first step is always that I would have to identify which iconic gestures we have, or I would have to concentrate on gestures that have a specific systematic use. Last year I edited a special issue with Tanya Stivers.³⁶ It includes contributions that show that the analytic categories to be used for referring to the phenomena first must be worked out in detailed single-case analyses. If you then want to test them regarding their generalizability, their dependence on particular contextual variables,

³⁶ <https://sites.google.com/g.ucla.edu/tanya-stivers/home>

their relation to genres, or something of that kind, then it is often necessary to code—and certainly at the point where you do anything statistical.

Ulrike Schröder – I see it the same way.

Arnulf Deppermann – Bad eclecticism, for me, consists in simply taking descriptive or analytic terms from different theoretical components and then using them from the outset to describe one's data. A meaningful reference to foreign or other theories would be: I have first carried out my analysis autochthonously with the conversational data. I see that there are certain systematicities here that I can substantiate on the basis of the data, and now I may see that similar findings have already been produced, for example, in experimental contexts, or that they have already been postulated by some theorists, and that you can clearly identify a congruence. That is absolutely legitimate. [...]

Ulrike Schröder – In which countries is interactional linguistics actually practiced?

Arnulf Deppermann – Worldwide? I think it is certainly strongest in Scandinavia. In Finland, for example, interactional linguistics—if you compare it with Germany—has mainstream status. In many areas of language studies there, it is simply a common and, in some cases, even a leading approach. Germany is, of course, a much larger country, so quite a lot is happening here as well. What the future will be, I do not entirely know. You also mentioned this at the beginning: many important researchers in the field have now retired. [...] In the United States, the leading researchers are still, for the most part, not in linguistics. There are a few, but even those, such as Barbara Fox³⁷ and Sandra Thompson,³⁸ are now leaving. Chase Raymond,³⁹ to be sure, is in linguistics. There are still a few people in sociology and above all in communication sciences. Their communication departments are simply quite different from those in Germany. In Germany, communication studies are now mostly quantitatively oriented. [...]

³⁷ <https://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/barbara-fox>

³⁸ <https://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/people/sandra-thompson>

³⁹ <https://www.chasewesleyraymond.com/>

Ulrike Schröder – How do you see the situation outside the Western world?

Arnulf Deppermann – In China, we are seeing an enormous expansion of interactional linguistics. I notice this to some extent because I am Associate Editor of the *Journal of Pragmatics*. We now receive a great many submissions from China, with a substantial proportion devoted to interactional-linguistic topics. It is interesting, and certainly also related to the structure of Chinese, that they do exactly what you find among Germans and Finns as well: they are particularly fond of particle studies. That is a topic that is especially popular in Japan as well. In Japan there are quite a few people working in interactional linguistics. These are the two countries outside the Western countries where it is practiced most. Of course, they are in any case the research-strongest countries outside the Western world. In other countries it is much more sporadic. There are a few people in Turkey, in Israel, and in Indonesia. Also in Africa. But Latin America—you know this better than I do—outside Brazil, is almost a blank map. Discourse analysis, for example, is very prominent there.

Ulrike Schröder – Yes, these things are often mixed as well. In general, my impression is that it is somewhat less prominent in Romance-language countries.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, absolutely. In Italy there are some people doing interactional linguistics, especially also in the intersection with more applied topics, medicine, psychology, and so on—Renata Galatolo,⁴⁰ Marilena Fatigante,⁴¹ and people like that do this kind of work there. Here in Germany, Elwys De Stefani,⁴² for example, also works in Italian studies. In Spain there is surprisingly little. In France it has become much less since the area in Lyon is no longer as strong. By contrast, research in French-speaking Switzerland is stronger; with Simona Pekarek Doehler,⁴³ for example, and, from an ethnomethodological perspective, Esther González-Martínez,⁴⁴ there are research-active people in the Suisse Romande.

⁴⁰ <https://www.unibo.it/sitoweb/renata.galatolo>

⁴¹ <https://phd.uniroma1.it/web/MARILENA-FATIGANTE-FATIGANTE>

⁴² https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/rose/personen/de_stefani.html

⁴³ <https://www.unine.ch/isla/biographie/simona-pekarek-doebler>

⁴⁴ <https://studies.unifr.ch/en/doctorat/soc/sociologyfrench>

Ulrike Schröder – Yes, that is true. A question about corpora, about the AGD⁴⁵ and the FOLK⁴⁶ corpus.

Arnulf Deppermann – AGD is the Archive for Spoken German; FOLK is a separate corpus.

Ulrike Schröder – Yes, a separate corpus. There are now efforts to undertake European comparisons. Uwe Küttner⁴⁷ and Jörg Zinken⁴⁸ wrote an article that I recently used in a seminar, and it brought a question back to mind. The article dealt with these breakfast conversations; it was a first comparison of sorts—Polish family breakfast conversations, German and British breakfast conversations, and so on. We then also discussed this in the seminar: What is the situation here in Brazil? And you ask yourself: To what extent does such a corpus represent a cross-section of a country, a society, or a cultural group? It is not at all easy to find people whom you can actually record, especially outside more highly educated strata. Many recordings with such groups are always overrepresented in the corpus; for example, there are many educational contexts—schools or universities—and, in general, students are automatically more accessible. That was also the case for us, with exchange students, for example, whom you can access more easily. But with societies increasingly drifting apart—and by this, I mean societies in many different countries—I have asked myself whether this is representative in any way. This came back to mind when I looked at those breakfast conversations. [...]

Arnulf Deppermann – The question of the representativeness of the corpus has concerned us a great deal from the very beginning in developing FOLK. I do not want to go into all the aspects I could mention here, but one question is, of course: What do we understand by representativeness in the first place? That is not at all easy to answer. Let us begin with the point you also mentioned: Which social groups are represented in the corpus at all? What you say is, of course, entirely correct. In the early years of the corpus,

⁴⁵ https://agd.ids-mannheim.de/index_en. AGD stands for *Archiv für Gesprochenes Deutsch*.

⁴⁶ <https://agd.ids-mannheim.de/folk>. FOLK stands for *Forschungs- und Lehrkorpus Gesprochenes Deutsch*.

⁴⁷ <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/prag/personal/kuettner/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/prag/personal/zinken/>

we had a very strong predominance of students, because those recordings were simply the easiest to obtain. Clearly, I can teach seminars and say: please record conversations in your shared apartment. Those are the easiest to get. In recent years, in one major publication and one smaller one, we developed detailed reflections on the stratification concept, asking: How does the corpus have to be developed so that it better satisfies certain criteria of representativeness? This led to the decision that one direction of corpus expansion would be the following: we would concentrate on telephone conversations and really try to fill the gaps regionally and in terms of age. That means that we carried out targeted recording campaigns, for example in Saxony or eastern Germany and northern Germany—regions that had previously been missing in the German-German language area. Second, we also paid close attention to getting more older people into the corpus. The third aspect is now emerging: when we first planned FOLK, from 2006 to 2008, it was very clearly planned as a project for spoken German. We now see that social reality has changed in such a way that you increasingly must allow for multilingualism. I would not say that we are actively seeking it out, because we cannot transcribe 120 languages or the like. We would not have the capacity, and we could not annotate them either. But of course, we now increasingly also have conversations in which code-switching plays a role and languages appear that we can manage here to some extent, such as Turkish, Italian, Russian, and Ukrainian. That is the next step. We are aware that the sociodemographic aspects need to be expanded. This is increasingly the case in the FOLK corpus. [...] All of this does not apply to PECII.⁴⁹ PECII is this European comparative corpus. There was an entirely different logic behind it. Jörg Zinken and Giovanni Rossi⁵⁰ developed it primarily for Italian. And the languages included are German, Italian, Polish, Finnish—I do not know whether French data are also included—English and Hebrew are supposed to be added. The idea was rather to find activity contexts that regularly occur in all of these languages or cultures. These were family breakfasts with children, car rides with friends, and board games. That has no claim to representativeness at all, but rather a claim to standardization: you say, we realize similar activities; what do they look like

⁴⁹ https://agd.ids-mannheim.de/PECI_extern.shtml. PECII stands for .Parallel European Corpus of Informal Interaction.

⁵⁰ <https://soc.ucla.edu/person/giovanni-rossi/>

in different languages and cultures? The question of whether they are really culturally representative is another matter. Yes, I know people criticize this and say: This is so stereotypical, this heteronormative idea of the nuclear family that is being regarded as a normative model. We can debate whether that is appropriate or a superfluous criticism, but the point is not representativeness; the data are much too small for that. The representativeness of the social dimension was, however, rather the original idea of FOLK, that is, to represent the entire communicative household—the full range of interaction types and genres that exist in our society—in the corpus. And there, of course, you simply encounter limits, because certain contexts are not accessible. What is underrepresented is conflict.

Ulrike Schröder – Exactly, I noted that down as well, because I think it is a very exciting topic, especially from a comparative perspective.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, and that is not present in the FOLK corpus. Then, of course, there are certain genres that you simply cannot get into. We cannot record collective bargaining negotiations. For a public corpus, we cannot include medical communication, because it is not authorized for such purposes. You can obtain authorization for a research project, but not for a corpus open to the scholarly public, where a very large number of people can do all sorts of things with the data. We do at least have topics such as physiotherapy, but we do not have psychotherapy or anything similar. There are clear limits. They have to do with data protection and with access. We do not have aristocratic communication in the corpus. There are social strata that close themselves off; they are opposed to being studied. Nor do we have decision-making communication among bankers or anything of that kind. When trade secrets play a role, we cannot get access there either. There are simply many segments of social practice that we cannot enter.

Ulrike Schröder – Yes, that is unfortunate, but I think everyone has that problem. A question about the point you just addressed regarding transcriptions: We have now begun to engage more closely with automatic transcription, that is, automatic speech recognition, and last year we had a

workshop on this with Jan Gorisch⁵¹ from the IDS. Since then, we have been using aTrain.⁵² There are studies suggesting that it still makes no difference in terms of speed. You must know that, unlike in Germany, in Brazil we have a series of institutional problems: we have neither mid-level academic staff (*Mittelbau*) nor secretarial support. That means we do everything by ourselves. Additionally, we observe that many people prefer to write their master's theses or dissertations on topics and in areas that are less demanding in the sense that collecting data and transcribing them are not required. In that respect, ASR is very helpful. Coupled with our focus on intercultural interaction, it is an additional relief, at least when you have a great deal of transcription experience. Then you can say: all right, this first step can initially be done by AI-supported ASR, and then you go in to check and modify it and then add the prosodic aspects and the bodily resources. Finally, in Brazil you are always in danger of falling behind, because compared with Europe or the United States there is simply not the same amount of money at our disposal, let alone technological developments that, today, proceed incredibly fast and cost money. We have no access to them at all. One question, therefore, is: How do you view automatic transcription? Over the years I have experienced how valuable it is to transcribe, and at the same time new topics develop. You really go along with the data; you experience sequentiality and co-occurrences. Then, you see: many things are happening here at the same time; something interesting is happening there; I will go back into that. And eventually you may even modify the research topic you had at the beginning. For someone who works with ASR from the outset, this experience is shortened. They do not know it. To what extent is that a problem? What discussions are there about it? And above all: How do you see this against the background of multimodality? A great deal is happening there now. But for those who are not necessarily working within conversation analysis, it is becoming increasingly difficult to read transcriptions at all; in addition, everyone sporadically does something different.

Arnulf Deppermann – On the first question: here, within the FOLK project, we regularly conduct studies on the effectiveness of automatic

⁵¹ <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/prag/personal/gorisch/>

⁵² <https://business-analytics.uni-graz.at/en/research/atrain/>

transcription. At the moment the situation is still that it is worthwhile only to a very limited extent—at least if you apply the criteria of a GAT⁵³ transcript. And it is worthwhile only when you have interactions that are dyadic, without major background noise, with few overlaps, and without dialect. If those conditions are met, then it can indeed save time. But under all conditions involving multiactivity, that is, many participants, speakers who use dialect, poor sound quality, and so forth, it is rather pointless. Then this kind of transcription can at best provide a kind of content overview of the conversations, so that you have a rough orientation: What are they doing here? What are they doing there? What are they talking about at all? But then it is not really a transcript; it is more a kind of rough content indexing. That can also be meaningful if you have very large quantities of data. If one wants to produce that, then you can take automatically generated transcripts, edit them, summarize them a bit, and put them into proper written form. But strictly speaking, that is not really a transcript. I myself still transcribe a lot. And I also think—here I would absolutely agree with what you said—that it is important for me personally. I also have data pre-transcribed by a student assistant, at the GAT minimal level, sometimes also at the basic level, but it already begins there that I often rework these basic transcripts very extensively, because I would do this or that differently, because I hear this or that differently. And I think this is not only the transcript as part of the data from which the analysis proceeds; it is also, of course, because you hear the data more precisely when you consciously have to make transcription decisions. In doing so, you notice many phenomena in the data that you otherwise would not have become aware of. That is also what Gail Jefferson⁵⁴ always said. And it is interesting that Jefferson actually derived all the research questions she had from the practice of transcription. Laughter, pauses, overlap: all these things that Jefferson investigated never came from some theoretical conception of interaction or some social-theoretical question, as in Goffman or the like;

⁵³ GesprächAnalytischen Transkriptionssystem, versão em português: SCHRÖDER, Ulrike; MENDES, Mariana Carneiro; PIRES, Caroline Caputo; SILVA, Diogo Henrique Alves da; NASCIMENTO, Thiago da Cunha; PAULA, Flavia Fidelis de. *Um sistema para transcrever a fala-em-interação: GAT 2*. Veredas – Revista de Estudos Linguísticos, v. 20, n. 2, p. 6–61, 2016, <https://periodicos.ufjf.br/index.php/veredas/article/view/28203>

⁵⁴ https://emcawiki.net/Gail_Jefferson

they always came from the practice of transcription. I would not make this into a dogma. I would neither say that transcription is already the analysis—no, it is not—nor would I say that you can generate sensible questions only if you transcribe your data yourself. But I do think it is a very essential source for identifying phenomena, arriving at research questions, and noticing precisely new things that did not already come from one's own theory or research question. I would think that this is very important, and it must continue to be taught. You cannot and should not skip this point and say: How wonderful, in FOLK we already have all the transcripts, and people now only have to learn how to analyze. That is completely wrong. It is a craft that people naturally have to learn. The second question you had was about multimodal transcription. Yes, I also see, even within conversation analysis, that many people say: I do not read these transcripts. I do not make them myself anyway; I do not read them at all. Instead, ((laughs)) a transcript appears, and then they say: Where does it continue?

Ulrike Schröder – It is also sometimes incredibly difficult, even for me to this day. Sometimes it is so hard to understand: What is this about? Because the context is missing, or because something was not formulated properly to explain: the transcript begins at precisely the following point. And A is this person and B is that person.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, exactly. I think we could talk about this for a long time. Perhaps a few points. First, I think the term “transcription” is misleading. You know, when you have a convention such as GAT, then you can say: all right, we have different levels of transcriptional precision, but at the level of precision you adopt, the convention specifies practically deterministically what and how you have to transcribe.

Ulrike Schröder – Yes.

Arnulf Deppermann – That is never the case with multimodality. These are rather resources for annotating something, but there is no multimodal transcription convention that says you must transcribe object use, gesture, facial expression—whatever. This means that, from the outset, you cannot decide on the basis of the transcription convention what is to be transcribed. Conversely, however, the transcript is to an even greater degree the result of

the analysis in terms of selectivity and granularity—how precisely you do it. That means it emerges over the course of the analysis. For example, I never have student assistants make multimodal transcripts. It makes no sense at all. I tried it for a few years, or perhaps for one or two years, and then I saw: that is simply a pity for the working time. I threw it all away. Of course, that also frustrates people ((laughs)), because they then have the feeling that they have done everything wrong. But they have not necessarily done anything wrong; they could not know what is relevant and how to categorize what you see in a meaningful way, because they had no research question and because they had not themselves worked analytically with the data. And for that reason, producing such a transcript is an entirely different process and involves an entirely different kind of accountability in deciding why I represent something here. Second: it is always very important to reflect on what I put into the transcript, what I show through still images, where I have to place them, and which ones I need to convey an evident, gestalt-like visual impression of what is happening. I mean, if I now have five annotation lines under every speaker's contribution, the multimodal gestalt completely gets lost. I can no longer imagine what is happening at all. For that, you must have a meaningful selection—and, of course, one that has in some way been analytically tested—so that you can say: What is really necessary to annotate here, and what do I leave out? With some colleagues I see that, out of a somewhat misguided understanding of precision or completeness, they put all sorts of things into the transcript that are never addressed analytically and that play no role either in what you want to analyze. I think you have to be selective in order to produce a transcript that can still be received. Then, of course, you are no longer at Sacks's criterion of the transcript as a means of verification, because transcripts are the instrument through which every reader can check the analysis. Yet, if I inevitably have to be selective, then as a reader you can always say: well, perhaps something else happened there that was quite decisive for the course of interaction, but maybe it was not transcribed here, so I cannot assess what the analysis is worth. That is a dilemma you cannot get around. You can get around it only with data such as those in FOLK. I mean, when I write an article with FOLK data, I always provide the corpus source. People can then register in the DGD and look at the data. But I cannot achieve, through the transcript, that verifiability in a multimodal analysis is already guaranteed by the annotations. [...]

Ulrike Schröder – And more is being produced, ever more quickly, according to ever new criteria and with ever more innovative tools.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes. What would be desirable is for us in linguistics to create a stronger awareness of the role in which the body is relevant for linguistic practice. You do not achieve that through the most detailed possible multimodal transcripts, but rather through more focused representations. If it becomes too detailed, it no longer reaches anyone.

Ulrike Schröder – Professor Deppermann, those were my questions. Thank you very much for your detailed answers and for your time.

Arnulf Deppermann – Yes, thank you, Professor Schröder, for your interest. I am pleased that you want to know all of this.

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