

Non-affiliative stance-taking in storytelling activities

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This paper deals with multimodal displays of non-affiliative stances and assessments in German face-to-face storytelling activities. It is based on recordings of conversations between well-acquainted participants. To allow for fine-grained multimodal analysis these conversations were filmed from an external perspective and in addition, all participants wore mobile eye tracking glasses during the entire interaction.

Building on research that has highlighted the co-constructed nature of storytelling activities (Lerner 1996, Schegloff 1997) and the intersubjective nature of stance-taking (Du Bois 2007, 2014), this paper takes a multimodal perspective and focusses on how interactants use language, prosody, gaze, and gestures to express stances that are non-affiliative to different degrees. The paper addresses two main issues: We first concentrate on the ways that non-affiliative assessments and stances are communicated as multimodal packages. This includes both verbal and nonverbal strategies to highlight disaffiliation. Second, we focus on the face work that storytellers and recipients jointly do to mitigate these displays of disaffiliation.

We will first focus on the (con-)structional side of non- or disaffiliative stance taking and show that disaffiliation is usually projected by turn-initial pre-beginning elements (Schegloff 1996: 92–103) such as *ja* (yes), *ja aber* (yes but) und *ja gut* (yes well), *joa* (yeah) as well as *ja (ich) weiß* (yes, I don't know). These constructions are accompanied by gaze aversion and in some cases also by a short lateral nod, suggesting that all these semiotic resources are associated with each other by convention. They thus may qualify as multimodal stance-taking constructions (Zima & Bergs 2017). If the subsequent disaffiliative utterance is further realized with high pitch, it is treated as an interruption or turn-competitive incoming (French & Local 1983) and hence as particularly problematic and in need of repair. Speakers thus react to these disaffiliative incomings by either giving way and pausing their own turn or by competing for the turn space. This competition is usually marked by speeding up, raising pitch and gaze aversion (Zima, Weiß & Bröne 2018) from the incoming participants.

We further show that although the combination of different semiotic resources to express disaffiliation is common, disaffiliation can also be communicated by recipients' reluctance to give (sufficient) feedback and/or take a stance. As Stivers (2008) has argued, this particularly concerns nods at sequence closings, which are not accompanied by any other forms of verbal or non-verbal feedback. By its focus on multimodal stance-taking in storytelling activities, the paper ties in with both the recently growing interest in the multimodal nature of stance-taking as well as recent pleas to revisit interactional storytelling from a multimodal perspective (König & Oloff 2018, Zima & Weiß 2020). It further contributes to the ongoing discussion on the potential multimodality of constructions (Zima & Bergs 2017, Schoonjans 2018).

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