



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Speaking in public: Social interactions within larger groups. Contributions from a conversation analytic multimodal perspective

Third-party funded project

Project title Speaking in public: Social interactions within larger groups. Contributions from a conversation analytic multimodal perspective

Principal Investigator(s) [Mondada, Lorenza](#) ;

Project Members [Keel, Sara](#) ; [van Schepen, Nynke](#) ; [Svensson, Hanna](#) ;

Organisation / Research unit

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften / Französische und Allgemeine Linguistik (Mondada)

Department

Project start 01.10.2012

Probable end 28.02.2017

Status Completed

This project aims at investigating social interaction within larger public groups, and at offering a detailed micro-analysis of the systematic organisation of the interactional order of meetings, based on video recordings treated in the perspective of Conversation Analysis.

If meetings have been analysed within a broader perspective in sociology, social psychology, discourse analysis and more recently in management research, micro-analytic approaches of the moment-by-moment details of embodied conduct in meetings are still scarce. Moreover, if business meetings are increasingly studied, public meetings in which citizens actively participate are still understudied. This lack of in-depth detailed analyses can be related to methodological difficulties (recordings often concentrate on the focal persons doing a speech or on chairmen directing the debates, and only seldom offer details about what all of the participants are doing), but also to perspectives focusing more often on active speakers rather than on recipients, audiences or entire participation frameworks. Within Conversation Analysis, there is a long tradition of detailed analyses of small groups, but only few studies concerning interactions in larger groups.

This project aims at offering significant advances in the analysis of public talk and social interaction in larger groups, by focusing on a diversity of public meetings in which citizens actively participate, speaking and debating publicly. The aim of the project is to describe the systematic organisation of interaction, turn-taking, and participation in these activities.

The project is based on an important corpus, that has already been established and that will be further enlarged by pursuing fieldwork. The data concern a series of exemplary instances of interactions in larger groups: they document a participatory democracy project in urbanism in Lyon (France), concerning the rehabilitation of an ancient military site and its transformation into a public park. The participatory process has been implemented in a series of meetings involving a large number of citizens: information meetings, collective visits on the site to be transformed, brainstorming meetings. The empirical basis of this research project is secured: meetings have already been video recorded during past fieldwork (2008-2011) by the Principal Investigator (PI) as she was working at Lyon University; collaboration with public institutions in Lyon is secured, which guarantees an access to the archives and to further documentation; access to future fieldwork – since the project is still evolving – is also secured, and authorisations to video record future meetings is granted. Moreover, collaboration with the ICAR research lab in Lyon facilitates the logistics of future fieldwork as well as exchanges about the analysis.

The rich videographic corpus already available has been collected by the PI without any specific funding and has never been the subject of any supported project. Substantial teamwork, largely exceeding individual forces, is required to properly and systematically analyse it. The current project wants to exploit these materials and secure the pursuit of data collection when the public citizens consultation will move on: this offers the possibility of constituting and analysing a unique corpus of longitudinal recordings. The study of the corpus will produce not only novel scientific analyses of public talk but also offer detailed feedback to the public institutions organising participatory meetings.

On this basis, the project aims at developing an extensive detailed analysis of interaction in larger groups, within the perspective of Conversation Analysis. More particularly, it deals with:

- Analysis of a variety of episodes of public speaking, involving lay people who are not used to speak in public;
- Analysis of the specific turn-taking system(s) involved in the management of social interaction in large groups, as well as of larger participation frameworks, including not only 'main' speakers and chairmen, but also all of the participants (not reducible to a mere 'audience');
- Analysis of proposals, negotiations, disagreements, collective elaboration of solutions, decision-taking in brainstorming sessions;
- Analysis of the embodied and visible conduct of the participants, as a crucial dimension for a detailed understanding of their action and participation;
- Analysis not only of talk-in-interaction (public discussions) but also of public note-taking (writing-in-interaction), which is important for the understanding of decision-taking in larger groups;
- Analysis of longitudinal aspects, on the basis of recordings covering 3 years of activities.

These topics represent considerable novel issues for micro-analysis; they also constitute challenging methodological aspects. Moreover, the project aims at offering feedback to participants on the field – who already manifested their interest and are open to collaboration.

Keywords public meetings, conversation analysis, participation, social interaction, turn-taking, interaction in large groups, video analysis, multimodality

Financed by

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

Add publication

Add documents

Specify cooperation partners