

## **International conference "Prosody and Interaction": 15-17 September 2008, Potsdam University, Germany - Conference report<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Since the middle of the 1980s, the empirical study of prosody in natural everyday interaction has evolved into a productive and internationally recognized field of study. By now, it has produced a large body of work in a wide range of sub-fields as well as a sound catalogue of research methods and principles adapted to its data and objectives. Beyond doubt, prosody in spoken natural talk-in-interaction has been proven to be systematically analyzable and to function as an essential resource in the management of such interaction.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it has been shown, among others,

- to provide cues in the organization of units such as turn-constructive units and turns,
- to support the organization of turn-taking and overlap,
- to distinguish between certain types of actions and activities, such as in different kinds of repair and question-answer sequences, assessments and assessment sequences,
- to contribute to topic organization,
- to contextualize conversational modalities, genres and styles,
- to index and symbolize participants' social, ethnic and regional identities, and
- to display attitudes and emotions.

The work of Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen has had a major impact not only on the development of the research on prosody-in-interaction (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1993, Couper-Kuhlen/Selting 1996) but also – in collaboration with Margret Selting – on the formation of a more general research programme that has become known as "Interactional Linguistics" (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen/Selting 2001, Selting/Couper-Kuhlen 2000, Couper-Kuhlen/Ford 2004). In September 2008, a number of close colleagues, (former) doctoral students, and friends assembled for a conference on "Prosody and Interaction" in Potsdam on the occasion of Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. The conference was organized by Dagmar Barth-Weingarten and Elisabeth Reber in collaboration with Margret Selting, and funded, among others, by the German Research Foundation (DFG). With its conference theme "Prosody and interaction", it intended to take stock of existing research results in prosody-in-interaction as well as to identify desiderata and potential further directions for research in the field. It gathered almost 40 participants from

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, semantics and lexicology in interaction, for instance, have not attracted as much attention within interactionalist frameworks (but cf. Hakulinen/Selting 2005).

countries such as Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the United States.

The conference aim was reflected in its overall schedule. Following the first two introductory presentations by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting, which compiled a survey of previous research results, the programme was divided into three thematic sections:

1. Prosody and other levels of linguistic organization in interaction,
2. Prosodic units as a structuring device in interaction, and
3. Prosody and other semiotic resources in interaction.

The variety of contributions to each of these thematic sections highlighted current research interests. They ranged from the study of single aspects of the prosody and phonology of interaction to multimodal approaches of face-to-face interaction, with several contributions dealing with various facets of each of the current research trends covered. Each conference paper was complemented by a short co-presentation, which discussed the major results and implications of the paper given, putting them into perspective and raising further issues to be tackled. The conference was wound up by a final discussion, which provided space to reflect upon issues of broader significance recurring in a number of the contributions.

In the following sections, the major results and theses of the conference presentations will be summarized (section 1) and a survey of the major theoretical issues raised will be offered (section 2).

## 1. Conference presentations

### 1.1. State of the art

In her account of the state of the art of prosody in interaction, *Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen* made an argument for a perspective on prosody as social action in interaction. Taking stock of previous research in the field, she highlighted its achievements as regards the description of role of prosody for the production of turn-internal and turn-external structures, such as floor management, action formation and sequence organization. She underlined that it is necessary to adopt the participants' perspective, i.e. to consider interaction as emergent, to move beyond correlations to explanatory accounts, and to remember that prosody rarely works alone. As far as future research is concerned, she considered the questions of what the concept of "prosody" comprises and how prosodic study relates to the analysis of multimodal interactions as the most pressing issues. In his comment, *Harrie Mazeland*, among other things, drew the participants' attention to problems of interpreting the quantificational analysis of parameter change with PRAAT and the relevance of a conversation analytic approach for research results, in particular its contextualized, situated thinking.

In a second, complementary paper on the state of the art, *Margret Selting* defined the scope of the study of prosody in interaction and accounted for the relevance of the field by summarizing the functions of prosody in interaction. She outlined the major methodological approaches and principles, and sketched out

major issues of current research. Listing challenges for future research, she named the varying views in the field as regards issues of categorization (i.e. the question whether everything observable need to be transcribed and analyzed or only those features intuitively judged as relevant) and the handling of traditional categories (e.g. intonation units, accents). She also called for improved transcription systems and an increased focus on the description of voice quality. *Arnulf Deppermann* in his discussion pointed to two problems in research on prosody: the gradient nature of prosodic phenomena and the issue of how to account for functional analyses of prosodic features as the latter are rarely overtly oriented to by participants.

## 1.2. Prosody and other levels of linguistic organization in interaction

*Gareth Walker* highlighted the relevance of non-prosodic (i.e. phonetic) resources in the construction of turn-endings. In his collection of examples of rush-through from British and American video as well as audio data from all kinds of interactional settings, he observed a reduction in vowel and consonant articulations in the final syllables of TCUs when turn-holding. Challenging the widespread view that prosodic resources fulfill the major function here, he advocated a holistic perspective on the vocal resources deployed for turn construction and turn-taking. His discussant, *Susanne Günthner*, among other things, complemented Walker's claim by adding multimodal parameters, such as gaze, as another potentially relevant aspect.

Making a case for prosodies forming a part of the grammar of sequence and interaction, *Richard Ogden* exemplified his point in a case study of complaints about third parties in English talk-in-interaction. Apart from being produced in different sequential positions and with different lexis, so-called A-complaints (i.e. complaints designed for affiliation) differ from so-called X-complaints (i.e. complaints designed to exit a sequence) with regard to their prosodic-phonetic make-ups. While A-complaints are done with  $f_0$  sustained above speaker's average, great loudness and pitch peaks often high in the speaker's range, X-complaints are produced relatively quietly, with a narrow pitch span, low in the speaker's range and with an overall lax articulatory configuration. However, he pointed out that the prosodic features are characteristic of (dis)affiliation rather than certain kinds of complaints. In her commenting paper, *Auli Hakulinen* warned of tendencies to treat findings on English as universals. She further made a case for an interactional perspective on the interpretation of sequence-expanding and sequence-closing actions, arguing against a formalist approach to actions because it risks being too speaker-centered.

*Geoffrey Raymond* showed that the production of type-conforming responses to yes/no interrogatives in English (e.g., *yes* and *no* or other equivalent tokens) generally orients to the syntactic format and the normative relevancies set up by the interrogative these tokens respond to. Examining the prosody of type-conforming tokens, he found that their prosodic formatting was used to project either more talk (in the case of slightly rising intonation) or turn completion (in the case of closed forms such as *yep*, *nope*, and *yeah* with glottal stop). Similarly, actions beyond those originally accomplished can be added or an aspect of the original action can be withheld.

Picking up on the thesis that the yes/no-interrogatives and type-conforming responses "form a tight structural package", his discussant, *Marja-Leena Sorjonen*, suggested that response tokens such as *yes* and *no* are multifunctional and that depending on the prosodic packaging of the type-conforming response, it may not always perform an answer but do other actions, e.g. acknowledgement.

In a joint paper on English talk-in-interaction, *Paul Drew* and *John Local* presented work in progress on the phonetic detail of recycled, topic initiations when speaker's first try to "launch a new something" has failed. They categorized the speakers' formatting of such retrieved topic initiations as recycles out of overlap vs. as resumptions vs. as done for another "first time", and illustrated the kinds of formal prosodic-phonetic differences and similarities from the initial topic initiation. The prosodic-phonetic features they identified to be relevant were duration, loudness, pitch contour and range, and articulatory features. Overall, a new "first" was formatted with greater difference to the parameters of the original topic initiation. In his comment Peter Auer aimed at a typology of re-doings in German data, which included features such as the adjacency of original activity and re-doing, and the recognizability of the previous activity.

### 1.3. Prosodic units as a structuring device in interaction

*John du Bois* conceptualized the intonation unit as a prototype-structured category with fuzzy boundaries, whose "boundary zone" is exclusively defined through a cluster of prosodic cues including tempo and pitch changes, filled and unfilled pausing and certain articulatory features. In the second part of the paper he claimed on the basis of American-English data that the intonation unit represents "the most effective unit for organizing the participants' orientation to *resonance*", i.e. the activation of affinities across utterances, such as lexical repetition. Intonation units are claimed to demarcate sequences of units suitable for cross-mapping. In the latter regard, his discussant, *Susanne Uhmann*, raised the issue of the variation of intonation units in length, number of syllables and markedness as well as that of cross-linguistic variation.

*Beatrice Szczepiek Reed* was concerned with the empirical grounding of tone units, or intonation units, in conversation. She claimed that there are prosodic units at the same or below the level of turn-constructional units, namely "turn-constructional phrases", which may, but need not be, co-extensive with intonation units. Based on English data, she argued that they form a participant category, whose extension can be deduced from prosodic properties, grammatical, semantic-pragmatic, turn-structural and sequence-organizational properties. Interestingly, however, they may also go against *traditional* syntactic phrasing. The latter point was taken up by this paper's discussant, *Jan Anward*, who pointed out that chunks which go against traditional modeling of syntax are frequent in spoken Swedish, also, but they can be handled with more recent approaches to syntax (Steedman 2000).

*Friederike Kern* offered first results from a study on German radio live commentaries of football matches. In particular, she examined the prosodic and syntactic resources radio reporters deploy in order to construct a so-called "dramatic speech style" and thereby convey drama and suspense. In this way, the two activities of "describing pitch events", i.e. describing events of the game and

delivering background information, and "delivering background information" were contextualized through different bundles of prosodic resources, such as an almost over-increasing speech rate and pitch height in the event of a goal, which was absent during the reporting of background information.

In a study on the emergence of intonation systems in young children, *Bill Wells* in collaboration with *Juliette Corrin* examined English child-carer interactions, discussing instances of children's verbal repeats that imitate the tone, i.e. the pitch contour, of the carer's prior unit (prosodic imitation, PI) and those that are done in different prosodic design (prosodic contrast, PC). The different contingencies of PIs and PCs with respect to the subsequent sequential context were explored and, deriving from that, implications for our understanding of the developing use of tone in 19-21 month old children were proposed. The paper's discussant, *Traci Walker*, raised the question whether one may observe variation in other prosodic properties than intonation, such as speech rate. In addition, on the basis of her own work on "doubles" (Curl/Local/Walker 2006) and "repetition repairs" (Curl 2004), she discussed the question of how much phonetic sameness is needed for a repeated unit to be analyzed as same or different.

#### 1.4. Prosody and other semiotic resources in interaction

In her paper, *Elisabeth Gülich* presented a single-case study on the implicit and explicit, multimodal ways of communicating fear of death by the patient's telling story episodes about her seizures in a German medical interaction. The analysis illustrated that in these so-called "running away episodes" the increasing emotional involvement on the part of the patient is displayed through a range of multimodal resources such as direct eye-contact, and that increased emotional involvement and the actual labeling of the emotion are jointly achieved through the interactive work between therapist and patient. In her comment, *Elisabeth Reber* highlighted the fact that Gülich's analysis breaks up the dichotomy between non-affect-laden and affect-laden talk. Pointing out that it is the therapist who first labels the patient's emotion reconstructed through the running away episodes as fear of death, she suggested that the labeling may be a resource for the therapist to display category membership as a psychological expert.

Based on Japanese talk-in-interaction, *Hiroko Tanaka's* study on the response token *huun* made visible the need for a unified account of the prosodic-phonetic shape, the sequential position and the visual cues accompanying the production of response tokens. Although *huun* is one of the most versatile response tokens in Japanese, Tanaka claimed that it is possible to distinguish different uses of this token by taking into account the variety of contextualization cues available to the participants, in particular the visual conduct. Among the core functions ascribed to the token were the "meditative" use, which signals the current recipient's contemplation on the informing just heard, and its use as an aligning/acknowledging token, which signals attentiveness to what is being recounted while at the same time withholding an explicit evaluative stance towards other speaker's talk. It was the multimodal approach to the study of response tokens which the discussant, *Dagmar Barth-Weingarten*, considered as the genuine contribution of this paper in the conference context. In addition, she raised other issues such as that of the

phonetic reducibility of response tokens and its effect on their distinctiveness as well as the iconic use of prosody.

*Cecilia Ford* presented a paper co-authored with *Barbara Fox* and *Rebecca Scarborough*, exploring the phonetic-prosodic, sequential and visual construction of so-called "laughables", that is, conversational objects inviting and responded to by recipient laughter or other kinds of humorous actions. In the English data, laughables were found to be produced 1) in otherwise serious conversational environments, in order to bring about a (temporary) change to a non-serious modality and 2) in environments with humorous talk being the main activity. In the former case, laughables were seen as a modulation of an on-going activity, whereas in the latter, they were described as an addition to such an activity. On the basis of their data collection, they described particular phonetic and bodily practices contextualizing laughables, such as "wobble". The latter has so far been notated as *ea-h-t y-h-our s-h-alad* but it includes more than that, such as a partitioning of the vowel into rhythmic components by either breaks or increases in intensity (cf. tremolo, Chafe 2007), and leaning forward or backward. In her comment, *Karin Birkner* stated that Ford et al.'s paper implements a range of desiderata of future research, as e.g. combining prosodic and phonetic analysis, including categories such as stance/affiliation/alignment and analysing laughables not as isolated phenomena but in a semiotically rich context.

In a concluding paper, *Marjorie Goodwin* and *Charles Goodwin* illustrated on the basis of American English data how an aphasic participant compensated his highly restricted vocabulary by the use of other semiotic resources, especially prosody and gesture. For this they introduced the notion of "semiotic agency". Through the interactive work with co-participants building on and making sense of his communicative signals ("cooperative semiosis"), the use of his limited resources enabled him to accomplish meaningful actions. This was impressively demonstrated with the example of pointing, which could be used by the aphasic to refer to distant points in both space and time. *Helga Kotthoff's* comment addressed the paper's 1) concepts such as that of cooperative semiosis, 2) prospects for other types of interaction where a fully competent speaker makes up for the linguistic and conversational deficits of a not fully competent speaker, and 3) the issue of reciprocity potentially also relevant for professional training (e.g. that of nurses, teachers, etc.).

Though discussed from different angles, a number of theoretical issues recurred in several of the contributions and were taken up in the final discussion. In the next section of our report, we attempt to summarize the most important points, thereby also taking recourse to individual papers.

## 2. Major theoretical Issues

From a theoretical point of view, all contributions started off from the presupposition that language is inseparably connected with its interactive context and that it consequently needs to be studied in this context. Against this background, the discussion centered around four major theoretical issues: 1. linguistic structures in interaction, 2. the multimodal approach to interaction, 3. the display of affect and emotion and 4. the deconstruction of communicative phenomena.

## 2.1. Linguistic structures in interaction

As far as linguistic structures in interaction are concerned, the discussion centered around the forms and functions of prosodic units, how prosody and constructions (in the sense of construction grammar) relate to each other, and whether and how prosodic-phonetic structures may be (consciously) manipulated by the participants.

### 2.1.1. Prosodic units

For more than six decades, structuralism has been well-established in the study of language, and many current linguistic approaches are influenced by its way of thinking. Thus, it may come as no surprise that the units of language, and in particular prosodic units, were one of the major topics discussed at the conference, too. In accordance with the conference theme, the discussion focused predominantly on the concept of 'prosodic units' and their role in interaction. Yet, it is precisely the employment of this concept to the study of natural interaction which leads to a questioning of it: In how far can terms and notions established in mainstream research – in prosody and phonetics as well as in other fields – be employed as useful starting points for interactional studies? The concept "intonation unit", for instance, makes reference to a phenomenon which can be observed in both experimental speech production and natural interaction. Its existence in natural interaction is supported by the fact that it may correlate with other linguistic phenomena, such as syntactic (for a discussion, see e.g. Selting 2000) and lexical ones (du Bois<sup>3</sup>). At the same time, however, the exhaustive application of the notion of intonation units to natural spoken interaction is often problematic, not least so because of a lack of co-extension with other units of language (Szczepek Reed).

The difficulties faced when applying the notion of "intonation unit" are just one instance of a whole bunch of problems arising from uncritically adopting structural notions based on data and methods different from those applied in interactional linguistics. Hence, seen from a more general point of view, one needs to pose the question of how much of a structural approach is necessary at all. With regard to prosodic units, one solution could be found in the idea of prototypes and of family resemblances of instantiations of units (e.g. du Bois). This would allow us to summarize differing variants of an instantiation of a prosodic unit under one heading. As an alternative approach it was suggested to investigate unit *boundaries*, rather than the units themselves, and to consider possible clusters of prosodic and phonetic parameters specific to such boundaries. In this way it would be possible to pay attention to the fine prosodic-phonetic detail of an interactionally relevant phenomenon without having to exhaustively split up conversational exchanges into units. The ultimate solution may, however, lie in a reasonable combination of both approaches: This means that more attention should be paid to the unit boundaries and their parametricized markings. At the same time, in many cases units result from the production of boundaries, and thus can be studied in their own right. However, instead of promoting prosodic units

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<sup>3</sup> References without year refer to presentations at the conference.

there was support for the concept of turn-constructive units, which are constructed through multiple resources and do not reflect only one linguistic level of organization, that is, prosody, or even visual resources. Indeed, what the study of units should take into account is that smaller conversational units are co-constructed by means of various aspects, among them prosodic and phonetic (Walker), syntactic (Raymond), sequential (Ogden) and – to a considerable extent in face-to-face conversation also – visual cues (Gülich, Tanaka, Ford et al., Goodwin/Goodwin).

### 2.1.2. The study of prosody in interaction and construction grammar

In recent years, *Construction Grammar* has considerably gained ground in usage-based approaches to language (cf. e.g. Fried/Östman 2005, Günthner/Imo 2006). Its influence was also observed in various contributions to the conference. Ogden, for instance, even connected it with the Firthian idea of *prosodies* as linguistic features, such as prosodic characteristics, that bind structures of talk together (Firth 1957).

In the radical version of Construction Grammar, "any quirk of a construction is sufficient to represent that construction as an independent node" (Croft 2001:25), i.e. any difference in realization marks a pattern as separate in the network of constructions. Against this background it is interesting to note that various presentations emphasized the role of prosodic marking in differentiating the meaning of individual lexemes and phrases, for instance, with answers to *yes/no*-questions (Raymond) and with *response tokens* (Tanaka). This poses a question of relevance to construction grammar theory: May different prosodic realizations be a distinguishing factor between different constructions? While prosodic differences may certainly contextualize different meanings, actions and activities, such a view, however, may at the same time bring us closer to the tunes-approach prevalent in prosodic research, which has otherwise been criticized by *Interactional Linguistics*. Another issue raised by this is: What is a "quirk" in terms of parametrized phenomena, and what are the consequences of such a radical perspective for storage and processing models?

A second, though related issue, was raised by contributors thematizing the relationship between the position of prosodic boundary marking and the emergence and identification of syntactic constructions. Thus, the placement of intonation unit boundaries can lead to syntactic mapping (du Bois). This is particularly interesting at points where syntactic constituents and prosodic boundaries do not coincide, as it either hints towards language change in progress or the need for a redefinition of syntactic constituent structure (Szczepek Reed).

### 2.1.3. Manipulating prosodic structures in interaction

Apart from the structuring of interaction by units and the emergence of linguistic structure on the basis of prosodic cues, a third angle to "structures" became relevant in the discussion: the "intentional" manipulation of interactional structures by participants. Almost all contributions emphasized the role of prosody for the contextualization of specific actions and activities. Along these lines, the pro-



sodic-phonetic realization of lexical material can contextualize the latter as different actions (Local/Drew, Raymond, Ogden). Hence, one could assume that in children's language acquisition the proficient use of prosodic parameters is of particular relevancy (Wells).

Yet, the systematic use of fine prosodic-phonetic detail also leads to the question in how far participants may use or manipulate structures – of whatever kind – *intentionally* in order to accomplish specific actions in interaction. This question is particularly relevant when it presupposes a certain amount of knowledge on prosodic-phonetic structures on the side of its user, e.g. the knowledge on how to display affective dimensions, such as pleasure and anger, in interaction. The fact that participants are able to produce mock emotions (Sandlund 2004) or re-construct emotional displays in story-telling (Günthner 1997) provides evidence that this kind of knowledge does exist, even if participants themselves cannot compile a "list" of features they are manipulating when doing being angry, for instance.

Furthermore, it was also pointed out that the deployment of certain prosodic structures may be motivated by an iconic use of prosodic marking, for instance when signaling the degree of involvement in a conversational topic or action (Kern, Tanaka).

## 2.2. Multimodality in interaction

In accordance with the conference theme, the role of prosody for differentiating "meaning" in interaction was emphasized in a number of presentations. In addition, with the great majority of contributions being based on analyses of face-to-face interaction, it was noted that a similar function can also be accomplished by visual behaviour. In particular, analyses of this kind of material show very clearly that the study of interactional structure cannot be based on lexical, syntactic and prosodic-phonetic material alone, but that it must include visual parameters when adopting a participant's perspective. Thus, specific activities are contextualized visually, as, for instance, the affect-laden coloring of information in doctor-patient interaction (Gülich). Further, there are visual cues to cognitive and emotional states (Tanaka, Ford et al.) and even to semantic differences in the case of language pathologies affecting lexical and syntactic storage (Goodwin/Goodwin). Detailed investigations of visual cues in comparison to other communicative resources suggest that several of the levels of linguistic and visual organization are often finely attuned to each other (Kendon 1967, also e.g. Ford et al.). Also, when some of the levels of linguistic organization are impaired, the visual mode, together with selected prosodic parameters, can even provide the main cues to "meaning" (Goodwin/Goodwin). Data such as these support the idea that it may be worth adopting an approach that expands its scope beyond the verbal mode of communication in the analysis of face-to-face interaction (cf. Schmitt 2007).

As a consequence, the conference participants agreed that a multimodal approach to the study of prosody in interaction will be one of the major tasks of future research in this field. In particular, what needs to be investigated is the variety of visual resources for interaction and their attunement with prosody, syntax, lexis and sequential organization in the contextualization of actions and activities.

In this connection, the discussion topicalized the usefulness of the term "multimodality" since it associates some peculiarity with the phenomenon, which is not justified as it is the default mode of interaction. Also, with this term one may be prone to focus on the visual means while communication is based on the collaboration of all modes available. Therefore, it was suggested to adopt the notion of various "semiotic systems" instead, which according to Arnulf Deppermann (p.c.), however, may be problematic itself: 1) "Systems" are not practices/actions; therefore the term cannot refer to the same phenomena as "multimodal interaction", 2) The term "system" may lead to a reification of the different modes, which is empirically wrong, 3) the term "semiotic" has a semantic bias, disregarding the organizational and coordinative uses of multimodal activities. Each system should be seen as organized in its own right, but also as complementary to all other systems available in a certain communicative situation.

### **2.3. Contextualization of affect and emotion in interaction**

The signaling and display of affect and emotion is another field of research which has gained increasing attention in recent time (e.g. Reber 2008, Couper-Kuhlen to appear). For instance, phonetic-prosodic cues can contextualize a unit of action as a complaint (Ogden), the current situation in a football match as full of excited and euphoric anticipation or disappointment (Kern), and the production of minimal response particles as displays of certain kinds of involvement and affect (Tanaka). Moreover, Ford et al.'s presentation induced a discussion of the difficulties of developing an inventory for the description of laughter and laughables, in particular for cases which are realized without the prosodic and visual cues commonly described in the literature. In another multimodal study, Güllich showed how repeated reconstructions of the patient's experience of fear of death in multiple story episodes was done in an increasingly affect-laden way. This gradient increase in affective involvement was achieved through the deployment of various clusters of multimodal resources, thus breaking up the dichotomy between affect-laden and non-affect-laden talk (as set up in previous work by e.g. Selting 1996).

In general, the conference participants agreed that – next to the analysis of visual cues – the study of prosody and phonology in interaction contributes considerably to the investigation of subtle displays of affect, which cannot be made accountable. At the same time, it was underlined that the cluster of phonetic-prosodic cues can only mark contextually and indexically determined emotions, and that there is no one-to-one relationship between a specific parameter cluster and an emotion.

### **2.4. On balance: Deconstruction as a major task of analysis**

While many of the analyses presented were based on the interpretation of participants' actions and activities, the final discussion raised the issue of how we as analysts come to interpret some utterance as, for instance, *rushing-through*, *laughable* or *affect-laden*, that is, what the analytic basis of such categories is. For this reason, the formal deconstruction of meaning, actions and activities was seen

as another main task for further research. A potential key phenomenon is the repetition of utterances/actions with and without variation as these enable the analyst to identify the role of single, individual resources in interaction. It was pointed out, however, that the attempt to deconstruct the individual prosodic-phonetic, parametric constituents of a certain auditory impression leads to another major and as yet open question: How can we maintain the balance between the attempt to identify the components of an auditory impression, for instance, and the interpretation of that phenomenon in its entirety as a holistic *gestalt*? Apart from posing a methodological issue for the analysis itself, this question is also of relevance to understanding how participants deal with language and its visual contextualization: Do they process single parameters or a *gestalt*, and if so, how? In this regard it was emphasized again that previous insights, in particular those from different approaches, should be used – not as blinkers, but as points of orientation, which can be revised if need be.

### 3. Conclusion

With hindsight, many of the participants considered this conference an extremely productive experience. In particular, the homogenous methodological approaches of the papers presented allowed an intensive scholarly exchange between the participants, in which the current state-of-the art was ascertained in a way which will hopefully stimulate further research along the lines of the desiderata pointed out.

Currently, the authors, in collaboration with Margret Selting, are editing a volume, entitled "Prosody in interaction", which will contain all conference contributions extended by discussants' comments and the results of the general discussion. It is scheduled to appear with Benjamins in 2010.

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