

Forms and Multifunctionality of Interruptions and Simultaneous Speaking in Ordinary Talk – proposal of a Universal Model for the Evaluation of Interruptive Speech Sequences

Şaban Köktürk

Translation Studies, Sakarya University

Sakarya Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Çeviribilim Bölümü 54187

Serdivan / Sakarya, Turkey

Tel: 90-264-295-7326 E-mail: skokturk@sakarya.edu.tr

Emine Öztürk (Corresponding author)

Translation Studies, Sakarya University

Sakarya Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Çeviribilim Bölümü 54187

Serdivan / Sakarya, Turkey

Tel: 90-264-295-7338 E-mail: emineo@sakarya.edu.tr

Received: July 24, 2012 Accepted: August 14, 2012 Published: September 1, 2012

doi:10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2137 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2137>

Abstract

It has become common within traditional conversational analysis to interpret instances of interventions and simultaneous speaking that regularly occur in natural conversation with the help of objective criteria, mainly from the analysts' point of view. Only rarely, conversational analysts consider at least taking into consideration the interactants' point of view; hardly ever are interventions analyzed by strictly putting the participants' reactions in the center of interest. The present paper will establish a model with which analysts will be able to classify instances of disruptive and simultaneous speech by combining the interactants' metalinguistic and paralingual signals with objective criteria, however, strictly focusing on the participants'

reactions in a first step and only applying structural parameters if no reactions on the speakers' side are perceivable. The categories I have developed are based on selected parts of three example conversations of German speakers that have been translated into English for this paper. The final purpose is to postulate a participant-oriented model for classifying interventions which may help to avoid misleading interpretations only based on the analyst's opinion.

Keywords: Conversational analysis, Turn-taking, Intervention, Simultaneous speaking, Participant, Interruptive speech

1. Introduction

Interventions within several forms of talk have traditionally been analyzed and interpreted technically, i. e., with the help of certain structural criteria such as syntactical, prosodical as well as semantic-pragmatic turn completion. Those criteria have been established and described in advance by the respective analysts to further determine whether a specific type of intervention or simultaneous speech has to be either classified as overlap or interruption for instance. Furthermore, conversational analysts often assigned interruptions certain predefined functions, mostly stating that interruptions are used by speakers to demonstrate power, dominance and control. Only a few studies have proposed to not rely on technical criteria for interpreting talk but to closely observe the interactants' reactions (cf. Edelsky 1981; Murray 1985; Watts 1991; Talbot 1992; Olbertz-Siitonen 2009, Schegloff 2000, 2002). Following this postulation, I will propose a participant-oriented model of classifying interventions, only taking into consideration structural parameters where no speakers' reactions could have been detected. On the one hand, I will base my classification schema on multiple speakership and three basic levels of analyzing an ongoing turn, this way extending the standard model of turn-taking (cf. Sacks et al. 1974) by two components (cf. chapter 2). In chapter 3, I will present and justify the different subcategories of my model by presenting authentic data from natural conversation. Further, I will briefly discuss a possible explanation for the different reactions of interactants to apparent equal instances of simultaneous speech, proposing the multifunctionality as an important criterion.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Principles of Conversational Turn-taking – Revising the Model Proposed by Sacks et al.

A conversation is defined as an event conjointly established by at least two speakers during which the participants chat about at least one topic (cf. Brinker /Sager ⁴2006). The crucial aspect that differentiates a conversation from monologic texts is the speaker-swift (cf. Kotthoff 1993; Sacks et al. 1974), within sociolinguistics also referred to as turn-taking. When listening to people's conversations, it is easily recognizable that the interactants are capable of orderly organizing their turn-taking (cf. Schegloff /Sacks 1973, Sacks et al. 1974); establishing and maintaining a certain conversational order this way. Talking about "order" Schegloff /Sacks (1973) especially point out the way participants are able to organize the act of turn-taking: Normally, only one person owns the turn at the same time during a conversation and the attendees manage to take over the conversational floor in an order. Within discourse analysis utmost interest had been laid in discovering and investigating the principles and rules that speakers apply to establish the conversational order. More than 30 years ago, Sacks et al. (1974) in particular investigated this issue and published their findings in their well-known and very often cited paper "A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation"(Sacks et al. 1974). A model for conversational turn-taking has resulted from their research work that can be taken as the standard model within the area of discourse analysis nowadays.

As the present paper will particularly deal with a feature that in fact violates the rules of orderly turn-taking, namely interruptions and simultaneous speaking, there is a need to briefly

describe the principles of orderly talk before focusing on disruptive sequences. Thus, the following explanations will briefly outline the rules of the standard model so that in a next step I will be able to justify some critical aspects of the model which, in my opinion, are crucial to mention and to discuss.

Universal rules of conversational turn-taking

The model proposed by Sacks et al. basically consists of two components: The **turn-constructive component** and the **turn-allocation component**. The former postulates that conversational turns are composed of linguistic units, so-called turn-constructive units (TCUs). Having completed a TCU, a transition relevance place (TRP) has been reached, at which a speaker change may occur. As a consequence, every speaker has the right to, at least, produce such a TCU before a change of speaker may take place (completion right; cf. Sacks et al. 1974). An intervention that occurs before having completed one's turn displays a violation of the current speaker's completion right. Further, Sacks et al. state that a TCU may represent „sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions“ (Sacks et al. 1974, 702), i. e. syntactical structures, such as grammatically complete sentences or also just single words. One of the rule observances, which Sacks et al. have stated within their research data, postulates that „transitions (from one turn to a next) with no gaps or overlaps are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight over-lap, they make up the vast majority of transitions“ (Sacks et al. 1974, 700). The authors explain this rule observance with the fact that speakers have the linguistic ability of anticipating the further progress of the current turn to place their own turn close to a TRP, this way avoiding a violation of the current speaker's completion right. Due to this rule observance, speaker-swifts usually occur smoothly and simultaneous speaking sequences are only rarely to detect (cf. Sacks et al. 1974.). As a consequence, Sacks et al. posit that „overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time“ (Sacks et al. 1974, 700), determining this feature as a general fact of natural human conversation which displays simultaneous speaking as a violation to this rule and a quite rare conversational phenomenon.

The second basic rule of the model organizes the turn-taking during a conversation, stating three possible ways a speaker-swift may occur:

Rule 1a: The current speaking person attributes the right to speak to another participant, e. g. by simply requesting him or her to talk or by posing a question.

Rule 1b: After having reached a TRP a participant ascribes himself/herself the right of utterance.

Rule 1c: If neither the current speaker selects anyone as next speaker (1a), nor nobody of the interactants selects him- or herself (1b), then the current speaker may produce another TCP or he may remain silent. If he decides to further expand his turn, rule 2 will come into effect that states that rules 1a-c shall be applied again at the next TRP until a speaker-swift has occurred (cf. Sacks et al. 1974).

It should have become apparent so far that natural conversation usually takes place by taking into consideration those rules and consistently applying them. Obviously, speaker

unconsciously stick to those rules which can be further confirmed by the fact that speakers normally repair turn-taking mistakes: „Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn taking errors and violations; e. g., if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble.” (Sacks et al. 1974, 701) Referring to my data I can confirm that speakers fix simultaneous starts, overlaps or simultaneous speaking sequences immediately as the following extract (1) will briefly illustrate:

(1) (Relation between father and son)

01 A: bu::t (---)well it is anayoli’s task,

well the thing is that: (1.0) as he is the father of her son she cannot-

02 B: eliminate him.=

03 =no.

04 A: eliminate him and he has to learn to establish a relation to him, (--)

05 as the father that he is.

06 no:thing more.

07->B: yes be[cause-]

08->A: [be]cause this is a bond- don’t know-

that will never tear apart.

Extract (1) is a clear case of a turn-taking error that is immediately fixed by speaker B. She starts to produce a new TCU at a TRP (line 07) when speaker A also begins to speak almost at the same time (line 08). Speaker B realizes the turn-taking error, hence stops talking **leaving the floor up to speaker A.**

Revising the „one-party-at-a-time“-premise

As I have already pointed out, in numerous cases of overlapped speech, simultaneous starts or apparent interruptive talk that I could detect in my data and which I have exemplified with extract (1) the participants immediately start to repair if turn-taking trouble occurs. However, in a lot of other cases, I also observed that the speakers did not do so. In some occasions they accepted simultaneous sequences without even indicating that there is a linguistic problem. It seemed as if effective communication may indeed also take place with sequences that differ from the standard model. This observation is of course not innovative or new in the area of discourse analysis research. A number of authors have already stated the same fact pointing out that, among others, it depends on the conversational style of the participants whether interruptions or overlaps are accepted and even desired as a special conversational feature or not (cf. Tannen 1993, ²2005) or it is implied that the need of repair depends on the function of the disruptive talk (cf. Coates 1996, 1997, ²2004; Edelsky 1981; Thimm 1990; Murata 1994; Makri-Tsilipakou 1994). Other authors mention that conversational features and their (non)acceptance depend on either the social context in which they are uttered (cf. Kallmeyer

2006; Kotthoff 1993) or the cultural features and conventions of each speech community (cf. Fant 1995) thus, they are highly variable.

On the basis of these observations I will now argue that the model proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) needs to be corrected or at least discussed in certain aspects. I will show that the above mentioned rules, in particular the single speakership code and the proposition of immediate repair in case of failure, need to be revised or at least expanded by certain criteria.

2.2 Problematic Aspects of the Standard Model

Although the proposed model has been accepted as generally applicable for human talk within ethnomethodological conversation analysis (cf. Olbertz-Siitonen 2009), there are quite a few aspects that have been criticized in linguistic research. Based on the most frequently uttered aspects, I will propose a slightly different approach for analyzing human talk that will in the end result in a categorization schema with which disruptive talk in particular shall be able to be investigated and classified.

Parameters of the turn-constructural component – reliably projecting the end of others' turn

Firstly, one of the very frequently criticized aspects refers to the turn-constructural component, i. e. those features with which TCUs and TRPs can be linguistically described by the analyst as well as the parties involved in the respective conversation. (cf. Ford/Thompson 1996; Selting 2000; Kallmeyer 2006). Sacks et al. (1974) especially ascribe the syntactical component major relevance for projecting a TRP. However, numerous authors have shown that syntax only plays a minor role in determining the possible end of a TCU, resulting in other components playing equal or an even more significant part in anticipating a coming TRP (cf. Ford/Thompson (1996), Selting (2000), Kallmeyer (2006), Schegloff (1996)). It has been plausibly argued that;

1. TCUs feature a mixture of syntactic, prosodic and semantic-pragmatic parameters (cf. Ford/Thompson 1996).
2. Syntactic, prosodic and semantic-pragmatic parameters may only serve speakers as an **orientation** to anticipate the possible end of a turn to evoke a smooth speaker-swift; speakers, however, cannot be totally sure to smoothly take over the turn by analyzing the other speaker's turn regarding those parameters. Thus, turn completion cannot be unambiguously determined by taking into consideration all of these criteria as it also highly depends on the individual perception and interpretation of every speaker involved in the interaction (cf. Kallmeyer 2006).
3. Aside from the just mentioned parameters, it is stated that turn-initializing particles as well, such as discourse markers and firm text patterns, play a major role when it comes to anticipating the end of others' turn (cf. Kallmeyer 2006) and
4. Not every TCU ends in a TRP, and thus, generates a possible swift of speakers, but turns may reach their completion point not before the speaker has produced several TCUs (cf. Selting 2000).

The data I have recorded show that the mentioned parameters are significantly involved in the interruption and simultaneous speaking phenomena which is why I propose to expand the model's turn-constructive component by prosodic as well as semantic-pragmatic criteria with which a turn's formal completion may be neutrally determined by conversational analysts. Amplifying the turn-constructive component by those aspects is considered especially crucial within the area of disruptive and simultaneous talk as it helps to formally determine a turn as complete or incomplete, regardless of the participants' individual perceptions of the exchange. I will further discuss the individual perception of the parties involved and a possible way of including their perception in my proposal of a possible model of forms of interruptions and simultaneous speaking later on. For now, I will exemplify the importance of considering prosodic as well as semantic-pragmatic features when analyzing the potential formal completion of a speaker's turn by briefly discussing extract (2) that shows a so-called trail-off (cf. Ferguson 1977; Jefferson 1983b; Schegloff 2002):

(2) (Distancing yourself from your son)

(1) A: because sometime it's the- them who establish distance.

(2)-> if they are <<p> just some:->

(3) B: oh yes.

It is evident that A's utterance in line (2) is syntactically as well as prosodically incomplete. However, both speaker easily manage to produce a smooth speaker-swift which results from speaker A prosodically indicating (lower voice, slow speech, break, prolongation of last sound) the pragmatic end of the turn and B perceiving A's turn-completion. The combination of a lower voice and final sound prolongation has been described by Selting (1995) as an end of turn signal. B's "oh yes" indeed tells us that she understands what A aims to express and that there is no need for further turn-progress. Extract (2) shall have indicated that in some cases a turn is incomplete on all three levels at first sight and from the analyst's point of view, yet it is marked as pragmatically complete from the speaker's point of view. As a conclusion, I propose to use the three parameters only as guidelines when analyzing human talk, but not as completely reliable resources. Quite the contrary, it is the speakers that decide when a turn has reached completion and not the analyst applying a list of formal criteria. Consequently, the categorization schema I will propose later will put the **speakers' point of view** in the center of conversation analysis, thus, taking the reactions of the parties involved as a crucial resource for analyzing interruptive speech.

Simultaneous sequences and disruptive talk – a more frequent and regular phenomenon than proposed

Secondly, another often discussed aspect is related to the "one-party-at-a-time premise" that the model postulates as the standard of human talk. A number of studies have already demonstrated a contrary point of view discussing rough speaker-swifts and simultaneous sequences as perfectly suitable and even desired in certain contexts (cf. Tannen 2005; Coates 1996, 1997, 2004, Glindemann 1987; Lerner 2002, 2004; Lappé 1983; Watts 1991; Fant 1995; Olbertz-Siitonen 2009; Ford/Thompson 1996). Whether interventions or simultaneous speech are perceived as disturbing and violations of existing conversational rules are said to

depend on various factors, such as divergent conversational styles (cf. Denny 1985; Tannen 2005) and the specific function of an intervention (cf. Goldberg 1990; Murata 1994; Li 2001; Smith-Lovin/Brody 1989; Ahrens 1997; Thimm 1990; Makri-Tsilipakou 1994; Murray 1985; Kowal et al. 1998; Jefferson 1983a, b; Schegloff 2000, Schwitalla 1992; Kallmeyer/Schmitt 1996, James/Clarke 1993) for instance which I will briefly discuss later on.

As I have already mentioned, my data show a lot instances of smooth speaker-swifts, but also provide numerous cases of sequences that would be classified as interruptive or in need of repair by classical conversation analysis which is however not marked as problematic at all by the speakers themselves. Simultaneous speaking does not automatically evoke failure of communication and interruptions or rough turn-taking are often accepted as legitimate speaker-swifts. This observance resulted in me proposing to eliminate the “one-party-at-a-time premise” as the standard of human talk. The idea is to consider both, single speakership as well as multiple speakerships, as perfectly suitable ways of communication that only the interactants themselves may characterize as appropriate or inappropriate.

3. An Alternative Way of Classifying Interruptive Speech – the Participant-oriented Approach

In the following, I will present different categories of interruptions and simultaneous speech sequences. The proposed classification is motivated by the simple fact that speakers indicate each other how their conversational actions have to be perceived by other participants in a conversation: „It is a systematic consequence of the Turn-taking organization of conversation that it obliges its participants to display each other, in a turn’s talk, their understanding of other turns’ talk.“ (Sacks et al. 1974: 728). Consequently, parties display each other respectively handle disruptions in a certain way which may serve as an indicator for the analyst that a participant has perceived an intervention as an undesired interruption or, on the contrary, as an unproblematic interference. Hence, focusing on the interactants’ reactions on certain conversational actions it is possible to interpret specific situations in conversations from the speakers’ point of view (cf. Denny 1985; James/Clarke 1993). I have specifically paid attention to the metalinguistic and paralingual signals (cf. French/Local 1983; Selting 1995; Bilmes 1997; Schegloff 2000) sent out by the recorded speakers to indicate that an intervention is perceived as an interruption or as at least problematic. Taking the participants’ point of view into account, the analyst is partially able to avoid classifying an intervention as an interruption that in fact was not perceived as such by the participants. A technique that some linguists have claimed to be very useful for reliably distinguishing problematic interruptive talk from unproblematic interruptive talk (cf. Edelsky 1981; Murray 1985; Watts 1991; Talbot 1992; Olbertz-Siitonen 2009, Schegloff 2000, 2002). The model I am proposing here is in particular based on this distinction.

Metalinguistic indications of problematic speech (such as “You have just interrupted me!”) are extremely seldom in conversation, but are indeed the only really reliable indicators for interruptions. Hence, I will only name such interventions as **interruptions** during which there have been clear metalinguistic indications. Cases that are marked as undesired or problematic

by the speakers with the help of paralingual resources (raise of speech volume and pitch, decrease of rate of speech, sound prolongation, cut-offs, reformulations etc. (cf. French/Local 1983; Watts 1991; Kotthoff 1993; Ingenhoff 1998, Schegloff 2000; Jefferson 2004:48) will be named **disruptions**.

Although speakers regularly display each other their perceptions of conversational actions, they do not do so in any case. The analyst can never be sure that an intervention has been perceived as unproblematic only because there have been no perceivable verbal, nonverbal or paralingual signals. Such cases that could formally be classified as interruptions due to syntactical, intonational as well as semantic-pragmatical parameters described in detail above, will be named **unproblematic cases** within my classification schema. Following Schegloff (2002) I will independently analyze apparent unproblematic cases, further sub-classifying them as **overlaps**, **simultaneous sequences** and **potential interruptions** according to my own definition¹. I will now further illustrate the established categories by using concrete examples taken from my data.

3.1 Unproblematic Cases

3.1.1 Overlaps

Conversational overlaps may on the one hand result from the listener's desire to send back-channel signals (cf. Yngve 1970; Duncan 1974; Frank 1992; James/Clarke 1993, Glindemann 1987; Schnyder 1997) to indicate that s/he is following the conversation. Schegloff (2000:5, 2002) has stated that speaker normally do not indicate back-channel signals as problematic or disruptive; other authors even point out the enhancing effect of minimal responses which classify them as a crucial feature of "good" conversation (cf. Frank 1992). In fact, my data do not show a single case of an intra-turn placed minimal response that has been marked as problematic. Extract (3) will exemplify this observation:

(3) (Selene)

01 A: hm it is just that selene is thinking one step further. (---)

02 because well (.) it's her fa:ther,

03-> her [fa:ther has] a new wi:fe,

04-> B: [that's right]

05 A: i mean it's a different situation.

B places her minimal response within A's ongoing turn. However, A does not paralinguistically modify her turn, she also does not consider B's back channel behavior as problematic.

¹ I have defined a potential interruption with the help of pure objective criteria as follows: An utterance is to be defined as potentially interruptive if it is placed within at turn in progress although its completion is not yet predictable regarding neither syntactical nor intonational or semantic-pragmatical parameters. Excluded from this definition are so-called trail-offs (cf. Ferguson 1977:301; Jefferson 1983b:7; Schegloff 2002:302) and unintentional interventions, probably evoked due to turn-taking errors (e. g. simultaneous starts).

As well, overlaps are frequently placed almost at the end of an ongoing turn, i. e. close to the coming TRP. Jefferson (1973, 1983a, 1983b, 1986, 2004) has extensively investigated the strategical placement and possible loci of overlaps. She argues that in a lot of cases overlapping inventions of the listener do not result from turn-taking errors; in contrast, they are systematically placed. Placing his/her turn close to a TRP the hearer /second speaker demonstrates his/her ability of projecting the end of the ongoing turn by either orientating on syntactical (transitional onset), semantic-pragmatical (recognitional onset) or progressive (progressional onset) resources (cf. Jefferson 1983a). Within the set of transitional onset terminal overlaps make out the majority of possible transitional overlaps. A terminal overlap is typically placed at the last word or the last syllables of the ongoing turn, thus, the turn in progress may be seen as practically complete on the semantic-pragmatic level, which is why in most cases terminal overlaps are managed unproblematically by the speakers, this being also the case in my data:

(4) (Differences between siblings)

01 A: well i mean it's just every child is diff[erent].

02 B: [like-]
for example- like in your case, (1.0)

03 selene is totally different than you guys.

3.1.2 Simultaneous Sequences

Similar to the abovementioned overlaps I have observed for situations of simultaneous speaking that in some cases the participants accept simultaneity as an apparent legitimate form of talk, whereas in other cases it is marked as problematic or undesired. At this point I, thus, think it is worth mentioning that the distinction speaker make within interventions, overlaps and simultaneous sequences is likely to depend on the specific function that a speaker intends to comply with the respective intervention. I will further discuss this issue later, for now, let me briefly discuss the different unproblematic forms of simultaneity that is included in my data.

Non-turn-competitive incomings

Extract (5) shows that speaker B places her commenting turn during A's ongoing turn. However, the paralinguistic articulation of B's turn shows that it has to be characterized as not turn-competitive since it is articulated in a low voice and a low rate of speech (cf. French/Local 1983). Hence, speaker B is respecting A as the current primary speaker with no right on the floor, assigning herself the role as secondary speaker (cf. Schwitalla 1992):

(5) (beautiful children)

(1) A: <<f> well yes the- the girl,> i thought it's gonna be a beau:tiful girl.=

(2) =cause as you see chuy is beau:tiful as well.

(3)-> a- [a little nose.]

(4) B: [<<all,p> they were beautiful children.>]

Choral co-production

With regard to the collaborative construction of conversational turns several authors have adverted to a specific phenomenon of simultaneous speaking that has been described as choral co-production of a single turn (cf. Schwitalla 1992; Lerner 2002; Glindemann 1987) or turn-sharing respectively. The crucial difference to other simultaneous turns lays in the identity of the utterances and the equal prosodical synchronization (cf. Glindemann 1987). Choral co-productions are stated to be the clearest cases in which speakers intentionally ignore the “one-party-at-a-time”-premise and successfully manage to share the floor (cf. Schegloff 2000). The following extract (6) will illustrate this:

(6) (The accidents)

(1) A: the last time- it is said that she was hit at the cranium. =right?

(2) B: ah well al[ways.]

(3) A: [that]she almost died.

(4) C: during a:ll accidents.

(5)-> during (-)the [first one as well.]

(6)-> B: [the first one as well.]

Simultaneous starts

Rule 1b, that has been proposed as one of the rules according to which speakers manage the speaker-swift (cf. Sacks et al. 1974; Kotthoff 1993), regularly provokes turn-taking errors which are often expressed in simultaneous starts in my data, especially in the four-person-conversation. Sacks et al. (1974) have observed that their participants perceive simultaneous starts as errors that need to be repaired by one of them leaving the floor up to the other one. This observance has been further explained with the cognitive inability of human beings to listen and talk at the same time (cf. Beattie 1981). Closely examining my data, however, I cannot confirm this observation as I could detect some cases that do not show any paralingual signals indicating a problem. One of those cases is extract (7):

(7) (You have to get to know each other)

01 A: two persons won't forget their past.

02 B: <<p> ah what do you [know?>]

03 A: [may]be one, but not two.

04 ((laugther))

05 B: well yes maybe.

06 (1.0)

07 A: [and besides it is just different.]

08 B: [first i have them to get to know]each other.

3.1.3 Potential Interruptions

Within discourse analysis interruptions have traditionally been described as linguistic strategies that convey power, control or dominance (cf. Zimmermann /West 1975; West 1979; Greif 1980; Kollock et al. 1985; Bilous/Krauss 1988; Lovin/Brody 1989; Orcutt/Harvey 1985; Goldberg 1990). The persistent and long lasting generally negative opinion had been generated

without taking into consideration the reactions, metalinguistic or paralingual signals or opinions of the participants, but basically represents the researchers' opinions and interpretations. In contrary, I advocate to consistently sticking to the speakers' reactions, hence, not assuming that an interruption has occurred although the apparent interrupted speaker has or has not perceived the intervention as an interruption. According to the participant-oriented approach I propose here, I have suggested naming interventions that structurally look like interruptions from the analyst's point of view, but are treated inconspicuously as potential interruptions. My data hold numerous cases of potential interruptions from which I will present extract (8) as an example:

8) (Better being with nobody)

01 A: (--) the bad thing is that i had just broken up with the new one,
02 and immediately after that i came together with the old one again.
03 and although: well i don't think that it was the worst decision-
04 but in the end i think the best would have been to be with neither
05 of the two.

06 (1.0)

07 A: or well- i mean, (---)

08-> B: well yes- so you can have some time fo::r- for- as you have just
09 said- for yourself and for thinking about it and (.) for valuing
10 the things man.

According to the parameters that may structurally define the completion of a turn and that have been described earlier in this text, speaker B's intervention in line 08 would have to be clearly classified as an interruption. However, as speaker A does not display any problem with B's intra-turn intervention we can only classify it as a potential interruption.

3.2 *Problematic Cases*

3.2.1 Interruptions

In my classification an interruption is defined as an intervention or conversational activity that is metalinguistically marked as illegitimate by the current speaker. Metalinguistic displays of illegitimate actions are the only reliable indications for a conversation analyst that an interruption has occurred according to the individual perceptions of the respective speaker. Extract (09) will demonstrate such a "clear case" (cf. Olbertz-Siitonen 2009):

(09)(Jealousy)

- 01 A: and she is somewhat ugly.=isn't she?
02 (---)
03 A: his wife is really quite ugly [and anyways]- he is jealous.
04 B: [do you know her?]
05 C: yes.
06 A: oh what would [have been if-]
07 C: [you know her]or what?
08 A: no i-
09 C: no.
10 A: through- through- um-
11 B: you've seen photos?
12 ((...))
13 A: well just imagine chuy if he had a- (1.0)
14 a: (-) a beautiful wife.
15 pff.
16 B: he would make princes[ses.]
17 A: [i]mean sometimes-
18 C: instead of the wife being jealous.
19 A: exactly.
20 C: i mean who knows whether she [would be jealous.=right?]
21-> A: [that- let me te:ll you]this.
22 sometimes jealousy appears,
23 because people know people's past.

The interventions (lines 04, 07 and 11) can be classified as potential interruptions. Speaker A does not show any reaction to those interventions, however, in line 21 it seems as if she is not willing to accept another interruption and she successfully claims the floor by directly asking her conversational partners to leave her speak.

3.2.2 Disruptions

Speakers seldom complain about interruptions explicitly. However, they express their displeasure about other interlocutors' interventions through specific paralingual strategies (cf. French/Local 1983; Selting 1995; Schegloff 2000; Jefferson 2004). Whereas I could only detect two cases of interruptions in my data, I have recorded a lot of instances of disruptions, though. In my participant-oriented classification schema I define a disruption as a conversational activity that is marked as problematic with the help of paralingual strategies. By carefully paying attention to the various paralingual signals speakers may send out during an exchange, the analysts are able to better interpret the participants' perceptions of actions, they may easily distinguish between problematic and unproblematic instances of interventions as well. The following extract (10), in which the attendees discuss the advantages and disadvantages of regularly going to a fitness center, shows a turn-competitive incoming (cf. French /Local 1983) which is marked as disruptive by the current speaker:

10) (fitness center vs. home)

- 01 A: and why don't you- don't you think it would be better for you to
02 buy equipment to exercise at home?
03 (---)
04 A: for some dumbbells you would pay around-
05 B: yeah but you don't do it [alex.]
06 C: [yes]but it is-
07-> A: equip- equipment of- <<f> [is>-]
08 D: [at] home you can't motivate yourself.

A's rise of voice indicates a sanction of D's intervention (line 08) which qualifies D's talk as a disruption. It is remarkable that A does not go into turn-competition to defend his right as primary speaker. Every member of an exchange disposes of equal linguistic resources to depend or capture the right to speak, thus, whether or not an intervention, interruption, disruption or simultaneous sequence may occur is negotiated by the participants: "Causing to stop' is not a unilateral action but an interactional achievement (...)" (Schegloff 2002, 295).

The next category of simultaneous sequences will exemplify how speakers extend an overlap, identified as a disruption, into a longer simultaneous sequence of turn-competition.

3.2.3 Simultaneous Sequences

Problematic simultaneous sequences are equal to disruptions in a sense that both subcategories are mainly characterized by the members' paralingual signals which sanction the intervention. The only aspect in which problematic simultaneous speaking differs from a disruption is its duration. For a certain time period neither party displays willingness to leave over the floor to the other interlocutor, extending the disruption to turn-competition or extended floor fights (cf. Schegloff 2000; Jefferson 2004). I could only detect a small number of turn-competitive simultaneous speaking in my data; the following extract (11) represents one of them. As fights for the floor seem to rarely occur in ordinary talk I assume that speakers indeed prefer to stick to the single speakership principle when talk is embossed by competition.

(11)(therapy)

- 01 A: for instance she has- she has always visited psychologists,
02 specialized in add- addictions.
03 B: yes i know.
04 A: i mean-
05 B: i don't doubt that but-
06-> (---) [what she needs is a <<f> !THE!rapist.>]
07-> B: [they know very well <<cresc> what- what] they can do for
08 her (--) and what they can't.>

The fight for the floor in lines 06-07 is clearly indicated by the rise of voice of both speakers through which both of them express their unwillingness of leaving up the floor to their respective interlocutor.

4. Multifunctionality of Interruptive and Simultaneous Speech – A Possible Explanation

The proposed different categories of unproblematic and problematic cases of disruptive speech have revealed that speakers may handle apparent equal interventions in multiple ways which raise the following question: What are the reasons and motives of participants for reacting negatively or not reacting to interruptive speech at all? Whereas some cases have been consistently marked as unproblematic (e. g. backchannel remarks) others have either been marked as legitimate or illegitimate in different contexts (e. g. simultaneous sequences). Within research it has been argued several times that speakers analyze intra-turn interferences on a functional level, afterwards deciding whether they indicate them as desired, neutral or illegitimate (cf. Goldberg 1990; Schegloff 2002; Menz/Al-Roubaie 2007), and correspondingly dealing with them: „Interactants define interruptions not by counting syllables but functionally.“ (Talbot, 1992, 459). Hence, it is assumed here that the different ways of managing an intervention highly depend on the multifunctional nature of interferences. After having classified and further sub-divided the different instances of interruptive speech according to the model proposed here, analysts will be able to find out more about the speakers motives taking into consideration the different conversational functions that an intervention may have (commenting, disagreeing, avoiding critical statements, initiating a change of topic, assistance in phrasing, managing a mistake, demonstrating solidarity, specifically asking, demonstrating power /dominance, and so forth (cf. Zimmermann /West 1975; Ahrens 1997; Bilous /Krauss 1988; Carbó 1992; Coates 2004; Lerner 2004; Li 2001; Olbertz-Siitonen 2007, 2009).

5. Summary and Conclusion

The present paper aims to propose a classification schema respective a model with which interventions of every kind that regularly occurs in natural conversation could be assigned a certain category. The proposed model is based on two assumptions that differ from the standard model of turn-taking proposed by Sacks et al. (1974). Firstly, it has been argued that simultaneous speaking is not to be handled as turn-taking error, but as a possible legitimate way of governing speaker switches and of conveying certain functions. Secondly, when structurally exploring an intervention the in-progress turn needs to be analyzed for its syntactical, prosodical and semantic-pragmatic features in order to determine whether or not it has reached completion before the intervention has occurred. Further, it has been proposed to analyze interventions from the participants' point of view in the first instance (participant-oriented approach) and to consider structural criteria only in those cases where possible reactions (metalinguistic and paralinguistic signals) are indiscernible on the side of the apparent interruptee. Strictly following these principles, analysts will be able to differentiate between problematic and unproblematic cases on the first level. In a second step, analysts could further subdivide the different cases of unproblematic speech into overlaps, simultaneous sequences, and potential interruptions. Instances of problematic speech shall be further classified as interruptions, disruptions, and simultaneous sequences.

Categorizing the different instances of interruptive speech with the help of the model proposed here, analysts will, in future, on the one hand avoid assigning general negativity to any kind of

intervention without even considering the attendees' reactions. On the other hand, analysts could be better sensibilized to the different motives that speaker have to differently react on interventions as it has been assumed here that the heterogeneous management of interventions is directly linked with their multifunctional nature and high variability.

References

- Ahrens, U. (1997). The interplay between interruptions and preference organization in conversation. In Kotthoff, H. & Wodak, R. (Eds.), *Communicating gender in context* (pp. 79-106). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Beattie, G. W. (1982). Turn-taking and interruption in political interviews: Margaret Thatcher and Jim Callaghan compared and contrasted. *Semiotica*, 39, 93-114.
- Bilmes, J. (1997). Being interrupted. *Language in society*, 26, 507-531. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500021035>
- Bilous, F. R. & Krauss, R. M. (1988). Dominance and accommodation in the conversational behaviors of same and mixed gender dyads. *Language and communication*, 8, 183-194.
- Brinker, K., & Sager, S. F. (2006). *Linguistische Gesprächsanalyse: Eine einföhrung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt.
- Carbó T. (1992). Towards an interpretation of interruptions in Mexican parliamentary discourse (1920-1960). *Discourse and society*, 3, 25-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0957926592003001002>
- Coates, J. (2004). *Women talk: Conversation between women friends*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. (1996). Gesprächsduette unter Frauen. In Trömel-Plätz, S. (Ed.): *Frauengespräche: Sprache der Verständigung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag.
- Coates, J. (1997). The construction of a collaborative floor in women's friendly talk. In Givón, T. (Ed.), *Conversation; Cognitive, communicative, and social perspectives*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Denny, R. (1985). Marking the interaction order: the social constitution of turn exchange and speaking turns. *Language in society*, 14, 41-62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500010939>
- Duncan, S. Jr. (1974). On the structure of speaker-auditor interaction during speaking turns. *Language in society*, 2, 161-180. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500004322>
- Edelsky, C. (1981). Who's got the floor? *Language in society*, 10, 383-421. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S004740450000885X>
- Fant, L. M. (1995). Negotiation discourse and interaction in a cross-cultural perspective: the case of Sweden and Spain. In Ehlich, K. & Wagner, J. (Eds.), *The discourse of business negotiation* (pp. 177-201) Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Ferguson, N. (1977). Simultaneous speech, interruptions and dominance. *British journal of social and clinical psychology*, 16, 295-302.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1977.tb00235.x>

Ford, C., & Thompson, S. A. (1996). Interactional units in conversation: syntactic, intonational, and pragmatic resources for the management of turns. In Ochs, E., Schegloff, E. A. & Thompson, S. A. (Eds.), *Interaction and grammar* (pp. 134-18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frank, K. (1992). *Sprachgewalt: Die sprachliche Reproduktion der Geschlechterhierarchie – Elemente einer feministischen Linguistik im Kontext sozialwissenschaftlicher Frauenforschung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

French, P., & Local, J. (1983). Turn-competitive incomings. *Journal of pragmatics*, 7, 17-38.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(83\)90147-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(83)90147-9)

Glindemann, R. (1987). *Zusammensprechen in Gesprächen: Aspekte einer konsonanztheoretischen Pragmatik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Goldberg, J. (1990). Interrupting the discourse on interruptions: an analysis in terms of relationally neutral, power- and rapport-oriented acts. *Journal of pragmatics*, 14, 905-921.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(90\)90045-F](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90045-F)

Greif, E. B. (1980). Sex differences in parent-child conversation. In Kramarae, C. (Ed.), *The voices and words of women and men* (pp. 253-258) Oxford: Pergamon Press.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0148-0685\(80\)92281-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0148-0685(80)92281-2)

Ingenhoff, D. (1998). Der Kampf ums Rederecht I: Formen und Strategien der Gesprächsbeitragskoordination. In Schmitz, H. W. (Ed.), *Vom Sprecher zum Hörer. Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Gesprächsanalyse* (pp. 125-200). Münster: Nodus.

James, D., & Clarke, S. (1993). Women, men and interruptions: A critical review. In Tannen, D. (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction* (pp. 231-280). New York: Oxford.

Jefferson, G. (1973). A case of precision timing in ordinary conversation: Overlapped tag-positioned address terms in closing sequences. *Semiotica*, 9, 47-96.

Jefferson, G. (1983a). Notes on some orderlinesses of overlap onset. [Online] Available: http://www.liso.ucsb.edu/Jefferson/overlap_onset.pdf (May 30, 2012)

Jefferson, G. (1983b). On a failed hypothesis: „Conjunctionals“ as overlap-vulnerable [Online] Available: <http://www.liso.ucsb.edu/Jefferson/Conjunctionals.pdf> (May 30, 2012)

Jefferson, G. (1986). Notes on „latency“ in overlap onset. *Human studies*, 9, 153-183.

Jefferson, G. (2004). A sketch of some orderly aspects of overlap in natural conversation. In Lerner, G. H. (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation*. (pp. 43-59) Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company

- Kallmeyer, W. (2006). Wann ist ein Redebeitrag zu Ende? Grammatische, semantische und pragmatische Aspekte des Formulierens komplexer Äußerungen im Gespräch. In Breindl, E., Gunkel, L. & Strecker, B (Eds.), *Grammatische Untersuchungen. Analysen und Reflexionen* (pp. 493-510). Tübingen: Narr Verlag.
- Kallmeyer, W., & Schmitt, R. (1996). Forcieren oder: die verschärfte Gangart. Zur Analyse von Kooperationsformen im Gespräch. In Kallmeyer, W. (Ed.), *Gesprächsrhetorik: rhetorische Verfahren im Gesprächsprozess* (pp. 19-118). Tübingen: Narr Verlag
- Kollock, P., Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1985). Sex and power in interaction: conversational privileges and duties. *American sociological review*, 50, 34-46.
- Kotthoff, H. (1993). Unterbrechungen, Überlappungen und andere Interventionen: Vorschläge zur Kategorienunterscheidung und kontextorientierten Interpretation. *Deutsche Sprache*, 21, 162-185.
- Kowal, S., Barth, HC., Egehan, H., Galusic, G., Kögel, C., Lippold, N., Pfeil, A., & O'Connell, D. C., (1998). Unterbrechungen in Medieninterviews – Geschlechtstypisches Gesprächsverhalten? *Germanistische Linguistik*, 139-140, 279-299.
- Lappé, W. (1983). *Gesprächsdynamik: Gesprächsanalytische Untersuchungen zum spontanen Alltagsgespräch*. Göttingen: Kümmerle.
- Lerner, G. H. (2002). Turn-sharing: the choral co-production of talk-in-interaction. In Ford, C., Fox, B. & Thompson, S. (Eds.). *The language of turn and sequence* (pp. 225-256). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lerner, G. H. (2004). Collaborative turn sequences. In Lerner, G. H. (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 225-256). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Li, H. Z. (2001). Cooperative and intrusive interruptions in inter- and intracultural dyadic discourse. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 20, 259-284.
- Makri-Tsilipakou, M. (1994). Interruption revisited: affiliative vs. disaffiliative intervention. *Journal of pragmatics*, 21, 401-426. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(94\)90012-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)90012-4)
- Menz, F. & Al-Roubaie, A. (2007). Quantifizierende Verfahren in der qualitativen Forschung zur Arzt-Patient-Kommunikation: Unterbrechungen, Status und Geschlecht. In Gruber, H., Kaltenbacher, M. & Muntigl, P. (Eds.), *Empirical approaches to discourse analysis* (pp. 169-197) Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang.
- Murata, K. (1994). Intrusive or cooperative?: A cross-cultural study of interruption. *Journal of pragmatics*, 21, 385-400. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(94\)90011-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)90011-6)
- Murray, S. O., (1985). Toward a model of members' methods for recognizing interruptions. *Language in society*, 14, 31-40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500010927>
- Olbertz-Siitonen, M. (2007). Kooperative Kooperation – Funktion und Form von Überlappungen in einer Lehrerkonferenz. In Tiitula, L., Piitulainen, M. & Reuter, E. (Eds.),

- Die gemeinsame Konstitution professioneller Interaktion* (pp. 171-200). Tübingen: Narr Verlag.
- Olbertz-Siitonen, M. (2009). Unterbrechen in zielgerichteten Gesprächen. [Online] Available: <http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/978-951-44-7876-5.pdf> (May 30, 2012)
- Orcutt, James D., & Kenneth H. L. (1985). Deviance, rule-breaking and male dominance in conversation. *Symbolic interaction*, 8, 15-32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/si.1985.8.1.15>
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696-735.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1996). Turn organization: One intersection of grammar and interaction. In Ochs, E., Schegloff, E. A. & Thompson, S. A. (Eds.), *Interaction and grammar*. (pp. 52-133) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620874.002>
- Schegloff, E. A. (2000). Overlapping talk and the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language in society*, 29, 1-63.
- Schegloff, E. A. (2002). Accounts of conduct in interaction: Interruption, overlap, and turn-taking. In: Turner, J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Sociological Theory* (pp. 287-328) New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36274-6_15
- Schegloff, E. A., & Sacks, H. (1973). Opening up closings. *Semiotica*, 8, 289-327. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/semi.1973.8.4.289>
- Schnyder, M. (1997). *Geschlechtsspezifisches Gesprächsverhalten: Höraktivitäten und Unterbrechungen in Radiogesprächsrunden*. Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus.
- Schwitalla, J. (1992). Über einige Weisen des gemeinsamen Sprechens: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie der Beteiligungsrollen im Gespräch. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft*, 11, 68-98. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/zfsw.1992.11.1.68>
- Selting, M. (1995). *Prosodie im Gespräch: Aspekte einer interaktionalen Phonologie der Konversation*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Selting, M. (2000). TCUs and TRPs: The construction of units in conversational talk. *Language in society*, 29, 477-517. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500004012>
- Selting, M., Auer, P., Barth-Weingarten, D., Bergmann, J. Bergmann, P., Birkner, K., Couper-Kuhlen, ... & Uhmann, S. (2010). Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2 (GAT 2). Gesprächsforschung. Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion, 10, 353-402 [Online] Available: www.gespraechsforschung-ozs.de (May 30, 2012)
- Smith-Lovin, L., & Brody, C. (1989). Interruptions in group discussions: The effects of gender and group composition. *American sociological review*, 54, 424-435. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2095614>

Talbot, M. (1992). I wish you'd stop interrupting me!": Interruptions and asymmetries in speaker rights in equal encounters. *Journal of pragmatics*, 18, 451-466. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(92\)90084-O](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(92)90084-O)

Tannen, D. (1993). The relativity of linguistic strategies: rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance. In Tannen, D. (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction*. (pp. 165-188) New York: Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2005). *Conversational style – analyzing talk among friends*. New York: Ablex.

Thimm, C. (1990). *Dominanz und Sprache. Strategisches Handeln im Alltag*. Wiesbaden: DUV.

Watts, R. J. (1991). *Power in family discourse*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.

West, C. (1979). Against our will : Male interruptions of females in cross-sex conversations. In Orasanu, J., Slater, M. K. & Loeb Adler, L. (Eds.), *Language, sex and gender – Does “la Difference” make the difference?* (pp. 81-97). New York: The Academy. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1979.tb17755.x>

Yngve, V. H. (1970). On getting a word in edgewise. *Papers from the sixth regional meeting of the Chicago linguistic society*, Illinois, pp. 567-578.

Zimmermann, Don H., & West, C. (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In Thorne, B. & Henley, N. (Eds.), *Language and sex – difference and dominance* (pp. 105-129). Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Appendix

CA transcription conventions (according to GAT 2 proposed by Selting et al. (2010))

- : sound is held (approx. duration: 0.2-0.5 sec.)
- :: sound is held (approx. duration: 0.5-0.8 sec.)
- ::: sound is held (approx. duration: 0.8-1.0 sec.)
- [onset of interruption or overlapped speech
- = ‘latching’; no interval between the end of a turn and the start of the next one
- cut off speech
- (.) micro-pause (approx. duration: < 0.2 sec.)
- (-) short pause (approx. duration: 0.2-0.5 sec.)
- (--) pause of medium length (approx. duration: 0.5-0.8 sec.)
- (---) longer pause (approx. duration: 0.8-1.0 sec.)
- (1.5) pauses in tenths of seconds
- <<f> > forte (loud)

<<ff>>	fortissimo (very loud)
<<p>>	piano (low)
<<pp>>	pianissimo (very low)
<<all>>	allegro (fast)
<<len>>	lento (slow)
<<cresc>>	crescendo (getting louder)
<<dim>>	diminuendo (getting lower)
<<acc>>	accelerando (getting faster)
<<rall>>	rallentando (getting slower)