Interaction in Media(ted) Settings – An ICCA10 report

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1. Introduction

This conference report focuses on papers presented at ICCA10 that addressed interaction in media and mediated settings, i.e. interaction mediated both in terms of technology and institution. One session and one panel at ICCA10 were explicitly dedicated to media settings: the session "Interaction in Journalistic Settings" (chaired by *Mats Ekström*) dealt with mass-mediated and professional journalistic settings. The panel "Orders of Interaction in Mediated Settings" (organized by *Ilkka Arminen*, *Christian Licoppe* and *Anna Spagnolli*) encompassed papers on interpersonal communication in private and institutional settings, on human-robot-interaction and on mass-mediated talk. There were also several papers on media settings that were presented as single lectures or in other panels. Some of these are also included in this report.

2. Topics of interaction in media settings

The papers presented centered around three topics: Mediated interpersonal interaction, human-robot interaction, and mass-mediated communication.

2.1. Mediated interpersonal interaction

Conversation analysis in fact started out with data from a mediated setting: telephone conversation (Schegloff 2002). Although the mediality of the situation was not addressed explicitly, some of the phenomena highlighted were actually strongly connected to the mediated setting they occurred in (ibid.). However, due to the development of new technologies, mediated interpersonal communication has become increasingly complex. Papers presented at ICCA10 addressed mobile-phone communication (Licoppe/Morel), private chat communication (Spagnolli) and complex mediated workplace settings (Lan Hing Ting, Vaajala).

A concept that is underlying almost all papers is that of "affordances". Technologies offer certain possibilities for action that Hutchby (2001), with recourse to Gibson's work in the psychology of perception, calls "affordances". The term "affordance" offers a "third way" between the opposing positions of technological determinist and social-constructivist perspectives on technology (ibid.:444). From this intermediate position, technologies are not seen as determining their interpretation and use. However, they are also not understood as being open to any kind of interpretation and use (ibid.). They "may be both shaped by and shaping of the practices humans use in interaction with, around and through them" (ibid.:444). The affordances that were made relevant in the presented papers were connected to three central aspects of mediated communication:

1. media technologies' possibilities to "affect the distribution of personal space" (ibid.:445),

2.   the specific ways in which signs are distributed by media technologies,

3.   the restriction of modalities that media technologies can impose on interactions.

Christian Licoppe and Julien Morel's paper addressed the first aspect. They show how interactants use the spatial flexibility of mobile devices in specific ways that construct the interaction space.

The second aspect is central for Anna Spagnolli's paper on chat communication. There is no letter-by-letter distribution in conventional text chat systems, which means that messages are distributed in packages. This specific affordance creates a spatiotemporal separation of the contexts of production and use (Zitzen/Stein 2004). As text messages are produced "privately" in the dialogue box and sent as packages, the production of turns cannot be monitored as in talk (ibid.).

The third affordance is central to the papers presented by Karine Lan Hing Ting and Tiia Vaajala. The specific affordances of the media technologies they study do not offer modalities that are available in face-to-face communication (e.g., vocal-aural modalities in instant messaging), thus restricting the semiotic resources available to the interlocutors. The absence of certain modalities can contribute to a setting in which interlocutors can more easily engage in parallel activities than in face-to-face-settings, because the collaborative construction of joint attention cannot be monitored, e.g., when talking on the phone and chatting. The resulting setting is modally highly complex, as Karine Lan Hing Ting's analysis of the interaction between co-present call-centre workers and Tiia Vaajala's study of emergency line communication showed. These two papers also drew attention to the fact that media technologies' affordances are intertwined with certain institutional practices.

In their paper on "Location sharing, proximity recognition and the production of interactionally generated encounters in mobile phone conversations", *Christian Licoppe* and *Julien Morel* addressed mobile phone communication and its specific affordances. As a mobile device, the mobile phone engenders patterns of communication that are distinct from landline calls. While these patterns have been described with respect to the organization of openings (Arminen/Leinonen 2006; Hutchby/Barnett 2005), Licoppe and Morel look at mobile phone communication from the specific perspective of the production of encounters as "interactionally generated actions" (Sacks 1992:211). They showed that in mobile phone conversations, information on the location of interlocutors functions to negotiate a possible face-to-face meeting. Location sharing thus not only has informative function, but can be used to project a possible face-to-face encounter. Licoppe and Morel's paper illustrated how a specific affordance of mobile communication – its mobility – makes possible certain communicative activities that restructure the interaction space. By negotiating possible face-to-face-meetings on the mobile phone, interlocutors work on the public space they are acting in, giving it temporally and interactionally relevant meanings.

Anna Spagnolli's talk "Re-mediation and conversation analysis: The case of overlaps" was presented in the panel "Orders of Interaction in Mediated Settings". It addressed private interpersonal communication that is mediated through a text chat system. Using twelve chat conversations that were obtained by asking people

to discuss travel plans via the chat system Skype, Spagnolli investigated the stability of the conversational phenomenon "overlap" in chat communication. A central concept for her analysis is that of "re-mediation" (Bolter/Grusin 1999). It implies that there is a "re-use" and a "re-definition" of "natural communication-environment" phenomena in mediated interactions. The concept takes an intermediary position between the notions that mediated communication is either merely second order to face-to-face communication or a completely new and separate phenomenon. Mediated communication is seen as borrowing from natural conversation, adapting phenomena to the affordances of the medium used (Spagnolli 2010). Spagnolli started her analysis by defining overlap in chat communication as two or more turns that are sent simultaneously, which is indicated through their having the same time stamp in the chat log. She made clear that this definition is not unproblematic. For face-to-face conversation, overlap is defined as more than "one speaker at a time" (Sacks/Schegloff et al. 1974). However, in chat communication, the concept "speaker" is "atomized in several installments" (Zitzen/Stein 2004), namely the production and the utterance of messages. Chatters only become relevant as "speakers" in the chat conversation once they have sent their messages. Consequently, "material" interruptions are impossible; messages that are sent at the same time are put into a linear order by the chat system. However, Spagnolli showed that chatters do split their turns, sending messages in several packages and thus making "the progression of the turn partially available to the interlocutors" (Spagnolli 2010). Messages that are sent during this incremental production of a turn can then be seen as overlapping. However, the simple occurrence of two messages with the same time stamp of which one is a split turn is not a sufficient criterion for overlap. Spagnolli pointed out that potential places of overlap have to be shown to have conditional relevance. For this reason, Spagnolli looked at the practices chatters use to resolve overlaps. In the subsequent discussion, the applicability of the concept "overlap" to chat conversation was questioned. It was suggested that it might be more fruitful to approach the presented phenomena using the concepts of "schism" or "parallel activity". Another issue raised was the question whether overlap actually can be shown to be a participant category in the excerpts presented. Spagnolli pointed out that her corpus encompasses video data as well. Using these recordings, which show the chatters' behavior in front of the screen, the relevance of overlap for the interlocutors can be proven, as a study by Beißwenger (2008) shows.

Karine Lan Hing Ting's study on communication in a call center was presented in the panel "Orders of Interaction in Mediated Settings". In her talk "Text chat and multi-activity: Multimodal interaction between co-present call centre workers", she presented an example of the multimodal interactions call-centre agents are engaged in while they are talking to potential customers on the phone. Lan Hing Ting presented video-data she collected during her fieldwork in a French call centre. The excerpt shown consisted of an outbound call by a call centre agent, the text messages the agent received from the co-present floor leader during the call and the bodily interaction between the co-workers, floor leaders and floor supervisors. The call centre agent is engaged in at least three different interactions at the same time, each relying on different modalities. While each interaction is confined to one modality (sound, writing and bodily conduct), their simultaneous occurrence confronts the call centre agent with a modally extremely complex en-

vironment. Lan Hing Ting's presentation provided interesting insight in a highly mediated environment and its institution-specific practices that are relevant in both the context of workplace studies and mediated communication. The density of the analyzed situation was also visible in the discussion following Lan Hing Ting's talk, which was partly devoted to establishing a mutual understanding of the interaction presented in the transcript. Open questions were the nature of the floor leader's messages ("those who are discouraged leave your positions") and the negotiation of their appropriateness by the floor leader and the supervisors that was documented in the video excerpt and transcript.

Also *Tiia Vaajala* addressed a mediated working place situation in which different technologies intersect. In her talk entitled "The computer assisted interaction in the emergency response centre – the challenges of the interaction with the contradictory practices" (Panel "Orders of Interaction in Mediated Settings"), Vaajala focused on the intersection between the interactional demands of an institution and those of its clients, which have to be dealt with at the same time because of the use of certain technologies. Due to a new emergency system, Finish emergency-dispatch operators take the incoming emergency calls and insert the information in an automated information system at the same time – in contrast to prior systems with separated phases of call taking and information insertion. They have to negotiate between the caller's interactional demands and the necessity to obtain the kind of information the information system requires. Vaajala presented an excerpt from her data corpus, which consists of 180 audio recordings of emergency calls, of which 50 recordings were videotaped as well. Her analysis shows that the information systems not only have to be fast, trustworthy, reliable and to promote decision-making (Vaajala 2010), but also be sensitive to the social interaction between operator and caller.

2.2. Human-robot interaction

Human-robot interaction (HRI) is not yet a central field of application of conversation-analytic methodology. This was reflected by the fact that only one paper presented at ICCA10 addressed HRI. However, as several studies have shown, CA can contribute essentially to inform the theory of human-robot-interaction, while at the same time HRI may function as a testing platform for CA's analytical results (Pitsch 2010a). CA's important contribution to HRI lies in its capacity to detect interactional regularities without being deterministic.

In her presentation on "CA and the design of multimodal human-robot-interaction" (Panel "Orders of Interaction in Mediated Settings"), *Karola Pitsch* presented a study that uses CA findings on naturally occurring face-to-face talk to inform the design of robot systems. As social interaction is highly contingent, deterministic routines fail to meet the requirements of talk in interaction. More flexible robot systems need to be able to monitor the user's behavior, interpret it as meaningful in terms of the interactional organization and adjust its own behavior accordingly (Pitsch 2010b). The study Pitsch presented used findings on "pause & restart" (Goodwin 1980) and head nods (Heath 1992) in natural occurring talk between humans to inform the conduct of a robot that acted as a museum guide in an exhibition. In contrast to lab studies, this "real world"-setting confronts "naïve"

visitors with the robot's behavior. An important task to be performed by the robot in this specific situation was to enter into contact with the visitor, to arrange a relevant position and signal ways for the visitor to communicate with the system (Pitsch 2010b). For the robot, this asks both for a capacity to recognize the visitor's position and to produce an adequate reaction. For the latter purpose, the pattern of pause & restart was implemented into the robot's behavior. Goodwin (1980) shows that in natural conversation, turn-initial pauses and restarts are used to obtain orientation to a turn in production. The robot's behavior was adjusted accordingly. It monitors the visitors' gaze behavior and "if it loses the visitor's gaze, it stops talking, pauses briefly and restarts its talk" (Pitsch/Kuzuoka et al. 2009). This "contingent entry" proved to engage visitors to enter in an interaction with the robot significantly more often than "non-contingent" entries did. In those cases when the robot adjusted (or at least seemed to adjust) to the visitors' behavior, they more often stayed until the end of the interaction and mutually produced an ending phase with the robot. Another resource regarding alignment found for human-human-interaction are head nods (Heath 1992). In human-robot-interaction, head nods could be shown to elicit head nods. As an "emerging communicative pattern", Pitsch found that visitors used head nods to "control" the robot, taking his head turn and pause as a first turn that requires a response. The visitor's nod thus functions as a "go ahead" sequentially, even if the robot actually only monitors the visitors gaze direction. Pitsch provided a fascinating insight into human-robot interaction that made very clear how HRI can profit from CA findings, and also what CA can gain from HRI.

2.3. Mass-mediated interaction

Broadcasted talk is a well established topic in conversation analysis. There is extensive work on talk shows (Hutchby 2006) and news interviews (Clayman/Heritage 2002a). While the "classic" CA approach to media talk is product-oriented and primarily concentrated on the verbal level of the broadcasted interaction, there has also been research on the visual level (Lauerbach 2010), as well as studies on the production- (Clayman 1990; Heath/Luff 2000; Lundell 2010) and reception-side (Hepp 1998). Most papers presented at ICCA10 dealt with media talk as product[1] (Ayaß; Ekström; Lundell/Ekström; McIlvenny). However, production perspectives were addressed in some papers in addition to the product-analyses presented. Erikson dealt with press conferences, which are at the intersection between product and production, and Gerhardt analyzed the reception side by looking at communication during the reception of broadcasted soccer games.

In her paper entitled "Producing 'hereness' and 'nowness': Interviews with foreign correspondents in television news", *Ruth Ayaß* presented data from a project on the construction of hereness and nowness in television news. Ayaß introduced several instances of on-air-interviews between news presenters and foreign cor-

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[1]   In media studies and conversation-analytic studies on media communication, a differentiation in product, production and reception analyses is common (Ayaß 2004). The study of media texts as products implies that neither the production nor the reception processes are central to the analysis, but the broadcasted talk itself.

respondents in live connections. This situation is characterized by a "double me-
diality": The audience at home watches on the screen how the news presenter and
the foreign correspondent interact with each other via screen and/or telephone.
This creates turn-taking patterns that are different from those of news interviews
between co-present participants as described by Clayman/Heritage (2002a) and
others. Although doubly mediated interviews of this kind have been the object of
conversation-analytic enquiry, the analytic focus mostly did not lie on the double
mediality of the broadcasted talk. An exception is Montgomery (2006), who
explicitly focuses on live "two-ways", which is the institutional term for live links
between journalists in a TV studio and correspondents. As one feature typical of
news interviews with foreign correspondents via the screen, Ayaß identified the
"summoning" of the foreign correspondent by the news presenter, which employs
the correspondent's first name and takes the format of "X is now in Y. X, what is
the situation...". Ayaß analyzed the function of this format both within the mass-
mediated talk and in the interaction between news presenter and correspondent.
While on the level of the mass-mediated talk, the format functions as a trajectory
between the "here" of the studio and the "there" of the correspondent's location
and as a legitimization of the foreign correspondent as an "expert" for the current
issue, it might at the same time work as a signal for the correspondent who can
typically only perceive the news presenter via an audio channel and needs a strong
signal to indicate the beginning of the conversation. Ayaß pointed out that for the
project at the University of Klagenfurt, ethnographic research in news production
will be carried out to follow up these initial ideas on the production-side of the
broadcasted talk. In addition to the verbal level, Ayaß presented an analysis of the
backgrounds in front of which the foreign correspondents act. In the subsequent
discussion, it was asked in which way the backgrounds position the correspondent
in terms of liveness and his/her knowledge about the news reported, and how cor-
respondent interviews and backgrounds are used to make up for a lack of news.

The phenomenon of intraprofessional interviews was also addressed in the ses-
sion "Interaction in Journalistic settings", where *Åsa Kroon Lundell* and *Mats
Ekström* presented a paper on "Doing 'commentaries' on the news: Constructing
journalistic expertise in intraprofessional news talk". While Ayaß – concentrating
on interviews with foreign correspondents – focused on the construction of a spe-
cific spatial constellation and its implications, Lundell and Ekström analyzed the
resources generally used in the contextualization of journalists as experts in inter-
views. Drawing on a corpus of twenty intraprofessional dialogues from the Swe-
dish news program "Aktuelt", Lundell and Ekström showed how the task of
"doing a commentary" is accomplished interactionally in the interview between
journalists and journalist-experts. Contrasting the intraprofessional interview with
the teleprompter-read commentaries from the early 1980s, the authors pointed out
how the dialogic form creates spaces in which liveness and expertise can con-
stantly be reinforced during the talk. This is even more interesting as the use of
the interview format for the production of commentaries can also be seen as an in-
stance of the "conversationalization" (Fairclough 1994) of news discourse, which
can be used to "mark a shift away from authority" (Fairclough 2005:160). Lundell
and Ekström presented a striking example for the ambivalent character of conver-
sationalization by showing that it can also be used to lend the interviewee´s voice
more authority; creating opportunities to constantly re-enact the interviewee's ex-

pert identity. In the subsequent discussion, the question was raised whether there are differences between the monologic 1980s commentaries and the current dialogic form regarding their opinionated nature. It was remarked that on German TV, both the dialogic form and the teleprompter-read monologic form exist, the latter being used for strongly opinionated, even polemic commentaries, which are distinctly different from the commentaries given by journalist-experts in intraprofessional interviews. This led to the question whether there are differences in the understanding of the communicative form "commentary" between Sweden and Germany or whether – at least for German TV – there is no substitution of the monologic form by the intraprofessional interview, but rather a diversification of forms.

In his paper on "Hybridity as a resource and challenge in a talk show political interview", *Mats Ekström* addressed the hybrid nature of political interviews in personality talk shows. Based on examples from four talk shows that were broadcast on Swedish public service radio during the 2006 elections, Ekström showed that talk show interviews involve a "mix of activities (and frames of activities)" (Ekström 2010:234). While news interviews mainly involve accountability interviewing, talk show interviews shift between accountability interviewing and small talk. These different frames can follow each other sequentially or occur in an integrated form, when both frames are invoked at the same time. The resulting hybridity is a communicative resource for both the host and the politician and can lead to challenging situations on the part of the politician. Ekström argued that due to this phenomenon, talk show interviews are not necessarily less adversarial than news interviews and form a fruitful object for analysis. In the subsequent discussion, a parallel to political audience-participation talk shows was drawn, where the talk shifts between the individual situation of the audience members and a more general political discourse, resulting in a specific form of hybridity. In line with Ekströms argument regarding talk shows, in these shows, too, the initiation of frame shifts is a question of power and can be used to create challenges for the interlocutors.

Paul McIlvenny's paper "Talking video in 'everyday life': Interactional practices of localizing, translating and stretching conduct in Reality TV parenting programs" was part of the panel "Space as Resource and Achievement" organized by Wolfgang Kesselheim. Like Ruth Ayaß in her talk on news interviews, McIlvenny addressed a setting that is characterized by a double mediality, but in a distinctly different way: In parenting programs like "Super Nanny", video is used as a "therapeutic tool" to "intervene interactionally" in the every-day practices of the people participating (McIlvenny 2010:146). Video is thus not only used for the surveillance of the participants by the audience like in Reality TV programs such as "Big Brother", but it is made relevant for the participants themselves. McIlvenny differentiated between the following three functions of video in the counseling process: video prompted recall, live video monitoring and commentary, and live video relay and instructional feedback from one space to another (e.g. bed room to living room). While the former functions to confront participants with their own behavior, the latter two are used to comment the participants' behavior either for the audience or as real-time instruction. In his analysis of excerpts from "Tiny Toddlers" and other shows, McIlvenny showed how video is used to cut and re-

configure time and space, constructing specific social perspectives, most notably that of professional vision.

In his talk entitled "Follow-up-questions and adversarialness in political press conferences: A study of press conferences with the Swedish government", *Göran Eriksson* addressed a setting that is not produced for mass-mediation, but forms an institutional context that precedes the mass-mediated talk. However, press conferences are broadcasted regularly and thus also circulate as mass-mediated talk. An important difference to talk shows or news interviews is the fact that press conferences are not produced for the sole purpose of broadcasting. Erikssons' analysis focused on follow-up-questions by journalists, which were studied in 7 press conferences by the Swedish government that contained 107 question turns. As Eriksson pointed out, follow-up-questions are a central concept for the analysis of the interaction in press conferences, because here – in comparison to news interviews – journalists have limited access to the floor (Clayman/Elliott et al. 2006). In US-American government press conferences, there is a one-turn-per-journalist-norm (Clayman/Heritage 2002b). A follow-up-question is thus an indicator of journalistic initiative, as it involves re-taking the floor despite the institutional constrains. For the Swedish context, Eriksson analyzed how follow-up-questions are dealt with in the interaction between politicians and journalists, how journalists manage to regain the floor and how they use follow-up-questions to perform adversarialness. He found that the indicativeness of follow-up-questions regarding adversarialness depends on the US-American context, where the one-turn-per-journalist-norm is active. In Swedish press conferences, where the floor is less restricted, follow-up-questions perform more diverse tasks. Eriksson found that journalists use follow-up-questions to elicit elaborations on a subject, prompt assessments of a specific matter and invite confirmations. With this analysis, Eriksson showed that follow-up-question are in fact a context-bound indicator of adversarialness and that research on other than US-American contexts is needed.

In her talk "Notability: How media influence talk-in-interaction", *Cornelia Gerhardt* focused on the reception of TV shows. Relying on video recordings of English football fans watching the World Cup on television, she studied how TV influences talk-in-interaction and how, in turn, meaning is produced during the reception by the ongoing talk. The concept of "notability" is central in Gerhardt's analysis. She does not understand notability as an inherent quality of the media text, but as a communicative construction by the participants in front of the screen. "Notability" refers to the moments in Gerhardt's data when "sudden shifts" in the interaction occur (Gerhardt 2010). These shifts are typically produced by interjections and do not preface a following activity, but construct the very moment as "notable". The construction of notability is not accountable, as Gerhardt showed using excerpts from her data. In the subsequent discussion, the question was raised whether the construction of notability might be more debatable and accountable during the reception of other media genres. Football games offer a structure that makes notable moments relatively clear (at least for those who know the rules of the game). Moreover, the live commentator "pre-reads" the game for the audience and signals notable moments. Gerhardt agreed that football games form a special case and suggested that a comparison to other media genres might yield interesting results.

3. Concluding remarks

The papers presented at ICCA10 showed that conversation analysis is a powerful tool to analyze a broad range of media(ted) settings, including new media technologies and the complex settings they afford. For future conferences, it might be fruitful to discuss the implications of the "multimodal turn" in CA and linguistics for the conversation-analytic study of media(ted) settings. This discussion seems called for due to the modal complexity of mediated settings and the specific requirements and constraints that they create for a multimodal approach to interaction. One question that could be addressed regards the already existing approaches to multimodality in media(ted) settings, e.g. social semiotics, and the possibilities and problems of their integration to conversation-analytic studies. Another important question is the reach of conversation-analytic methodology for the study of media(ted) settings. Although it is more than obvious that conversation-analytic studies of mediated settings cannot ignore the visual aspects of their objects of study, the inclusion of multimodal data is more problematic than in the study of face-to-face interaction. This is due to the specific affordances of media technologies that make possible interaction across time and space and constrain the interactants' access to semiotic resources. A case in point is the inclusion of multimodal data in the study of chat communication: data on the bodily behavior of chatters in front of their screens are indeed very informative to understand the chat conversation – but which status do these data have in terms of participant categories? As long as they are not using web cams, each other's bodily conduct is not available to the chatters and thus cannot be relevant for their interaction. The multimodal analysis of TV interviews and talk shows is problematic in a quite similar way. The visual design of the media product (frames, editing, inserts) is not available to the interlocutors in the TV studio[2] and can thus not be analyzed in terms of participant categories. The interactant who actually makes these semiotic resources relevant in his reception is the TV viewer – who is not included in classic product-oriented studies. At the same time, in a product analysis, the nonverbal behavior of the interlocutors in the TV studio is only accessible through a layer of editing etc. The actual nonverbal interaction in the studio can only be analyzed by looking at the situation before it is edited, which would rather be part of a production analysis. These questions of course already have been addressed in conversation-analytic studies on media settings, but obtain new relevance when the visual level is understood as an integral part of the analysis.

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[2]   However, the broadcasted picture is actually accessible to the interlocutors in the studio via large screens in some live TV talk shows, but this is not the norm. Moreover, it is not accessible to all interactants all the time.

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