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Intelligent design

Tailoring one's utterances to recipients, situations and genres

Abstract: In everyday encounters, interactants have to keep track of a wide range of parameters which are relevant for a successful conversation: They have to 'address' the communicative genre that is (or is about to be) activated as well as the immediate and general situation the interactants are in. Furthermore, interactants have to tailor their utterances in such a way that they meet the supposed local needs of their partners-in-talk and make sure that their talk rests on the assumed shared knowledge of all interactants. On the basis of everyday spoken German conversations it will be shown that speakers have to design their utterances in such a way as to be adapted to their recipients' knowledge as well as to address situational and genre-related parameters. By analyzing utterance design it becomes possible to reveal the cognitive processes of the interactants.

Keywords: recipient design; utterance design; Interactional Linguistics; cognitive linguistics; Conversation Analysis

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1 Introduction: Utterance design in complex interactional settings¹

In unplanned, real-time interactions, participants have to keep track of a multitude of parameters that require addressing, monitoring or selective ignoring. By analyzing both the utterances of the speakers as well as the reactions of the listeners it is possible to reconstruct cognitive assumptions of the speakers.

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They reveal what the speakers think is relevant in a given situation, how they construe this situation and what they foreground or background as relevant aspects of an interaction (in Langacker's 1995 terms, how they 'view' a situation). Utterances can be designed for recipients, situations and genres: First, there are the interactants themselves, who are, of course, the most important 'units' that utterances are designed for. Second, situational factors play an important role as 'units' to be addressed. Sometimes, it is necessary to direct one's utterances to whatever needs to be done to continue within a sequential structure that is being produced at a given moment or to react to environmental influences (of course, situational factors are never just 'out there' but by addressing them they are made cognitively salient and set up as relevant for the interaction). And, finally, larger interactional patterns – communicative genres – may also be addressed by specific utterances (again, genres do not exist outside of communication but have to be created by the interactants). The ways these units are addressed open views into the speakers' cognitive construal of a given interactional constellation.

2 Intelligent design: Units that may be addressed in interaction

When designing their utterances, speakers may choose to tailor them to the needs of different units present in an interaction. Discussing the complexity of multimodal interaction, Goodwin and Goodwin (2004) conclude that verbal communication is not the only resource to be taken into account but that potential recipients as well as situational, activity and genre based aspects play an important role as 'addressable units' both for the interactants and the reconstructive efforts of the analysts:

[T]he act of speaking always emerges within complex contextual configurations that can encompass a range of quite diverse phenomena. These include structurally different kinds of actors using the semiotic resources provided by their bodies to construct a range of relevant displays about orientation toward others and the actions in progress, the larger activities that local events are embedded in within, past and anticipated encounters, structure in the environment, etc.

(Goodwin and Goodwin 2004: 239)

The most obvious choice, of course, is to address the recipients themselves, i.e. to design one's utterances in such a way that the chance is highest the recipients understand what is being said and, at the same time, to avoid saying things

they already know. This type of utterance design will be discussed in Section 2.1. Another choice is not to address the recipients but to address a situation. Of course, addressing a situation while in viewing and hearing distance to recipients always means that one also addresses the recipients. Situations alone can only be addressed when there is no-one about to listen, as, for example, when one comments aloud on a beautiful sunset while there is no-one else around. The third choice, discussed in Section 2.3., is genre design, i.e. to make one's utterances conform with a communicative genre (or, to use a concept more common in cognitive linguistics, a script or frame) which has already been activated or is about to be activated in discourse. Again, same as with situation design, genre design is always intertwined with recipient design and does not normally occur completely on its own (except for such cases when somebody, for example, practices genres such as a job interview or an oral exam alone at home with no listeners present).

The three different utterance design options are all held together by the basic tenet of interactionism described by Malone (1995: 163), which holds that “people construct their behavior so that it makes sense to others”. By analyzing the empirically attestable interactional behavior, it is possible to make inferences about the cognitive assumptions of a speaker. Recipient design is a special case in that it directly influences the “[C]hoices of words and phrases, intonation, and the larger structure of the discourse itself” according to the expectations of the other's knowledge and reactions (Malone 1995: 162), whereas situation or genre design, while still elementary to sense-making, do not show such a specific orientation to hypotheses about the other's knowledge, but rather illustrate that the speakers construe a given interactional constellation in such a way as to foreground aspects of its sequential or situational organization and that they have knowledge about certain conversational routines.

2.1 Recipient design

Recipient design not only is the area of utterance design with the longest research tradition, according to Sacks (1995: 438) it is also the most central one, in fact “the most general” maxim governing talk-in-interaction: “It runs: A speaker should, on producing the talk he does, orient to his recipient.” This maxim is so important “that much of the lexical, syntactic, prosodic, and semantic-pragmatic organization of speakers' utterances are selected as part of a process of recipient accommodation (within conversation analysis this is known as ‘recipient design’)” (Fox 2008: 255). What makes recipient design an interesting field of study for cognitive and interactional linguists alike is the fact that it

operates at the borders of cognition and interaction: Analyzing utterances in terms of recipient design allows for a reconstruction of the cognitive construal of (i) the speakers' assumptions they have about the knowledge, attitudes, interpretational efforts etc. (all, by the way, further cognitive phenomena) of their co-interactants, (ii) their construal and interpretation of a given situation and (iii) their knowledge of cognitive schemata (or genres) of communication.

The 'rules' that are the result of the maxim of recipient design are responsible for the aforementioned organization of speakers' utterances. Some of these rules are quite compatible with the conversational maxims of Grice (1975). For example, the rule not to talk about something that one has already talked about (Sacks 1995: 438) is compatible with Grice's maxim of quantity. Others concern local strategies of producing utterances. For example, the all-pervasive tendencies in interactions for collaborative utterance-completion and co-production (Lerner 2002; Helasuvo 2004) are such strategies with which to signal the recipient that one is following what a speaker is saying and whether one interprets and understands it the same way (Sacks 1995: 446). They acquire that function because the recipient who completes a speaker's utterance illustrates that on a cognitive basis he or she is in rapport with the speaker.

A third set of 'rules' is about creating coherence and reference. Sacks (1995: 446) names combinations of pronouns and relational units – *my mother, your brother, his father* – as typical strategies with which to guide recipients and help them establish the identity of something referred to by the speaker. For example, if someone uses the expression "this guy", this is recipient-designed insofar as "it instructs the recipient to not try to find who [...] is being referred to" (Sacks 1995: 453).

On a more general level, recipient design also means that it is typical to choose the topics one talks about according to whether they might interest the others or have some relevance for them:

And that turns on a rather general feature of the organization of conversation, 'recipient design', i.e., you should, as much as possible, design whatever you're telling about, even if it's the most intimate parts of your particular life, with an orientation to the other. So they ask you about something that they ask about because *you're* involved in it, and you answer it by reference to *their* possible involvement in it.

(Sacks 1995: 540)

What is interesting concerning recipient design is the fact that it offers an opportunity for analysts to reconstruct *cognitive* assumptions and orientations of the interactants. Whenever speakers design their utterances for recipients, they display what they assume that their recipients know and want to know. So, recipient design not only has to do with the speakers' accommodation of the

interactional needs of their recipients, but also their *informational* needs (Fox 2008: 255). Sacks' (1995: 540) maxim "design your talk to another with an orientation to what you know they know" can be read as *display your own cognitive efforts to get at your recipients cognition*. From a conversation analytic perspective, with its strict constraint to empirical data only, this is the only way to answer questions about cognition.

A good example of how this method can be used to 'get at' people's cognitive concepts is Fischer's (2006) analysis of interactions between human beings and robots. Fischer found out that there are "two prototypes of users' pre-conceptions, which can be reliably identified on the basis of linguistic surface cues and which have systematic effects on the linguistic properties of users' utterances" (Fischer 2006: 113). These pre-conceptions govern the way people interact with robots, i.e. how they try to make them do what they want them to do. On the basis of an analysis of the speakers' recipient design, Fischer was able to make out two basic conceptions people have of robots: Either they view them as tools or as more or less equal social actors (Fischer 2006: 113).

To sum up the discussion, recipient design concerns cognitively based hypotheses about the knowledge of the addressee, constellations of speaker and addressee (social status, knowledge, use of different codes, participation state etc.) and the appropriateness of the choice of structural and formal means such as grammatical markings, sequential organization, types of reference etc. (Schmitt and Deppermann 2009: 82). As has been mentioned before, recipient design is not restricted to verbal aspects. Goodwin (1981: 129) shows that speakers use prosody to manage recipient design, too (e.g. by lengthening sounds and delaying the completion of a word until the intended recipient gazes at the speaker), and Nomura and Hutchins (2007) found out that flight instructors accommodate their gestures to those of their student pilots in order to achieve better understanding of what they want to tell them. In the following discussion of the examples, though, I will focus on cognitive and verbal aspects of recipient design and ignore prosodic and multimodal ones.

Example (1) is taken from a conversation between a mother (M) and her daughter (D). The daughter had just started studying and moved to another town (all examples are transcribed according to GAT 2; Couper-Kuhlen and Barth-Weingarten 2011). Her mother is on a visit at her daughter's new flat. They are talking about how much things have changed in that town and the mother mentions the confirmation of a friend of the family which took place five years ago. That, too, was the last time both mother and daughter had been to the town. The topic of the confirmation triggers reminiscences of the mother concerning the dress she was wearing at the confirmation:

(1) Example 1

- 207 M *Übrigens das KLEID was ich da anhatte;*
 'by the way the dress that I had been wearing then'
- 208 *dieses sElbstgenähte LEInenkleid;*
 'this homemade linen dress'
- 209 *weißte,*
 'you know'
- 210 *(mit) nach mEInem (-) nullacht <FUFFzehn schnitt, <lachend>>*
 '(with) after my <run-of-the-mill cut <laughing>>'
- 211 D *das mit den baNA:nenschuhen,*
 'the one with the banana shoes'
- 212 M *NEIN.*
 'no'
- 213 *ja ja mit den baNAnenschuhen;*
 'yes yes with the banana shoes'
- 214 D *das mit dem AFrikamuster,*
 'the one with the African pattern'
- 215 M *nee DAS nich;*
 'no not that'
- 216 *das hatte (ich) AUCH den gleichen schnItt,*
 'that had (I) also the same cut'
- 217 *.hhh das war doch so:n (.) son KAFfebraunes:;*
 '.hhh that was (modal particle) such a such a coffee brown one'
- 218 *(--)*
- 219 D *ach DA:S-*
 'oh that'
- 220 *[mit den] (.) [pailLET]ten?*
 'with the sequins'
- 221 M *[ja-] [ja,]*
 'yes yes'
- 222 *nee-*
 'no'
- 223 *das ist das ROTE;*
 'that is the red one'
- 224 D *((lacht))*
 '((laughs))'
- 225 M *dIEses dieses (.) LEInenkleid;*
 'this this linen dress'
- 226 *dieses KAFfeebraune LEInenkleid.*
 'this coffee-brown linen dress'
- 227 *das hatt ich DA nämlich an.*
 'cause that was what I was wearing then'
- 228 *das hab ich auch schweren HERzens in den müll getan.*
 'that I have put into the dustbin, too, with a heavy heart'
- 229 *mh,*
 'mhm'
- 230 *(--)*
- 231 D *ich wollte dich grad noch mal FRAGEN;*
 'I just wanted to ask you again'
- 232 *(--)*
- 233 *ä:m wegen dieser STEIne morgen,*
 'because of those stones tomorrow'

Various strategies of recipient design can be observed: First, by introducing the topic of the dress with “by the way” (line 207), the mother offers her daughter a contextualization cue to the effect that a new but nevertheless incidental topic is introduced. The anaphoric pronoun “then” (line 207), on the other hand, instructs the daughter not to search for *any* possible context in which the new topic *dress* might be relevant, but to refer back to the *confirmation* just mentioned before. In other words: it creates local coherence.

After having introduced the topic “the dress” (line 207), M offers an appositional repair in line 208: “this homemade linen dress” (see Imo 2014 for a detailed discussion of the functions of appositions in interaction). This repair can be analyzed in two ways. First, regarding the possible cognitive assumptions M has about D, the repair may have been pre-planned, i.e. the word “dress” may have seemed insufficient to M as an understandable referent from the beginning and the following utterance might then be treated as something like a pre-planned, intended repair. Second, the fact that D does not immediately come in after the non-finite verb “was wearing” (line 207) may have shown to M that “the dress” was not enough. On an interactional basis, she could have realized that D needs more information to understand what M is referring to. In that case, the utterance in line 208 would have the character of an increment (Auer 2007) containing a ‘real’, interactionally triggered repair. From the data alone, both interpretations are plausible and the result is the same: The daughter gets additional information which M thinks may help her remember. Recipient design is also obvious in the choice of the demonstrative pronoun “this” (line 208), with which M indicates that D ought to be able to localize the discourse topic.

In line 209, M shows that she thinks that with the information given so far, D should know what she is referring to: With the tag question “you know” she indicates that to her knowledge D should be able to remember the dress now. Still, D does not react, and M therefore provides further details in order to help her remember. According to Schmitt and Deppermann (2009: 81), such an interactive and local orientation, negotiation and repair of recipient-designed utterances is fundamental to the concept of recipient design (see also Clark and Schaefer 1989 for a more cognitively oriented approach to the same phenomenon). From such a perspective, the utterance “after my <run-of-the-mill cut <laughing>>” (line 210) reacts to the daughter’s absence of understanding and, at the same time, lies open the mother’s assumptions of her daughter’s knowledge: M presupposes that D commands the necessary ‘insider knowledge’ to envisage the self-deprecatingly (as can be seen by M’s laughter) named “run-of-the-mill cut”.

Indeed, M's assumptions about D's knowledge are interactionally ratified: D is able to visualize a dress which might be the right one ("the one with the banana shoes"). After first refuting her daughters "try-marked" (Schegloff 1979) attempt at identification ("no"), M then accepts it ("yes yes with the banana shoes"; line 213). It is not clear from the data whether both mother and daughter refer to 'real' shoes that may have looked like or were decorated like bananas or whether these were part of the dress's printed pattern. In any case, the "banana shoes", although obviously being correct enough for the mother to be ratified, seem to be peripheral, because in line 214, when D describes the print of the dress she is now visualizing ("African pattern"), M realizes that her daughter's knowledge and her own differ: While the dress with the African pattern was indeed designed after her "run of the mill" cut (and probably also was worn with the "banana shoes"), it is not the dress M wants D to remember.

As a third support for her daughter's memory – after the facts that the dress was a homemade linen one and made after M's "run of the mill" cut – M now adds information about the color of the dress: "that was (modal particle) such a (.) such a coffee brown one"; line 217. The untranslatable modal particle *doch* is one of the most common modal particles in German. Like all modal particles, it is typical for talk-in-interaction and for dialogical and intersubjective management: With *doch*, a speaker invites the recipient to remember something (Weinrich 2005: 846).

By not providing any further information than that about the color of the dress M indicates that she thinks that this additional piece of information should now help D visualize the right dress. She does not produce any further talk and thus interactionally indicates that she is willing to wait for D's reaction, which comes in two parts in lines 219 and 220: First, D produces the "change-of-state token" (Heritage 1984) "ach" (line 219). The change-of-state token *ach* is used in German talk-in-interaction to signal that one just received a new piece of information (Imo 2009: 76). Quite often, *ach* is used in the context of repair sequences, as Betz and Golato (2008) show. This reference to new information and repair is strongly recipient designed: While M tries to provide D with enough information so that D is finally able to remember something M knows that D knows, D uses "ach" to show M that she is 'working mentally' and thus complying with the shared activity of remembering.

Nevertheless, D's efforts are in vain. In a try-marked (Schegloff 1979) intonation contour, she verbally presents the dress she is now thinking of: "that with the sequins"; lines 219–220). M first provides supportive positive acknowledgment signals ("yes yes"; line 221), with which she lies open her hope that D remembers the right dress. After "sequins", though, M realizes that she is

wrong, refutes her daughter's attempt at remembering the dress and corrects her, saying that the dress with the sequins was not a brown but a red one (line 223).

Her daughter then laughs. This laughter can be interpreted as 'giving up', i.e. as marking the futility to remember something. Here, too, there is the possibility of a face threat because not being able to remember something can of course also be construed as a personal failure. The laughter therefore also marks the possible face threatening aspects of failing to remember. This interpretation of the laughter as a plea for giving up searching for the 'lost' knowledge of the dress is made plausible by M's reaction: She does not endeavor to assist D with remembering any further. Instead, she repeats the information that D already has, namely that it is "this coffee brown linen dress" (line 226). The local structure of recipient design can be observed here very well: Only in respect to the failed attempts of M to help D remember the dress and only in respect to the directly preceding laughter can the utterances in lines 225 and 226 be understood as a signal of ratification for leaving this episode and closing it. As Schmitt and Deppermann (2009) stress, recipient design is both dependent on general assumptions of the speaker concerning the knowledge of the listener as well as on local structures that change the plausibility of these assumptions: "The narrative performance therefore is a product of a common interactional history to which it reacts. The same holds true for the recipient design that is produced in parallel to that performance and whose specific functionality can only be understood through this retrospective orientation." (Schmitt and Deppermann 2009: 83)

By not giving new pieces of information but repeating old ones, M shows that she does not persist in getting D to remember the dress. In line 227 she 'jumps' back to the start of this short episode: The utterance "cause that was what I was wearing then" can be seen as a reprise of "the dress that I had been wearing then" (line 207) and in line 228 the story is ended: "that I have put into the dustbin, too, with a heavy heart". This last utterance is finally surprising, because all those efforts of M to make D remember the dress serves no other aim than to tell D that the dress is now in the dustbin.

As a whole, this episode is an interactional and cognitive failure: D completely ignores the point about the thrown-away dress and offers no reaction to the whole story. Instead, after a pause of half a second, she starts a new and unrelated topic concerning their plan to fetch some stones for decoration the next day. Yet, in spite of this failure, this episode is full of recipient design: M assumed that D was able quickly to remember the dress. If that would have been the case, a smooth transition between the short talk about their acquaintance's

confirmation and the dress would have happened and also a second smooth transition between the topic of the dress and the fact that it is another of those things M recently dumped into the dustbin. The latter topic has not been talked about recently (at least not in the transcript) but it is obvious by M's use of "too" (line 228) that M and D recently talked about dumping things and that M is sure D remembers.

This last utterance is in fact one of the most important ones in this episode: without that, the basic rule to talk about that which you assume your partner-in-talk is interested in would be breached. Quite obviously, D does not really know why she should remember a dress her mother wore on a confirmation five years ago. In contrast, if the identification of the dress would have been quick, the whole episode would merely have been another item in a list of things M dumped into the dustbin, a topic both M and D had apparently talked about and, therefore, a topic that does not breach the maxims of recipient design.

What makes this episode a failure is the step-by-step unfolding and interactional nature of talk (Schmitt and Deppermann 2009: 105, my translation, call recipient design an "online process"): M does not deliver all information at once, because she thinks her daughter might remember quickly (line 208). The more information M has to add, the more prominence the topic of the dress gets, the more it is interactionally and cognitively foregrounded instead of serving as background information – the planned quick reference to the dress evolves into an extended attempt at remembering – until finally the original plan just to list the dress, whose remembrance was triggered by the confirmation, as another item that was thrown away, has been blown up completely out of proportion.

This happens because, as Schmitt and Deppermann (2009: 106; my translation) claim, recipient design comprises two aspects. The first one concerns hypotheses about the partners: "Recipient design is based upon the assessment of the recipient's knowledge, attitude, sensitivities etc.; this is the cognitive aspect of recipient design". This aspect is responsible for the procedural, *on line* evolution of an intended short episode of simply making S remember the dress into an extended attempt. The more M has to revise her knowledge about S's knowledge, the longer the episode lasts. The whole episode fits well into what Clark and Schaefer discuss under the heading of the *management of common ground*. Clark and Schaefer (1989: 261), for example, stress the fact that "the common ground of the participants in a conversation changes as the conversation proceeds". In the end, a speaker's contributions "are not formulated autonomously by the speaker according to some prior plan, but emerge as the contributor and partner act collectively. Success depends on the coordinated actions by the two of them." (Clark and Schaefer 1989: 292) In the case of the

example discussed above, the mother tried to use “personal common ground” (Croft 2009: 406) as the basis, i.e. assumed common ground that is “related to the notion of a social network, which is defined by direct interactions of individuals to varying degrees” (Croft 2009: 406). The assumption of the existence of common ground, though, turns out to be wrong: In spite of the fact that a family forms a strong social network, individual knowledge differs. While for the mother her home-made dresses possess a high degree of cognitive salience and can easily be retrieved from memory, this is not the case with her daughter.

The second aspect concerns ‘other positionings’: “The partner in talk is treated and categorized as somebody with a certain identity through processes of recipient design; this is the practical aspect of recipient design, it touches local identities and other locally relevant attributions of knowledge, emotion etc. which are assigned to the partner via discursive action” (Schmitt and Depermann 2009: 106; my translation). By designing her utterances in a way that makes D know that M knows that D should remember the dress (this is the primary aspect of recipient design), she also locally attributes D the position of somebody who will be told something about the dress, i.e. the recipient of information for which the identification of the dress is vital.

2.2 Situation design

In example (1), discussed in the previous section, there has also been one instance where the speaker not only addresses the recipient and forms hypotheses about her knowledge but where she more or less addresses a situation: When she introduces her side-topic, she explicitly marks it as a *side-topic*: “*by the way* the dress that I had been wearing then” (line 207). One could say that by marking her topic as a side-topic she as much addresses her recipient as well as the sequential structure and the situation that both speaker and recipient are part of at the moment. In her discussion of the structures of interactions, Fox (2008: 264) also comments on this double ‘address’ function that utterances have. On the one hand, they are, of course, addressed to a recipient, on the other hand, though, there are heavily routinized patterns which more or less set the frame within which utterances can be produced: “There is extensive evidence that the syntactic structure of a given utterance is constructed for the particular action under production, for this particular recipient at this particular moment in the interaction.” Sequential structure provides one such frame for the orientation of the interactants. Jefferson (1972: 296), for example, shows that side sequences are typically introduced by certain types of repeats and by interrogatives. In much the same line, a side topic may be introduced by certain formulae such as

by the way. Another frame is built by changes in external situations. If, for example, there is a sudden loud bang of a backfire of a passing car in the middle of a conversation, one might address this situation by *oh my God* or *damn cars*, without necessarily addressing the other speakers or designing the utterances for them. An even more striking example would be if someone hurts him- or herself and involuntarily utters a swearword which is disapproved of by the other speakers. In that case, the swearword is definitely not addressed to them. Quite on the contrary: Some work may even have to be invested in taking such an utterance back, for example if some unintended recipient is piqued by the swearword.

Of course, both sequential context (or, rather, co-text) and situational context are not just ‘out there’ on their own. Auer (1996: 21) claims that “all contexts are grounded in interactional work”, they are “no free goods available to analysts in all sizes for the interpretation of a given text”. From that perspective, even an involuntarily uttered swearword as a reaction to hurting oneself is not just a reaction to a given outside situation but *creates* that situation for everybody within hearing distance.

In spite of the fact that situations are also created in interactions, though, there is a qualitative difference between explicitly designing one’s utterances for a certain recipient or designing them according to some contextual or situational requirements. Working off a routinized schema cannot be called recipient design proper as it does not react to specific, local needs of a recipient but follows more or less routinized and generalized patterns (sequences, genres, frames or scripts).²

The following example (2) is an illustration of such a routinized pattern. It is taken from a telephone conversation between two friends. Both have just finished studying, and one, Hanna, has moved to another town. Renate calls Hanna to talk to her about her new job and to arrange a meeting. After having talked for about ten minutes, Renate initiates the closing of the conversation:

(2) Example 2

763 R GUT ich muss jetzt auch mal eine runde wEIterarbeiten,
 ‘well I do have to continue working now’

² As an interactional linguist, I prefer the approach of communicative genres (e.g. Günthner 2010; Günthner and Knoblauch 1995; Luckmann 1992). From a dedicated cognitive approach, it would of course be advantageous to make use of the concept of frames developed by Fillmore (2006), which focuses more strongly on the cognitive aspects of routinized communicative patterns than the theory of communicative genres.

- 764 (--)
 765 H ja[WOHL,]
 'yessir'
 766 R [ähm;](.)
 'erm'
 767 aber dann sprEchen wir uns (.) wIEder würd ich SAgen,
 'but then we will talk to each other again I would say'
 768 (--)
 769 H [ja.]
 'yes'
 770 R [MEL]den wir uns gegenseItig,
 'we will talk to each other'
 771 (--)
 772 H jA GERne. (.)
 'yes gladly'
 773 [und dann (.) ja,]
 'and then yes'
 774 R [(na gut ich werd)] mal HIER; (.)
 'oh well now I will here'
 775 n bisschen haha (.) wieder in [die TASTen] hauen,
 'hammer on the keys again'
 776 H [wir MACHen;]
 'we will fix'
 777 R hehehe;
 778 H JA;
 'yes'
 779 wir machen n terMIN ab irgendwie und dann;
 'we will fix a date somehow and then'
 780 JA.
 'yes'
 781 R cool.
 'cool'
 782 DANN freu ich mich.
 'then I'm looking forward'
 783 H ne,
 'eh'
 784 →<<lauter>> ach SO;> (.)
 '<<louder>> oh by the way'
 785 →äh EIne sAcHe noch [mal] eben äh:m:-
 'erm one thing just now'
 786 R [ja,]
 'yes'
 787 H LIsa,
 'Lisa'
 788 (1.0)
 789 H äh:m (.) WÜRde gerne; (.)
 'erm would like to'
 790 <eh wann sInd denn Osterferien;
 '<erm when are the Easter holidays'
 791 WEIß ich nich. °h <leiser und schneller>>
 'I don't know <quieter and faster>>
 792 die hat ja bis zu den Osterferien totAl viel zu TUN?
 'she has so much to do until the Easter holidays'
 793 R ja:, (.)
 'yes'
 794 H aber dann IN den Osterferien will sie sich gerne mit mir
 trEffen; (.)

'but then during the Easter holidays she would like to meet
me'
795 und ZWAR- (.)
'namely'

In line 763 Renate produces the retrospective evaluative adjective “GUT”, which because of its evaluating semantics can be used to signal the end of a conversation by marking the previous talk as successful and therefore possibly complete or ‘finishable’ (see also Barske and Golato 2010: 252). Immediately afterwards, she also gives the reason for closing the call, namely that she has to continue working. Hanna ratifies this “possible pre-closing” (Sacks and Schegloff 1973: 303–304) with an ironic “yessir” (line 765) with which she acknowledges Renate’s need to go on working. In lines 767 to 773 both Renate and Hanna arrange a future call and in line 774, Renate again offers a pre-closing sequence. This time, she uses “na gut / oh well” to introduce it. Even more like *gut / well* alone, *na gut* has sequence-closing properties. The particle *na* is almost untranslatable. It has no semantic content of its own and only occurs in combinations such as *na gut / oh well*, *na dann / oh then* or *na ja / oh yes*. With *na*, a “resigning”, “hesitating” or “deferring” component (Weinrich 2005: 837; my translation) is added to whatever follows after. With “na gut / oh well” Renate retrospectively retreats from the previous topics they have been talking about and prospectively re-focuses on her wish to go on working.

The ‘pre-closing’ has been set firmly on its way by then and Hanna ratifies it first by the acknowledgement particle “yes” in line 778 and then by recapitulating their plan to talk to each other again some time in the future. What is typical for a closing sequence (Imo 2013) is the combination of a projecting element, in this case the words “and then” (end of line 779), which is then neutralized by the closing signal “yes”.

Renate then initiates the next step right before the final closing sequence can be started, namely the exchange of goodbyes. In line 781 she evaluates the plan to call each other soon positively (“cool”) and goes on to express her pleasure of resuming the conversation with Hanna again sometime in the future (line 782). After that, the next step that is expected would be to say goodbye, maybe preceded by an exchange of final *okays* (Sacks and Schegloff 1973). The sequential pattern involving the closing of telephone calls constitutes a highly routinized schema and, therefore, once it is initiated a certain course of action is expected by both interactants. Nevertheless, this routine is not as fixed as not to allow any variation. Even after the closing sequence has been started, “there is always a potential for reopening topic talk at any point in the course of a closing section. [...] Getting to a termination, therefore, involves work at various points in the course of the conversation and the closing section; it requires accom-

plishing” (Sacks and Schegloff 1973: 324). Hanna’s reaction quite nicely illustrates the ‘accomplishing’ work to be done. In line 783, Hanna is still in line with Renate and the closing sequence. The invariant tag question “ne” can be interpreted as a ratifying signal with which Hanna acknowledges Renate’s expectation for another call in the near future. Yet, as the following lines show, Hanna is not yet ready to close the call. In order to get out of the closing sequence, she not only has to design her utterances to Renate but she also has to take into account the fact that they both are ‘doing closing a telephone call’. This situational and sequential structure is what the following stressed “ach SO / oh” addresses. Hanna has to indicate that she is well aware that she and Renate are in the middle of a closing sequence and at the same time that she wants to get out of it. By using the state of change token “ach SO”, which is usually employed to mark the receipt of some new and highly relevant information (Imo 2009: 64–69), Hanna ‘stages’ a sudden idea that works as an excuse to get out of the closing sequence. The formula “one thing just now” has the same function as a “misplacement marker” (Sacks and Schegloff 1973: 319). It shows that Hanna is well aware that the situation makes an exchange of goodbyes the expected next step and that she is breaking that expectation. Renate delivers a positive response token (“yes”; line 786), and then Hanna launches into a story about a common friend who is planning a party. After that story is finished, the conversation is then finally ended.

The change-of-state token and the misplacement marker can be said to be both situation- and recipient-designed. They are situation-designed because Hanna would not have needed these strategies if she simply wanted to tell Renate about the planned party of their common friend. In fact, she rather might have started with the name of their friend to set the topic, as she does in line 787. They are recipient-designed, on the other hand, because Hanna knows that Renate knows that both are just closing down a conversation. Therefore, they indicate Hanna’s knowledge about Renate’s knowledge and are intended to help Renate understand what Hanna does. What is different to the type of recipient design analyzed in section 2.1., though, is the fact that it is not just assumptions about the general knowledge of a partner in talk that counts here but also about the common communicative projects and sequential patterns that *both* interactants have created together and that are often worked off as more or less fixed, automatic routines. The routine character of some sequential patterns, which can be observed empirically in the data, supports the assumption of mental schemata, frames or scripts that the speakers within a certain community have acquired.

Within the last aspect of utterance design discussed here, *genre design*, the aspect of addressing utterances not to a recipient but to entrenched contextual or situational factors can be seen even stronger.

2.3 Genre design

As long as there are only two interactants who are communicating informally (i.e. with an open choice of topics and on an equal footing), utterance design mainly corresponds to recipient design, with a few exceptions concerning situation design. Things become more complicated, though, as soon as there are more potential recipients and the situation is a more formal one. Schmitt and Deppermann (2009: 105), for example, analyze a situation where a lecturer singles out one student from a group of students to reprimand him publicly. What becomes obvious is that the lecturer not just addresses the student himself but that he also uses the situation as an “informative and warning example” to the other students. Such multiple addressing structures sometimes can become the default option, for example in radio phone-in programs, where there is a group of listeners with a special participation status (Fox 2008: 258; Hitzler 2013: 113–114). Furthermore, with radio phone-in programs there is not just the uncertainty about who is actually addressed; there may also be situations when no-one in particular except the format itself is responsible for the utterance design. The reason why this happens has to do with the fact that communicative genres can set up fixed frames of expectations concerning what is said and when it is said so that interactants may merely orient to that pattern and ‘work it off’. Of course, communicative genres are not just restricted to mass media communication. This example was only chosen because in the analysis of example 3 below, a transcript taken from a psychological radio counseling radio program will be used to illustrate genre design. Nevertheless, genres may develop in any kind of communicative constellation which occurs often enough in a routinized fashion.

The concept of *communicative genres* was first developed from a sociological perspective by Luckmann (1992) and has then been extended to focus more on linguistic aspects by Günthner (2006) and Günthner and Knoblauch (1995).³

³ A similar approach which starts out from a semantic and cognitive angle is that of frame semantics (e.g. Fillmore 1982; 2006). While frames and genres share many features, the main difference is that the theory of communicative genres focuses strongly on interactional aspects of ‘pattern production’, not on cognitive ones.

The reason why genres emerge is that they “offer solutions to specifically communicative problems” (Luckmann 1992: 227), typically such problems that have to do with “the interlocking perspectives in the ‘dialogical’ production and reception of communicative action.” Interactants need to signal each other what “communicative projects” (Linell 2009: 196) they are planning, and instead of having to work constantly on discussing and negotiating these projects on a meta-communicative level, interactants may rely on genres, which are routines for the management of recurrent communicative projects. Genres offer routinized structures on all communicative levels: There may be fixed prosodic, lexical and syntactic structures, recurrent patterns of sequential organization, recurrent constellations of interactants with certain roles and recurrent situations in which they occur (and which they, in turn, help construct). The advantage of these prepatterned structures is that once a speaker uses them, recipients can recognize the genre which helps them to adjust their expectations to what will come next and relieves them “of having to co-ordinate every communicative action anew” (Günthner and Knoblauch 1995: 6). So, genres are chosen by interactants but, in turn, they also ‘choose’ what will be next (Luckmann 1992: 226). Depending on the degree of routinization and institutional embeddedness, genres may vary from rather loose structures – e.g. gossiping or re-proaching – to rather fixed ones – e.g. job interviews or wedding ceremonies.

Radio phone-in formats are located in the middle of these extremes, with psychological radio phone-in programs rather on the more fixed side than, for example, radio talk formats (Imo 2010; 2013; Willmann 1996). Willmann (1996) shows that psychological radio programs follow a fixed routine right from beginning to end. This means that the callers, the radio hosts and the psychologists make use of recurrent lexical, syntactic and sequential patterns in order to achieve the typical one-dimensional and efficient work of counseling in these formats (Willmann 1996: 205). For this reason, the single counseling episodes are very similar. Sacks (1995: 390) discussed this feature in detail when he noted that the advice counselors give to callers is not really addressed to the individuals but is delivered in a rather general way which always involves certain steps of asking for details and presenting the advice in a step-by-step fashion, even though with some callers who already have some background concerning possible solutions to their problems they might give it much more quickly. The counselors always go through the same routine, no matter who calls. Therefore, it seems safe to argue that recipient design is in some cases overridden by genre design. Most of the time, these routines pass unnoticed, only sometimes it becomes obvious that people more or less actively orient to them and address

them and in a few cases they can also fail (see Imo 2013 for an analysis of ‘failed’ radio phone-in conversations).

The following transcript in (3) is taken from the beginning of a psychological counseling. The program has already been on air for about half an hour and several callers have been counseled by the psychologist P before caller C gets through. The radio host (H) only comes in at the beginning and the end of a call, when he greets the callers and says goodbye:

(3) Example 3

- 1 H *und wir haben aber schon jemand der zIEmlich lang WARTet;*
 ‘and we have then somebody who has been waiting quite long’
 2 *guten Abend;*
 ‘good evening’
 3 (--)
 4 C *guten Abend.*
 ‘good evening’
 5 P *guten Abend,*
 ‘good evening’
 6 C *das ist ganz lIEB dass ich mit ihnen SPRECHen darf;*
 ‘this is very nice that I may talk to you’
 7 *ich hAb ' äh möcht es ganz KURE machen (-) eigentlich;*
 ‘I have erm want to make it quite short actually’
 8 (1.0)
 9 C °h[h äh-]
 ‘erm’
 10 H [NEIN] *nehmen sie sich nur zEIt; (-)*
 ‘no do take your time’
 11 *des i[s (--) gAr nich ein aufruf] zum SCHNELL werden;*
 ‘this is not an exhortation to hurry up’
 12 C [ja:: ich ()]
 ‘yes I ()’
 13 *ich weiß ja (-) dass es viele menschen GIBT die-*
 ‘I know that there are many people who’
 14 *[(JEder hat seine schwierigkeiten;)]*
 ‘everybody has their troubles’
 15 P [(ja) um was GEHTS bei ihnen;]
 ‘yes what is your call about’
 16 H [ja () jeder hat seine ZEIT.]
 ‘yes () everybody has their time’
 17 C °hh ähm: *ich hab AUCh probleme;*
 ‘°hh erm I also have problems’
 18 P *ja;*
 ‘yes’
 19 C *persönlicher ART;*
 ‘of a personal nature’
 20 *aber (-) ich möchte die nicht unbedingt jetzt noch mal AUS-*
breiten,
 ‘but (-) I do not really want to spread them again now’
 21 *weil (-) ich in IHnen-*
 ‘because (-) I in your’

22 *in ihren sEndungen schon gehört hab dass sie ganz Ähnlich
sind wie die problEme Andren menschen;
'in your programs I have already heard that they are quite
similar to the problems of other people'*

The host introduces the caller with an utterance where the unit that is addressed is difficult to make out: First, the *caller* is addressed and the fact that she has been waiting “quite long” (line 1) can be seen as an apology. Second, the *overhearing audience* is addressed and gets some background information implying that somebody waiting so long in the line must have important reasons, i.e. grave problems which she wants to talk about. Third, the *situation* is addressed. This evening, a lot of callers have called and therefore there has to be a waiting queue. Listeners are ‘treated’ in an assembly-line fashion (Willmann 1996) in these radio counseling programs, i.e. with a marked temporal phasing where a call lasts between five and ten minutes in order to get as many callers through in one hour as possible. One of the genre’s features is the communicative constellation of ‘working off’ about half a dozen callers each evening, and the host addresses exactly this constellation, i.e. addresses the typical structure of the genre. After the exchange of greetings and the caller’s appreciation of having been put through (line 6), she, too, addresses the genre when she says that she wants to “make it quite short” (line 7). The host’s reaction clearly shows that the reference to the tight temporal structure was indeed more a part of the genre’s convention than an address to the caller: She ‘repairs’ her utterance by telling the caller to “take her time” and that it was not intended as an ‘exhortation to hurry up’ (lines 10–11).

In lines 12 to 22 the caller does not address the host or the psychological counselor in a strict sense when she says that many people have problems (lines 12–14), that she, too has problems (lines 16–19), and that she does not want to spread them here (line 20–22). All of these utterances can only be understood as references and reactions to the conventions of the genre *psychological radio counseling*: First, in any other communicative constellation it would be strange to start immediately by talking about one’s problems. This is only possible in such a format and, quite on the contrary, it is even necessary there in order to show the host, the counselor and the radio audience that one complies with the genre. So the confession that the caller has personal problems (lines 16–19) is a routinized beginning of these radio counseling formats (Imo 2010). But even the ‘break’ in the routine, the fact that the caller does *not* want to talk about her problems in the program (line 21) can be accounted for as an address to the genre *radio counseling program* in that the caller indicates that she is a customary listener to it and therefore has knowledge about wide range of psychological problems other people have. Only after these preliminaries, which are ad-

dressed first to the genre that the caller is part of and only second to the host, counselor and audience participating in the radio counseling format, does the counseling start in earnest, i.e. the caller begins to talk of her problems. All of the interactants lay open with the help of these utterances that they are in command of the conventions of the genre (or frame) of psychological radio phone-in-counseling session and that they cognitively and interactionally orient to them.

3 Intelligent design: ‘Juggling’ between the need to address recipients’ knowledge, situational settings and genres

It has been shown above that utterance design is a multi-faceted phenomenon. While recipient design certainly is the most dominant aspect of utterance design, it is not the only one. Focusing on recipient design alone already involves dealing with quite a number of problems. Fox (2008), for example, points out that the concept of *recipients* itself is quite complicated, a fact that also became obvious in the context of the discussion of the psychological counseling on radio in the previous section:

Although we often speak about recipients as if it is a straightforward and static notion, in fact the achievement of reciprocity requires work on the part of both speakers and copresent (or even non-copresent) others, and the organization of participation to come to particular alignments of participants is indeed a delicate dance.

(Fox 2008: 257)

If one takes into account that speakers not only have to ‘juggle’ different potential recipients but also situations and sequential patterns as well as genres, things become even more complicated.

As has been shown, there are certain situational constellations (e.g. a routinized sequential structure such as the closing of a telephone call) where interactants address and ‘work off’ the structure or cognitive schema itself. The same holds true when interactants are communicating in the context of a genre, as for example a psychological radio counseling program. In that case, there are many aspects that may be mentioned but are not addressed to a recipient in the closer sense, not even when one takes into account the broader and more fluid range of possible recipients mentioned by Fox (2008). Instead, some of the routines (such as the referral to *problems*) constitute routine patterns that are expected

by the co-participants and others (such as the referral to the fact that many other callers have the same problems) may not be expected as part of the genre but can only be explained by it: It is not necessary, for example, for either the psychological counselor or the audience to know that the caller has listened to the program often enough to have got a comprehensive view of other people's problems.

The most difficult aspect when trying to keep apart recipient, situation and genre design is that situations and genres are reflexive, i.e. they are not just 'out there', they are not "fixed frames for processes that go on inside them" (Dittmann 1991: 225), but they have to be constituted and kept up by the activities of the interactants. Therefore, it is impossible to find situation and genre design 'on its own' – recipients always play a role, not least because they are a constitutional aspect of situations and genres. Nevertheless, as this analysis suggests, it is of advantage to distinguish between recipient design proper and recipient-cum-situation design or recipient-cum-genre design. This distinction is also very important as soon as one focuses on cognitive, instead on interactional, factors: Recipient design proper lies open the cognitive assumptions of speakers about the knowledge, beliefs, feelings etc. of their partner(s)-in-talk. It can be very local, is highly adaptive and makes use on knowledge which has been acquired in the context of an acquaintance, during the common membership in a community of practice or even ad hoc during the interaction itself. Situation and genre design, on the other hand, lies open the shared knowledge of interactants concerning the management of sequences or genres and their orientation to expected routines. As Günthner (2006, 2010) shows, there is not much fundamental difference between constructions (in the terms of construction grammar; e.g. Langacker 1987; Croft 2001; Goldberg 2006 and many others) and genres. Both can be treated as routinized patterns that form the grammar of a language (Östman 2015). The analysis of recipient design thus opens a vista both for the analysis of interactional as well as cognitive processes going on in a face-to-face encounter.

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