

Affectivity in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective

1. Affectivity in interaction

This paper is a contribution to an ongoing research project whose aim is to investigate the local display, interpretation and management of affectivity in everyday interaction in two different languages and cultures, German and English.¹ For the purpose of this project the technical term *affectivity* is understood as ‘the display of heightened emotive involvement, its interpretation and its management in interaction’. The general hypothesis is that interlocutors use verbal, vocal and visual cues as resources in everyday and institutional interaction for the **signalling** of heightened emotive involvement and the **interpretation** of affect-related **displays**. Interlocutors also **manage** affect in interaction by *preferring* certain types of affect display over others and by *preferring* certain types of next-turn uptake of these displays. *Preference* is used here as a technical term referring to relations between paradigmatically organized alternatives for action at given structural positions in the organization of talk. *Preference* is observable in the data – it is not a personal or psychological concept. The analyst’s task in studying affectivity in interaction is: (i) to deconstruct the practices and devices that interlocutors use to make their talk interpretable as emotively involved or affect-laden, (ii) to reconstruct the ways in which co-participants arrive at specific affective-colored interpretations of these displays, and (iii) to reveal participants’ preferences for displays and uptakes of display in the management of affect in interaction.

1 “Emotive involvement in conversational storytelling”, co-directed by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen & Margret Selting and funded by the Cluster of Excellence “Languages of Emotion”, Free University of Berlin.

2. A sequence-based approach to affectivity

Contrary to folk belief, casual talk is not a randomly ordered conglomeration of utterances (or as some would have it, a degenerate realization of linguistic competence), but rather a deeply ordered, structured phenomenon. Utterances are objects which speakers use to accomplish particular actions in interaction with others. They are produced as turns-at-talk, which are organized as pairs of initiating and responding actions. These pairs of turns are themselves grouped into larger courses of action, or sequences – coherent, orderly and meaningful successions of actions which serve to get activities accomplished in talk (Schegloff, 2007).

By way of illustration, consider the case of a request or proposal sequence. This kind of sequence is typically embarked upon in order to get an interlocutor to carry out some action, provide some service or tender some piece of information. In response, interlocutors may either accept or refuse what is being requested or proposed. Thus, the basic structure of a request/proposal sequence type is

- A: Request/proposal
B: Acceptance or rejection

Because a request/proposal is often a delicate matter in everyday interaction, an initiating speaker may begin with a preliminary action which tests the ground, so to speak, for the projected request or proposal. If the interlocutor responds with a “go-ahead” to this preliminary, then the initiating speaker can proceed with the request/proposal. If the interlocutor responds with a “block”, the initiating speaker can abort the request/proposal and thus circumvent rejection:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A: Pre-request/pre-proposal | A: Pre-request/pre-proposal |
| B: Go-ahead | B: Block |
| A: Request/proposal | ∅ |
| B: Acceptance or rejection | |

The particular response which an interlocutor makes to a prior request or proposal will be instrumental in determining what happens next.

If the proposal or request is granted, then the sequence may come rather rapidly to completion, with the original requester/proposer acknowledging the acceptance of the request/proposal. If it is rejected, however, the sequence may be expanded, with requesters/proposers optionally making modified requests/proposals and/or rejecters optionally making compensatory offers. Yet, unless some compromise is reached, the rejectee will (in all likelihood) ultimately finalize the rejection, indicating that they are not going to insist further, and the rejecter will align with this move (Davidson, 1984, 1990):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A: Pre-request/pre-proposal | A: Pre-request/pre-proposal |
| B: Go-ahead | B: Go-ahead |
| A: Request/proposal | A: Request/proposal |
| B: Acceptance | B: Rejection |
| A: Acknowledgement | (A: Post-expanding move) |
| | (B: Post-expanding response) |
| | A: Finalization of rejection |
| | B: Acknowledgement of finalization |

The sequence, it has been argued, is the unit with respect to which emotive displays in interaction must be analyzed (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000). This is because emotive displays are themselves not random, but are situated at specific positions in interactional sequences (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009). With respect to request and proposal sequences, it is in particular following the rejection or rebuffing of a request/proposal that affect displays are encountered. Specifically, it is on the **rejection-finalizing turn** where affect-related signals relevantly occur. Rejection finalizations thus make publicly available the affective stance which the proposer or requester is taking towards the rejection. And since the lexical content of rejection-finalizing turns is usually minimal, this display is typically accomplished via *tone of voice* and/or *gesture* (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009).

3. The case of rebuffed requests and proposals

To see this, let us consider a couple of concrete cases. The first is a rather typical case of a proposal, made in the course of a telephone conversation between Leslie, a middle-aged housewife, and her husband Skip. When we join the conversation, Leslie is inquiring into the particulars of a business trip which Skip is about to make.

(1) Other chap (Holt Sept-Oct 1988 II)²

- 1 Les: where are you going to STAY:.
 2 Ski: (0.7) well i don't know whether we're going to stAy
 3 or come BACK yet.
 4 uh i- it can be DIFficult;
 5 i expect to get a HOTEL in oxford;
 6 at THIS short nOtice,
 7 Les: well I was going to SAY:
 8 if I came WITH you;
 9 <perhaps we could stay in Ox-
 10 in HUDnam for the nIght.> <animated>³
 11 .hh
 12 Ski: (1.4)
 13 well I shall be with this OTHER chap;
 14 HE won't want to do THAT.
 15→ Les: <OH::.
 16→ (0.5) oh i SEE.
 17→ (0.6) oh not to WORry then.> <subdued>
 18 .h (1.7)

The proposal here, made by Leslie, is that she accompany Skip on the business trip to Oxford he has planned and that they spend the night in Hudnam (lines 8-10), where they have friends. This proposal is delivered despite the fact that Skip has just expressed uncertainty about

2 This and all following transcripts are presented in GAT notation (Selting et al, 1998).

3 These descriptors are intended to give the reader a rough impression of the speaker's tone of voice.

whether his trip will involve an overnight stay at all (lines 2-6). Regardless of this, Leslie nonetheless makes her proposal in an animated voice, conveying hopeful anticipation on her part that it will work out. Skip's response, however, indirectly vetoes Leslie's proposal. He reports that he will be travelling with someone else, a circumstance which Leslie was apparently unaware of, and declares that his business associate will not like the idea (lines 13-14).

Faced with what amounts to a rejection of her proposal, Leslie acknowledges the new information and signals provisional acceptance of its consequences with a rejection-finalizing turn (lines 15-17). The tokens *oh* and *oh I see* indicate, provisionally at least, that she is not going to contest the matter further but is instead accepting and 'finalizing' the outcome of the sequence as rejection.

Yet the tone of voice which Leslie uses on her rejection finalizing turn in (1) is not wholly neutral. Instead it is 'marked', in the sense that a number of its prosodic features depart noticeably from local norms: for instance, lines 15-17 have lower volume, lower pitch, breathier phonation and weaker articulation than Leslie's prior turn in lines 7-10. By virtue of their markedness, lines 15-17 make an audible display of something affect-related. In the case at hand, because expectations have been expressed and then disappointed, the stance can be assumed to be a negative (as opposed to a positive) one. In the framework of so-called "basic emotions" (Plutchik, 1980; Ortony & Turner, 1990) it would presumably belong to the category of *SADNESS* and might be glossed here as 'disappointment'.

There are a number of cues in subsequent talk which indicate that Leslie is making a display of *SADNESS*, specifically 'disappointment', and that Skip interprets her display this way. This is how the conversation continues:

(1') Other chap, continued from (1)

- 19 Les: <RIGHT. hhh
 20 Ski: uh: -
 21 Les: .hhh (0.7)
 22 Les: thAt means tAKing the dOGs TOO of [course.> <subdued>
 23 Ski: [YES.

- 24 YES.
 25 Les: but if it was just YOU;
 26 we could DO that;
 27 Ski: YE[AH=
 28 Les: [↑COULDn't we.
 29 Ski: =if it was just YOU-
 30 if it was just ME;
 31 i mean i'd be HAPPY to.
 32 but what [i-

In the follow-up to Skip's rejection, Leslie continues to dwell on her proposal in a subdued tone of voice, interspersing expressions of resignation with noticeable pausing (lines 19-22).⁴ She then moves into wishful thinking about how things would be if Skip were travelling alone (line 25-26). Such expressions of resignation and regret indicate that Leslie is treating the rejection as having dashed her hopes of accompanying Skip on his business trip. Skip, on the other hand, proceeds to reassure her that her proposal was not completely unreasonable by suggesting that under different circumstances he would welcome the idea (lines 29-31). Moves on the part of a rejecting party to console and/or to reconcile the proposing party, often accompanied by suggestions for alternative courses of action (not in evidence here), indicate that a prior affective display has been interpreted as 'disappointment' and that some type of remedial action is perceived as being called for.

What we have seen so far then is that in activity sequences where a proposal or request receives an outright or unambiguous rejection, participants who have brought forward the proposal or request deal with this rejection in subsequent talk by acknowledging and accepting it, indicating that the matter is now closed. On these occasions the way the rejection is finalized is interpretable in terms of affectivity. So far we have seen a case where the rejection finalizer has <subdued> vocal features superimposed on it. In context, these become interpretable as displaying 'disappointment', that affect being socio-culturally asso-

4 Line 22 is a reference to what would be involved if she did come along and is thus the retrospective acknowledgement of an obstacle to her proposal.

ciated with the dashing of one's hopes concerning some future event or situation. Participants demonstrate an orientation to such a display through distinctive types of behavior in subsequent talk: For instance, the party having made the proposal or request may, as here, dwell on it and express regret and resignation about its not being acceptable/grantable, while the participant having thwarted the proposal or request may make attempts to conciliate or console the other and may suggest alternative plans of action.

Yet displaying 'disappointment' is not the only way of dealing with a rejection. To see this, consider the following fragment from another telephone conversation between Leslie and Skip. This time Leslie has called Skip at work, ostensibly to ask him to pick up some ham on his way home.

(2) Invited tonight (Holt 2:11)

- 1 Les: w'l can you get the HAM at lunch time?
 2 Ski: Okay then,
 3 Les: few PIEce:s,
 4 (0.3)
 5 Ski: TWO:?
 6 (.)
 7 Les: ↑f:e:w PIEce[s].
 8 Ski [YES.
 9 (.)
 10 Ski: i [↑WI:LL,
 11 Les: [.h
 12 Les: ALright,
 13 Am I:- inVITed tonIght.
 14 (1.2)
 15 Ski: I don't THINK so;,
 16 (0.6)
 17→ Les: <OH:.> <sharp>
 18 (0.3)
 19 Ski: WHY:.
 20 Les: I j's WONdered=
 21 =if it's a sOCial ocCAsion,

- 22 (0.7)
 23 Ski: we:ll I dOn't (0.2) dOn't (0.3) THINK so,
 24 (0.6)
 25 Ski: ,less i've got it WRONG.=
 26 =i'll hAve a look at the PAPers.
 27 (.)
 28 Les: Oka[y,
 29 Ski: [i've gO[t them here WITH me.
 30 Les: [RIGHTo,
 31 (.)
 32 Les: ↑lEt me know if[i A:M,
 33 Ski: [i'll lEt you KNO:W,
 34 YE:S. YE[S.
 35 Les: [YES.

At issue here, in addition to the ham, is a social event being organized that evening in conjunction with Skip's firm. In line 13 Leslie shifts to this topic rather abruptly by posing an initial question, keyed with stretching and a pause, which turns out to be the preliminary to an upcoming delicate action (Schegloff, 2007). The delicate action in this case is arguably getting Skip to volunteer to take her along to the social event.⁵ However, Skip's reply, after a significant delay, is that he doesn't think she is invited. This dispreferred response dashes any hope Leslie might have had of attending the event.

Yet significantly, Leslie does not respond to Skip's rejecting turn in a subdued tone of voice. Instead her pitch and volume on *oh* (line 17) are as high as they were at the end of her prior turn (cf. *tonight* in line 13) and her voice quality is sharp rather than lax. Moreover, rather than setting in on time, her *oh* is produced with noticeable delay. Leslie's turn clearly carries an affective display but it is not one interpretable as 'disappointment'. In the framework of "basic emotions" (Plutchik, 1980; Ortony/Turner, 1990) this display is closer to ANGER than SADNESS and might be glossed as mild 'annoyance'.

5 This is evident in part from the fact that she asks the question in the first place: if she were not interested in going, she would presumably not mention it at all. Moreover, the way she produces the question, viz. in the affirmative and with final pitch falling to low, suggests an expectation on her part that the answer will be affirmative.

Evidence for such a gloss will be found in the particulars of what happens next. Skip does not attempt to console or reconcile his interlocutor in subsequent talk but instead challenges Leslie on having asked the question in the first place (line 19). His *why* (sc. *why are you asking?*) is reproachful, implying that she was mistaken to have expected an invitation in the first place. Leslie does not go on to express regret or resignation about the fact that she is not invited, but instead counters Skip's challenge self-defensively with a reciprocal question-cum-reproach (Schegloff, 2007): *I just wondered, if it's a social occasion* (lines 21-22). Here too her tone of voice is sharp, not lax. This turn accounts for why Leslie expected the invitation, and with its immediate onset, also implies a conviction that the expectation was reasonable. At the same time, it reciprocates Skip's challenge through the negative interrogative form of what it implies: *if it's a social occasion (why shouldn't I be invited)*. Thus, rather than parties to the rejection continuing with expressions of resignation and consolation, as in (1), in (2) the rejection escalates into confrontation, resolved only when Skip reluctantly backs down (line 25) and agrees to double-check his papers (line 26).

In contrast to a display of disappointment in response to the rejection of a proposal or request, a display of annoyance may imply a sense on the part of the requesting party that the rejection was inappropriate, unjustified, unfair. In situations where there is an asymmetry of power between participants, it may convey a perception that one party is abusing their power over the other (Wootton, 1981). Unsurprisingly then, displays of annoyance at this sequential juncture lead to more talk involving reproaches, justifications, recriminations and self-defense.

The provisional conclusion that imposes itself then is that the way talk unfolds subsequent to a rejection depends crucially on how the requester or proposer signals they are 'taking' the rejection. The conversational evidence indicates that this can be accomplished quite subtly through tone of voice on a turn ostensibly claiming not to contest the matter further.

4. Preference in responses to rebuffed requests

Given that requesting parties in English conversation on some occasions gloss the finalization of a rejection with a display of ‘disappointment’ and on other occasions with a display of ‘irritation’, the question which now arises is: What determines which of these affects is displayed when? If both are relevant in a given situation, which is *preferred*, in the technical sense of this term?

Sacks (1992) was one of the first to address questions of preference in the display of affect and emotion in conversation. He points out with respect to the expression of joy and sorrow in response to the delivery of news that a mark of surprise often comes first in response to a piece of news. Only once the news has been elaborated on does an assessment — in the case of good news an expression of joy, or in the case of bad news an expression of sorrow — follow. He explains the situation this way:

As a rule expressions of joy and sorrow go after expressions of surprise. (...) The expression of surprise gives the other a chance to fully develop what has happened. If one puts in only an emotion of sorrow without the surprise one may be heard as cutting off the story and not really caring (1992, 573).

These observations suggest that there may be a normative ranking of affect displays such that some take precedence over, or ‘go before’, others. Like other types of action preference, it can be expected that this ranking will be motivated by considerations of sociality and solidarity (cf. also Heritage, 1984a).

In the following we shall explore Sacks’ claim that when affects “go in the same place”, it is meaningful to ask what their preference relationship is to one another (1992, 572). We will do this with respect to the affect displays of ‘disappointment’ and ‘annoyance’, both of which can occur on a rejection finalizer subsequent to the unequivocal rejection of a proposal or request.

There is in fact some evidence to indicate that participants preferentially display one of these affects in response to a rejection even though the other is also relevant. One instance of this occurs in a tele-

phone conversation between Leslie and a clerk from the local branch of Barclay's bank. Leslie is calling to inquire whether Barclay's will cash a Midland check for her son:

(3) Barclay's (Holt S-01988:2:1)

- 1 Des: gOOd afterNOON;
 2 bArclay's castle CAry;
 3 (0.3)
 4 Les: oh helLO.
 5 UHM -
 6 .tch.hhh i'm not very SU:RE of;
 7 (0.4) u-whAt i DO;
 8 eh- if I: give my s-
 9 I deal with uh- MIDlan:d,
 10 hh .hh (0.7) [h.hhhh
 11 Des: [YE:S,
 12 Les: but if my SON comes DOW:N;
 13 u-with a CHECK. h
 14 a mIdland CHE:CK; .hhh
 15 u-aa: for thIrty five POUNDS;=
 16 =will you CASH that FO:R him,
 17 at BARclay's?
 18 (0.3)
 19 Des: not NORMally,
 20 is your sOn a cUstomer HE:RE,
 21 Les: .hhh i- NO::;
 22 my ↑MOTHer in law is. hh
 23 missiz FIELD.
 24 Des: ↓NO;=
 25 =there's- there's NOTHING -
 26 w-WE can do;
 27 we could only cash YOUR check for YOU;,
 28 (0.3)
 29 Les: .h YES.
 30 (.)
 31 Des: with a ↑CHECK card.

- 32 (1.0)
 33 Des: [we-
 34 Les: [what d'you MEAN;=
 35 =if I send my CHECK card along.
 36 Des: ↓NO,
 37 it would need (.) YOU to do it yourSE:LF,
 38 (.)
 39 Des: i cAN't- (.)
 40 i cAN't cash A midland check HE:RE,
 41 Les: NO.
 42 Des: (for) ANYbody other than the drAWer of the uh CHECK.
 43 (1.7)
 44 Les: oh I see:.
 45 so (.) i[f:-
 46 Des: [then there's a poun:d FEE.
 47 OBviously;
 48→ Les: <oh: RIGHT.
 49→ Okay.
 50→ NEVER mind then,> <subdued>
 51 TH[ANK you very much.
 52 Des: [ah:
 53 Des: <<h> alRIGHT?>
 54 Les: .h YEAH, .h
 55 Des: TH[ANK you.
 56→ Les: [<not REALly,> <sharp>
 57 bye BYE.=
 58 Des: =(yeah we:ll/you wel-)
 59 bye BYE.

When Leslie first learns that the bank will not cash her son's check but only one of her own (lines 25-27), she withholds any sign of finalization, merely responding neutrally with the weak agreement token *yes* (line 29). This leads to further negotiation with the clerk over the conditions under which the bank would be willing to cash her check (lines 31-42). But when she is now told that the bank will charge a one-pound fee for this service (lines 46-47), Leslie terminates the sequence, finalizing its negative outcome with the tokens *oh: right*.

okay. never mind then (line 35). These tokens are delivered in a subdued tone of voice similar to that used on the rejection finalizer in (1) and are thus hearable as displaying something akin to ‘disappointment’. The clerk indeed appears to register Leslie’s display accordingly: he follows up with a high-pitched, solicitous *alright?* (line 53), to which Leslie responds affirmatively (line 54), conveying, initially at least, ‘troubles resistance’ (Jefferson, 1988). But then, in overlap with the clerk’s appreciative *thank you*, Leslie unexpectedly reverses her position, switching to the negative *not really* (line 56). This turn is produced in a sharp tone of voice and makes a display of being ‘put out’ by the bank’s rejection of her request. Note that on one hearing (*yeah we:ll*, line 58) the clerk’s response can be taken as an indication that he has heard it as such.

So here is a case where the conversational record shows that two different affect displays are relevant and available in one and the same situation. Yet significantly, it is the display of disappointment which comes ‘early’, i.e. on the rejection-finalizing turn immediately after the bank’s final word, whereas the display of annoyance is positioned later. Moreover, the display of annoyance is done with only a mild expression of discontent (*not really*, line 56) wedged in between an affirmation that everything is all right and an upbeat closing turn. And it is produced in full overlap with co-participant talk. Taken together then, the mild form and the covert position of this turn cue it as implementing a socially less acceptable, or dispreferred action.

Thus, the display of disappointment might be said to be *preferred* over the display of annoyance in a rejection context in the sense that it is positioned early, before any sign of discontent. By the same token, the display of annoyance might be said to be *dispreferred* in a rejection context in the sense that it is delayed and mitigated. If done at all, a display of annoyance will be positioned late, i.e. well after the response to the turn embodying the rejection, and will be accomplished in a weak and covert form.

That precisely *this* preference relation, and not the reverse, should hold between displays of disappointment and annoyance may be motivated by the nature of the affects being displayed. Disappointment, belonging to the SADNESS family, implies a turning inwards, whereas annoyance, as a member of the ANGER family, is associated with aggres-

sion and striking out. Anger and annoyance following rejection imply a perception that the rejecting party is somehow 'at fault', whereas sadness and disappointment imply resignation to the perception that things can't be helped. Therefore, it is not surprising that displays of annoyance, which are more likely to be disruptive of sociality, should be dispreferred by comparison with the non-'fault-implicative' displays of disappointment.

5. A cross-linguistic, cross-cultural comparison of rebuffed requests

Let us now briefly consider displays of affect in rejection contexts from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective. Indeed similarly structured request sequences can be found in German interaction as well. One of these will be seen under (4) below.⁶

(4) *Stabi* (Tel 7-2)

Gabi is a college student who needs to write a term paper over the week-end. She has called up the library on a Friday to ask if they can get a book from Building One (where the stacks are) to Building Two (where the reading room is) on that same day if she orders it by email.

5 Gabi: SAGen sie;
 say you
 say

6 wenn ich hEUte noch-
 if I today still
 if I today

7 uhm .hhh

⁶ I am grateful to Margret Selting for providing me with access to this conversation.

- 19 Gabi: aso es wär für den LESesaal.
 so it would be for the reading room
 it would be for the reading room.
- 20 ds-
 it's-
- 21 Lib: ja JA.
 yeah yeah.
- 22 DENnoch.
 still.
- 23 aso es mUss ja nun aber m-mit dem (.)kuRIERdienst;
 so it must indeed now but with the courier+service
 it has to go by (.) courier;
- 24 uhm hierHER gefahren werden,
 to here driven be
 uhm to get here,
- 25 .hh und uh::
 .hh and uh
- 26 im prinzip JA.
 theoretically yes.
- 27 aber uhm: ich würds ihnen nIch r- eh garanTIERen.
 but I would+it you not guarantee
 but uhm: I wouldn't want to uh guarantee it.
- 28 Gabi: mhn;
 mhn;
- 29 (0.7)

- 30→ .hhh <GUT - > <stylized>
 .hhh okay
- 31 na ja ich verSUCHS mal.
 oh well I try+it once
 oh well I'll try it.
- 32 alles [KLAR.
 fi[ne.
- 33 Lib: [O-KAY;
 [okay;
- 34 Gabi: VIElen dank.
 thank you.
- 35 WIEderhören;
 good bye;

In the given context Gabi's initial inquiry (lines 6-10) harbors an implicit request: she hopes to obtain the book she needs from the library that very same day. Yet the librarian's reply to this inquiry-cum-request is delayed and hedged (line 11), suggesting that there are problems involved in complying. Gabi initially remains silent (line 12), displaying that the librarian's answer is incomplete or insufficient, whereupon the librarian proceeds to elaborate, explaining that the book might get there or not depending on the driver. To this Gabi provides only a weak acknowledgement, again conveying that the matter is not yet settled to her satisfaction (line 17). Now consider what happens next.

In line 19 Gabi proceeds to clarify her request: she only needs the book for the reading room, not to check out. This information appears to be provided in an attempt to reduce the imposition of the request and thereby facilitate compliance. But the librarian insists that there is still no way to be sure whether it will get there in time or not, formulating the gist of her talk in a way which is tantamount to rejection (lines 26-27). At first Gabi again merely acknowledges this rejection (line 28), but – after a longish pause, during which she may be moni-

toring for some reversal on the part of the librarian – then appears to give up the contest. In line 30 she produces the German rejection finalizer *gut*, adding with resignation that she will try anyway (line 31), and thereafter moves to close the conversation (line 32).

Here then is a German rejection context, one where, by comparison with the English materials, ‘disappointment’ would be a relevant affect to display: compare Leslie’s subdued tone of voice in line 35 of (3) above. Yet Gabi’s prosody on the finalizer *gut* in (4) is not of the subdued type. Instead it has stylized prosody (Couper-Kuhlen, 2005), with the syllable stretched and the pitch and volume held constant at a relatively high level. On one interpretation, Gabi’s *gut* – together with her precipitous and quasi-unilateral move to end the conversation in lines 32-35 (“fine”, “thank you”, “good-bye”) – is retrospectively interpretable as signalling something akin to ‘annoyance’.

Intriguingly, in subsequent talk, the librarian orients to this display by unexpectedly re-opening topical talk and offering some practical advice on how to get the book:

(4’) Stabi, continued from (4) above

- 36 Lib: passen sie AUF;
watch you out
hey listen
- 37 rufen sie doch hier in der buchausgabe AN;
call you still here at the book+loan up
just call up the lending desk
- 38 obs aso am nachmittag ANjekommen ist.
if+it so in+the afternoon arrived has
(to see)if it has got here this afternoon
- 39 .hh dass sie aso um uh FÜNF (.) hier mal ANrufen?
that you so at five here once call+up
.hh just give a call here at five p.m.?

- 40 Gabi: mhm?
mhm?
- 41 Lib: ich sag ihnen mal die DURCHwahl für die BUCHausgabe?
I say you once the extension for the book+loan
I'll give you the extension number for the lending desk?
- 42 Gabi: ja?
yeah?
- 43 Lib: zwei sechs SECHS?
two six six?
- 44 Gabi: ja,
yeah,
- 45 Lib: ACHTundzwanzig FÜNfundzwanzig.
eight+and+twenty five+and+twenty
twenty-eight twenty-five.
- 46 Gabi: [ACHTundzwanzig fünfundzwanzig.
eight+and+twenty five+and+twenty
[twenty-eight twenty-five.
- 47 Lib: [ge-
[ex-
- 48 und GEBen sies gleich WEG.
and give you+it immediately in
and get your order in right away.
- 49 (1.0)
- 50 Gabi: uh huh.
uh huh.

- 51 Lib: aufn WEG. ja?
on+the way yeah
(get it)on its way. okay?
- 52 Gabi: mhm.
mhm.
- 53 Lib: und RUFen sie aber v- bevor sie KOMmen noch mal AN,
and call you however before you come once again up
and call up however bef- before you come,
- 54 (0.8)
- 55 und seien sie nicht entTÄUSCHT wenn es erst denn
and be you not disappointed if it first then
- 56 MONTag soll.
Monday must (be)
and don't be disappointed if it ends up having to be
Monday.
- 57 Gabi: h he HEH [.h he:,,
- 58 Lib: [JA?
[all right?
- 59 Gabi: GUT=
okay=
- 60 Gabi: =Aso dann hab ich sOnnabend auch keine CHANCE
so then have I Saturday also no chance
oder wie
or what
so there's no chance I could get it Saturday I
suppose.

- 61 Lib: (0.2) *nein NEIN.*
(0.2) *no no.*
- 62 SONnabend FÄHRT der wagen nicht.
Saturdays drives the car not
Saturdays the driver doesn't work.
- 63→ Gabi: <OH::: > <subdued>
oh:::
- 64 MM?
mm?
- 65 alles KLAR.
all clear
okay.
- 66 Lib: JA?
okay?
- 67 Gabi: ↑gut vielen DANK.
↑*fine thank you.*
- 68 Lib: BIT-te –
you're welcome -
- 69 Gabi: [WIEderhören.
[*bye.*
- 70 Lib: [WIEderhören.
[*bye.*

The librarian now recommends that Gabi call up the lending desk late that afternoon to see whether the book has arrived (lines 37-39) and offers to give her the telephone number (lines 41-47). She then rounds off her advice by reminding Gabi to turn in her order immediately

(lines 48, 51), admonishing her not to be *disappointed* if things do not work out (lines 55-56).

From this behavior on the part of the librarian, it is clear that Gabi's earlier response to the rejection was registered as affect-laden. Had Gabi produced a non-affect-laden rejection finalizer, there would have been no need for the librarian to make any effort at conciliation. Furthermore, the librarian's admonition not to be disappointed serves as confirmation that 'disappointment' is also a relevant affect in the German cultural context following rejection.⁷

The librarian's conciliatory move prompts Gabi to reopen the sequence with a subsequent version of her request (Davidson, 1984). She now inquires whether she could get the book on Saturday, if it doesn't come on Friday. With this move she implies that she still has hopes that the book will be available before Monday. Yet the librarian immediately and unequivocally rejects the possibility of Saturday (line 61-62). Gabi now responds with the German particle *oh*, delivered in a prosodically subdued tone of voice (line 63).

Gabi's *oh* in line 63 accomplishes two things: for one, it registers the information that the drivers don't work on Saturdays. It thus marks a change of state in Gabi's knowledge (Heritage, 1984b). At the same time, however, its vocal formatting, specifically the low falling, soft, weak prosody, contributes to something which is hearable as a display of 'disappointment'. Although this display is fleeting, it registers in the conversational record because it motivates the subsequent display of troubles resistance (*mm?*) and accounts for the 'stiff-upper-lip' manner in which the sequence-closing *alles klar* is delivered.

The way rejection is handled in the German context is intriguing when compared to the English case shown in (3). In terms of preference, the evidence suggests that English speakers whose service request is rejected preferentially produce displays of disappointment (if they produce any affect display at all). Displays of annoyance are avoided and, if produced, will be done late and in a weak and covert fashion.⁸ In a similar situation in the German context, however,

7 The fact that the librarian alludes to Gabi's display as one of 'disappointment' rather than 'annoyance' may be an attempt to avoid the face threat implicit in attributing an anger-related affect to her.

8 See Couper-Kuhlen (in press, b) for more evidence to back up this claim.

we find a speaker whose service request is rejected finalizing the rejection first with a display of something which, by comparison with the English data, sounds more like ‘annoyance’ and only later making a display of ‘disppointment’. This might be an indication of different preference systems, or “display rules” (Fiehler, 2002), in the two cultures. A display of annoyance may be considered socially less appropriate than a display of disappointment in the English context, whereas in German contexts the opposite may hold.

Alternatively, however, it could be argued that in line 30 Gabi is simply using a different tone of voice than that which English speakers would use to display ‘disappointment’. In this case, the argument would be that the same affect is in play in (4) as in (3) but that Gabi contextualizes its display differently from the way this would be done in English. That is, it might be argued that she is using different resources to cue or trigger the same interpretative frame as Leslie’s subdued tone of voice in (1) or (3). That the librarian refers to Gabi’s display as *Enttäuschung* (Eng. ‘disappointment’) in line 55 could indicate that she has interpreted Gabi’s tone of voice as ‘doing disappointment’. If so, this would support the argument that different systems of contextualization are being used (Gumperz, 1982). Contextualization cues are often prosodic in nature and are said to evoke interpretive frames for the language they accompany (Auer & di Luzio 1992). In this case we would have evidence not for a difference in “display rules”, but for a difference in the use of contextualization cues.

6. Implications for intercultural communication and ‘linguistics of migration’

What do we learn from a comparison of rejection contexts in English and German? Although all due caution is needed given the small amount of data analyzed so far, a number of provisional observations can be made concerning dimensions of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variation in the display of affect:

- (1) *Ways of responding to rejection.* The activity of requesting a service appears to have similar possibilities for sequential development in

both cultures. Unambiguous rejections occur in both speech communities. We also find similar procedures being deployed following rejection: silences, weak agreement tokens and/or rejection finalizers. And we find similar types of affect being displayed in conjunction with the finalization of rejection: ‘disappointment’ and ‘annoyance’. What we do not know for sure at this point is whether the “display rules” in the two speech communities vary in terms of which, if any, of these affects is considered socially more acceptable. Only further empirical work can resolve this issue.

- (2) *Lexical and prosodic resources for finalizing rejection and displaying affect*. Whereas in English one of the most common particles for finalizing rejection appears to be the change-of-state token *oh* (either on its own or together with objects like *I see* or *right*), the German example shows two rejection finalizers in use (*gut, oh*), neither one of which is the standard change-of-state expression *ach so* (Golato & Betz, 2008). Thus, whereas in the English cases (1) and (2) two different affect displays were accomplished with the same token *oh* via prosody alone, in the German case two different lexical resources were involved. This raises the question of whether German, as a well-known ‘particle language’, might rely more heavily on particles for the display of different affects, whereas English, with fewer particles, might rely more heavily on phonetic and prosodic variation of one and the same lexical item.⁹ What needs exploring then is the division of labor between lexis and prosody as resources for the display of affect in the two languages.

What is the relevance of such a comparison for intercultural communication? We know from anthropological studies of emotion in other cultures (Lutz, 1988) that the display rules regulating which affects can be shown in which contexts and by whom may differ significantly from culture to culture. Moreover, Gumperz’ (1982) study of Indian cafeteria workers in England reminds us that contextualization cues, e.g. the ‘tones of voice’ and other types of expression we use to convey particular interpretations of what is being said, can differ from

⁹ See Schubiger (1965) for a similar line of argumentation.

one linguistic and cultural community to another. The implications arising from both kinds of difference for intercultural communication are obvious. When speakers who are communicating with one another rely on different affect-related display rules or on different systems of contextualization to convey affect-related meaning, they will tend to make inferences concerning which affect is being displayed based on what they are familiar with. The result may lead to serious miscommunication. For instance, we may infer that someone is an irritable person because they display annoyance in a situation where we would expect a display of disappointment. But it may be only their cultural display rules which do not encourage displays of disappointment under such circumstances. Or we may infer that someone is annoyed based on the contextualization cues used, whereas actually they are using these markers to display disappointment.

Display rules function imperceptibly: they might be said to be below the level of *cultural* awareness, in that for the average lay person affects and emotions are ideologized as spontaneous outpourings of inner states and are thus expected to be culture-independent. Consequently, the 'management' of affect displays in interaction can all too easily be interpreted as spontaneous feeling, as an outward mirror of the 'real' inner self. Similarly, contextualization cues function below the level of *linguistic* awareness, in that speakers who are using the same linguistic code will believe that they can understand one another, but their inferences will be based on an unconscious appeal to non-referential contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982).

In other words, were Leslie and Gabi communicating with another, be it in English or in German, Leslie might judge Gabi to be an irritable, testy person based on her stylized response to a rebuffed request, whereas Gabi might find Leslie bland and lacking in feistiness based on her subdued response. And yet each might be responding with a different affect display but in ways appropriate for the display rules of their respective linguistic/cultural communities. Or each might be displaying the same affect in response to a rebuffed request but with different contextualization cues. When such personal attributes become stereotypes for whole cultural groups, as in e.g. "Germans are irritable and testy", "the English are bland and lacking in feistiness", we have the wherewithal for major communicative trouble. The cross-linguistic and

cross-cultural study of affectivity in interaction can expose differences in the “display rules” for affect in particular sequential contexts and/or in the use of contextualization cues for the display of similar affects. Awareness of such differences furthers greater interpersonal sensitivity in intercultural communication and thus testifies to the socio-cultural relevance of a ‘linguistics of migration’.

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