

**All You Need is Laugh**  
**Interactional Implications of**  
**Laughter in Business Meetings**



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Ph.D. Dissertation  
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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In this introductory chapter, I present the aim of this dissertation. I also comment on the motivation for studying laughter, and present the overarching research questions this study addresses. In making references to theories of social action I draw a connection to the bigger frame that shaped the analysis of laughter in the present study. Further, I provide the reader with ethnographical background containing information about quantitative facts of the data, broad knowledge about the company the data were collected in, as well as detailed information about the hierarchical structure of the team. I then present and discuss the typical sequence of the meetings and show features that all meetings have in common. Finally, the outline of the dissertation is presented.

#### **1.1. Introduction**

The aim of this dissertation is to describe what happens in talk-in-interaction when people laugh. The interactional relevance of laughter and its organization in an institutional business setting is at the core of this study. The purpose of the analyses is to fathom the phenomenon 'laughter' in regard to what it does to interactants when engaged with others: what constraints it puts on them, in which ways it interferes with or supports their local identity work, and whether it impedes or assists them in doing their business.

The decision to study laughter in interaction was reached 'on a gut level' – which I have always considered to be a good starting point for working on this particular phenomenon. Laughter is said to have a vast influence on people's conversational and interactional behavior – after all, "Laughter is the lightning rod or play, the eroticism of conversation" (Eva Hoffman, writer). Being an enthusiastic laugher myself, I became captivated with the idea to commence an empirical study of laughter, using the methodology of Conversation Analysis, to really understand what the effects of laughter in talk may be, and to investigate its organization in talk.



In summary, this study is in line with the French writer Françoise Sagan in believing: "There can never be enough said of the virtues, dangers, the power of a shared laugh." This dissertation aims to shed light on the power of laughter in talk.

## 1.2. Research Questions and Overarching Topics

The present study addresses research questions relating to the organization and interactional relevance of laughter. It is not concerned with the reasons *why* people laugh (theories on this are discussed in chapter 3). Rather than embarking upon laughter from a psychological or philosophical angle, this study views laughter as an interactional, social phenomenon.

The discipline that is most concerned with studying social interaction is, of course, sociology. It would go beyond the scope of this study to discuss theories of social interaction in detail. Therefore, in the following section, I focus on those theoreticians whose works have influenced and shaped to some considerable extent the analyses of this study: Durkheim, Goffman and Garfinkel.

Durkheim was among the first sociologists who stated that interactions between individuals bring about features not detectable in separate individuals. Durkheim argued that "social facts"<sup>1</sup> (Durkheim 1895 [1982]: 45) should be examined and explained on a societal rather than an individual level. In contrast to the most accepted belief of his time, Durkheim posited a causal direction of social influence from group to individual.

The "social theorist" Goffman (Giddens 1988 [1996]) has been closely connected to the Durkheimian views: "[T]he deepest layer in Goffman's works, his core intellectual vision, is a continuation of the Durkheimian tradition" (Collins 1988 [1996]: 43). Goffman's work is concerned with the investigation of how people organize their interactions with each other, and how they define their reality through these interactions:

"The process of mutually sustaining a definition of the situation in face-to-face interaction is socially organized through rules of relevance and irrelevance. These rules for the management of engrossment appear to be an insubstantial element of social life, a matter of courtesy, manners, and etiquette. But it is to these flimsy rules, and not to the unshaking character

---

<sup>1</sup> "Social facts" in the Durkheimian sense are e.g. collective sentiments, customs, institutions, nations.

of the external world, that we owe our unshaking sense of realities."  
(Goffman 1961 [1972]: 72)

Another sociologist linked to the Durkheimian tradition is Harold Garfinkel. As the founder of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), Garfinkel recommends that we should treat the objectivity of "social facts" (Durkheim) as an achievement of society's members, and investigate that achievement process thoroughly (Garfinkel 2002).

"EM [Ethnomethodology] investigations have their origins, aims, directions, policies, methods, the corpus status of its results, its clients, and its consequences, in worldly and real work of making things that Durkheim was talking about discoverable, and making their discovery accountably evident, as things of immortal, ordinary society." (Garfinkel 2002: 93)

In order to achieve this, ethnomethodology examines the ways in which people make sense of their world, display this understanding to others, and produce the mutually shared social order in which they live.

As an elementary part of social interaction, laughter can thus be seen as one feature that shapes and influences "social facts" (Durkheim), that defines and manages "face-to-face" (Goffman) interaction, and thus assists people in building their reality and making sense of their world. It is in this line of thinking that laughter and its relevance and consequences in talk are studied in this dissertation. The comprehensive research questions this study addresses are:

- What is the interactional relevance of laughter in talk, that is: What do interactants achieve by laughing/not laughing when engaged in interaction?
- How is laughter organized? Can it occur in every position in talk?

There are certain overarching topics that these research questions touch upon, and which reappear in the analyses of laughter in the three analytic chapters. These topics are 'Institutional Business Interaction', 'Membership Categories and Identity Work', and 'Multiperson Setting'. Below, each topic is adumbrated, its relevance is explicated, and further

detailed research questions in regard to each individual topics are postulated. Also, I indicate the chapters of this study in which each question is addressed.

#### Laughter in Institutional Business Interaction

This dissertation studies laughter in business meetings. All data extracts stem from the same data source (see section 1.3. for more details). The investigation of laughter in this particular setting and context raises the question of whether laughter in a business environment has special interactional characteristics in comparison to laughter in everyday interaction, and whether its organization is different compared to mundane interaction. Further, the query obtrudes whether laughter is context-bound. These issues are addressed in chapter 4. Questions about laughter in regard to existing business structures like hierarchies, team formations and seniorities surface – e.g. can hierarchy be laughed into, or out of, existence? Can seniority be displayed through laughter? I discuss this in detail in chapter 5. Further, investigations of laughter 'about' superiors are relevant in a study of laughter at the workplace– what happens, when a subordinate makes the boss subject of a laughable? And how does this laughter have potential to construct affiliation with the boss? Chapter 6 is concerned with answering these questions.

The question remains whether laughter in business meetings deflect from the agenda, or, put more bluntly: With all the laughter going on, are business meetings really about business? This question is taken up and discussed in the conclusion.

#### Laughter in Regard to Membership Categories and Identity work

In this study, the question whether laughter has an influence on Membership Categories and interactants' local identities is tightly connected to the issue of 'Institutional Business Interaction'. The business setting endows the participants with a set of particular local identities and Membership Categories (e.g. 'Boss', 'Team Member', 'Subordinate' etc.). These categories can be made relevant and oriented to in interaction with each other. The present study looks at in which ways laughter is a tool for interactants to do so.

Organizational roles and work-related identities can be a source for laughter. Chapter 4 sheds light on how this can be achieved in business meetings. Hierarchical Membership Categories can be made relevant through laughter in complaint sequences, as can issues of

team seniority. Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of how this is done in talk. The Membership Category 'Foreign Language User' can be made a resource for laughables, and can, in that way, be made relevant in business meetings to orient to local identities and at the same time achieve affiliation, as chapter 6 shows. Overall, this study claims that laughter is a rich and central tool for participants when doing local identity work.

### Laughter in Multiperson Setting

All laughter sequences analyzed in this study occur in a multiperson setting; analyses of laughter in dyadic interactions are drawn on only infrequently for reasons of comparison. Of course, the number of participants has an influence on the interaction, especially so when laughter sequences occur: While in dyadic interactions a laughable has only one recipient who can either join laughter or decline laughter, a producer of a laughable in a multiperson setting can be faced with numerous next actions to his/her laughable, e.g. both acceptance (thus joining) and declination of laughter from different people at the same time, a round of subsequent jokes by more than one participant, or different receptions of the laughable (for example the reciprocity of the contribution as a laughable by one party, and as a complaint by another - for an example and a detailed discussion of this possibility, see chapter 4 and 5). The matter of how the multiperson setting influences the organization of laughter sequences is particularly discussed in chapter 4, but chapters 5 and 6 also touch on this question.

### **1.3. Ethnographic Background**

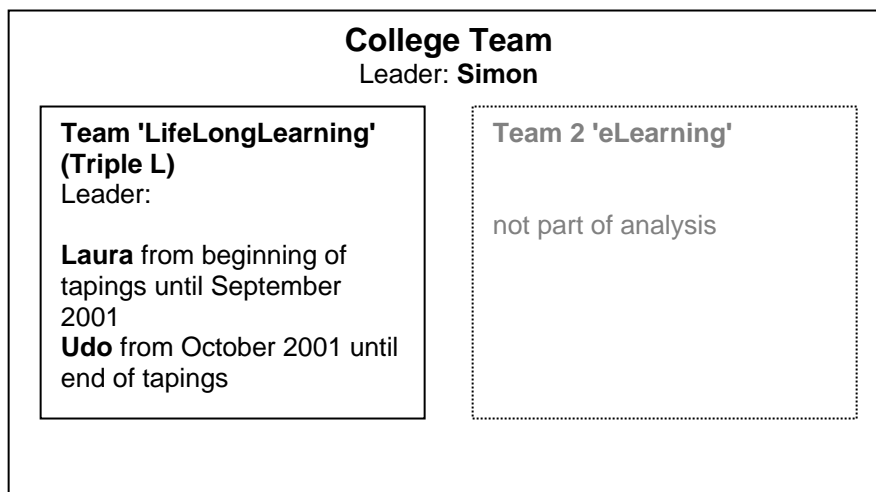
The background for this study are 15 hours of video tapings, comprised of 14 business team meetings within the Human Resources department of a major German-US-American financial service company. With slight discrepancies due to day-to-day business, the meetings were held on a weekly basis, ranging in duration from 40 minutes to 1½ hours. The taping was conducted in the period from August 2001 till March 2002 at the company's headquarters in a major German city.

The company 'AutomobileFinances AG'<sup>2</sup> was founded in 1990 as a subsidiary of a large German automobile corporation. Since the merger of the mother company in 1998 the company is a joint German-US American corporation, constituting the finances services sector within the automobile branch. The spectrum of product and service offerings range from financing, insurance and mobility services (such as mobile navigation systems, WAP services etc.) to bank services.

At the time of the data collection, the relatively large department of Human Resources provided services to about 9.000 employees in 38 locations worldwide, 5.000 of which were in the **North American Free Trading Area** (NAFTA). The department in which the data collection took place, 'AutomobileFinances College' ('College' from here forth), was part of the Human Resources department and as a headquarter section responsible for the development and implementation of trainings at all hierarchy levels. The College team consisted of two sub-teams in one of which, 'LifeLongLearning' (Triple L Team hereafter), the data collection was conducted. Customers of the Triple L Team were drawn exclusively from the internal departments of the corporation, and could choose between five operating business areas according to their needs and status: 'Executive Training', 'General Business Skills', 'Technical Training Financial Services', 'Human Resources', and 'Organizational Development Consulting'. Graph #1 illustrates the structure of the 'College' team with its respective leaders. Note that during the course of the data collection the Triple L Team was subject to a change in leadership: Its boss (Lara) left the company and a new one (Udo) was employed.

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<sup>2</sup> All names, labels and locations are anonymized in this study to protect the privacy of the individuals and company.

Graph #1.1, *Diagram of College Team's structure*

The size of the Triple L team varied from 4-8 employees. In the meetings, not more than 11<sup>3</sup> and not less than 4 employees participated. The participants of the team meetings are<sup>4</sup> almost exclusively members of the Triple L team who all know each other well on a work-basis and interact daily. The only member of staff who regularly attends the meetings while not being a team member to the Triple L team is the departmental leader's (Simon) secretary, Laura. In this position she is of assistance to the entire College team and thus a well known colleague to everyone. The meetings, called 'Sit Ins' by the team itself, are mostly held in German, though longer English sequences occur sporadically when the College's leader Simon, a non-native speaker of German, is present. The only time this comes about more frequently is a period in which the Triple L team lacks a direct, regularly present sub-team leader in the period between late September and late November. The usage of English expressions within German sequences, though, is common in the Triple L team. This is due to the fact that the official corporate language is English, which provides a reason for the

<sup>3</sup> Including the non-team members Laura, Simon and max two apprentices.

<sup>4</sup> Although neither the Triple L team nor the College continues to exist in the form presented, I will from here on use the present tense when describing the team structure for ease of reading.

numerous anglicisms like "Human Resources", "Financial Services" and the like.<sup>5</sup> Also, the team has a highly international personnel structure: Its members are of German, Russian, Argentinean and US-American origin.

### 1.3.1. Hierarchical Positions within the Triple L Team

The position each staff member has according to his or her work contract is a reality for the participants, although not made relevant at all points. The present study is concerned with how the interactants orient to and make relevant hierarchical positions and organizational roles through laughter. Therefore, it might be helpful for the reader to be equipped with background knowledge about the hierarchical identities and positions each team member holds according to their work contracts and other organizational facts. In the following table I introduce each individual team member and briefly outline every team member's function with a few descriptors containing information on first language and the time of their presence in the team. This table is to be used as a detailed reference to all data segments shown in the analysis where I just briefly list the individual's name and position.

---

<sup>5</sup>As examples for the use of single English expressions within the German meetings, refer to the following data extracts:

Business Meeting 010912

001 Melanie: wobei das im **team retreat** wieder so ankam so .HHHee  
*whereas this was reacted to in the team retreat as if .HHHee*

Business Meeting 010912

001 Corinna: wieviel **general business skills** darfs denn in der **WEN re:gion** sein  
*how much general business skills are allowed in the WEN  
 ((World Excluding NAFTA)) region*

Business Meeting 010928

001 Corinna: **consultant** für ehm personalentwicklung also **H R development**  
*consultant for ehm human resources development so h r development*

Graph #1.2, Hierarchical Positions within the Triple L Team and Other Relevant Background Information on the Team Members

<b>Leaders</b>		<b>Simon</b>	<b>Laura</b>	<b>Lara</b>	<b>Udo</b>
<b>Position in the team</b>	Head of department 'College', the two sub-teams' leaders report to him	Simon's secretary, substitutes for Nora when on vacation	Head of the sub-team 'Training & Qualification'	Head of the sub-team 'Training & Qualification', joins the team in October 2001	
<b>Presence in the team</b>	Not a regular participant in the meetings, only during the time when the team leadership is not settled (approx 2 months), attends 3 times	A regular team meeting participant, though not a regular team member, attends the meetings for information flow and cooperation purposes	From beginning of tapings until September 2001. Together with Corinna, Nora and Ulrike the team member with the longest history in the company.	Starts his job in late October 2001, but begins attending the team meetings regularly by the end of November 2001	
<b>Language</b>	First languages Hebrew, Arabic and English, a learner of German with intermediate proficiency	First languages Spanish and German	First language German	First language German	



**Standard-salaried team members**

	<b>Corinna</b>	<b>Robin</b>	<b>Melanie</b>	<b>Nora</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Area 'Technical Training Finance Skills' and 'Human Resources'	Area 'Language Training' and 'Expatriates'	Area 'General Business Skills'	Team Assistant
<b>Presence in the team</b>	From beginning of tapings until December 2001 Together with Lara, Nora and Ulrike the team member with the longest history in the company.	During the entire period of tapings	During the entire period of tapings. Has joined the team just before the beginning of the tapings (August 2001).	During the entire period of tapings. Together with Lara, Corinna and Ulrike the team member with the longest history in the company.
<b>Language</b>	First language German	First language English, fluent in German	First language German	First language German
<b>Additional Information</b>	Among the regular team member highest in hierarchy. Is in charge of the interns.		Comes from another department of the company to the 'College'.	In charge of the training of the apprentices.

**Student workers, interns and apprentices**

	<b>Ulrike</b>	<b>Madita</b>	<b>Tamara</b>	<b>Anke</b>	<b>Wilma</b>
<b>Position in the team</b>	Student worker	Student worker	Intern	Apprentice	Apprentice
<b>Presence in the team</b>	During the entire period of tapings. Together with Lara, Nora and Corinna the team member with the longest history in the company.	During the entire period of tapings	During the entire period of tapings	From beginning of tapings until October 2001	From October 2001 until February 2002
<b>Language</b>	First language German	First language German	First language Russian. Near-native in German	First language German	First language German
<b>Additional Information</b>	Formerly responsible for the area "General Business Skills". Supports Melanie when she starts.	Started working for the company as an intern.			

### **1.3.2. Typical Sequence of a Meeting**

For general background information on the data, it is relevant to know about the typical recurring sequence of each meeting. There is an overall procedure to all meetings which is characterized by the following three features. First, the meetings do not take place as the first thing on a work day; generally all team members have met before at some point during the day. Second, there is no preassigned agenda as the team members usually gather once a week in the appointed meeting room where each is expected to report on her/his current activities. Third, the time frame is set for usually 1 to 1½ half hours. The team is used to this certain procedure and only deviates from it on special occasions, e.g. when in need of preparing a special event or a presentation of internal matters (twice in the collection). Day and time of the weekly meetings are arranged at each Sit In for the next one, or the team's assistant Nora informs all employees via eMail.

Laughter occurs in all phases of the meeting. Analysis showed no significant prominence of one phase displaying a particular high number of laughter events. However, the focus of this study is not the quantitative analysis of where in a meeting laughter happens most, or how much laughter occurs in which phase. For that reason, I will not pursue the question of laughter in regard to meeting phases any further at this point.

The following table provides an overview of the typical sequence of a meeting. Each single phase will be examined in detail below.

Graph #1.3, *The Six Typical Phases of a Triple L Team Meeting***Pre-Phase of the meeting**

Team members enter the designated meeting room. Pre-beginning activities (mostly talk about private matters, often joking may occur.) Commencement of establishing participation framework by presence.

**Orientation/transition to beginning of meeting**

Either vocally and/or by body posture, namely by taking a seat on a chair and arranging paper and pens.

**Beginning of official part of the meeting**

Official beginning of the meeting through greeting by leader or team member. Selection of first 'team reporter', usually by the person highest in hierarchy.

**Core of meeting: Round of Reports**

Every team member reports on current issues. Second speaker self- or other-selected (usually by person highest in hierarchy), all next speakers pre-allocated until all members have reported.

**Closing of official meeting**

After everyone has reported, there might be time to add things which haven't been mentioned in the round of reports. After that, the person highest in hierarchy closes the meeting.

**Post-Phase of meeting**

The team members leave the meeting room. Post-sequences of private or joking nature might occur.

Pre-Phase of the meeting

As soon as the team members enter the appointed meeting room and sit down, they thereby begin to establish the framework for the meeting. Presence combined with the association to

the Triple L Team constitutes membership<sup>6</sup> and shapes the participation framework for the specific meeting, even though generally all team members are expected to participate. All participants are seated around an oval table in the designated meeting room as visible in the following picture :

Graph #1.4, *Typical Setting in Meeting Room*



Before the participants orient to the 'official' beginning of the meeting, talk about private or non-institutional issues occurs, often of a joking nature. These sequences belong to the "premeeting phase" (Cuff & Sharrock, 1985: 154)<sup>7</sup>. They might in fact be in preparation for the upcoming meeting, however

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<sup>6</sup> Excluded from membership are of course employees who enter the room while or before the meeting is in progress and who belong neither to the Triple L team nor College team like technical staff or colleagues who entered accidentally.

<sup>7</sup> There are also some instances in which this particular phase does not occur and the participants move directly into the next phase, "Orientation/transition to beginning of meeting".

"(t)he relevance of considering activities sequentially prior to making a formal start is not solely dictated from the point of view of the necessity for commencement markers and recommencement markers [...] but also brings to view the extent to which activities prior to a formal start are not only prior to the beginning but are 'prebeginning activities', that is, activities that are done through an orientation to the prospective character of the beginning." (Cuff & Sharrock 1985: 155).

An example for these pre-sequences is provided in the extract below<sup>8</sup>. The participants have gathered in the meeting room about 46 seconds ago and are now discussing Nora's upcoming private move in an informal as well as joking nature. The topic of the conversation is the question of what the most appropriate means of transportation is to transfer Nora's furniture and other objects from the old apartment to the new one. The distance between the new and the old flat turns out to be a laughable.

Segment #1.1.<sup>9</sup>

LGH 011024<sup>10</sup>, 0:00:46<sup>11</sup>

001 Madita: wie weit musst [du denn fahrn?  
*how far do [you have to drive?*  
 002 Nora: [( ) auch die grossen. grössten. mit  
*[( ) also the big ones. biggest ones.*  
 003 mit dem auto so zehn minuten ( ) wenn man- wenn  
*by car around ten minutes ( ) if one- if*  
 004 die ampeln mal grade ganz schnell sind  
*the traffic lights are having a*

<sup>8</sup> The following data extracts illustrating features of the different phases of the meeting are taken randomly from various meetings of the collection to enable the reader to get an overview.

<sup>9</sup> Since I work with German data I usually use three lines in the transcripts for each utterance, in order to make the data available to an international audience. The first line presents the actual, original utterance. The second line attempts to give a word-by-word translation of each turn into English in order to communicate a close impression (not in all data extracts). The third line offers an idiomatic translation into English. The asterisks show where and how non-vocal activities of the participants occur. The transcription system follows Jefferson 1984a. Further transcription symbols are explained in the appendix.

<sup>10</sup> These digits display the date of the meeting (in this case, November 24th, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> These digits indicate the timeline within the meeting. It shows when the particular sequence starts (in this case, 00 hours, 00 minutes and 46 seconds within the meeting).

005 Nora: [schnell sind  
*[fast day*

006 Corinna: [£lohnt sich ja kaum(h)£ hehe[HEhe  
*[£hardly worthwhile (h)£ hehe[HEhe*

007 Madita: [kannste auch TRAgN  
*[you can CARry that*

008 Nora: hehehe  
*\*mimics to carry sth  
heavy over her shoulder*

009 Madita: kannste auch mit dem bollerwagen \*so hehe  
*you can use a trolley like that hehe*

The insignificant distance between Nora's old and new apartment constitutes a laughable. Corinna in line 6 produces a next turn with smile voice and laughter particles within speech. Her comment "(das) lohnt sich ja kaum" ("(that's) hardly worthwhile"), implies that the distance is so marginal, it does not require any means of transportation. This tenor gets picked up by Madita in overlap. She enhances the laughable by saying "kannste auch tragn" ("you can carry this"), line 7, using resources of Corinna's turn to produce a laughable herself. After Nora, the recipient of the laughable, has reacted with a laugh in line 8, Madita produces another recycled version of the joke by elaborating on how Nora can carry her things across the street ("mit dem bollerwagen" – "you can use a trolley") and physically enacting the suggestion.

This exchange takes place in the very early phase of the meeting, before all expected participants are present, and serves here as a typical example of private or joking interaction before the meeting starts. Other topics in this phase include classically the weather, but also for example the outfit of a present colleague, a discussion of the beauty of a particular actress or jokes about the taping procedure.

Orientation/transition to beginning of meeting

In this phase the participants depart from the rather unofficial pre-phase and orient to the official nature of the meeting. Cuff & Sharrock (1985) refer to these activities as "activities that are done through an orientation to the prospective character of the beginning." (Cuff & Sharrock 1985: 155). The participants discuss topics like schedules of presence and absence or matters that occurred at another relevant meeting which might be relevant for single team members.

Typically, when a team leader is present, she or he self selects as first speaker. The following segment of a meeting's beginning exemplifies a typical meeting's beginning.

Prior to the transcript shown below, Lara, the team leader, has entered the room while the other team members are already seated (with the exception of Robin, who enters the room a little later, see transcript line 2). Still standing, she then produces the turn "sind die telefone umgestellt?" ("are the telephones redirected?", not in the transcript) which is directed at the whole team – during the team meetings all telephones are re-directed to the phone line in the meeting room in order not to miss any calls. After that, she states "sehr gut die ganze frauenmannschaft beisammen hehehh" ("very good the whole team of women together hehehh", not in the transcript). While saying that, she sits down. Now having established the framework of the meeting, she further goes on to manage the transition from non-meeting to meeting. Segment #1.2 illustrates how she does so.

## Segment #1.2

LGH 010912, 0:00:40

001 Lara: okee ich glaub das ist das letzte mal dass wir  
*okay I believe that is the last time that we*  
002 *okay I think this is the last time that we*  
überhaupt in dieser konstellation zusammensitzen  
*actually in this constellation sit together*  
003 *actually sit together in this constellation*  
ich glaube aber auch dass es fast das erste mal  
*I believe but too that it almost the first time*  
004 *also believe that this is almost the first time*  
ist(hh) [hehe d(h)ass wir [hier zs(h)ammensitzhen]  
*is(hh) [hehe th(h)at we [here s(h)it together ]*  
*that we sit here together*





## Segment #1.3

LGH 011024, 00:01:11

*\*Corinna rests face in both hands*

001 Corinna: SSOa.\*  
*ok\**

002 (0.2)

003 Corinna: ((talking through hands))wir wartn auf laur↑a oda  
*we are waiting for laur↑a or*  
wollen wir stajrten.  
*should we start.*

004 Ulrike: m[ ( )

005 Nora: [mmn wir starten.  
*[mmn we start.*

006 Corinna: °wir starten?°  
*°we start?°*

((7 seconds talk about Laura's comments to the invitation and her account for being late she has given in advance to Nora omitted))

007 Madita: kommt sie denn noch nach?  
*will she PRT PRT come later?*

008 ((Nora nods))

After an exchange about Nora's upcoming private move (see segment #1.1) Corinna, who is highest in hierarchy in this round, and who substitutes for the former team head, ends the preceding sequence with "SSOa" ("so"). Meier 1997 has linked the utterance of 'so' to (1) a speaker's announcement that now something is about to happen which is of concern to everyone present<sup>12</sup>, and (2) activities that are concerned with the attempt of a closing of some kind<sup>13</sup>. In the latter sense the German 'so' might be comparable to the English 'ok' (see Beach 1993).

Corinna's "SSOa" is thereby closing the preceding opening phase in which private and informal topics are allowed and common and in some cultural context even desirable<sup>14</sup> (Cuff & Sharrock 1985, Schwartzman 1989), and signaling that now the formal part of the

<sup>12</sup> "His loud utterance of 'so' seems to announce at a first glance only that something is about to happen which is going to be of concern to everybody present." (Meier 1997: 66, translation MV)

<sup>13</sup> e.g. "Activities [...] in connection with the endeavor of a break [...] in connection with the endeavor of the closing of the meeting, [...], in connection with the endeavor of the completion of a topic and the transition to a next one [...], in connection with the closing of 'side sequences' [...]" (ibid: 71-74, translation MV)

<sup>14</sup> See Villemoes (1995) for a comparison between Danish and Spanish business encounters: An analysis of face-to-face negotiations yielded that both Danish and Spanish business men attribute importance to small talk during negotiations to the same extent, the only difference being the face saving strategies.

meeting is about to start. She then addresses the fact that Laura is not yet present and asks the team whether they should wait for her. Official members of a meeting have rights as well as duties, implying that they are usually expected to arrive in time for the meeting's beginning (Meier 1997: 55). However, by appearing late, they might have a tool for testing their status in the team. If the group waits for them and thereby relates their own presence with the beginning of the meeting, their own status is secured (Schwartzman 1989: 124). In this case though, Nora turns down the suggestion to wait for Laura (line 5) and shortly reports (in the lines omitted) on a conversation where Laura has revealed to her that she is very busy. Madita then, in line 7, inquires whether Laura will attend the meeting ultimately and gets a positive reply from Nora. After this, the participants begin to orient to the official beginning of the meeting.

#### Beginning of official part of the meeting

Since the weekly Sit Ins of the Triple L Team are mostly concerned with the aim of updating all colleagues about everyone's current chores and business, every participant needs to be presented with the opportunity to report on her ongoing activities. The Triple L team ensures this by a special procedure of turn distribution. After a greeting by the team leader or, if absent, the designated substitute, the official start of each meeting includes the selection of a first 'team reporter'. The different techniques the team members use to achieve this first turn distribution is discussed and analyzed in detail in section 2.2.1 of this study.

#### Core of meeting: Round of reports

The 'round of reports' constitutes the core of the meetings – their primary reason being a weekly update for every team member. The topics usually discussed revolve around:

- Individual assignments, individual responsibilities
- Planning of forthcoming seminars and/or events
- Arrangement of substitutions and support within the team
- Discussion of projects in reference to timeframe, responsibilities
- Expected employment of new team members, new hires, changes in personnel
- News from the upper management

After the 'first team reporter' has delivered the latest news in her area of responsibility, a next speaker gets selected. The next speaker is usually the person sitting next to her or him. The succession of either the colleague sitting left or right is usually negotiated via eye contact with the team leader or, more seldom, the current speaker. Generally all of the directives are counteracted by a re-assurance "soll ich anfangen" ("shall I start"), "soll ich weitermachen" ("shall I continue"), usually directed at the team leader who is expected to give a positive response token to this. An example:

## Segment #1.4

LGH 020123, 00:05:04

```

((Madita finishes her report, looks at Udo))
                                *Udo nods
001   Udo:   °gut.hmhm.* okhe↑e°
                                °good. hmhm. *okhay↑°
                                *Udo turns gaze in Nora's direction
002                                     (0.*8)
                                *Nora looks at Udo
003   Nora:   *soll ich weitermachn?=  

                                *shall I continue?=  

004   Udo:   m[hmh?  

005   Nora:   [ehm ich hab ((starts reporting))  

                                [uhm I have

```

In line 1, Udo ratifies the closing of Madita's previous report, which she has indicated for him to do by looking at him after she has finished talking. In the following gap, Udo turns his gaze towards Nora, who sits next to Madita on her right side. Nora picks up on this look and asks "soll ich weitermachen" ("shall I continue") in line 3. This does not seem to require an answer since Nora overlaps Udo in the production of his reply. She then starts to report on her current activities.

Departures from this procedure of speaker selection do occur, although very infrequently, and only when there is a special occasion for the meeting other than the weekly updates like a presentation of one team member on a data manager tool, or the discussion of contributions to a planned team retreat.

Closing of official meeting

The closing of the meeting is projectable when every team member has reported. In case there are 'add-ons', the respective colleague might self-select as in 'I have something to add' and in that way postpone the closing of the meeting. When every team member has finished reporting, the team member highest in hierarchy closes the meeting. To illustrate how this is done, see the following examples:

## Segment #1.5

LGH 011024, 01:31:10

```

001   Corinna:      ham wers?=
                        is that it?=  

                        *Nora nods  

002   Nora:         =°°j*.hha.°°  

                        =°°y*.hhes.°°  

                        *Corinna rises from her chair  

                        **Participants begin to rise from their chairs  

003   Corinna:     *.hho↑** khe:↓  

                        *.hho↑**kay:↓

```

## Segment #1.6

LGH 020213, 00:40:13

```

001   Udo:         *Udo looks at his wrist watch  

                        *mt (.).hh GUth.  

                        *mt (.).hh GOOdh.  

                        *Tamara looks at Nora across the table from her  

002   Tamara:     *°£(          )£ [hehe °  

003   Udo:         [okee. <dann> (.) wünsch ich allen  

                        [okay. <then> (.) I wish everyone  

004               einen >schön n tag<  

                        a >nice day<

```

In example #1.5 Corinna, who substitutes here for the team leader, asks the team "ham wers?", which is to be translated as 'is that it?'. Nora, seemingly on behalf of everyone, gives a positive reply to this. With her closing "okee", Corinna rises out of her chair, as do all other team members. The meeting is officially over. In segment #1.6, Udo more explicitly dismisses the participants and sends them back to their desks by almost formally disbanding them with "dann wünsch ich allen einen schönen Tag" ("I wish everyone a nice day").

Post-Phase of meeting

After the meeting is officially closed, usually by the person highest in hierarchy, the participants start leaving the room. Sometimes another joking issue, maybe related to further scheduled meetings during the day or non-institutional topics come up. The following segment shows an example where Laura, Simon's secretary, alerts the others to clean the table since there is another meeting scheduled in this room. Obviously, Simon will participate in this next meeting, as Nora orients to in line 4.

## Segment #1.7

LGH 011013, 00:54:06

- 001 Laura: und ihr räumt bitte hier den- (ab-) euer  
*and you PLEASE clean please here the- (away-) your*  
*and you please clear the- your*  
*\*Laura, Melanie get up*
- 002 geschirr oder was \*damit  
*dinnerware or what in order to*
- 003 [hier ( ) die nächste sitzung  
*[here ( ) the next meeting*
- 004 Nora: [ja unser chef hat hier extra seinen  
*[yes our boss has deliberately his*  
*\*Anke looks at Nora smilingly*
- 005 apfelsaft gelass\*en. [hat er gerade gesagt  
*apple juice left\* here. [has he just said*
- 006 (Tamara): [nhheehhahaha
- 007 Laura: [das kannst ja stehen  
*[that can you PRT leave*  
*[that you can just leave*
- 008 lassen der- (.)den setzen wir nachher da wieder,  
*standing he- (.)him place we later there again,*  
*that spot we'll place him there again later*  
*\*Nora points with finger*
- 009 Nora: neheja \*£setz dich \*dahin wo dein \*apfelsaft  
*neheyes \*£sit yourself \*there where your \*apple juice*  
*yes you sit where you apple juice*
- 010 steh(eh)£ hehe  
*sta(h)nd(h)s£ hehe*  
*is hehe*
- 012 Tamara: hhehheHEHEHh
- 011 Anke : ahhHHAHHA [HHAhh  
*[\*Laura looks down*
- 013 Laura: [\*und beWEG DICH NICH von der stelle  
*[\*and doN'T MOVE AWAY from there*
- 014 (.)

015 Laura                   *\*Laura looks at Nora*  
*\*e^hhehehehe*

*\*Anke looks at Laura*

016 Anke:                   *\*\* Anke looks at Nora*  
 £und TRINK AUS(h)£ °h\*hehheh\*\*he°  
*£and DRINK UP(h)£ °hhehhehhe°*

017 Nora:                   ja genau [und TRINK (.) AUCH (.) £AUS(hh)£.  
*yes exactly [and DRINK (.) ALSO (.) £UP(hh)£.*

018 (Anke):               [a:hhahha

019 Tamara:               £hier da solltest du und wenn er aufsteht weißt  
*£here there should you and when he gets up you know*  
*\*T mimics the movement of pulling someone down*

020                       du \*so runterreißen und sagen zuerst  
*\*like that pull down and say first*

021                       austrinken(he) hehehe  
*drink up hehehe*

022 Nora:               hhja >simon.< (.) >du hast vergessen auszutrinken<  
*hhyes >simon.< (.) >you have forgotten to drink up<*

Whereas Laura's request in line 1-3 orients to the institutional requirements of leaving behind a tidy room in order for the next meeting to take place, Nora, in line 4, produces a laughable. With a mockingly obedient voice she states that "unser chef" ("our boss"), deliberately left his apple juice in the spot where he sat. The reference 'our boss' draws attention to the hierarchical relations within the team and indicates distance. Although this utterance is not necessarily 'innocent', it does not inevitably need laughter in response. However, had there been no laughter by the recipients, Nora's contribution could have been taken as a complaint about the shortcomings of a superior. After Tamara has established laughter as a response to Nora's turn (line 6), the talk evolves into an elaboration of a joke around Simon. Laura's turn plays on the incongruity to the reality of the organizational world and the hierarchical settings within: She implies that the team as subordinates could place the superior, Simon, where ever they feel is appropriate, as if they could tell him what to do and where to sit. This is, of course, not the case. This inaptness serves as the basis for the joking talk that follows. In line 9 Nora pretends to be talking to Simon, and uses a register that one would use for talking to a disobedient child. Her turn comprises the first of three imperatives that each builds on: "setz dich dahin" ("sit there"), line 9, "beweg dich nicht von der Stelle" ("don't move away"), line 13, "trink aus" ("drink up"), line 16. All of them pretend to be directed at Simon. Tamara in line 19ff sums up the activity the imperatives have implied in a more narrative way by sketching a scenario of chiding an defiant child, which is taken up by Nora in line 22.

Through this joking exchange and the shared laughter, the meeting is closed. Looking back at the Pre-Beginning Phase of the meeting, it becomes obvious that the participants orient to a more non-institutional mode, using the resources of the institutional world to engage in a joking and casual way. In a wide sense, Schwartzman's (1989) result:

"Meetings almost invariably follow a pattern of moving from informal or everyday speech or 'chatting' to whatever is culturally recognized as proper meeting talk and action and then back to 'chatting'. (Schwartzman 1989: 285)

proves to be true for the meetings in the Triple L Team. The 'chatting', or rather everyday interaction shown in the segment above could not have taken place, of course, had Simon still been present, nor would the 'joke' have worked as well with any of the other participants. The orientation to what will happen after the meeting, and the joint laughter and joking activities work –among other things- as a means to dissolve the setting of the 'Sit In'. After the interaction shown, the team members leave the room. The participation framework of the Sit In is resolved and new frames need to be established.

#### **1.4. Outline of Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of (a) three separate articles (empirical analytic chapters), (b) two chapters which put the analyses into a theoretical and methodological perspective, as well as (c) an introduction and (d) a conclusion that integrate the common research interests and recurring issues of the study.

The articles are written for separate publication, and are therefore in a form where each of them can be read independently, both from one another and from the other chapters. This form causes certain paragraphs to seem repetitive. However, chapter 1-3 prepare the grounds for the articles and should be read as embedding the analyses into a broader framework of theory, incorporating them within persistent research questions and overarching topics, and endowing the reader with in-depth background information on the data basis.

After this introduction, in which the aim of the study, its motivation, the research question and the ethnographic background have been described, chapter 2 presents the methodological framework of the dissertation. The methodology (Conversation Analysis)



is portrayed from the perspective of institutional interaction, focussing on business interaction. The recurrent topics of the analytic chapters are focal points in the discussion of the methodology. Chapter 3 introduces theories about laughter, starting with a broad angle and reporting on findings from disciplines like literature, philosophy and psychology, to then narrow down the view on laughter as a social phenomenon, portraying findings from sociolinguistic. Finally, the Conversation Analytic perspective on laughter is described.

On the basis of chapters 1-3, the empirical part of the dissertation follows. Chapter 4-6 are referred to in the dissertation as Vöge I (chapter 4), Vöge II (chapter 5) and Vöge III (chapter 6). As an overview on bibliographical information and editorial status by the time of submission, see the following listing:

#### Chapter 4

Vöge I Vöge, M. (to be submitted). The Omnipresent Potential for the Occurrence of Laughter: Positioning, Preference, Sources and Interactional Relevance of Laughter Compared to the Activity of Repair. To appear in *Research of Language and Social Interaction*.

#### Chapter 5

Vöge II Vöge, M. (in review). Local Identity Processes in Business Meetings Displayed through Laughter in Complaint Sequences. To appear in *Journal of Pragmatics, Special Issue on "Laughter in Interaction - Social Achievements and Sequential Organization of Laughter" - Studies in the Honour of Gail Jefferson*, edited by Vöge, M. & Wagner, J.

#### Chapter 6

Vöge III Vöge, M. (in review). Multilingualism as a Resource for Laughter and Identity Work in Business Meetings. Three Cases. To appear in Wagner, J. & Pallotti G. (Ed.), *L2 - Learning as Social Practice: Conversation-analytic Perspectives*.

In chapter 7, I discuss the analytic results of the dissertation and bring together the overarching topics for a conclusion. In addition, a list with all transcription symbols according to Jefferson (1984a) plus further symbols and abbreviations used in this study can be found in Appendix A, as well as an English summary of the dissertation (Appendix B) and a Danish résumé (Appendix C).

## Chapter 2

### Conversation Analysis and Business Communication

This chapter provides an insight into the methodology employed in this study - Conversation Analysis (CA) – from the angle of CA research within business communication. While the chapter does not supply a general introductory overview of CA – for this I refer to Heritage (1984a, 1995), ten Have (1999), Silverman (1998), Drew (1994, 2004), – it presents basic CA notions that underlie recurrently the analyses in the analytical chapters, such as turn-taking, repair, complaint and Membership Categories. The aim of this chapter is to supply the CA-familiar reader with the methodological thread of this study.

#### 2.1. What Is It Good For? Postulations and Objectives of Conversation Analysis and the Relevance for Business Communication Research

Conversation Analysis is a method to look at interaction and talk beyond pure language aspects; in fact it is a method to look into talk-in-interaction above the level of individual language systems. Aside of keeping track of grammatical structures and choice of words, interactants need and succeed to manage their social lives in and through talk-in-interaction.

"The basic principles of CA [...] can be summarized as follows: (i) Social order resides within everyday social life, of which face-to-face interaction is a critical part; (ii) to "know" what people are doing in their everyday life does not require any recourse to hidden motives or models of rationality, but only showing how people actually do it; it then follows that (iii) every claim we as analysts make about what people do must be proven by evidence from the everyday social life of people, which entails a focused, systematic analysis of their [...] interaction." (Wei 2002: 163)

Through interaction, humans are socialized. It constitutes the primordial site of social life. "Conversational interaction may then be thought of as a form of social organization through which the work of the constitutive institutions of societies get done – institutions such as the economy, the polity, the family, socialization, etc. It is, so to speak, sociological bedrock." (Schegloff 1996: 4). Among the "institutions of societies", in a literally institutional context, research has revealed details about interaction in courtrooms

(Atkinson & Drew 1979), doctor-patient interaction (Heritage & Maynard 2006, Haakana 1999) and business interaction (Firth 1995, Ehlich & Wagner 1995). This dissertation focuses in particular on business interaction.

A very basic question to pose at the beginning of explorations into institutional business interaction is 'What constitutes business interaction?' This is partially answered by CA's assumption that all contributions in interaction are both potentially context shaping and context renewing (Heritage 1984a, Heritage & Atkinson 1984). Participants can shape, negotiate and renew the context they are interacting in at every possible moment. In the case of institutional (business) interaction that means that it is not necessarily bound to locations (Drew and Sorjonen 1997). Office talk needs not inevitably to be institutional, for example when colleagues discuss weekend's happenings or private plans. On the other hand, business talk can very well take place in a private home, when colleagues meet at a dinner party and discuss the results of the last meeting. It is thus not restricted to certain physical settings. To get a better grasp on institutional interaction Drew and Sorjonen (1997) suggest the following categories:

"[...] (a) participants' orientation to their roles and identities, (b) participants' management of institutionally relevant activities, and (c) comparative dimensions of language and interaction." *ibid.*: 97.

The crucial point in this category is the "participants' orientation". CA researchers need to be aware that "[i]t is not for us [CA researchers] to *know* what about context is crucial, but to *discover* it." (Schegloff 1992a: 128, original emphasis). "Context is both a project and a product of the participants' actions": (Heritage 2004: 109). The following data sample illustrates the identification and definition of institutional talk versus ordinary talk from the participants' perspective. By looking at turn-taking, lexical choice, person references and specific inferences, Drew & Sorjonen's categories become obvious. At the beginning of the meeting, different interactants perform different kinds of activities at the same place, in the same setting and at the same time. See how (1) (Laura, Simon, Madita) are doing ordinary talk, while (2) (Nora) is orienting institutional tasks and roles.

Segment #2.1  
 LGH 011013, 0:00:07

	(1)	(2)
001	Simon: a: hh	Nora: ((on the phone))
002	(0.8)	e:hm
003	Melanie: gRA[Ce [kelly	
004	Simon: [k <u>EL</u> Ly=	
005	Madita: [grace	
006	kelly	
007	Simon: [=grace k <u>EL</u> Ly	
008	Laura: [grace kelly hat sich	ehhh
	<i>Grace Kelly always let</i>	
009	immer nur von einer seite	achtundzwanzichster
	<i>her pictures taken from</i>	<i>twenty eighth</i>
010	fotografieren lassn=weil	bis dreissigster
	<i>one side only because</i>	<i>until thirtieth</i>
011	die andere war nich so	oktober
	<i>the other wasn't as</i>	<i>october</i>
012	schö[n	zweitausend<zwei:??>
	<i>beau[tiful</i>	<i>two thousand &lt;two:??&gt;</i>
013	Simon: [°ehhe[hum°	
014	Melanie: [echt?	u::nd
	<i>[really?</i>	a::nd
015	Laura: ja.=	
	<i>yes.=</i>	
016	Madita: =ich dachte immer bei	(warten se mal)
	<i>I always thought with</i>	<i>(hold on a moment[youF])</i>
017	grace kelly seien beide	
	<i>Grace Kelly both sides</i>	
018	seiten gleich schön.	
	<i>were equally beautiful</i>	

In this extract it becomes obvious that Simon, Melanie, Madita and Laura, although sitting in a meeting room with their colleagues clearly in the process of getting ready for a meeting, do not engage in institutional talk. After a co-resolved word search (line 1-7) Laura tells a story about the US-American actress Grace Kelly who apparently claimed to have a photogenic side (line 8-12). Madita (line 16) then states that she always thought that Grace Kelly was beautiful from all sides, implying that she would not have expected a woman famous for her beauty to have one particular photogenic side. All of this talk cannot be connected to any institutional role or identity, or to any relevant activity within the context of a financial services company.

At the same time, Nora is involved in business talk. She defines open spaces in the team's calendar with a customer or colleague from another department. She orients to her institutional role (team assistant) and task by lexical choice and institutionally specific inferences (the specific date: "october twenty eighth two thousand and two", line 9ff, instead of formulating a temporal description less precise, e.g. 'some time next year' or 'next October'). Further, the person reference (German formal address form "Sie", line 16 –) shows her orientation to institutionality, since the team members usually address each other by the informal address form 'du' (you).

Applying the three basic elements (according to Drew & Heritage 1992<sup>15</sup>) needed to be met for the constitution of business interaction (or more general: institutional interaction), it can be stated that Nora shows (1) *goal orientation* as her conduct aims at arranging a date that agrees with both Nora's and her conversational partner's work calendar; her talk is marked by (2) *constraints* as she and her co-participant are bound to these calendars and to working days/hours, and (3) the *framework* she and the colleague on the phone interact in is clearly inferential to the specific institutional context.

Many more questions than 'What makes institutional interaction institutional?' arise from the investigation of Business Communication. Issues like 'How do interactants perform their specific institutional goals and duties?', 'Are business meetings really about business?' 'How are institutional identities negotiated and realized?' are addressed in this study, and the methodology of CA provides the tools to embark upon these questions. CA offers a methodology that enables researchers to establish what activities are conducted in a particular setting and how they are accomplished. With its idea of a "machinery" of talk (Sacks 1995 LC2, Lecture 1: 169) or "technology of conversation" (Sacks 1995 LC2, April 2: 339), CA investigates how interactants use this machinery in order to make sense of and give life to theoretical sociological concepts like 'team' or 'company'. CA research can thus enrich

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"1 [Goal orientation] Institutional interaction involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question. [goal orientation]

2 [Constraints] Institutional interaction may often involve special and particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand.

3 [Framework] Institutional talk may be associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts." (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22)

the perspective on business interaction for both theoreticians and practitioners:

"Through adopting an applied perspective, CA [...] offer[s] practitioners a tool kit of linguistic resources for 'doing [X]'. Such a tool kit of discursive resources could be used to influence the outcome of meetings and detect and deal with the conversational tactics of others. This use would first involve convincing practitioners that "talk is action" and that, from a social constructivist perspective, what is going on in a company is constructed through language rather than being simply described by language." (Clifton 2006: 215/216).

After having given a broad overview on CA in terms of its postulations and objectives for the analysis of Business Communication, the following section provides insight on the procedures of data collection and transcriptions.

## **2.2. Procedures: Data Collection and Transcription**

One of CA's first and foremost imperatives is the exclusive utilization of recordable, naturally occurring data. The sources of data may vary in terms of their origin and character<sup>16</sup>; however, the core prerequisites of data are the same no matter what setting is the focus of research. The data are the centre of all CA studies. This approach draws special attention to the collection and notation of the data and at the same time increases the validity of CA research since only natural, 'real' interaction can reveal what people actually do when interacting.

For conducting research on Business Communication, it is essential to collect the data in an authentic corporate setting. The sensitivity of any kind of internal business information can be a barrier to the collection of such data; however, as the researcher of this study I had the advantage of being previously employed at the company as well as during the recording of the meetings, and thus could gain the trust of colleagues and superiors. Upon sharing the idea of the project to colleagues and superiors, a presentation on the procedures and the goals of the study was given. All employees involved expressed great interest in the proposed project and immediately gave their consent to being recorded on videotape. The issue of confidentiality, which generally arises in dealing with institutional or

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<sup>16</sup> See e.g. ordinary dyadic telephone conversation (Jefferson 1978, Button 1990), institutional telephone conversations (Sacks 1967), institutional dyadic face-to-face settings, e.g. therapy interaction (Mondada 1998), and courtroom interaction (Drew 1990), multipersonal ordinary settings like family interaction (Egbert 1997a), and multiperson institutional settings, e.g. business meetings (Meier 1997, Asmuß 2002a)

any kind of authentic data, was settled with the company through mutual agreement; all personal names, brand names and locations are anonymous.

It is necessary for an observation-based science like CA to have a detailed transcription system that portrays the interaction caught on tape with as much detail as possible, in order to enable researchers to identify phenomena, structures and deviances. A transcript is necessarily selective and can by no means replace the original recording.

"The significance or relevance of [the fine-grained] details [of the transcribed interaction] may not be (probably is not) apparent when one is transcribing the recording of the interaction; they may come to have significance only as one begins to analyze the data. But at the time the transcription is made, all lies ahead; the transcriber attempts only to capture on the page, as faithfully as possible, in as much detail as possible what was actually said and how and when it was said." Drew 2004: 78.

By re-examining the transcripts, analysts can investigate and reveal the organization of many aspects of talk-in-interaction, including the kind of disfluencies that are often dismissed as random factors. The transcription system employed in this study was developed by Jefferson (1984a). For a detailed explanation of transcription symbols used in this study, refer to appendix A.

The next section describes the analytic processes of CA, in particular when investigating Business Communication. It starts with an overview of sequential analysis, paying special attention to the specific turn-taking system in business meetings, to then discuss the analysis of activities.

### **2.2.1. Sequential Analysis: Turn-Taking, Paired Activities in Business Meetings**

CA values interaction as a co-constructed, sequential achievement of the co-participants and ties both meaning and context to the concept of sequence. It thus relies heavily in its analyses on the concept of turn-taking: Every action is the result of a preceding action ("[s]equential organization has primary analytic utility in describing talk as action [...] Maynard & Whalen 1995: 163), and the connotation of every action is "heavily shaped by the sequence of previous actions and social context itself is a dynamically created thing that is expressed in and through the sequential organization of action." (Heritage 2004: 105). The turn-taking system is described as "locally managed, party-administered, interactionally



controlled, and sensitive to recipient design" (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974: 696). The main rules for conversational turn-taking are (a) "One party talks at a time", (b) "Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief", and (c) "Speaker change recurs, or at least occurs" (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974: 700). Through these rules it becomes transparent that in conversation there is "order at all points" (Sacks 1984).

One of the most powerful notions in interaction in terms of turn-taking is the concept of paired activities. Successive activities in conversation are habitually grouped in pairs, and the second part is conditionally relevant. The power of these pair constructions (such as greeting-greeting, question-answer, invitation-acceptance/decline sequences<sup>17</sup>) lies in the constraint they impose on the interactants, both sequentially and interactionally. Sequentially, they are a resource to assign the turn to someone else but the current speaker, possibly selecting a next speaker; and force this speaker to follow the proposed line of context. The strength of the sequential constraint can be observed (and felt) in interaction when the second pair part stays amiss: It will be received as such, its absence will in most cases need interactional work to be

<sup>17</sup> Laughter in interaction is also organized as an adjacency pair construction. Not without good reason do we say "his laughter is contagious". Initial laughter as an invitation to the co-interactants is discussed in detail in Jefferson (1979). To illustrate the paired structure of laugh invitation and acceptance here briefly, I show a short data segment in which the invitation to laugh succeeds in the way that the co-interactants join in. Please note the extra work the laughter initiator has to do in order to achieve joint laughter.

**Buisness Meeting 011114, 0:04:27**

001 Corinna: *£musste ich dazu erst mal kündigen?£*  
*£mustPST I thereto PRT PRT resign?£*  
*did I have to quit in order for*  
002 Corinna: *d(hh)amit(h) [das th(h)[ema*  
*i(hh)n order(h)[that t(h)[opic*  
*that topic*  
003 Nora: [hihihi [  
004 Madita: [hhe hha hha

In line 1, Corinna utters her turn with smile voice. In some instances this is enough to successfully elicit laughter in the co-interactants, in this instance; however, Corinna needs to do more work to draw the recipients of her utterance into the laugh mode. In line 2 she creates an even stronger laughter-specific recognition point by producing "within-speech laughter [...] [a]nd the recipient can treat such [...] particle[s] as providing a recognition point, a locus for recipient laughter, and can accept the invitation to laugh then and there." (Jefferson 1979) The recipients, Nora (line 3) and Madita (line 4) accept the invitation and produce some laugh tokens as a reply to Corinna's laughable remark in line 1. Nora, being the first to laugh, can be said to elicit Madita's laughter and thereby with her utterance orienting to the context given by Corinna, but also enhancing the laughability of Corinna's utterance and through that bring forth next laughter. For more on this particular data extract, see also section 4.3.1. of this dissertation.

smoothed out. This context-shaping and potentially context-renewing (Heritage 1984a, Heritage and Atkinson 1984) aspect of adjacency pairs<sup>18</sup> adds to the power they possess in that way as a current speaker can flex his/her muscles by employing an adjacency pair and thus leading the conversation in the way she/he desires it to go.

Studies of institutional interaction, in particular business meetings, show that this kind of interaction often underlies a specific turn-taking system (see e.g. Edelsky 1981, Cuff & Sharrock 1985, Lenz 1988, Larrue & Trognon 1993), which profoundly relies on adjacency pairs. As analyses reveal, the team investigated in this study (Triple L team) employs a particular procedure of turn distribution. After a greeting by the team leader or, if absent, the designated substitute, the official start of each meeting includes the selection of a 'first team-meeting reporter'. Usually the team leader, if present, self selects as first speaker (though not necessarily as first team-meeting reporter) and then allocates the next turn to a next speaker. This is coherent with what Sacks et al. (1978) observed regarding the distribution of turns:

"In contrast to both debates and conversation, meetings that have a chairperson partially pre-allocate turns, and provide for the allocation of unallocated turns via the use of pre-allocated turns. Thus, the chairman has rights to talk first, and to talk after each other speaker, and can use such turn to allocate next speakership." Sacks 1978: 45)

In every meeting of the collection, the right to speak and the ensuing progression of sequences are handled in quite similar ways. After self-selection of the person highest in hierarchy, the two most common ways to select a 'first' team-meeting reporter are both through other-selection, either by an individual address produced by the team leader or a person higher in hierarchy, or by a general inquiry to all participants, also produced by the team leader or, if absent, preferably the person highest in hierarchy. In the first case, the person highest in hierarchy either uses the name or an indexical term ("du" – informal German 'you'). In the latter approach, one person inquires in general terms of who would like to start. Examples of this:

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<sup>18</sup> Again, this contemplation implies that 'context' is a co-constructed product of the participants as well as a common development, since every utterance is both context-sensitive and context-renewing. "The context-renewing character of conversational actions is directly related to the fact that they are context-shaped. Since every 'current' action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next' action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the framework in terms of which the next action will be understood." Heritage (1984a: 242)

*Other selection, individually addressed selection by a person higher in hierarchy:*

Segment #2.2

LGH 011024, 00:01:29

001 Corinna: °ja.° denn legen wir mal los. °yes° then let's start. *\*Corinna looks at Nora*  
*\*magst du? \*would you like to?*

*Other selection, generally directed at the group, by a person highest in hierarchy:*

Segment #2.3

LGH 011031, 00:01:47

001 Udo: wer möchte starten?° *\*Tamara lifts head in*  
*Ulrike's direction*  
*who would like to start?\**

*Other selection, generally directed at the group, by a person of intermediate hierarchy:*

Segment #2.4

LGH 020109, 00:01:23

001 Nora: wer mag anfangn?  
*who would like to start?*

It is worth noting that most of these other selections are done in the format of a first pair part of an adjacency pair, either a question-answer sequence; or a directive, as Lenz (1988) observed in technical meetings.

After the first team-meeting reporter has informed the co-present colleagues on the 'latest news' in her area of responsibility, a next speaker gets selected, habitually the person sitting next to the current team-meeting reporter. The succession of either the colleague sitting left or right is usually negotiated via eye contact with the team leader or, less frequently, with the current team-meeting reporter. Generally all of the nonverbal cues to continue are counteracted by a re-assurance 'soll ich anfangen' (shall I start), 'soll ich weitermachen' (shall I continue), usually directed at the team leader who is expected to give a positive response token to this. An example:

*Selection of next (second) team-meeting reporter:*

Segment #2.5

LGH 020123, 00:05:04

((Madita finishes her report, looks at Udo))

\*Udo produces vertical headshake

001 Udo: °gut.hmhm.\* okhe↑e°

°good. hmhm. \*okhay↑°

\*Udo turns gaze in Nora's direction

002 (0.\*8)

\*Nora looks at Udo

003 -> Nora: \*soll ich weitermachn?=  
\*shall I continue?=  
004 -> Udo: m[hmh?

005 Nora: [ehm ich hab ((starts reporting))  
[uhm I have

In line 1, Udo ratifies the closing of Madita's previous report, which she has indicated him to do by looking at him after she finished talking. In the following gap, Udo turns his gaze towards Nora, who sits next to Madita on her right side. Nora picks up on this look and asks "shall I continue", line 3. This does not seem to require an answer since Nora overlaps Udo when he makes his reply. She then starts to report on her current activities.

After having given theoretical background and applicable examples of the turn-taking machinery in business meetings, the next section discusses the analysis of activities in business meetings, specifically of repair and complaints.

### **2.2.2. Analysis of Activities: Repair and Complaints in Business Interaction**

Repair in interaction is an activity by which co-participants locate and deal with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding (Schegloff, Jefferson, Sacks 1977). Trouble sources, or repairables, are the cause for the repair the turn a repair initiation refers to. Typical trouble sources in talk are "[...] word replacement, repairs on person reference, and repairs on next-speaker selection." (Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson 1977: 370). Repair can be initiated by self or other; however, self-correction is preferred over other-correction in interaction (Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson 1977). A repair operation can be composed of one, two, or more turns. In the case of self-repair, it usually comprises one turn:

Segment #2.6

LGH 011013, 0:45:38

001 Simon: (.)vielleicht ist es okee: ein sekretärin  
 (.) maybe is it okay: a secretary  
 maybe it is okay to stay (.) to be a  
 002 zu °blei°hben (.) zu sein  
 to °sta°y (.) to be°  
 secretary

Here, Simon repairs the verb in his utterance from "zu bleiben" ("to stay ", trouble source) to "zu sein" ("to be ") (line 2). The interactional purpose of a repair initiation is to separate the trouble source from the correction (Jefferson 1974a). The trouble source is also recognizable in being produced slightly quieter than the rest of Simon's turn. The trouble source, the repair initiation and the completion of repair all happen in one turn.

In case of an other-correction, there is a distinction between other-initiated, self-completed repair (OI, SC repair) and other-initiated, other completed repair (OI, OC repair). First, a case of OI, SC repair is examined:

Segment #2.7

LGH 011114, 0:00:06

001 Nora: dann machts- du- du bist die einzige die  
 then make- you- you are the only one who  
 then you do you you are the only one who  
 002 dann noch mt- mit ein teil team meetings  
 then PRT wth with a part of the team meetiꞑg  
 then ((is)) still a part of the team meeting  
 003 -> jetzt darfst du den bericht machn  
 now might you the report make  
 now you can make the report  
 004 Madita: thee  
 005 Robin: jhehehaha  
 \*Corinna moves head right, left  
 006 -> Corinna: \*wie=was↑ hmm  
 \*how=what↑ hmm  
 how what  
 007 -> Nora: °eh° bericht machen? fürs nächste team meetiꞑg?  
 °eh° report make? for next team meetiꞑg?  
 eh do the report? for the next team meeting?

The trouble source occurs in line 3 where Nora invites Corinna to deliver the team report in the upcoming monthly videoconference with a cooperating team overseas (these

videoconferences, called "team meeting", are held in English and are somewhat dreaded by the team members). In line 6, Corinna initiates repair with an unspecific repair initiator (see Drew 1997 on open class repair initiators) "wie=was" ("how=what"). In line 7, Nora produces a recycled form of the earlier turn and thus deals with Corinna's problem of understanding.

Other-initiated, other completed repair can be problematic in talk and is the least preferred form of repair in interaction. Here an example of an OI, OC repair:

Segment #2.8

LGH 011013, 0:28:01

001 -> Madita: oda=soW↑AS?, muss immer lAUra das original  
*or=somethin like THAT?, must always lAUra the original*  
*Laura must always receive the original*

002 bekommn und ich muss immer eine kopi:e davon bekommn.  
*receive and I must always a copy: of it receive.*

003 .hh ds is irgendwie noch nich ganz so::=  
*.hh tht is somehow PRT not PRT so::=*  
*that somehow is not quite yet so*  
*-----slightly mumbling -----*

004 -> Laura: =i|ch m↑uss nich das original bekommn.=ich muss  
*=\*I↓ m↑ust not the original receive.\*=I must*  
 I don't have to receive the original. I have to

005 eine kopie davon bekommn=  
*a copy of it receive=*  
*receive a copy of it*

006 =das original muss die bUCHha[ltung bekommn  
*=the original must the aCCOU[ntancy department receive*  
*the original must go to the accountancy department*

The trouble source occurs in line 1/2 when Madita explains how the procedure of invoices are handled by the team. Being responsible for the budget, Madita claims that Laura, the department leader's secretary, should always get the original of the invoice, and she (Madita) has to receive a copy. Laura initiates repair in line 4, where she slightly mumblingly states that she does not need to receive the original invoice. Then (line 4-6) she repairs Madita's statement and concludes that she (Laura) must have a copy and the accountancy department must have the original. In repairing, she completely ignores Madita's agenda which was to get the colleagues to make a copy of all invoices available to her (Madita) every time.

CA research has shown that every utterance in talk can be a repairable, regardless of its positioning. In their analysis of repair Schegloff et al. (1977) show that "each of the positions at which repair DOES get initiated is a position at which repair CAN be initiated." (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1977: 374). It is not only noticeable errors in talk that prompt the occurrence of repair (Schegloff 1997), but "[..] it appears that nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class 'repairable'." (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1977: 363). Further, it has been shown that "[..] every turn trails a repair space behind it" (Schegloff 1992b: 1327). The interactional purpose of self-repair can be to achieve mutual gaze at the beginning of a turn (Goodwin 1980, Egbert 1996). Further, participants in multiperson settings can display affiliation by repair and use it as a device to start a new topic (Egbert 1997b). Another fascinating part of repair, also dealt with in this study, is repair among interactants of different linguistic backgrounds. For this intercultural aspect, see e.g. Brouwer et al. (2004), Egbert (2004), Egbert et al. (2004).

Repairables show a feature that they share with complainables: Both are usually identified in talk retrospectively, that is through some next action that follows them.

"It is [...] a retro-acting object [...] that an apology can constitute, the source element which it brings into relevance being a complaint-source, or complainable, just like an other-initiation-of-repair brings into relevance the status of some prior item as a trouble source or as repairable. Of course, just as laughter after a joke locates the joke as its source and does not prompt a search for other possible laughables, so an apology after a complaint locates the complaint as its source, and does not prompt a search for a complainable other than the one the complaint complained of."  
Schegloff 2005, p. 460/61

It appears that everything in talk can constitute a complainable (see Sacks 1995, LC1, lecture 15.1: 598ff), since almost every turn in talk can be taken by the recipient(s) as such. Sacks suggests "that local explanations, for whatever, are preferred explanations if they can be used." (Sacks 1995 LC2, lecture 1: 96). In other words, a simple statement such as "it is six o'clock" can, under certain local circumstances (e.g. in a meeting that was scheduled to end at five o'clock), constitute a complaint.

Research on complaining has shown that complaint sequences unfold in adjacency pairs (Dersley and Wotton 2000, Drew 1998, Pomerantz 1984, Schegloff 1988) in which the

complaint is the first pair part, the initial action which makes a next action relevant. Drew & Curl (forth.) show that complaint sequences develop in a more complex way than in the form of an adjacency pair, as does Heinemann (forth.), and this study. Complaints in an institutional setting have been investigated by Asmuß (2003), Egbert & Vöge (2008), and Heinemann (forth.).

The following data extract illustrates how a contribution within a business environment can be received as a complaint, although it was not produced as such. The data shows the interactional resolution of this dilemma via a laughable. Tamara, the intern, points out a mistake that Ulrike (student worker) has made – Ulrike listed the "insurance topics", line 2, incorrectly in the brochure under two categories ("CVF" vs. "Insurance Brokerage", line 3/5) instead of only under the one correct one (CVF in this case). Ulrike reacts towards Tamara's utterance as a complaint (line 6). Tamara then attempts to buffer her potentially complainable activity through laughter and an apology (lines 8/9).

Segment #2.9

LGH 020109, 0:27:12

001 Tamara: ulrike übrigens diese versicherungsthemen das  
*Ulrike by the way these insurance topics that*  
002 ist diese private vorsorge [( )  
*is these private precaution [( )*  
003 Ulrike: [das ist Cee vau  
*[that is C V*  
004 [eff ja  
*[F yes*  
005 -> Tamara: [das is keine e eh[m nn insurance br[okerage ja?  
*[that is no e eh[m nn insurance br[okerage ja?*  
006 Ulrike: [ja [ja sorry ds  
*[yes [yes sorry tht*  
007 -> stimmt. .hhhh achjeh °e[ uuhhh°  
*is right..hhhh achjeh °e[ uuhhh°*  
008 Tamara [hheheh tut mir  
*[hheheh I'm*  
009 -> ɛl(h)ei[d(h)ɛ hehehe .hhe ]  
*ɛs(h)or[y(h)ɛ hehehe .hhe ]*  
010 Ulrike: [jaja jaja jaja ]

Tamara's utterance in lines 1-2 could be taken as a plain cue to something that was labeled incorrectly. Although Tamara clearly selects Ulrike as the addressee of her turn (naming of



first name at the beginning of line 1), she designs her turn in a parenthetical way ("übrigens", "by the way", line 1). In line 5 she states that Ulrike listed the topic under a wrong category. In line 6 Ulrike apologizes in overlap at the first possible completion point of Tamara's utterance and thus retrospectively turns Tamara's contribution in a complainable activity. Had Ulrike's next turn to Tamara's contribution been a simple recognition of the correction (e.g. 'oh, you're right'), Tamara's turn in line 5 would not necessarily have had any complainable quality. However, by apologizing ("sorry", line 6) and producing a token that indicates despair ("achjeh", line 7), Ulrike retrospectively marks Tamara's turn as a complaint. Consequently, Tamara reacts to this in her next turn and signals that her contribution was not necessarily to be taken as a complaint but rather as a plain cue. She does so by laughing and apologizing in return.

This section shed light on the activities of repair and complaint in business meetings. In the next section, Membership Categorization Analysis as a tool to embark on the investigation of social identities' establishment in business meetings is discussed.

### **2.3. Being Boss, Subordinate and Colleague - Membership Categorization Analysis and Social Local Identities in Business Environments**

The "very central machinery of social organization" (Sacks 1995, LC1, lecture 6: 40) enables interactants to manage interrelational issues. It is through talk that participants conduct, negotiate, manifest and maintain their individual relationships. In doing this, they build and display their own identities, categorize others, negotiate correaltions and the like. Membership Category's characteristics provide instant clarification by making "some large class of activities immediately understandable" (Sacks 1995, LC1, lecture 1: 337).

Membership Categories are innumerable, and a person can and does belong to many of them at the same time (for instance, a person can belong to the categories male, painter, speaker of English, learner of German, father, uncle, boss – all at the same time). Sacks notes:

"Each of these categories could apply to the same person. And it's perfectly obvious that Members do use one set's categories for some statements and another set's categories for other statements. If we're going to describe Member's activities, and the way they produce activities and see activities and organize their knowledge about them, then we're going to have to find out how they go about choosing among the available sets of categories for grasping some event." (Sacks 1995, LC1, lecture 6: 41)

Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) enables researcher to examine "category types, practices, contextual usages and interactional achievements in a large number of settings" (Egbert 2004: 1470). It is a means to disclose the construction of social identity in interaction. Social local identity is not some external device that interactants are involuntarily labeled with, but can be established and negotiated. Just like context, identity has "[...] to be treated as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed, and, by extension, as transformable at any moment." (Heritage 2004: 111). Thus, social local identities are resources that people can employ to accomplish specific purposes in interaction. As one perspective on social identity, MCA shows that identity is not something people are, but "something they do" (Widdicombe 1998: 191).

For business interaction, this also means that identities like boss, subordinate or colleague are not fixed attributes to the interactants but need to be established and can or can not be oriented to at any given moment in talk. In this particular setting, despite outer defining circumstances like work contracts, it is still a fact that "[i]dentities are negotiated in and through social interaction, are interactionally accomplished objects" (Gafaranga 2001:1915). Business-relevant identities need to be brought about through talk in order to sustain the social reality of a meeting (Atkinson, Cuff & Lee 1978). An extensive study on how interactants co-construct social roles in German business meetings can be found with Barske (2006). Hierarchy and 'doing being boss' is a central topic in Business Communication studies. For this, refer to e.g. Schmitt & Heidtmann (2002) and Clifton (2006) on how 'being leader' is constructed in meetings. In some cases, membership categories that have to do with local origin play a role in business meetings (Asmuß 2002b on stereotypes like "the perfect Germans", *ibid.*:67, Villemoes 1995 on facework priorities in international negotiations). The study at hand contributes to the investigation of how interactants in

business meetings bring about, orient to and make relevant identities in regard to the concept of 'team', to hierarchy and seniority, as well as to local origin through laughter.

## Chapter 3

### Laughter – Theories on Why, How and When People Laugh

The following chapter supplies background information on the different theories of why, how and in which situations people laugh. The chapter starts out with a broad and general scientific perspective on laughter, drawing on research in the disciplines of literature and philosophy. The focus is then narrowed to interactional studies of laughter, in particularly concentrating on humor research, shedding light on studies on humor at work, to then illuminating the focal point of this study: Laughter from a Conversation Analytic perspective. Here, studies on the organization and the interactional functions of laughter in everyday and institutional interaction are reflected.

"We are all here for a spell; get all the good laughs you can."

Will Rogers

"What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul."

Yiddish Proverb

#### 3.1. Introduction

Laughter is so essential, so ubiquitous in human life that people from numerous ethnic backgrounds, in almost every occupation, and in many fields of research have a perspective on it, have written a book or spoken a proverb about it, or even have applications and usages for laughter. The phenomenon of 'laughter' holds many facets as to what it does with and to humans<sup>19</sup>. Medicine has not only given evidence on how laughter physiologically happens, but it has also proven that its effects on the body are beneficial to human health.

The internet search machine "Google" finds almost 31.000.000 entries for the search term 'laughter', many of them to do with the medical benefits of laughter and trainings that

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<sup>19</sup> I am aware of the fact that a number of animal observers have claimed that humans are not alone in having laughter (compare Fry and Allen, 1975: "[...] At least three of the higher primates – man, chimpanzees, and gorillas – exhibit laughter", cited from: Glenn 2003b: 15). The present study, however, concentrates on human laughter, and human-human interaction alone.

educate people about how to make use of these benefits like 'Laughter Yoga'<sup>20</sup> or 'Laughter Therapy'<sup>21</sup>. Also, a large number of 'fun' sites can be found. This is due to the general assumption that laughter is connected to something funny, amusing and enjoyable: "It seems [...] that pure or typical [...] laughter comes from what is best termed joy, alone." (Dearborn 1900: 851). In contrast to this general view on laughter, this study is concerned with the interactional relevance of laughter, that is the local social consequences laughter has in talk-in-interaction, and with what people achieve by laughing on an interactional level while engaged in conversation with others.

To be able to look at the interactional relevancies of laughter it is useful to look at what other disciplines say about the phenomenon of laughter. In the following section, I illustrate how laughter has been studied in literature, philosophy and psychology, and then give an overview on how laughter as a part of humor research has been examined as an interactional phenomenon. After having done this, I give an overview on the CA perspective on laughter, with a specific focus on laughter in institutional settings.

### **3.2. Laughter in Literature, Philosophy and Psychology**

Research in literature and philosophy unravels the spiritual quality of laughter and illustrates how laughter has an impact on literary, historical, and societal events. From the viewpoint of literature and philosophy, the phenomenon 'laughter' has a society-changing and superior-challenging nature. Philosophy tries to reveal the reasons why humans laugh.

One central figure in the literary research of laughter is Bakhtin (1984). In his work he revisits the writings of Francois Rabelais, a 16<sup>th</sup> century French author. In doing so, Bakhtin contemplates the history of laughter throughout time. He analyses the culture of folk humor and laughter in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as the "social consciousness of all the people" (Bakhtin 1984: 92). During the Renaissance,

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.laughteryoga.org/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.laughtertherapy.com/>

"[L]aughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint." (Bahktin 1984: 66).

Later laughter is politicized, rationalized and regulated, in addition to being connoted with negative facets. Besides analyzing a 16<sup>th</sup> century author's work, Bakhtin's discussion of laughter in Rabelais is a request for recovering the universality, positivity and freedom within laughter in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (2006) writes about the art of jesting and about what mastering this art and its consequent laughter reveals about men: "Those who know to jest appropriately shall be called *dutifully* and *versatile*, they know how to interrelate. Because such jesting are quasi motions of the character, of the inner human, and just like one judges the body from its motions, the ethical idiosyncracies can be judged in the same way."<sup>22</sup> (*Nicomachean Ethics*, chapter 14). In the later evolving evolutionary tradition of philosophy, laughter was viewed as causing satisfaction and stress resolution (Darwin 1890), and as a released energy (Spencer 1860, Bergson 1911).

Philosophy, and also psychology, tried to pinpoint the reasons why people laugh. Two theories within philosophy were developed: The superior/ hostility theory and the theory of incongruity. The *superior/hostility* theory (Aristotele, Hobbes 1651), argues that people laugh when they compare themselves with others who they feel are of lesser strength, beauty, cleverness or any other positive trait imaginable. It is this theory that underlies the principle of slapstick or clownery and also the one which captures the fact that laughter can very well have an evil, a harmful, an excluding quality to it; a fact easily forgotten when first looking at laughter. The theory of *incongruity* (Kant 1790, Schopenhauer 1819) posits that laughter derives from experiencing the unexpected. If one thing is anticipated and a completely other or even contradictory thing happens, or another frame is suddenly applied, people in many cases tend to perceive that as laughable. Numerous jokes, children's wordplays (e.g.: Why

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<sup>22</sup> Translation MV, Original in German: "Die aber angemessen zu scherzen wissen, heißen *artig* und *gewandt*, als wüßten sie sich wohl zu wenden. Denn solche Scherze sind gleichsam Bewegungen des Charakters, des inneren Menschen, und wie man die Körper nach ihren Bewegungen beurteilt, so auch des Menschen sittliche Eigenart"

couldn't the pony come to the picnic? It was a little horse.), as well as many forms of performing art (e.g. Dadaism, political cabaret) rely on this theory about humor and laughter. It lacks, though, an explanation of why some incongruent situations are perceived as funny and others are not. This theory separates the joke from the telling and reduces it to only its content; it leaves out the context and manner in which jokes or punch lines are told.

In psychological research, scientists had a similar view on laughter as the evolution theoreticians did<sup>23</sup>. Freud (1905) explains joking and laughter as the subconscious prevention of a wish from completing its natural aim. He claims that laughter is an expression of suppressed emotions and thus provides a way of relieving tension. This builds the third theory as to why people laugh, the *relief* theory (Freud). In summary, it suggests that people react with laughter when they have escaped from real or imagined danger, real or imagined bad news or a no longer existing threat. The laughter that derives from this category is that kind that people produce when getting off a roller coaster or in a movie theatre during a horror movie, that is, when an anticipated fright emerges as a false terror.

More general research on laughter looks at laughter as a part of human behavior development and evolution: "[L]aughter is a modification of the noise that used to frighten the tiger away. [...]. Getting the point of a joke corresponds to seeing the tiger." (Bailey 1976: 21/33). Provine (1996) describes his approach to laughter as "[...] one that a visiting extraterrestrial might take were it to encounter a group of laughing human beings." (Provine 1996: 38), and thus takes a general look at all aspects of laughter such as laugh structure, laugh production, laugh sounds, the social and linguistic context of laughter, occurrence of gender differences and the contagious nature of laughter.

While the theories introduced so far have investigated laughter from an exterior and rather abstract point of view, the next section highlights an approach to laughter as a social phenomenon.

### **3.3. Laughter as a Social Phenomenon**

None of the approaches introduced so far, including the three theories on why people laugh, have paid sufficient attention to the social character of laughter (Mulkay 1988). Studies of the

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<sup>23</sup> For a more extensive overview of psychology's perspective on laughter, refer to Berlyne 1968-1970

organization of social interaction have looked at the positioning of laughter in talk (Mulkey 1988, Sacks 1995). Goffman (1974/1986) shows that laughter 'floods out' and that such outbursts often infringe on the ordinary interactional frame. It thus has been shown that laughter serves a broad range of interactional functions, some of which might, but need not be related to instances of joking and humor. Still, it is in humor research that laughter is considered as a social phenomenon, namely as a reaction to humor. In the following section I give a short overview on laughter within humor research from a sociolinguistic perspective, with a particular focus on laughter at the workplace.

### **3.3.1 Laughter as a Part of Humor Research**

Humor, just like laughter, has been looked at from many angles: Psychology (Chapman 1976, McGhee 1979, Foot 1997), anthropology (Apte 1985), and medical disciplines, especially under the focus of biochemical and physiological benefits of humor (Robinson 1983). Since this study's focal point is solely the social aspect of laughter, this section looks at humor research from a sociolinguistic perspective.

In this realm, a definition of humor can be found in Chafe (1987):

"[H]umor is the safety valve that saves us from the consequences of our natural reasoning when it would get us into trouble. [...] humor is an adaptive mechanism whose function is to keep us from taking seriously those things that we ought not to take seriously." (Chafe 1987: 18).

The border between interactional functions of humor and of laughter in interaction are fluent when looking at the literature. Much of humor research involves laughter as a response to humor in interaction. "The specific distinctions among laughter, joking, and humor have been notoriously difficult to address conceptually as well as empirically" (Osvaldsson 2004: 518). In the context of humor research, laughter has been labeled as the 'language of humor' (Zijderveld 1983).



### **3.3.1.1. Humor from an Interactional Sociolinguistic Perspective**

Humor research under the focus of sociolinguists analyses how and why people laugh, and what is achieved by laughter in talk (Chafe 2007). Laughter is stereotypically connected to amusement. Thus, humour research does look at laughter from an interactional approach in so far as it takes the audience response to certain turns or activities into consideration and analyzes both humor and laughter. When discussing conversational joking, Norrick (1993) states that joking and laughter are an adjacency pair. The author lists four forms of conversational humor, namely jokes, anecdotes, wordplay, irony, and argues that aggression and rapport are the main interpersonal functions of conversational humor (Norrick 2003). One main area in which investigation of laughter as a response to humor has taken place is in the study of language and gender (Kotthoff 1988/1996, 2006). This field analyses humor as a situated discursive practice and discusses "the marginalization of women's humor in everyday life, in scientific models, and in theories of humor" focusing on joking within the dimensions of "status, aggressiveness, social alignment and sexuality" (Kotthoff 2006: 4). In the same range lies the work of Kienzle (1988/1996), Lampert & Ervin-Tripp (2006) and Groth (1992).

The present study's focus lies on the analysis of laughter in an institutional setting. Sociolinguistic humor research has done numerous studies of humor at the workplace which are summarized in the next section.

### **3.3.1.2. Humor at the Workplace**

Humor and laughter at the workplace have been the focus of interest to researchers for quite some time – and for quite obvious economical reasons: The use of humorous remarks among colleagues at work has been suspected to improve organizational efficiency and is seen as "a powerful workplace tool" (Lang 1988). Humor has been shown to be an instrument for successful management and leadership (Consalvo 1989).

Humor in the workplace and its social functions in this particular setting has been studied from a sociolinguistic perspective across various settings, e.g. in a hospital

(Cosser 1960), printing corporation (Sykes 1966), shop floor (Collinson 1988), police department (Pogrebin & Poole 1988), photo shop (Mulkay, Clark, Pinch 1993), and in language schools (Evans Davies 2003). Those studies point out that humor and laughter at the workplace have numeral interactional goals, such as being a means to invert hierarchies (Cosser 1960), helping to maintain organizational relationships and generating a feeling "of implicit understanding and camaraderie, thus strengthening group norms and bounds" (Pogrebin & Poole 1988: 184). Further, humor and laughter have been shown to be "a sign that participants are encountering interactional difficulties and that the special features of humor are being used to manage these difficulties." (Mulkay et al. 1993: 191). Both assist interactants in resisting "tightly controlled [...] work tasks and social organization [...] within the company" (Collinson 1988: 185), and are to them a means of control and a tool to build memberships. Laughter is also seen as the contextualization of jokes. It appears that persons higher in hierarchy laugh more frequently than their subordinates (Dannerer 1999). Humor can both convey positive affect and assist participants in communicating negative intent (Holmes 2000). While it fosters collegiality, it often focuses on gender stereotypes and sex (Holmes 2006).

The project 'Language at the workplace'<sup>24</sup>, initiated by Holmes et al. in 1996, finds that humor at the workplace contributes to social cohesion, to the establishing of solidarity and collegiality, is used in order to diffuse pressure, and as a repressive discourse device, i.e. in criticism. Further, the researchers in this project show that subordinates can also apply humour to contest their superiors (Language at Work Project: Humor).

Although the findings about humor presented in the previous section seem tempting in terms of answering the question of why people laugh and what happens when they do (especially at the workplace), this sociolinguistic approach does not satisfy the fine-grained details of the organization of laughter in talk and its actual relevance for interaction. Laughter is not always connected to a humorous event in talk. It can serve many other purposes in talk. While the sociolinguistic approach certainly takes into account the social aspect of laughter by looking at it as the human reaction to humor in talk, the methodology of observing, interviewing and data analysis of what is conceived to be humorous from the researcher's perspective does not sufficiently capture what really happens when people laugh

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/research/lwp/research/humour.aspx>

in talk-in-interaction from the participants' perspective. The findings remain somewhat on the surface of interactional analysis, not truly giving insight into the detailed features of laughter in interaction, but rather on the researcher's take on the outcome of joking and applying humor.

The next section illuminates the CA approach to laughter, and gives an overview of the state of the art. With the methodology of CA, as discussed in detail in chapter 2, the fine-grained details of laughter in interaction become observable from the participants' perspective, and both the organization and the interactional relevance of laughter can be described.

### **3.3.2. The Conversation Analytic Approach to Laughter**

CA looks at laughter as an interactional phenomenon, not necessarily bound to a humorous event or activity of co-present parties, but foremost as a locally situated feature of ongoing talk. As one of the founder of CA, Sacks discusses the location of laughter in the flow of talk (Sacks 1995 LC1, Lecture 14), showing how laughter is tied to the preceding talk that contains a 'laughable' element (the laughable), of whatever nature that element may be. He further states that laughter is an exception to the rule 'one speaker at a time' (Sacks 1995 LC2: 32, Silverman 1998: 103). Clearly, laughing is an activity than can be performed by more than one speaker at a time, it offers in fact the potential for interactants to act in unison. "In a sense then, it is as if laughter were a parallel activity to the ordinary turntaking machinery (Sacks et al. 1974). Thus, the basic notion of order at all points (Sacks 1984) holds for laughter as well" (Osvaldsson 2004: 519). In the following, I give an overview of the CA literature on laughter.

### 3.3.2.1. The Organization of Laughter in Talk-in-interaction

Very early studies of laughter in natural conversation in the realm of CA are concerned with the organization and interactional consequences of laughter in talk, both in humorous and non-humorous contexts. The sequential organization of the telling of a joke in form of a story was Sacks' focus of interest when initially looking at laughter (Sacks 1974a, 1978). He claims that

"laughings [...] have a priority claim on a joke's completion. But each recipient is not obliged to laugh. Each who chooses not to can orient to its priority status by being silent in favor of those who might choose to. Consequently, delayed laughings and silence too are systematic possibilities on joke completions." (Sacks 1974a: 347-348)

Moving away from jokes and focusing on the interactional relevancies of laughter in talk, Schenkein (1972) shows how interactants can display affiliation by producing laughter, and disaffiliation by withholding it. Further, the author analyses how the production of laugh particles can serve to disclose a previous speaker as 'foolish'.

Much of the sociolinguistic work on humor as an interactional device (discussed above) has in fact been deeply influenced by and owes a lion's share to Jefferson, whose work in laughter in interaction is with no doubt seminal. In a series of papers, Jefferson (1974b, 1979, 1984b, 1985) explores the sequential unfolding of laughter, thus showing that laughter is by no means unorganized or uncontrollable by its producers, but rather a carefully sequentially organized event in talk; a product of coordinated, methodic actions which serve to pursue numerous aims in interaction.

In particular, Jefferson's analyses reveal participants' techniques for inviting laughter (Jefferson 1979), such as the speaker employing post-utterance laugh particle(s) to demonstrate that laughter is appropriate. The following segment shows an instance of laugh invitation and acceptance by "speaker himself indicates that laughter is appropriate, by himself laughing, and recipient thereupon laughs" (Jefferson 1979: 80). It clearly displays how the first speaker's utterance reaches completion, then the occurrence of a pause, then the first speaker offering laughter and the recipient then produces laugh tokens.

## Jefferson 1979 (1)

(1)  
 Dan: I thought that wz pretty outta sight didju  
 hear me say'r you a junkie.  
 Dan: hheh heh,  
 Dolly: hhheh-heh-heh

Further, Jefferson explored how participants can decline to laugh along. In her work on trouble telling, Jefferson (1984b) dealt with the occurrence of recipients' serious answers in response to trouble-tellings that are produced with laughter. This proved to be a way for trouble-tellings recipients to display trouble receptiveness. When investigating laughter in the pursuit of intimacy, Jefferson et al. (1987) show how laughter can be employed for establishing close interpersonal relationships. The question of whether women really do laugh more than men is taken up by Jefferson (2004). In her last work, Jefferson (to appear) reports on instances of producer's guttural features that are falsely received by recipient as laugh, and what the interactional consequences of this are.

Subsequent CA research on laughter draws in large part on Jefferson's seminal work. When examining laughter as "(1) a turn taking cue, (2) an instruction to hear, (3) a display of hearership, (4) an invitation to elaborate, and (5) a resource in affiliation." (O'Donnell & Adams 1983: 175), the authors refer to Jefferson's work on the sequential organization of laughter. So does Hester (1996) when claiming that "'parties to laughter' are oriented to the place of laughter as an organizational method for the recognizability of its referent, and as a method for accomplishing various interactional tasks." (Hester 1996: 262). In looking at how participants organize alignments, intimacy and distance through laughter, how they negotiate what constitutes 'laughing at' and 'laughing with' (Glenn 1995), and in the examination of laugh invitations and shared laughter (Glenn 1989, 1991/1992), the author alludes to Jefferson. Further research on the gendered aspect of laughter (Glenn 2003a) shows Jefferson's influences, as well as the compendium on how and why people laugh (Glenn 2003b). Still later research, such as the investigation of laughter as a means to manage

linguistic incompetence in aphasic talk (Wilkinson 2007), hinges on Jefferson's fundamental findings about laughter.

After having given a short overview on the CA work on laughter in general, the next section deals with CA studies on laughter in institutional settings.

### **3.3.2.2. CA Studies on Laughter in Institutional Settings**

Not only in humor research, but also within CA, institutional settings have been of specific interest to many researchers. The social consequences of laughter in this particular environment have brought forward analyses of interaction in numerous environments, such as doctor-patient interaction (West 1984, Haakana 1999, 2001, 2002). In this realm are also the studies of Heath (1988), looking into the role of laughter when dealing with embarrassment in doctor-patient interaction, Bergmann (1992), concerned with delicate situations in psychiatric sessions, and Silverman (1997), examining HIV counseling. All three studies are concerned with investigations of how laughter is a participant's means to deal with delicate and/or embarrassing aspects in talk. Further, laughter has been investigated in job interviews (Adelswärd 1988), encounters in a bookshop (Gavioli 1995), intercultural business negotiations (Adelswärd & Öberg 1998), management gurus' talks (Greatback & Clark 2001), marine radio communication (Sanders 2003), telephone interviews (Lavin & Maynard 2003), and Swedish youth detention homes (Osvaldsson 2004).

In doctor-patient interaction, West (1984) and Haakana (1999, 2001) find that laughter shows specific interactional patterns, in that patients volunteer to laugh significantly more frequently than doctors do, and that their laughter is not very likely to be reciprocated by the doctor. Haakana (1999, 2001) advances West's arguments and shows that through laughing, patients (1) orient to interaction and subjects as 'delicate', (2) discard doctors' understandings, or (3) problematize doctors' suggestions.

When looking at laughter in an institutional environment and compare this in two linguistic settings, Gavioli states that there are different positions for laughter in English and Italian shop assistants' dispreferred responses, and that these positionings seem to suggest "two ways of organizing a mechanism for initiating and carrying out remedy in talk-in-interaction in [the] two languages" (Gavioli 1995: 382). In intercultural business negotiations,

laughter is found to establish joint meanings and to change the frame of the interaction (Adelswärd & Öberg 1998). In management gurus' talks, laughter appears to be a means for both the guru and the audience to evoke a sense of social cohesion and consensus, and to affiliate without unequivocal alignment with the each other's position. Laughter is analyzed as an affiliative response in marine radio communication, making an attempt to distinguish between 'genuine' and 'non-genuine' laughter (Sanders 2003). The analyses of telephone interviews reveals how interviewers decline interviewees' invitation to laugh, and how they instead produce "pseudolaughing responses" (Lavin & Douglas 2003: 349) in order to maintain the protocol of standardized interview surveys. Analyses of Swedish youth detention homes show that laughter is employed to reject praise, to display alignment, and as a tool to allow participants to take 'time out' from ongoing talk (Osvaldsson 2004).

With the exception of Glenn 1989, Adelswärd & Öberg 1998, Greatbach & Clark 2001, and Osvaldsson 2004, much work that has been done to investigate laughter concerns dyadic institutional interactions. The present study, however, focuses on laughter in a multiparty setting, thus contributing to an under-analyzed field of inquiry. The analyses in this study show that laughter in a multiparty environment differs significantly from interaction between two participants. Jefferson's work on laugh invitations and subsequent acceptance / declination imply that current speaker's laugh invitation follow either one or the other. In multiperson interaction, a current speaker inviting laughter can encounter both at the same time. Also, in multiperson interaction the laugh invitation can be produced by someone other than the current speaker and this might have a vast influence on the interaction.

## Chapter 4

### **Vöge I: The Omnipresent Potential for the Occurrence of Laughter: Positioning, Preference, Sources and Interactional Relevance of Laughter Compared to the Activity of Repair**

Based on analyses of 98 instances of laughter drawn from a body of 15 hours of videotaped business meetings, this chapter explores laughter as a potentially ubiquitous element of interaction through (1) showing two different positionings of laughter in talk, namely laughter in first position (same-turn display of understanding of something in speaker's own turn as laughable) and laughter in second position (next-turn display of understanding of something in other speaker's turn as laughable); (2) uncovering a preference for laughter in first position through quantitative and qualitative analysis, revealing a disaffiliative tendency for laughter in second position; and (3) examining laughter both as context-free in its sequential organization and context-sensitive, as the study exposes laughter as an indexical for specific aspects of the institutional context. The chapter compares the activities of laughter and repair and shows parallels in regard to mechanism, organization, preference and interactional relevance, thus demonstrating the omnipresent potential of the occurrence of laughter.

#### **4.1. The Phenomenon**

Laughter and laughables are remarkably intriguing objects in interaction. As Conversation Analysis (CA) research has shown, laughter is a highly organized facet of interaction and serves numerous interactional purposes. With no doubt CA owes its lion's share on the research of laughter to the seminal work of Gail Jefferson (1979, 1984a, 1985, and Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff 1987). Jefferson's detailed transcription of laughter made it possible to see the "machinery" (Sacks 1995 [Fall 1965 and Spring 1966]) of this interactional phenomenon. Subsequent studies have always drawn on Jefferson's findings to then explore laughter further, e.g. in everyday settings (Glenn 2003b), doctor-patient-interaction (Haakana 1999), or business environments (Adelswärd 1988, 1998, Dannerer 2002, Holmes 2000, 2006).

It thus has been shown that laughter can potentially occur everywhere, regardless of context or setting, and sometimes in the most unexpected situations. But can laughter occur in every



position in talk? And if it can, does the positioning of laughter matter in terms of preference, like it does for the activity of repair?

The comparison of laughter to repair obtrudes since both phenomena seem to have many sequential aspects in common. Research on repair has shown that everything in talk can constitute a repairable. Not only noticeable errors in talk prompt the occurrence of repair (Schegloff 1997), but "[...] it appears that nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class 'repairable'." (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1977:363). Is this true for the class 'laughable' as well, that is, does laughter have an omnipresent potential for occurrence? Prior research seems to indicate this: "Virtually any utterance or action could draw laughter, under the right (or wrong) circumstances" (Glenn 2003b: 49). In contributing to the discussion of laughter as a potentially ubiquitous element of interaction, this study draws a comparison between laughter and repair, which addresses rather broad phenomena and mechanisms, like positioning in talk and preference issues. In doing so, the study focuses on laughter in business meetings in particular, and investigates preference and affiliation in laughter sequences. The investigation of laughter in a particular context and type of interaction is less related to general sequential aspects of the activity and more to the social context of a setting in which laughter occurs. Repair has been shown to be context-free: "In a comparison of American and German conversation, repair can be shown to be context-free in that, basically, the same mechanism can be found across these two languages." (Egbert 1996: 587). This paper examines that the organization and emergence of laughter is both context-free, in that the institutional setting sets no constraints upon its organization, and context-bound, as the setting can be exploited to create laughter sources. The paper thus investigates the interactional relevance and consequences of laughter.

The study commences with the analysis of the sequential positioning of laughter in business meetings, emphasizing the point that the organization of laughter in talk is context-free. It then examines whether other-initiation of laughter is a dispreferred action, and investigates the interactional consequences this action has in business meetings. In relation to this point of investigation, the paper analyzes preference issues for laugh initiations, exploring whether self-initiation of laughter, like the self-initiation of repair, is a preferred option in interaction. To what extent laughter has a context-sensitive aspect in regard to laughter sources is the question pursued in the last section of this chapter.

As this paper researches laughter, related phenomena like smile, smile voice and other non-vocal features of interaction that might be connected to laughter, are only addressed in the frame of laughter occurrences. For a more elaborate discussion on, for example smile, see Haakana (1999) and Ekman (2001).

The data base for this study are 15 hours of video tapings, comprised of 14 business team meetings<sup>25</sup> within the Human Resources department of a major German-US-American financial service company. The team's composition is international, with members from Germany, Israel, Russia and the United States, who partly use German as a second language (three team members are non-native German speakers). In general, the meetings' language is German.

When looking for laughter occurrences in the 15 hours of video data, it soon became clear that it is difficult to make an adequate quantity count of the laughter sequences in the meetings.

"It seems quite clear [...] that parties to interaction do not laugh per minute. Laughter is among the most inescapably responsive forms of conduct in interaction. Even outside of interaction, it is treated by humans as intrinsically, indefeasibly responsive; one is always laughing 'at' something, even if only a fleeting memory [...]. If one wants to assess how much someone laughed, to compare it with other laughter by that person or by others, then a denominator will be needed that is analytically relevant to what is to be counted because it is organizationally related to it in the conduct of interaction. And minutes are not." (Schegloff 1993: 104/105)

"Minutes are not", and neither are the bare counting of coded laughter occurrences:

"Phenomena in the data are generally not coded. The reason for this is that tokens that appear to be the same may, on closer inspection, turn out to have a different interactional salience [...] Coding tokens on the basis of certain manifest similarities runs the risk of collecting in the same category objects that in reality have quite different interactional significance." (Drew 2004: 99)

So when stating that this study is based on the analysis of 98 laughter incidents, this number indicates the quantity of laughter occurrences transcribed and analyzed thoroughly, not the quantity of actual laughter occurrences in 15 hours of business meetings. As an empirical

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<sup>25</sup> The meetings are weekly informal 'insider' meetings exclusively, that is, only members of the team participate.

piece of information, it provides the reader with facts and details about the findings' foundation. The 98 laughter incidents were chosen randomly (mostly because of their perceptible apparentness in the data).

In the following section I analytically explore how laughter is positioned in talk and what interactional consequences occur from the two different positionings. Different phenomenal aspects of laughter positionings are examined and compared to the mechanism of repair in order to show that both activities have an omnipresent potential for occurrence in interaction, as well as a preference structure to them. To begin with, I give a short description of what a laughable in the analytical sense is.

#### **4.2. What is a Laughable?**

A clear definition of what constitutes a laughable remains intangible,

"because the term laughable glosses over an analytically problematic notion. Virtually any utterance or action could draw laughter, under the right (or wrong) circumstances. This fact dooms any theory that attempts to account coherently for why people laugh. [...] the distinction of what does and what does not count as a laughable, or what makes some particular item humorous [...] remains elusive." (Glenn 2003b: p. 49).

Laughter is mostly indexical. Its referent, the laughable, is usually noticeable for both the researcher and (in multi-party settings some of) the participants when laughter occurs. Even the rather obvious term of a 'laugh invitation' might consist of various features, such as "[...] combined occurrences [...] of [...] standard lexical invitations as special words (peculiar, fanciful, idiomatic) and prefatory exclamations, and [...] within-speech laughter by current speaker." (Jefferson 1974b: 6). Jefferson also talks about a "recognizable event for laughter" (ibid.: 11). When looking at (or experiencing) laughter in talk and its sequential location, participants and analysts then can make out what it was that provided the cause for it: The laughable. Its analytic definition is thus both emic and retrospective.

The next section investigates the positioning of laughter in talk, and compares these positionings to the activity of repair. It also deals with the issue of preference for both laugh and repair initiations.

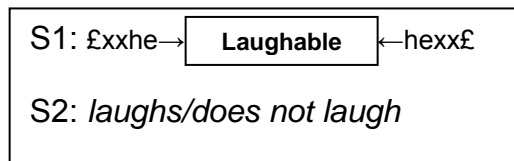
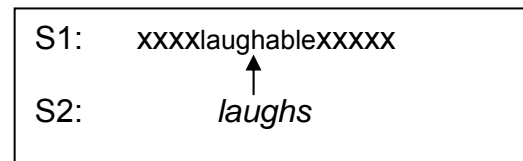
### 4.3. 'Every Turn Trails a Laughter Space Behind It' - Positioning of Laughter Relative to the Laughable in Comparison to the Positionings of Repair

This study contributes to the discussion of the omnipresent potential of the occurrence of laughter in interaction and claims that just as "[...] every turn trails a repair space behind it" (Schegloff 1992b: 1327), every utterance trails a laughter space behind it, available to the same or other speaker. When comparing the mechanisms of laughter and repair, CA research on repair shows that every contribution in talk can be a repairable, regardless of its positioning in talk: "[E]ach of the positions at which repair DOES get initiated is a position at which repair CAN be initiated." (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1977: 374). Prior research has identified different positionings for laughter: There are "four positions (same turn, transition space, next turn, and third turn)" (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1977: 371) for repair initiation. This section compares the positionings "same turn" (self-initiated repair) and "transition place/next turn" (other-initiated repair) to the positionings of laughter in interaction.

Analyses of 15 hours of data reveal that there seem to be mainly two different positionings of laughter: (A) '*Laughter in first position*', in which a producer displays his/her understanding of something in his/her own turn as laughable (same-turn display), and (B) '*Laughter in second position*', where another interactant displays his/her understanding of something in the previous turn by another speaker as laughable (next-turn display). The descriptors 'first' and 'second' both position the laughter relative to the laughable. While in (A) the laughable is usually clearly marked as such by its producer (S1<sup>26</sup>), for example through smile voice (indicated by "£" in the graph and in the transcripts) and/or within-speech laugh particles or irony, and thus potentially recognizable to both its initiator and recipient(s), (S2), the producer of a laughable in position (B), may be unaware of what the laughable in his/her turn was. To illustrate the two different positionings, see the following table:

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<sup>26</sup> S1 stands for 'Speaker 1' (first speaker, producer of the laughable), S2 for 'Speaker 2' (second speaker, recipient of the laughable).

Graph #4.1, *Display of understanding of something in a turn as a laughable***A Laughable: Display of understanding  
in same turn (laughter in first position)****B Laughable: Display of understanding  
in next turn (laughter in second position)**

The understanding of something in a turn as a laughable can happen in first position (A) by the producer of the laughable him/herself, where the laughable is surrounded by talk and/or nonverbal activities (like smiles, facial expressions, body movements) that hints at the fact that the speaker indicates a laughable meaning to his/her utterance (section 4.3.1.). In second position (B) it is the next speaker who displays his/her understanding of the prior turn as laughable, a phenomenon that seems to be particularly typical for multiperson settings:

"For example, in dyadic interaction, the current speaker may invite laughter by initiating it herself (Jefferson 1979). A few studies from multiparty settings have shown somewhat different patterns (see Glenn 1989), in that a person other than the current speaker generally produced the first laughter token." (Osvaldsson 2004: 521)

In next-turn display of understanding something as a laughable, the laughable's producer's talk surrounding the laughable does not imply anything laughable in the turn.

In the following, the focus is first put on position (A), the display of understanding something as laughable in same turn. Different practices of how participants display the understanding of something as laughable in their own turn are analyzed (section 4.3.1). Subsequently, I show practices of how co-participants display their understanding of something as laughable in other's turn (position B, next-turn display, section 4.3.2). The investigation of laughter's positioning relative to the laughable has posed the question of affiliation and preference, e.g. of whether one positioning has a disaffiliative quality to it (section 4.3.2), and whether one positioning is preferred over the other, as is the case within the activity of repair (section 4.3.3).

### 4.3.1. Laughter in First Position: Same-turn Display of Understanding of Something as a Laughable

A display of the understanding of something as a laughable in speaker's own turn has been previously addressed by Jefferson in her groundbreaking work on laugh invitations (1979) and the analysis of laughter in talk (1974, 1985). Jefferson calls occurrences of this "candidate laughable utterances" (1979: 83). These do not necessarily have to be met by reciprocated laughter, as her seminal analysis of laughter in talk about troubles has shown (Jefferson 1985).

Comparisons of laughter in both one-on-one everyday (Jefferson 1974b, 1979; Glenn 2003b; O'Donnell-Trujillo & Adams 1983) and institutional interaction (this study) show that the participants' techniques of how to display the understanding of something in their own turn as a laughable shows no difference in regard to the setting. The sequential organization of laughter is in that regard context-free: In business meetings, participants apply the same procedures Jefferson has found in everyday settings to display an orientation to laughter. The following provides a small overview of these procedures.

In cases of laughter in first position, the producer of the laughable him-/herself signals an understanding of his/her turn as a laughable to the recipients by (1) *producing post-utterance laugh particles* (Jefferson 1979), (2) *producing laughter within-speech* (Jefferson 1979), and (3) *utterance produced with smile voice* (Haakana 1999). The following data segments give a quick overview of these participants' procedures. The laughable's turn is indicated with an arrow.

#### (1) Production of post-utterance laugh particles in first turn

Segment #4.1

LGH 011114, 0:04:48

001	Madita:	°das wars.° °that was it°
002		(.)
003	Nora:	zum thema broschüre? to the topic brochure? regarding the issue of brochure

004 Madita: °ja h°  
 °yes h°  
 005-> Nora: online broschüre. wie auch immer hmpf [>he[he<  
*online brochure. how PRT ever hmpf [>he[he<*  
*online brochure whatever hmpf [>he[he<*  
 006 Robin: [hmhmhh

Nora marks her turn in line 5 –which is a self repair of her utterance in line 3 - as laughable by producing post-utterance laugh tokens (note that "hmpf" is not a laugh particle, but expresses here something like sneering resignation). These serve for the other participants as a display to understand her completion of a self-repair with the following dismissal-implicit "wie auch immer" ("whatever") as a laughable. After producing the first laugh token, Nora is joined by Robin in laughing. What is not shown here: The topic of terminology in regard to "brochure" versus "online brochure" is further discussed subsequently to this laughter incident, and Corinna also joins the laughter.

## (2) Production of laughter within-speech in first turn

### Segment #4.2

LGH 010912, 0:00:40

001 Lara: okee ich glaub das ist das letzte mal dass wir  
*okay I believe that is the last time that we*  
 002 überhaupt in dieser konstellation zusammensitzen  
*actually in this constellation sit together*  
*actually sit together in this constellation*  
 003 ich glaube aber auch dass es fast das erste mal  
*I believe but too that it almost the first time*  
*also believe that this is almost the first time*  
 004-> ist(hh) [hehe d(h)ass wir [hier zs(h)ammensitzhen]  
*is(hh) [hehe th(h)at we [here s(h)it together ]*  
*that we sit here together*  
 005 ( ): [HAHAHAhh  
 006 ( ): [HHAHHA  
 007 ( ): [HEHEhehe

The same-turn display of understanding Lara's contribution as a laughable is done via producing in-speech-laugh particles in line 4 at a turn-transition relevance space. At the first possible point, after the first laugh particles in line 4, three other participants overlap with laughter. Concerning the phenomenon of within-speech laughter, Glenn (2003b: 80) states:

"If done within-speech, the invitation provides an early recognition point that allows the recipient to be laughing by the time the utterance reaches completion." This is clearly the case in the segment shown above.

*(3) Utterance produced with smile voice*

Segment #4.3

LGH 011114, 00:04:35

001 Madita: .hh das heißt aber eigentlich für mich nich  
*.hh that means PRT PRT for me not*  
*.hh that actually doesn't mean too many*  
 002 so viele änderungen also trotzdem noch  
*too many changes PRT nevertheless still*  
*changes for me but nevertheless still*  
 003 [korrekturlesen:,  
*[proofreading:,*  
 004 ->Corinna: [£musste ich dazu erst mal kündigen?  
*[£had I for that first PRT resign*  
*£did I have to quit for this first*  
 005 damit [das£ th(h) [ema  
*in order for [this£ t(h) [opic*  
 006 Nora: [hihihi [  
 007 Madita: [hhe hha hha  
 008 Corinna: e(h)ndlich mal ((h)entdeckt(h)) wird  
*f(h)inally PRT ((h)discovered(h))gets*  
*to be f(h)inally discovered*

Prior to this stretch of talk, Madita reports that the advertising brochure of the team will be changed from an actual manuscript to an online version. The brochure has been Corinna's project and she has been in favor of an electronic version for a long time. She now smilingly – and ironically - comments on the phasing out of the hardcopy version of the brochure as if it were a result of her resigning, thereby marking her turn as a laughable. Although there is no reaction of the other participants after Corinna's first TCU (turn-constructional unit, Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1974), the smile voice seems to be sufficient for displaying the understanding of her turn as laughable as soon as the trajectory of her turn is clear to her colleagues: Even before Corinna produces an in-speech laugh token, Nora overlaps her talk with laughter in line 6.

As segments #4.1 - 4.3 show, the techniques by which participants in an institutional multiparty business setting achieve a same-turn display of something in their own turn as a laughable do not differ from the ones Jefferson (1979) has shown for dyadic everyday



interaction. This is interesting in that the technical details of displaying something as a laughable in first position do not differ whether they are performed in an everyday or institutional setting, and they are not dependant on the number of co-present interactants. This analytic result yields the conclusion that the organization of laughter is context-free, as are the mechanisms of repair whose elements, (1) initiation, (2) trouble source and (3) operation, have been shown to be generally context-free (e.g. Egbert 2002: 56).

The next section analyzes laughter in second position (position B), that is the next-turn display of understanding something in prior speaker's turn, as laughable. Issues of affiliation and preference are discussed.

#### **4.3.2. Laughter in Second Position: Next-turn Display of Understanding of Something as a Laughable - A Disaffiliative Action?**

There seem to be two major techniques that participants in business meetings make use of in order to display their understanding of something in a prior turn as laughable in next turn: (1) *uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post utterance laughter*, and (2) *producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap; or producing an ironic remark as next action*. The following two data examples illustrate the techniques.

##### Technique 1

In the extract below, the apprentice Anke reports about her work in the team. The system for apprentices in this company allows for every apprentice to work at every department once in a revolving system. Anke is on the team for the second time (line 1) because she previously has done good work and as a result has been requested by the team and appointed to do holiday replacement for the team's assistant.

Lara, the team leader, displays an understanding of Anke's contribution in line 2 as laughable by repeating Anke's turn and post-utterance laughter. Subsequently, Anke joins the laughter.

## Segment #4.4

LGH 010912, 00:08:52

001 Lara: is nich zu langweilich jetzt schon das zwote mal?  
*is not too boring now already the second time?*  
*isn't it too boring now already for the second time*

002-> Anke: n:ö  
*nope*

*\*Lara turns gaze away  
from Anke into round*

003 Lara: nee HEHEHE[\*he he he ha [haha  
*nope HEHEHE[\*he he he ha [haha*  
[ ]

004 Corinna: [ha^hehehe (stei[gerung)  
[ha^hehehe (prog[ression)

005 Anke: [£darf ja jetzt  
[£may PRT now  
[£am allowed to do

006 urlaubsvertretung machen das hatte ich ja vo(h)rher nich  
*holiday replacement make that had I PRT bef(h)ore not*  
*holiday replacement now that I didn't have before*

When asked by Lara whether she finds it boring to be in the team again (line 1), Anke produces a nonchalant and rather casual negative answer "nö" ("nope"). Lara displays her understanding of this as laughable in next turn by repeating Anke's answer and producing post-utterance laughter (in which she is joined in overlap by Corinna, line 4). Anke then joins the laughter, first via smile voice (line 5), then by a laugh-token within speech (line 6).

Technique 2

In data segment #4.5, the team talks about the evaluation sheet they use for assessing their seminars. This is a somewhat 'old' topic within the team and a much debated issue. Furthermore, it is an unpopular task to carry out these customers' evaluations. Tamara here suggests to develop a whole new "interview guideline" (line 1) for the trainings' participants' in order to get more satisfying evaluations. Melanie disagrees by producing simply laughter in second position (line 3) and an ironic remark (line 5). The producer of the laughable, Tamara, declines to join the laughter.

## Segment #4.5

LGH 020109, 00:44:10

001-> Tamara: vielleicht sollte man richtig nen interviewleitfaden  
*maybe should one really a interview guideline*  
*maybe one should truly develop an interview*

\*somebody loudly  
 drops a pen

002 Tamara: entwickeln de\*nke [ich  
*develop thi\*nk [I*  
*guideline I think*

003 Melanie: [oh^ch[ho:h  
 [  
 [\*Ulrike is gazing at Tamara  
 \*\* Ulrike wrinkles her forehead

004 Ulrike: [\*oh\*\* nö:  
 [\*oh\*\* no:

005 Melanie: ðkenn ich jemanden [der das gu:t kannð  
*ðknow i someone [who that well: canð*  
*I know someone who can do that well*

006 ( ): [ >tne tne tne tne<  
 \*Melanie leans backward,  
 stretches upper body,  
 moves hands towards head

007 Melanie: ah^ hehhe\*hhehhe[hhe

008 Ulrike: [interviewleitfaden inwiefern.  
 [interview guideline to what extent.

009 (.)

010 Tamara: >°wenn wir wirklich solche informationen über  
 >° if we really want to get such information about

011 seminare kriegen< wollen und nich unser knappes eh  
*seminars and not our skimpy*

012 >evaluations<bogen°  
 >evaluation< sheet°

It seems that the dissatisfaction about the topic 'new interview guideline' for evaluating the seminars becomes observable as soon as, in line 2, someone loudly drops a pen while Tamara is speaking after she has mentioned the "interview guideline" (line 1). In line 4, Ulrike displays her disagreement with Tamara's suggestion both vocally ("och nö" ("oh no")) and non-vocally by wrinkling her forehead at Tamara while talking.

In overlap to Tamara's turn in line 2, Melanie produces laugh tokens that indicate her amusement about Tamara's proposition by the high-pitched tone. This is practically an ironic remark. This laughter is Melanie's first display of her understanding of something in Tamara's turn as laughable. Melanie thus diminishes Tamara's contribution as something amusing and disaffiliates with Tamara and her suggestion, while leaving it open what exactly is laughable

in Tamara's turn – it might be Tamara's suggestion or the implication of additional work, or something entirely different.

In line 5, Melanie produces a more explicitly ironic remark by smilingly stating that she knows a person who can do "that" (presumably referring to the design of interview guidelines) well. This person remains unnamed. The fact that Melanie smilingly alludes to this person in reaction to Tamara's suggestion seems rather like an insider-joke. The allusive fact that Melanie – in contrast to Tamara - 'knows' people in the organization plus their talents, and seems to have personal familiarity with them, strengthens her own affiliation with the organization and thus her identity as a knowledgeable, resourceful team member. At the same time, Melanie's interactional behavior portrays Tamara as not belonging within the group of informed members of the organization, thus disaffiliating from her. Following her spate of talk, Melanie produces several laugh particles (line 7). These get overlapped by Ulrike's attempt to seriously discuss Tamara's suggestion. Subsequently, Tamara, neither laughing nor smiling, picks up her initial argument in line 10.

Analyses of both techniques 1 and 2 reveal that the next-turn display of understanding something in prior other's turn as laughable can constitute a disaffiliative action. Affiliation is defined as "one dimension of the sociorelational realm" (Stivers 2008: 53) with which recipients can display support and approval of a prior speaker's displayed stance:

"[A]ffiliative uptake involves taking a stance that matches the [previous speaker's] stance toward the event(s) being described as, for example, funny, sad, horrible, or exciting." (ibid.: 36).

Accordingly, disaffiliative moves comprise actions with which participants display disapproval, challenge and rebuke, thus creating distance. For example, it has been shown for questions that "[d]isaffiliative questions typically perform actions like challenging, reproaching, complaining, criticizing, disagreeing, or the like." (Steensig & Drew 2008: 9). Both, affiliation and disaffiliation are thus central to the management of social relationships.<sup>27</sup>

Laughter in second position carries the risk of constituting a disaffiliative action, as it can easily be understood by the participants as 'laughing at', in contrast to 'laughing with'

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<sup>27</sup> For further work on (dis)affiliation, refer to the homepage of the ESF project: 'Language and Social Action: A Comparative Study of Affiliation and Disaffiliation Across National Communities and Institutional Contexts', <http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/sosio/project/affiliation/>

(Jefferson 1974b). Of course, it is not only the positioning, but also the environment of the laughable that are central keys for the distinction of 'laughing with' and 'laughing at'. Glenn (1995) addresses that issue and states

"'Laughing at' environments are recognizable as such by: laughable which nominates some co-participant as butt [*laughable's producer who is unaware of what the laughable in his/her turn is, 'target' of others' laughter*], first laugh by someone other than butt (especially perpetrator), possible second laugh by someone other than butt, and continued talk on topic." (Glenn 1995: 54, explanation added)

This listing is expanded with a further crucial feature for defining 'laughing at' scenarios: "[...] the unfolding of the subsequent talk may be an indicator of the situation as a 'laughing at' situation." (Osvaldsson: 520, emphasis added). In segment #4.5, all features of the listing appear: Tamara is nominated as the 'butt', Melanie is the one who produces the first laugh (line 3), second laugh is substituted by Ulrike's clear declination of Tamara's suggestion (line 4), and further talk on the topic, which unfolds with a rather reproachful focus on Tamara's suggestion, occurs. 'Laughing at' scenarios have thus undoubtedly a disaffiliative quality to them.

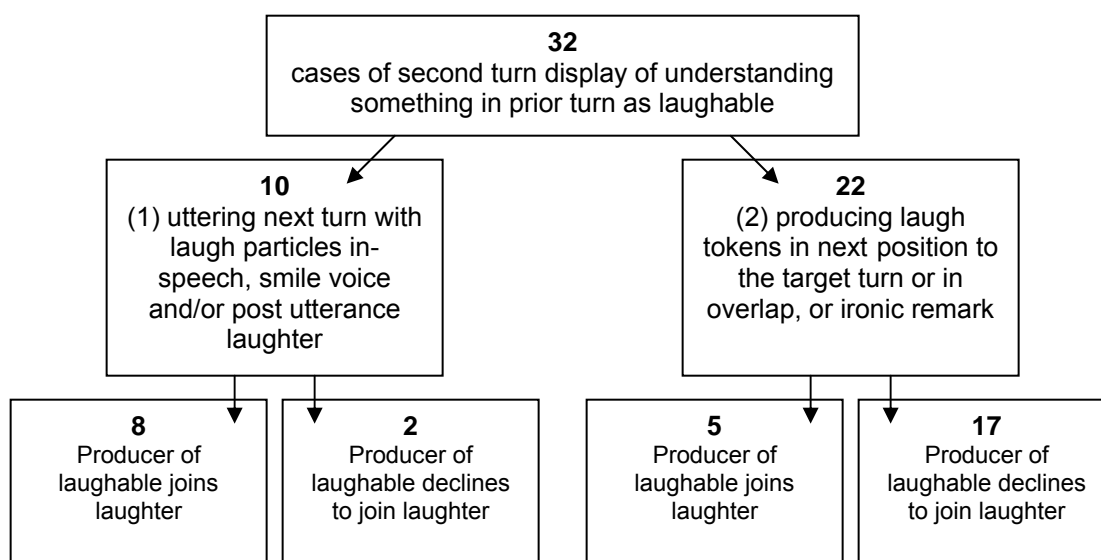
While both techniques of displaying the understanding of other's contribution as laughable have a sense of disaffiliation to them, interactants seem to manage a gradual degree of challenge with these two practices: Technique (1) seems to be the more agreement-oriented option for interactants, whereas technique (2) can easily constitute a challenge. This is backed up by looking at the subsequent reaction of the laughable's producer, the 'butt': If the turn of second position display of something as a laughable is uttered in smile voice, the 'target of laughter', seems to be more willing to laugh along and thus to turn the 'laughing at' into a 'laughing with' (see Glenn 1995:49ff)<sup>28</sup>. In 32 cases of laughter in next turn in the corpus of 98 laughter cases analyzed in the present study, it turned out that if the next speaker displayed his/her understanding of something in the prior turn as a laughable by smile voice or laughter-within-speech (technique 1), a majority of laughable producers joined the laughter. These instances seem to carry very little or no sense of challenge. Instead, they are instances of 'laughing with'. Is the subsequent turn to a

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<sup>28</sup> Glenn's results are replicated in the present study in the analysis of technique 1 and 2, this chapter.

target line only laughter (technique 2), however, the producer of the laughable is less inclined to join the laughter. In these cases, only 22% of the laughable's producer joined the laughter. To illustrate, see the following table:

Graph #4.2, *Distribution of techniques (1 and 2) in second position display of sth. laughable*



Laughter instances of type (2) seem to strengthen the sense of challenge that are inherent to the next-turn display of understanding something as a laughable. They increase the risk of disaffiliation and tend to elicit no laughter by the producer of the laughable. In only five out of 22 instances of only laughter in second position did the producer of the laughable joined the laughter. Technique (1) is, at the same time, much more likely to draw subsequent laughter by the producer of the laughable: In eight cases out of ten the producer of the laughable laughs with the other participant(s). When interactants employ the next-turn display of understanding of something as a laughable, it appears that in a majority of cases, participants orient to its immanent disaffiliation, in all probability even make use of it on the interactional level, and do not tend to mitigate the challenge.

From these analytic results emerges another correspondence between laughter and the mechanism of repair. As this study reveals, the next-turn display of understanding

something as laughable is a tool to indicate that the prior speaker's turn contains something laughable. It thus shows similarities to repair in second position, other-initiated repair. For other-initiated repair it has been shown that it is employed by a recipient to indicate trouble in hearing or understanding (parts or all of) a prior speaker's utterance (Schegloff et al., 1977).

In line with this, laughter in second position is used by recipient of the first turn to indicate to the prior speaker that he or she has found something laughable in prior speaker's utterance. Taking this correspondence and applying it to the two techniques of displaying understanding of something in a prior turn as laughable, another parallel between laughable and repairable may be drawn: Technique (1), *uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post-utterance laughter*, can be compared to repair initiations that specifically locate the source of the trouble, such as "which name", or "what street" (interrogative with partial repeat). Similar to that type of repair initiations, next speaker applying technique (1) to display something laughable in other's turn usually makes very clear what the laughable specifically is by, for example, repeating the laughable part of the prior turn (see analysis of data segment #4.4) or designing his/her next turn as matching the laughable:

Segment #4.6<sup>29</sup>

LGH 011114, 0:30:48

001-> Nora: °m: der is bei uns **durchgelaufen.**°  
 °m: he is at us ran through.°  
 m: he passed with us  
 ((line omitted))  
 003 Corinna: fecht nee **dann fang ihn mal.**  
 freally no than catch him PRT  
 really well than you should catch him

Technique (1) of next-turn display of laughter has thus a potential for affiliation with the laughable's producer. Technique (2), *producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap, or ironic remark*, though, does not specifically locate the

<sup>29</sup> Nora and Corinna are referring to the nomination and training system for executives. Employees need to go through the whole system in order to climb up hierarchy. Nora, as the team assistant in charge of organization of these processes, was part of the committee when the colleague was evaluated.

laughter source, but treats a word, a contribution or a whole turn as laughable (see analysis of segment #4.5). When interactants employ technique (2) to display something as laughable in prior speaker's turn, it appears to be much harder for the producer of the laughable to join the laughter. Technique (2) constitutes thus a more disaffiliative action in interaction than technique (1) does.

Returning to the comparison of laughter and repair, it can be said that technique 2 of displaying something laughable in prior speaker's turn can be compared to repair in next turn (other-initiated repair) in terms of what Drew (1997) called "'open' class repair initiations". Both treat the whole of a prior turn as laughable, respectively: repairable, and leave open what it is exactly the recipient finds laughable, respectively: has trouble with. Further, just as technique (2) of laughter in second position shows disaffiliative qualities, "'open' class repair initiations" do so as well:

"Analysis [...] suggests that troubles generating this ['open'] form of other-initiated repair shade into matters of alignment or affiliation between speakers (and here conflict in talk)." Drew 1997:69

Thus, the activity of next-turn display of something laughable in prior turn by technique (2) seems to shade into matters of conflict or disaffiliation.

The analysis of technique (1), and especially technique (2), has shown how laughter in second position has the potential to be a disaffiliative action. If something in prior speaker's turn is displayed as laughable in the next turn by producing only laugh particles in overlapping position, the producer of the laughable, presumably being left uninformed of the exact nature of the laughable, declines to laugh along, thus enhancing the disaffiliation.

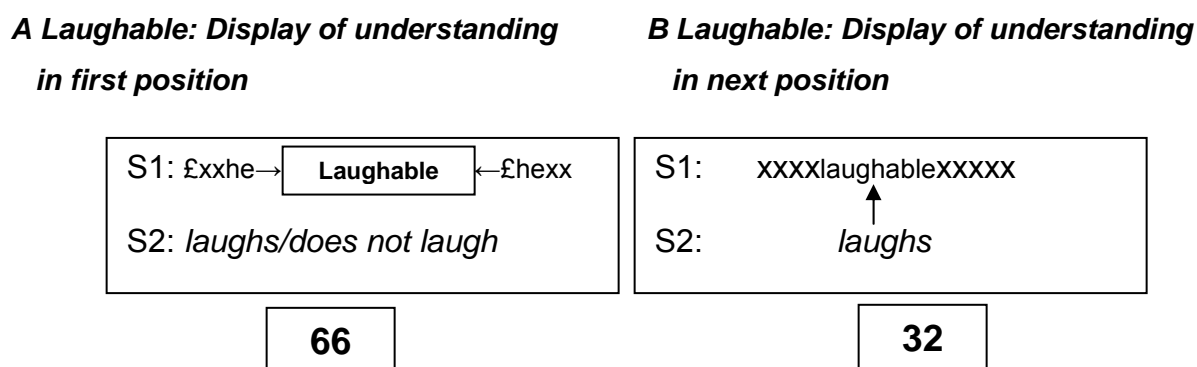
The next section investigates preference issues in the sequential organization of laughter and compares this to the mechanism of repair.



### 4.3.3. Preference for Same-turn Display of Understanding of Something as a Laughable

The investigation of the two different positionings of laughter relative to the laughable poses the question of whether there is a preference for laugh initiation by self (position A), similar to the preference for self repair (Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson 1977). Analyses show that most instances of laughter (67%) in business meetings are initiated by the producer of the laughable him-/herself (position A), and only 33% of laughter initiations occur in second position (position B):

Graph #4.3, *Display of understanding of something in a turn as a laughable – Quantitative distribution*



This frequency argument shows a parallel to the activity of repair - Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson (1977) show the quantitative predominance of self-correction over other-correction: "Even casual inspection of talk in interaction finds self-correction vastly more common than other-correction." (ibid: 362); "In the vast majority of cases, however [...], the trouble-locating is compacted into the repair-candidate itself, both being done by a single component, and being done in the same turn as the trouble source." (ibid: 376). When comparing self-initiated repair to laughter in first position (A), and other-initiated repair to laughter in second position (B), the fact that 67% of the laughter instances happen in first position, that is, are instances of 'self-initiated laughter', the analysis indicates a preference structure for laughter in first position.

In addition to the frequency argument, an analysis on the interactional level reveals that the distribution of (A) and (B) might find its explanation in the fact that the next-turn display of a laughable understanding of prior speaker's contribution (B) carries the risk of being a disaffiliative activity. Interactionally, it is much less risky to self initiate laughter about something in one's own turn (A), than to point to something laughable in prior speaker's, other's contribution (B) (see section 4.3.2.). This is connected to the issue of intersubjectivity: Laughter in first position is a tool for participants to achieve intersubjectivity in that the turn's producer displays to the co-participants how a contribution is to be taken, i.e. an orientation to laughter. Laughter in second position, though, runs the risk that the intersubjectivity is interfered with, since it might be the case that the producer of the laughable did not intend his/her contribution to be taken as such. In that case, intersubjectivity might need to be restored (e.g. by expatiating 'that was not a joke'). This is particularly relevant for cases when laughter in next position is introduced by producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap, or with an ironic remark (technique 2). In this case, the producer of the laughable might be left unaware of what the laughable actually is: Intersubjectivity is interfered with.<sup>30</sup>

In taking the issue of intersubjectivity into account, another parallel to repair can be drawn: The mechanism of repair is at all times oriented to achieving or restoring intersubjectivity, as laughter in first position seems to be. The next-turn display of understanding a prior turn as laughable, however, seems to have the potential to interactionally achieve the opposite, namely interrupting intersubjectivity. Both the argument of frequency and intersubjectivity, point at laughter in second position as, in this sense, a dispreferred activity.

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<sup>30</sup> When laughter in second position is produced by uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post utterance laughter (technique 1), next-turn display of understanding of something as laughable in prior speaker's turn points to what the next speaker finds laughable in prior turn. This needs to be pointed out in order to give the producer of the laughable the opportunity to understand what the laughable actually is (as it is the case in data segment #4.4, where Lara repeats parts of Anke's previous turn with post-utterance laughter, thus clearly indicating what the laughable is). This activity would then achieve intersubjectivity in that the producer of laughter (S2) displays to the producer of the laughable (S1) that she found something laughable in his turn, and points to what this precisely is (I am indebted to Maria Egbert for this insightful comment). Nevertheless, the producer of the laughter still runs the risk that the laughable's producer does not 'get it'.

The next section deals with laughter as bound to context. It examines whether laughter is both context-free and context-sensitive.

#### **4.4. Context-sensitivity of Laughter: The (Ironical) Indication of Organizationally Relevant Roles as a Recognizable Laughter Source in Business Meetings**

As I have shown in section 4.3.1., the organization of laughter is context-free as the institutionality of talk is not constraining the organization of laughter in comparison to the organization in everyday interaction. From this analytic result, the question emerges of whether laughter can exploit, in an indexical way, details of the context for the emergence of laughter, and be, in that sense, context-sensitive. Jefferson (1974) talks about "recognizable [.. ] event[s] for laughter" (Jefferson 1974b: 11). Are there "recognizable events for laughter" that are specific for business meeting interaction? The cause for repair is described in literature as 'repairable' or, as a synonym, 'trouble source'. Typical trouble sources in talk are "[...] word replacement, repairs on person reference, and repairs on next-speaker selection." (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1977: 370). Are there, just as there are typical trouble sources, typical laughter sources? Demonstrably, as this study has shown earlier, both laughables and repairables are, when made relevant and oriented to in talk, defined by the subsequent action of the participants<sup>31</sup>, that is, their definition is both emic and retrospective. But are laughter sources pre-defined by context and setting? This section investigates laughter in a particular context and type of interaction. It seems that a setting can be exploited to create laughter sources, and that laughter in that sense is context-bound, as well as free of context. As this feature is one argument for the omnipresent occurrence of laughter, it is worthwhile to look at what laughers are oriented to in particular episodes.

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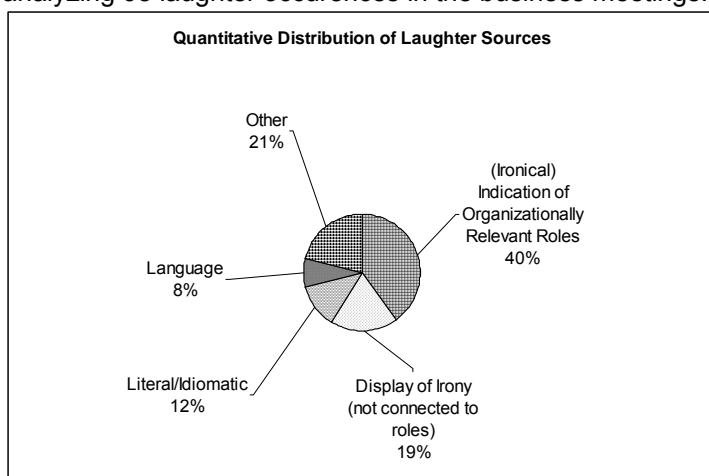
<sup>31</sup> Of course, both laughables and repairables can be left standing and not be oriented to.

When analyzing the 98 occurrences of laughter in business meetings, the orientation to organizationally relevant roles emerged as a typical laughter source<sup>32</sup>. In nearly half of the laughter instances (40%), the indication of work-related roles and identities constitutes "recognizable events for laughter" (Jefferson 1974b). From this frequency distribution, I conclude that this indication seems to be a typical laughter source in business meetings. In employing this resource, participants display the understanding of own or other's turn as laughable, interactionally point to a specific aspect of the institutional context, in particular work related roles and identities, and thus to the work environment. In that, laughter is context-sensitive as interactants can exploit certain aspects of the context as laughter sources. These aspects would not be employable as laughables in a different context.

The next three data segments serve to illustrate the most frequently occurring, and thus seemingly typical, laughter source in business meetings: The (sometimes ironic) indication of organizationally relevant roles for self and others.

Segment #4.7 shows how Udo, the team leader, ironically deals with both the institutional task of scheduling a meeting and his identity as the person highest in hierarchy. The segment is taken from the beginning of the meeting. Udo, the team leader, comments in his opening lines on the time slot that had been scheduled for the meeting. He designs his

<sup>32</sup> Although being the result of careful qualitative studies, a frequency count of laughter sources is problematic, as I have pointed out in reference to Schegloff (1993) in the introduction of this study (section 1), and can hardly be a denominator when analyzing laughter. Nevertheless, looking at laughter sources and their numerable distribution in business meetings reflects what laughers are oriented to in particular episodes. Below find a quantitative display of laughter sources found when analyzing 98 laughter occurrences in the business meetings:



turn clearly for Nora as the main recipient, which is visible in the direction of his gaze that does not waver from Nora during his whole stretch of talk. Also, Nora produces with no delay a second turn to his utterance. As the team's assistant, Nora is responsible for the scheduling of the meetings.

## Segment #4.7

LGH 020123, 0:01:40

001 Udo: gut.  
good.  
ok.  
(.)

002 (.)

003 Udo: .hh starten wir rein. hh \*ehm: (.) wir  
.hh start we into. hh \*ehm (.) we  
.hh let's get started hh \*ehm: (.) we

004 haben von (.) zehn bis (.) elf uhr dreissig zeit  
have from (.) ten to (.) eleven thirty time  
have scheduled time from (.) ten until (.) eleven

005-> eingeplant=um ehrlich zu sein ich wär nicht böS wenn  
scheduled=to be honest I would not angry if  
thirty=to be honest I wouldn't be angry if  
\*Udo smiles \*\*Robin, Madita,  
Ulrike turn gaze  
towards Nora

006-> wir n bisschen ffr\*üher fertig [werd[en]f\*\*  
we a little\* fear\*lier ready [ge [t]f\*\*  
we finished a little\* earlier

007 Robin: [hhhhe  
008 Ulrike: [hhehhe[hhehhe  
009 Nora: [wir  
[we

010 PLANen immer so viel ein=manchmal brauchen wirs  
SCHEDule always so much= sometimes need we it  
always schedule that much time=sometimes we need

011 manchmal ni[ch  
sometimes no[t  
it sometimes we don't

012 Udo: [is ja richtig. nee. ich- eh- einfach  
[is PRT right. no. I- eh- just

013 hintergrund=eh das was ich ihnen am montag vorgelegt  
background=eh that what I youPLF on Monday presented  
background=eh that what I presented to you on

014 habe  
have  
Monday

The laughable occurs in line 5. Udo's statement that he would not be angry if they finished the meeting earlier than the scheduled 90 minutes elicits laughter by some participants. The fact that Udo elicits laughter is something that has to be accounted for. This is done by (1) smiling, (2) smile voice (line 5, on "früher" ("earlier")), and (3) employing irony. Udo's statement does carry elements of irony, a feature of talk that has been shown to mark a first turn as a laughable: "The response of the addressee to recognized irony is routinely laughter" (Clift 1999: 538). Research labels an utterance as "classically ironic" (Hutchby 2001: 131) if it is "designed to imply precisely the opposite of what it states [...], [working] as a disputatious move through the speaker's ability to claim that his interlocutor has in fact made such a statement." (ibid:131). When Udo states that he "wouldn't be angry if" the meeting did not take as long as scheduled he does imply something opposite to what he actually states in the sense that he is trying to say that he hopes the meeting will only take a short time.

Among the elements of irony are, according to Clift, a "mismatch between [...] expectation and what is actually said" (ibid.:536), and a 'dramaturgical flavour' (ibid: 546). Interlinked with both these aspects is Udo's organizational role: The mismatch of expectation lies in Udo's organizational role as the team's leader and his choice of words as well as his displayed stance on meeting time. Being the person highest in organizational hierarchy, it does not matter for Udo how much time was scheduled for the meeting – he is in the position to set an end point to it at all times. Further, the word "böös" (line 3) stems from a register used for and by children. In addition, it has a dialectical flavor to it (the standard form being "böse"). This omission of the last vowel diminishes the word even more, making the gap between expected behavior of a 'leader' and actual choice of words even greater. The dramaturgical flavor as an aspect of irony lies in the way Udo produces his turn. He fixes his glance on Nora, almost staring at her. He further stages modesty by pretending that Nora has the power to make him sit during a meeting for the whole time. Due to the organizational roles this is of course not a reality. Udo's modesty is supported by the phrase "um ehrlich zu sein" ("to be honest"). Edwards (2005) describes the English equivalent of "um ehrlich zu sein" – to be honest - as

"[...] optional members' ways (among others) of asserting sincerity and independence as the basis of what they are saying on occasions in which something functional, normative, or invested is expectable" (Edwards 2005: 372).

Udo's "um ehrlich zu sein" strengthens both the mismatch between expectation and what is actually being said as well as the dramaturgical flavor of his utterance. The laughable he produces serves to dismantle his identity as the hierarchy highest; his humbleness and personal involvement is clearly staged for that purpose. Thus, the irony can be claimed to be a means of transforming his turn into a laughable and as a way to imply that he *is* the leader.

Ulrike and Robin orient to Udo's contribution as a laughable; they produce laugh particles at an early recognition point in overlap (lines 7 and 8). Nora, though, takes the team leader's utterance to be a complainable and exculpates her timing for the meeting. Note that she shifts the responsibility to the general team, applying the institutional "we": "we always schedule so much time", line 9. Subsequently, Udo produces something similar to an apology in line 12, thereby ratifying her complaint.

The previous segment has shown how the ironic, playful orientation to organizational roles can be used as a resource for laughter. Udo's role as leader and the rights that come with that organizational role have been singled out as an element of the context, and have been exploited for laughter. In collaboratively doing so, the participants point to the institutional setting.

The next segment also exploits one feature of the institutional context and employs it as a laughable. Madita, the student worker, reports that she has just returned from vacation (line 2/3). She does so smilingly, signaling that her turn constitutes a laughable (laughter in first position). Laura, employing the resources of Madita's turn, produces a subsequent laughable in position A, and uses the work-related identities 'team members who (have to) work' and 'team members who are on vacation' as a resource for teasing Madita. The teasing is joined by Melanie (line 5) and Simon, the departmental leader (line 8).

## Segment #4.8

LGH 011013, 0:23:36

001-> Madita: .hh ehm *ɛ*ich hab auch nich so furchtba viel zu erzähl  
*.hh ehm ɛI have also not so terribly much to tell*  
*I neither have terribly much to tell*

002 weil ich grade aus dem urlaub zurückgekommen  
*because I just out of the holiday came-backSEPV*  
*because I have just come back from vacation*

003 bin $\epsilon$ , hhhe  
*are $\epsilon$ , hhhe*

004-> Laura: *\*Laura nods*  
 ausser [*\*dass du* ] imma [noch so braun gebrannt]  
*except [*\*that you* ] yet [still so brown burned ]*  
*except that you are still so tanned*

005-> Melanie: [wie man SIEHT= ] [ ]  
*[as one SEEs= ] [ ]*  
*as one can see*

006 Madita: [=hahahehehaha ]  
*\*Laura turns*  
*gaze from Madita*  
*into the round,*  
*opens her arms*

007 Laura: [<bist> ]du [passt nicht hier\*- du  
 [<are> ]you [fit not here\*- you  
 you don't fit here- you

008-> Simon: [schlimma geht das nich]= [ ]  
*[worse goes that not]= [ ]*  
*it couldn't be any worse*

009 Madita: [=HAHAHhahahahheheh .hhh  
 010 hehah

011 Laura: passt gar nich hier rein ]  
*fit PRT not here in]*  
*don't fit in here at all*

012 Madita: h ha°haha° ] .dhhh

By producing her turn with smile voice and post utterance laughter, Madita displays that her turn is to be understood as laughable (laughter in first position). In line 1, Madita uses "furchtbar viel" ("terribly much"), in an ironical way: In fact she does not have to report anything at all, since she just returned from her vacation. In that way, her turn carries two meanings, and conveys a gap between the said ('I have only a little bit to report') and the implicated ('I have nothing to report because I was on vacation'). This is in line with Kotthoff's (2002) take on irony as a phenomenon of multiple voicing.



The fact that Madita does not have much to tell could have been left unsaid. By announcing this fact (ironically), Madita introduces the laughable. She upgrades this introduction by stressing "urlaub" ("vacation"). With phonetical tools (stressing "auch" ("also") as a connector to the previous contribution by the apprentice [not shown in the transcript], stressing "Urlaub" ("vacation") and smile voice) Madita achieves a 'bragging' tone, a tone which fits with the subsequent teasing: In line 4, Laura uses the resources of Madita's turn and matches her subsequent turn grammatically to Madita's prior turn. She begins a round of friendly<sup>33</sup> teasing by exploiting Madita's complexion (line 4), thus singling Madita out from the other team members as the one person with a skin color that is connected to persons who have been in the sun a lot, e.g. on vacation. Melanie in line 5 also draws on Madita's outer appearance in overlap to Laura ("wie man sieht" ("as one can see")), and using the grammatical resources of Madita's turn to complete it both grammatically and collaboratively. In designing her contribution as if it could have been produced by Madita, Melanie's gives her turn an ironic tone. Further, this contribution has a dramaturgical flavor (Clift 1999) as it is produced in an overt tone: The stressing of the verb "SIEHT" ("SEEs"), gives the contribution almost something reproachful.

In line 7, Laura produces a turn further contributing to the round of jocular teasing, as does Simon in line 8. Both their utterances constitute extreme case formulations (Simon: "schlimma geht das nicht" ("it couldn't be any worse"), Laura: "du passt gar nicht hier rein" ("you don't fit in here at all")), a crucial factor in interactionally accomplishing irony (Edwards 2000). Also, both their turns are in place of laughter. With their verbal jibes and jeering remarks, Laura and Simon escalate the joke and laughter.

In their teasing, the participants imply something like 'we do not want/need to be reminded that YOU went on vacation while WE were working', thus making identities connected to 'work' and 'play' relevant, while at the same time dividing the team in US and YOU. It appears that Madita has indeed a tanned complexion, as three participants remark on it. This alone, though, is not a reason to single her out. The stretch of talk analyzed here (line 4-11) shows that "teasing attributes certain deviant actions/identities which are mapped onto (an) identity(s) which recipient actually possesses" (Drew 1987: 219), as Laura, Melanie and

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<sup>33</sup> It is indeed a friendly tease, and this becomes observable in the fact that Madita is the first one to join the laughter in line 6.

Simon employ the categorization "suntanned person" for Madita to attribute her with the identity of someone who rested while others were working. This attribution becomes the resource for the laughable:

"A procedure can be identified in teasing, whereby a kind of innocent activity or category membership which is occasioned, usually teased person's prior turn(s), is then transformed in the tease into a deviant activity or category. Something which is normal, unremarkable, etc., is turned into something abnormal." (Drew 1987: 244)

The identity of someone who has been on vacation would not be deviant, 'teasable', or laughable when made relevant in a purely everyday setting with no references to work. In this spate of talk, the identity 'a colleague just returned from holiday' is being exploited for laughter. In that, as the analysis shows, laughter is sensitive to context. The laughter here exploits, in an indexical way, details of the context for the emergence of laughter. Although it is not the institutionality per se that is pointed to, identities which are related to the institutionality are used for producing laughter.

The next segment is a further example of how participants orient to the business context when generating laughter. Again, organizational roles relevant in the institutional environment are ironically oriented to as laughter sources, and are employed for both producing and laughter.

The team discusses an upcoming task: They have been asked to give a short presentation of the areas of responsibility within the team at the approaching team retreat. The team is generally displeased with the task and has displayed some reluctance to get on with it. By the time the team retreat will take place, Lara, the head of the team, will have left the team. In line 2 Lara asks her subordinates whether they all know what they are supposed to do, to then produce laughter in first turn by employing smile voice and post utterance laughter (lines 4/6). The team members decline to laugh along.

## Segment #4.9

LGH 010829, 0:05:19

001 Corinna: .HH HH[ ( ) ]

002 Lara: [also ihr ] wisst schon was ihr machen solltet,  
[well youPLIF] know PRT what youPLIF make should,  
well you do know what you are supposed to do

003 ich mein i bin gar net dabei?  
I mean I am PRT not there?  
I mean I am not even there then

004-> [ £>( dann is ja )£< ]  
[ £>( then is PRT )£< ]  
(well that's just)

005 Corinna: [(ich weiß nur eins)( )]  
[(I know only one) ( )]  
[(I know only one thing) ( )]

006-> Lara: wunnerbar? hhh hehö?  
marvelous? hhh hehö?  
\*Lara turns gaze towards  
Nora, then to Corinna

007 Nora: die blöde [org\*-  
the stupid [org\*-  
that stupid org-(anizational department)  
[\*Corinna rubs her face,  
talking through her hand

008 Corinna: [\*ich weiß gar nix und ich will mich  
[\*I know PRT nothing and I want myself  
[I know nothing and I don't want to

009 diesem chaos nich\* anschließen  
this chaos not\* associate  
associate with this chaos  
\*Corinna turns gaze  
towards Lara

010 (3.0)\*

011-> Lara: du £stehst auf der l(h)iste im übrig(hhhh)en(hh) [hehehe  
you £stand on the l(h)ist by the wa(hhh)y(hh) [hehehe  
you are on that list by the way hehehe

012 Corinna: [ich  
[I

013 weiß. simon hat mich gestern auch noch mal deutlich  
know. ((Name))has me yesterday too again clearly  
I know. Simon has pointed that out to me yesterday

014 darauf hin gewiesen.  
hereon pointed out.  
very clearly

By formulating the question in line 1, Lara is doing 'being leader' – she executes her right to query her subordinates whether they are performing the tasks they have been given. Lara addresses the whole team with the plural pronoun "ihr", the German plural form of "you". In that way she is being indirect and not indexically personal. Applying the conjunctive form

"machen solltet" ("should do"), she draws attention to the impositions the organization demands of them. At this point, it seems almost as if 'power becomes too naked' – although in a direct, uninhibited manner, Lara tells her colleagues what to do. Subsequently to action, Lara produces laughter in first turn (lines 4-6): She announces smilingly that she will not be present for the team retreat. The potency of the laughable - the gleeful announcement of the fact that Lara herself will not be present at the team retreat and hence is free of obligations for it - is enhanced by the description of this circumstance as "dann is ja wunnerbar" ("well that's just marvelous"), line 6. This constitutes an extreme case formulation, thus interactionally accomplishing irony (Edwards 2000).

The laughable produced by Lara is not reciprocated with laughter by the other participants. Corinna overlaps Lara in line 5 with a turn that is marked as contrasting Lara's question ("you know what you have to do", Lara, line 2, versus "I only know one thing", Corinna, line 5), interrupting herself when presumably realizing that she is talking in overlap to Lara. Nora, who also does not join Lara's laughter, complains about the "stupid org(anizational department)".<sup>34</sup>

Corinna then restarts her turn from line 5 in line 8, and states in a serious manner with no traces of laughter or smile that she knows nothing and "doesn't want to associate with this chaos". After a rather long gap of 3.0 seconds, Lara reminds Corinna that she is "on the list" (line 11), referring to the list handed out by the departmental leader, naming all those team members who are supposed to present their areas of responsibility at the team retreat. In contrast to the general inquiry in line 2, this turn now starts with the German singular version of "you" ("du"), thereby singling out Corinna as the recipient. This display of leadership is again, like in line 3, followed by the production of laughter in first position signaled by smile voice, in-speech-laugh-particles and post-utterance laughter, and, again, this laughter is not reciprocated by the co-participants.

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<sup>34</sup> Note that, although Lara is the team's boss and the initiator of the gleeful laughter, she is not taken as personally responsible for the impositions. This becomes observable in line 7 (Nora: "die blöde org", "the stupid org[anizational department]) and line 9 (Corinna: "diesem Chaos", "to this chaos"). If someone is to be taken accountable for the hassle it seems to be Simon – in line 13 Corinna mentions that he has "pointed out" something to her.

Lara's laughter in first position clearly does not constitute a laugh invitation (Jefferson 1984b) and is not taken by her co-participants as such. She rather displays complacency with the fact that, while Corinna (and the others) have to deal with 'being on the list', she – Lara – is free of such obligations, and she 'rubs it in'. Due to her organizational role as the leader (and the fact that she will not be with the team much longer), Lara can produce this gleeful laughter, and due to their institutional roles as subordinates (who are stuck with an unpleasant task), the other team members cannot join it. The identities which are related to the institutionality and thus reflect elements of it are used for producing and declining laughter.

In the data segments #4.7 - #4.9, the indication of organizationally relevant roles as one element of the institutional context have been shown to constitute laughter sources in business meetings. The participants here exploit details of the context in an indexical way for producing laughter. In employing work-related roles and identities as laughter sources, the participants point at the institutional setting. The qualitative and quantitative analyses yield to a typicality of this particular laughter source in business interaction. Thus, laughter has been revealed to be both context-free in regard to its sequential organization, and context-sensitive, as laughter has been shown to emerge frequently from typical laughter sources that are context-bound in so far as they make relevant a specific aspect of the institutional business context to then exploit it for laughter.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

This study has contributed to the investigation of laughter in talk-in-interaction, with a particular focus on business interaction. It has pursued research questions connected to laughter being an ubiquitous element of interaction through (1) looking at the different positionings of laughter in talk, (2) investigating issues of preference and disaffiliation for one positioning or the other, and (3) examining laughter as context-free and context-sensitive. Since the organization of laughter seems to show some parallels to the mechanism of repair, this paper has compared the two activities when appropriate and drawn on analytic results from the study of repair to strengthen the analysis.

The paper defines a laughable – the source for laughter in talk - as indexical, emic and retrospective. Laughter relative to its laughable can be positioned in two different places: (A) *Laughter in first position* (same-turn display of something laughable) and (B) *'Laughter in second position'* (next-turn display of something laughable). In position (A) a producer displays his/her understanding of something in his/her own turn as laughable. This can be achieved in talk through verbal and/or nonverbal activities (e.g. smiles, facial expressions, body movements), which hint at the fact that the speaker indicates a laughable meaning to his/her utterance. With laughter in position (B) another interactant than the producer of the laughable displays his/her understanding of something in the previous turn as laughable. This can be achieved by two major techniques: (1) *uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post utterance laughter*, and (2) *producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap, or ironic remark*.

When examining laughter initiations by self (laughter in first position: A) and other (laughter in second position: B), this paper claims that the self-initiation of laughter, like the self-initiation of repair, is a preferred option in interaction. This claim is backed up by a frequency argument – 67% of laughter occurrences happen in first position – and analyses on the interactional level: A sense of challenge is inherent to the next-turn display of understanding something as a laughable (B). Laughter in second position is a disaffiliative activity. It tends to elicit no subsequent laughter from the producer of the laughable. This paper claims that the sense of disaffiliation and challenge of laughter in second position is connected to the issue of intersubjectivity: While laughter in first position achieves intersubjectivity (the turn's producer displays to the co-participants how a contribution is to be taken), laughter in second position, increases the possibility that intersubjectivity is interfered with (the producer of the laughable might not have intended his/her contribution to have a laughable connotation). In the latter case, interactants might need to restore intersubjectivity. This proves particularly relevant for cases when laughter in second position is introduced by technique (2).

As a third point, this paper has shown laughter as both context-free and context-sensitive. It has done so through analyzing the technical details of displaying something as a laughable particularly in first position, and revealing that these show no difference, no matter whether they are performed in an dyadic everyday or multiperson institutional setting. Laughter seems mostly to be of overriding position when it comes to settings. This yields the analytic result that the organization of laughter is context-free. It is also context-sensitive, though, as a frequency distribution of laughter sources in business meetings suggests: The indication of roles and identities relevant in a business context are an eminent vehicle for laughter in the data. In making these work-related identities relevant, participants display the understanding of own or other's turn as laughable, and interactionally point to a specific aspect of the institutional context. In that, laughter is context-sensitive as it exploits certain aspects of the context as laughter sources.

As interactional achievement of laughter, the study shows that by initiating laughter in second position, interactants can achieve disaffiliation. Further, analyses reveal that laughter has both the capacity to ensure and interfere with intersubjectivity.

The paper has used the comparison between the organization of laughter to the mechanism of repair in interaction and pointed to certain parallels in order to strengthen both the analytic results and the argument of the omnipresent potential of laughter. Below, the resulting comparison is summarized in a table:

Graph #4.4, *Comparison of Laughter and Repair*

	<b>Laughter</b>	<b>Repair</b>
<b>Positionings (Initiation)</b>	<p>Laughter in first position, same-turn display of understanding sth as laughable (A)</p> <p>Laughter in second position, next-turn display of understanding sth as laughable (B) through:  <u>Technique 1</u>  Uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post utterance laughter</p>	<p>Self-initiated, self completed repair</p> <p>Other-initiated repair through:  <u>Specific repair initiators</u>  Interrogative pronouns such as 'what', 'where', 'who' etc, or the (partial) repeat of the trouble source (Schegloff, Jefferson, Sacks 1977) give clear indications towards the nature of the trouble source in prior speaker's turn, and are stronger than 'open'-class repair initiators, as well as preferred over them (Schegloff et al. 1977).</p>



	<b>Laughter</b>	<b>Repair</b>
<b>Positionings (Initiation)</b> (continued)	Laughter in second position displayed through  <u>Technique 2</u> Producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap, or ironic remark	Other-initiated repair through  <u>'Open' class repair initiators</u> Initiators that treat the whole of a prior turn as way problematic, such as 'pardon?', 'sorry?', 'what?'
<b>Preference</b>	Laughter in first position preferred over laughter in second position  Laughter in second position: Technique 1 preferred over Technique 2	Self-initiated repair preferred over other-initiated repair  Specific repair initiators preferred over open class repair initiators
<b>Sources</b>	Laughable (some seem to be typical for certain settings, here shown for business interaction: Indication of organizational roles)	Repairable (Problems of speaking, hearing, and understanding, Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson 1977)

As analyses have shown, both laughables and repairables can occur in all positions in talk, and nothing is, in fact, excludable as a source for each activity. They further share the aspect of preference for self-initiation. Also, their 'techniques' for initiation correspond. These arguments, as the analyses of this study reveal, yield to the analytic result that laughter, just like repair, has an omnipresent potential for occurrence.

## Chapter 5

### **Vöge II: Local Identity Processes in Business Meetings Displayed Through Laughter in Complaint Sequences**

This chapter investigates how hierarchy and seniority are brought into existence in talk-in-interaction. Using the method of Conversation Analysis (CA), the study reveals that laughter in complaint sequences is a means to indicate organizational hierarchical identities. 15 hours of videotaped business meeting build the basis for this study.

The combined activity 'indirect complaint+laughter' plays a central role in both the interactional co-construction and realization of hierarchy and seniority. In complaint sequences in which complainant and complainees are on the same hierarchy level, laughter enables the complainant to implicitly express potential indignations the complainees' conduct may have caused by presenting those as laughable. In cases of considerable hierarchical disparity between complainant (subordinate) and complainees (superior), laughter serves as one tool in carrying out the actual complaint, so that the complainant does not have to verbally express any misconduct. Further, laughter is a tool for the complainant to seek and for the co-present recipients to convey alignment and affiliation.

#### **5.1. Introduction**

This article analyses how laughter in indirect complaint sequences plays a key role in identity work in business meetings. Indirect complaints are complaints in which the complainees is a non-present third party (see also Boxer 1991, Edwards 2005). This study is exclusively concerned with indirect complaints. The activity 'complaining+laughter' provides rich resources for the participants in terms of shaping their own and others' local identity in terms of hierarchy and seniority. The data for the study are taken from 15 hours of videotaped business meetings. The methodological framework is conversation analysis.

The research questions this paper pursues are concerned with the interactional establishment of hierarchy and seniority in business teams. The article looks at whether hierarchy can be 'laughed into existence' during indirect complaint sequences. Of course, the hierarchical and organizational positions are, on a macro-level, a fact for the participants, defined by work contracts and duration of employment. The present study, though, looks at

how these macro-level facts are brought about in interaction; how they are oriented to and thus 'made' a reality on a micro-level in talk.

The activity 'complaining' or 'talking negatively' about a non-present colleague seems to be a particularly problematic one in a business setting, presumably due to the organizational restrictions in regard to the local identities. These constraints could be one reason that, when complaining occurs, it is recurrently accompanied by laughter. This fact alludes to the question of how central the role of laughter is in 'doing being indirect' during complaints.

Defining 'complaints' is a difficult task since, this interactional activity

"[...] elude[s] formal definition, and remain a largely normative and vernacular, rather than technical, category. That is to say, characterizing something as a *complaint* [...] is properly understood as part of the phenomenon, part of the practices in which people themselves may use words to construct the nature of things."

(Edwards 2005: 7)

Sacks (1995, Part I LC4) draws special attention to the fact that complaints in talk can be marked as such retrospectively, in other words: Any contribution in talk has the potential to be taken by the recipient(s) as a complaint. Research on complaining has shown that complaint sequences unfold in an adjacency pair (Dersley and Wotton 2000, Drew 1998, Pomerantz 1984, Schegloff 1988) in which the complaint is the first pair part, the initial action which makes a next action relevant. Drew & Curl (forthcoming) report on the development of complaint sequences as multilayered and more complex than an adjacency pair. However, a complaint (within a complaint sequence) is an initial action in a pair. The paired next action is preferably aligning and affiliating with the complaint (on a differentiation between alignment and affiliation, see Stivers 2008). As the analysis of the complaint sequences in business meetings has shown, both initiating and affiliating with the complaint in business meetings can be done via laughter.

Laughter has been studied to have an impact on numerous activities in interaction. The ways in which participants can display affiliation and alignment with preceding talk via the production of subsequent laughter has been examined by Schenkein (1972), O'Donnell & Adams (1983), Sanders (2003), and Osvaldsson (2004). In talk about trouble, Jefferson (1984b) shows how laughter is a means for the delivering party to display "trouble resistance". On laughter during complaint sequences, Edwards (2005) refers to Jefferson (1984b) and describes how laughter makes it possible for complainants to complain with 'tongue-in-cheek', but not in a lamenting way. "There is a tendency in making complaints, as with invitation refusals and 'dispreferred' actions generally, to project oneself as doing it reluctantly, or only through necessity." (Edwards 2005: 24). Laughter is a means to accomplish this.

With the exception of Edwards (2005), though, no research on the combination of the two activities 'complaining' and 'laughing' has been conducted. The present study contributes to the understudied area of laughter in complaint sequences, since this particular combination is rich with possibilities in terms of doing local identity work in institutional settings. Within this combined activity it is possible to analyse how participants co-construct hierarchy and seniority, categories that are mostly difficult to pinpoint at such a micro-level.

Local identities in terms of hierarchy and seniority are vitally shaped through laughter in complaint sequences. Laughter is a central tool when constructing identities in business meetings for self and others:

"The concept of identity [...] can be variously specified, for example, as an independent variable accounting for participants' use of particular linguistic or [talk-in-interaction] devices; as a means of referring to and making inferences about self and other, [and] as a constructed display of group membership [...]." (Zimmerman 1998: 87).

This paper looks at how laughter in complaint sequences is used as such a talk-in-interaction device. As this study reveals, the combined activity 'complaint+laughter' can indicate hierarchical disparities. By achieving indirectness and implicitness through laughter, subordinate team members are enabled to complain about superiors. By the mere mentioning of a superior's name+laughter, participants can co-construct a complainable identity for

superiors. The bigger the hierarchical difference between complainant and complaine, the more central laughter is in realizing the complaint.

Laughter in complaint sequences can further be employed to demonstrate seniority via making complaints about non-present third parties whose deficiencies are shared knowledge in the team. Seniority seems to be something that even a person high up in the organizational hierarchy needs to acquire and work for. When a new team leader joins the team, organizational roles need to be re-negotiated as the interactional hierarchy is not yet established. Laughter is a key factor in doing that, and this study exhibits how.

## **5.2. The Body of Data**

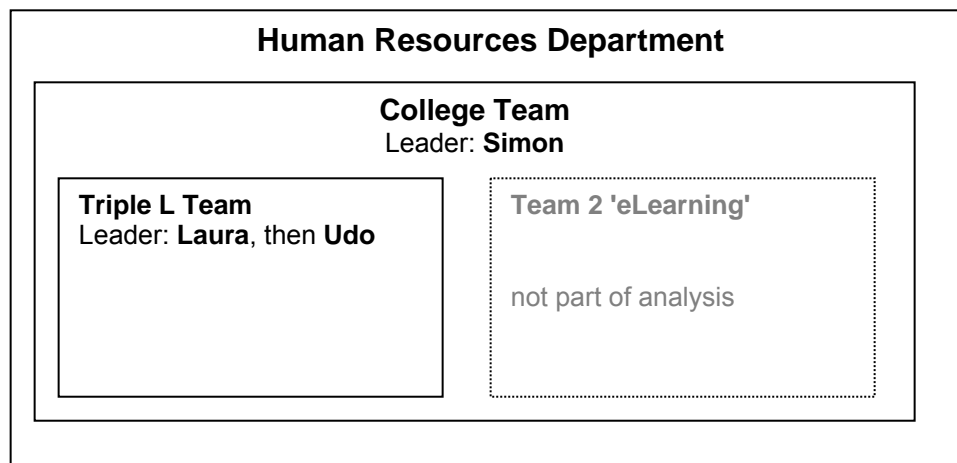
The data basis consists of 15 hours of video, comprising 14 business meetings. Within these meetings, 99 incidents of laughter were analyzed and searched for complaint sequences, which resulted in a total of 19 cases of complaints+laughter.

The data for this study were collected in a major international company, located in Germany, which deals with financial services. Weekly meetings of a team within the Human Resources department were videotaped during a period of eight months. In these meetings, the team discusses organizational matters such as planning of forthcoming seminars and/or events, schedules of presence and absence, individual assignments and responsibilities and news from upper management. The meetings range in duration from 40 minutes to 1 ½ hours.

The Triple L Team<sup>35</sup> is part of a division called 'College Team', and as a headquarter section responsible for the development and implementation of trainings at all hierarchy levels. The team members interact on a daily basis and know each other well. During the tapings the Triple L Team was subjected to a leader change: Its boss (Lara) left the company and a new one (Udo) was employed. For illustration:

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<sup>35</sup> All names, locations and labels are anonymized. The name "Triple L" stands for 'LifeLongLearning', since the team is part of the 'College' and hence responsible for learning within the company.

Graph #5.1, *Structure of Triple L Team within Human Resources Department*

Out of the 19 complaint sequences found in the data, nine complaint incidents are complaints about a non-present third party<sup>36</sup>, and three complaint sequences are of direct nature, that is the target of the complaint (complainee) is present. The remaining seven cases are of a miscellaneous nature, some of them in a marginal area between negative assessment and complaint.

### 5.3. How Hierarchy Shows in Complaints Through The Orientation Towards Laughter

Complaints in a business setting can be a difficult undertaking. The epistemic rights (Heritage and Raymond 2005) of complaining – namely who complains about what to whom in which manner– and the possible consequences of this activity bear different risks than the same activity does in an everyday setting. The institutional setting imposes certain restrictions to the interaction (see this study, Heinemann, forth., and Ruusuvaori, forth.): An open complaint about a superior's misconduct could result in drawbacks for the employee. In contrast to everyday settings, organizational roles and organizational hierarchy can play a decisive role for the interactional trajectories in an institutional business setting. This constraint might be

<sup>36</sup> Excluded from this definition are complaints about non-human third parties such as 'the light in the elevator' or 'the room in which seminar XY takes place'. Cases of this nature are collected among "miscellaneous cases".

one reason why most complaints produced by a person lower in hierarchy than the complainee involve laughter, and why direct complaints, that is complaints that are made against a person present during the interaction, are realized in a very implicit way<sup>37</sup>. The data reveals that all team members do complain occasionally, and that there is no tendency of only team leaders or particular team members complaining 'all the time'.

In order to show how laughter is a key factor in co-constructing indirect complaints in a business setting, and how it serves to show hierarchical self- and other-categorizations within these, research about complaints in everyday settings serves as a comparison. Drew (1998) describes in his study on complaints about non-present third parties in private telephone conversations, certain features for indirect complaints. Of course, there are essential differences in the data of Drew's study and the data to this study. First, Drew looks at complaints in an everyday setting while this study looks into complaints in business meetings. Naturally, the contextual restrictions of this setting are of a different nature, e.g., the consequences direct complaining about the team leader's conduct could have for an employee. Second, the data Drew bases his findings on are two-party-telephone calls, whereas this study looks at multiperson meetings. As a logical result from this setting, the boundaries of the sequences and the adjacency pair structure of complaint sequences might not be as apparently observable as it is when only two interlocutors are involved. However, comparing the findings of everyday to institutional settings is worthwhile, as it helps to see patterns in the activity of complaining through laughter in business meetings.

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<sup>37</sup> A random view of the data (2 hours) has shown that direct complaints do occur, but rather seldom. No clear tendency of whether all direct complaints are done top-down or without laughter could be identified. However, analysis has shown that the direct complaints that do occur are realized in a very implicit way, two of them by employing "warum" (why). For more on the complainable nature of "warum" see Egbert and Vöge (2008).

Drew lists the following three features for indirect complaints in everyday dyadic interaction:

- Complaint sequences are bounded sequences: A beginning and an ending is identifiable
- There are explicit formulations of the misconduct to be found, the reported incidence is (mostly) committed by a third (non-present) party
- At some point the complainant expresses moral indignation about the incident

The first feature has only a limited verifiability for complaint sequences in multiperson business meetings – and indeed any kind of complaint sequences. For everyday settings, Traverso (forth.) and Drew & Curl (forth.) show that complaint sequences in fact evolve beyond the boundaries of adjacency pairs. In institutional business environments, Günthner (2000), Egbert & Vöge (2008), Heinemann (forth.), Ruusuvuori (forth.), and this study show that in complaint sequences the boundaries are rather fluent and seem to develop step by step. While a beginning and an ending can be made out to a certain extent, the complaint sequences in business meetings are still not as bounded as Drew (1998) shows for his cases. Instead, they rather build an episode which the participants co-construct.

The "explicit formulations of the transgression" (Drew 1998: 306) that the complaint sequences in every day settings exhibit in order to alleviate recipients' affiliation with the complaint, do not occur in the complaints in business meetings. No matter the hierarchical difference between complainant and complaine, participants in business settings seem to retreat from openly stated, expressive complaints and rather employ laughter and laughables in order to co-construct complaints. However, it can be observed that the bigger the hierarchical difference between complainant and complaine, the more central laughter is in realizing the complaint.

The third feature Drew observes, explicit moral indignation, also seems to be hinted at by initiating and/or sharing laughter. Analysis shows that laughter is a central tool for recipients of the complaint to affiliate with, without making the affiliation too explicit. All these observations speak in support of the assumption that laughter is a means for participants to achieve indirectness.



The following graph offers an overview of the comparison between complaints in an everyday and business setting:

Graph #5.2, *Overview Comparison: Complaints in Everyday Settings (Drew 1998) and in Business Settings (this study)*

*Complaints in everyday settings*

The reported incidence is (mostly) committed by a third non-present party.

Complaint sequences are bounded sequences: A beginning and an ending is identifiable.

There are explicit formulations of the misconduct to be found.

At some point the complainant expresses moral indignation about the incident.

***Complaints in business setting***

**The reported incidence is (mostly) committed by a third non-present party.**

**Boundaries are rather fluid. Participants collaborate in realizing a complaint, they habitually co-construct the complaint.**

**Through laughables and laughter, the participants stay on an implicit level and do not formulate explicit formulations.**

**Explicit moral indignation is not expressed. Instead the indignation is hinted at by initiating or sharing laughter. This expression of indignation can be affiliated to with laughter by recipients of complaint.**

In the following, two types of complaints are discussed: Complaints on the same hierarchy level (SHL complaints) and complaints from down to top (DT complaints). Laughter in both types of complaints is analyzed in regards to how it helps to co-construct the complaint, how it influences the complainant's identity in terms of trouble resistance, how it displays the complainees behavior as complainable and how it is a major tool in orienting to hierarchy.

Complaints on the same hierarchy level – Laughter as a tool for creating complainant's identity as 'trouble resistant' and for seeking affiliation

The following two data extracts show complaints on the same hierarchy level (SHL complaints). Analyses reveal that these are done comparatively straight forward and open: Identifiable boundaries to the complaint sequences are observable, and the transgression is implicitly hinted at by making it a laughable. In all complaint sequences the participants collaborate in evolving the complaint and affiliate with the complaint via laughter. In the segment displayed below, the role of laughter in a SHL complaint sequence becomes evident. The complainees is explicitly named, the transgression is reported in the form of a laughable, and the recipients affiliate with the complaint by joining the laughter.

Some background information to the sequence: Nora invites Corinna to deliver the team report in the upcoming monthly videoconference with a cooperating team overseas. These videoconferences are called "team meeting" by the Triple L Team and are held in English. The team members take turns in doing the somehow dreaded report. Melanie, whose turn it was for the upcoming videoconference, will not be presenting the report due to her absence on that day. In line 10 Nora complains about Melanie. She then launches into a complaint story employing direct reported speech. Through this she tells the others about Melanie's misdemeanor, namely Melanie's refusal to do the next team report in the video conference. It is an important ethnographic fact that the complaining party (Nora) and the non-present complainees (Melanie) are on the same hierarchical level, but the complaining party has much more seniority than the complainees.

In the following, the seating order with the position of each team member is illustrated:



- 009 Robin: *\*Corinna rests head in hand, gaze towards Nora*  
*\*am mon[tag*  
*\*on mon[day*  
 [ *\*Nora bends head,*  
*gaze to Robin*
- 010-> Nora: [ *\*eigentlich† müsstes melanie machn.*  
 [ *\*actually† should it ((Name)) make.*  
 [ *actually Melanie should do it*
- 013 Corinna: ja,  
 yes,  
*\*moves head towards Madita*
- 014 Nora: uh *\*fweil sie sich letztens so*  
 uh *\*fbecause she RFX lastly so*  
*because she refused so much last time*
- 015 *f*g(h)ewei(h)gert(h)h(h)atf hab ich gedacht  
*f*r(h)efu(h)sed(h) h(h)asf have I thought  
 I thought
- 016 °(ich [geb ihr) ( )°  
 °(I [give her) ( )°  
 I give her ( )
- 017 Corinna: [fhat sief?  
 [fhas shef?
- 018 Nora: joa. naja ich mein das macht °jeder von un[s°.=  
 yea. well I mean that makes °each of u [s°.  
 yea well I say everyone of us does that
- 019 Corinna: [°ja°  
 [°yes°  
*\*Nora mimics Melanie's assumed defense*  
*with hands in front of her body*  
 \*\* Corinna smiles
- 020 Nora: =\*I:CH \*\*bin nich da.  
 =\*I: am not there.  
*\*Robin looks down on calendar*  
 on the table
- 021 Robin: \*e[e:hhehe
- 022 Nora: [°okee. sacht ja auch gar keiner dass du jetzt  
 [°okay. says PRT too PRT no one that youit no↑  
 alright. no one says you should  
 machen sollst°.  
 make should°.  
 to do it now
- 023 (0.5)
- 024 Corinna: also wir haben nochmal n sit in davor.  
 so we have again a sit in before.  
 so we do have a sit in before

Although Nora produces the turn in line 10 with a slightly irritated and accusatory tone of voice, the complaint remains implicit: It is realized with the particle "eigentlich" ("actually")+ conjunctive form ("müsstes Melanie machen"). In her work on the English usage of the token 'actually', Clift (2001) remarks "*actually* is used to display the speaker's treatment of a TCU

[turn constructional unit] as potentially informative for the other party and as contrasting, either explicitly or implicitly, with what preceded it." (Clift 2001: 266). With "eigentlich", Nora contrasts her turn in line 10 with what she has informed her colleague(s) about earlier, namely that Corinna should do the next team report. She states that it was 'actually' Melanie's obligation to do the report and thus implies that Melanie does not carry out her organizational duties.

In another way Nora's complaint is rather straight forward, though, in so far as the complainees is explicitly named ("Melanie"), and a narrative account of Melanie's the complainable behavior is given, using direct reported speech (lines 16-22) which has been shown as a device to construct complaints (Haakana 2007, Holt 1996). Nora initiates the reproduction of her interaction with Melanie with "naja" (see Golato 2006 on this token). "Well", being the English equivalent to "naja", has been described by Holt (1996) as a common device to begin a reported incidence: "[B]y beginning a reported utterance with *well* a speaker indicates that the quote was a response to some reported or unreported utterance in the original situation." (Holt 1996: 237). Holt also notes that Pomerantz (1984) describes 'well' as frequently prefacing dispreferred utterances. Nora's "naja" initiates the telling of the complainable incident, is in that way dispreferred and thus contributes to the explicitness of the complaint.

Nora's narrative is further framed as direct reported speech by the usage of "ich mein" ("I say") which in German commonly precedes direct reported speech (Günthner & Imo 2003: 17ff.). Additional features that Holt describes for direct reported speech, such as the "retention of the 'original's' deixis" (Holt 1996: 222) and the "retention of the 'original's' prosody" (ibid.: 223) are also part of Nora's utterance: the personal pronouns "ich" ("I") and "du" ("you") are co-referential with the reported speakers Nora ("I") and Melanie ("du"). The prosody<sup>38</sup> of both interactants' reported speech is mimicked, and, supposedly, exaggerated: Nora puts a slightly patronizing and irritated emphasis on her own production of "jeder von uns" ("each of us"), which is also produced in a slightly lower volume than the rest of her utterance. She then reproduces Melanie's talk stressing the personal pronoun "I:CH" ("I:") by producing it loudly and with a strong emphasis. Additionally, she playacts Melanie's

<sup>38</sup> The transcription used in this study (see Jefferson 1984a) may not be fully endowed with the possibilities to convey fine-detailed features of prosody. On a detailed analysis of the prosody of reported speech see Couper-Kuhlen (1996).

body language and displays a defensive hand movement (line 18), making her sound very reluctant and almost aggressively fending off the task she is asked to do.

By doing this, Nora gives the co-present team members access to the interaction she reports on and allows them to assess Melanie's behavior, without explicitly specifying her complaint (namely that Melanie is unwilling to deliver the report in the team meeting). The quoting of what Melanie has said and done "is particularly significant in the complaint sequence because what the other is quoted as saying is being portrayed as really what the complaint is about" (Drew 1998: 321). By using direct reported speech, though, Nora manages to make the complaint appear rather objective. Holt describes this effect of direct reported speech as

"an effective and economical device because it allows speakers to portray utterances 'as they occurred', thus avoiding the need for glossing or summarizing. Consequently, it enables speakers to give recipients access to the utterance in question, allowing them to 'witness' it for themselves and so giving an air of objectivity to the account. Furthermore, [...] recipients can make an assessment of the reported speaker based on the reported talk when [direct reported speech] is used to display the stance or attitude of the reported speaker. This can be important as it provides evidence, for example, that supports a complaint about a third party [...]" (Holt 1996: 236)

Nora's activities not only work towards producing a complaint, but also towards turning the report of Melanie's actions into a laughable. The description of Melanie's behavior, namely the fact that she refused to do the report, is given with smile voice and laughter-in-speech<sup>39</sup> (line 14, "ɛg(h)ewei(h)gert(h) h(hat)" ("ɛr(h)efu(h)sed(h)")). The reported event itself is presented as a laughable by employing exaggerated tone and gestures. Thus, Nora achieves two things: She displays trouble-resistance, that is by laughing she "is exhibiting that, although there is this trouble, it is not getting the better of [her]; [she] is managing; [she] is in good spirits and in a position to take the trouble lightly" (Jefferson 1984b: 351). Secondly, she invites her co-participants to laugh along and in doing so join her complaint about Melanie. And indeed, her laugh invitation receives a smile-voice reaction from Corinna (line 17).

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<sup>39</sup> See more on techniques to invite laughter in Jefferson (1979) and this study, chapter 4

The other participants affiliate through laughter: Nora's (reported) exaggerated production of Melanie's reaction to Nora's directive to do the team report (line 20) receives a smile from Corinna and open laughter from Madita and Robin. Through the smile and laughter, the co-participants somehow ratify Nora's construction of Melanie's behavior as slightly ridiculous, and definitely complainable, thereby affiliating with Nora's complaint.

Summarizing the analysis of the segment above, it can be stated that in this complaint incidence

- the boundaries are to a certain extent identifiable: The complaint sequence begins in line 10 with the allegation that Melanie should be doing the report and ends, after a narrative employing direct reported speech, in line 24, after a gap of 0.5 seconds, with Corinna returning to business matters. It is co-constructed by all participants through the use of continuers (Corinna, line 13, 19), question for detail (Corinna, line 17), smile (voice) (Corinna, line 17, 20), and laughter (Robin, line 21);
- Nora employs laughter as one means (in addition to using direct reported speech) to stay on an implicit level, she does not formulate explicit formulations (such as 'Melanie never does the report');
- the moral indignation is expressed through tone of voice (line 10), direct reported speech (line 16-22), laughter (13) and a laughable (line 20). It is affiliated to by the other participants through laughter.

The next segment shows a further incident of a complaint between two parties that are on the same level of hierarchy. Here, again, the complaint is rather straightforward in that the complainees are explicitly made known to the co-participants (the colleagues from the HR department), but it remains implicit in that no explicit formulation of the misconduct is expressed. This implicitness is achieved through laughter.

As some background information to what is going on in the sequence: Madita, a student worker, reports about a project that she was recurrently asked to work on together with student workers from the Human Resources department. The head of this department is "Frau Heller", mentioned in line 4. Repeatedly, this project gets delayed. Madita complains about that in lines 7, 12/13 and 17.

## Segment #5.2

LGH 011114, 0:49:22 (SHL)

001 Madita: ich hab noch ne ganz kurze rückmeldung is  
*I have PRT a whole short feedback is*  
*I do have a very short feedback it is for*

002 nur so als info ich ha-sollte ja  
*only so as info I ha-should PRT*  
*your information only I was supposed to*

003 eigentlich also es sollte aus dem h r (.)  
*actually well it should out of the h r (.)*  
*actually well there was supposed to be an*

004 bereich von frau heller? .h ein praktikanten::  
*department of mrs heller? .h a intern*  
*introduction for interns from the hr*

005 einführungstag stattfinden.[=(so wie ( ))]  
*introduction take place. [(as how ( ))]*  
*department of misses heller*

006 Corinna: [mhhm. (.) ja:. ]  
*[mhhm. (.) yes: ]*  
 ((6 seconds omitted [more explanation of the introduction for interns]))  
 \*Robin smiles

007-> Madita: .h £ich hab mich glaub ich mit ↑fünf↓ da\*men aus dem  
*.h £I have RFX believe I with ↑five↓ la\*dies out of*  
*I have met with I believe five ladies out of*

008 dem bereich getroffen (.) um da irgendwie was  
*that department met (.) to PRT somehow what*  
*that department to somehow arrange something*

009 abzumachen und dann war auch ein termin  
*arrange and then was also a date*  
*and then there actually was a date*

010 gesetzt? einundzwanzigster elfter? .h mt und ich  
*set? twentyfirst eleventh?.h mt and I*  
*set twenty-first November and I was supposed*

011 sollte dann da nachmittags dran teilnehmen son  
*should then PRT afternoon participate sucha*  
*to participate there in the afternoon have a*

012-> bißchen gucken=£und das ist jetzt auf nächstes  
*a little look=£and this is now to next*  
*little look= and this is now postponed*

013-> jahr verschoben.£ un- ungewiss  
*year postponed.£un- uncertain*  
*to next year. un-uncertain*

014 irgend[wann im januar  
*some[time in January*

015 Corinna: [£die kriegen auch überhaupt nichts  
*[£those get PRT absolutely nothing*  
*they can't get anything right*

016 geback[n (im augenblick)£  
*bak[ed (at the moment)£*  
*(these days)*



017-> Madita:                    [ɛwenn die mich noch ei:nmal a(h)nru f(h)en u(h)nd  
     [ɛif they c(h)all(h) me o:ne more time a(h)nd  
 018                    m(h)i(h)ch fragen ob ich mich mit d(h)enen  
     ask m(h)e(h) whether I will  
 019                    zusammense[tze,ɛ .HHHE:  
     sit toge[ther with t(h)hemɛ .HHHE:  
 020    Corinna:                    [ja. (kann ich verstehen)  
     [yes. (can I understand)  
 021    Robin:                    wollten die dass du irgendwas (.) beiträgst. oder,  
     did they want you to contribute (.) something or,

With a lengthy report Madita tells her colleagues about a project she was to participate in with some student workers. In the lines omitted she describes the project, then launches in line 7 into a narrative which she produces as laughable by using smile voice "ɛich hab mich glaub ich" ("ɛI think I have"), and employing irony. In line 10 she mentions the date on which the event should have taken place, to then announce, with smile voice again, that this date is postponed (line 12) to an uncertain date.

The two instances in which she employs smile voice are really her complaint: That she wasted her time meeting with a rather high number of female colleagues, and that now the event is being put off to a not yet appointed date. Madita's ironic tone and the smile voice help the complainable 'on its way'. The irony is achieved by stressing the number of women she has met "↑fünf↓" ("↑five↓") and calling them "Damen" ("ladies"). This "alternative recognitional"<sup>40</sup> (Stivers 2007, Heinemann forth.) enables the complainant to distance herself from the complainees and/or the reason of complaint, thus being another means to display trouble resistance (Jefferson 1984b). Further, it makes it possible for Madita to complain about specific persons within the organization without explicitly naming them. Making her complaint a laughable does not only portray her as trouble resistant, but serves in this instance to actually achieve the complaint: With no irony and no smile voice her report could have sounded neutral and would have less potential as a complainable. Research has shown that

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<sup>40</sup> "Alternative recognitionals" are, according to Stivers, "a way for speakers to not only refer to persons *alongside* accomplishing social actions but through the use of a marked form of person reference speakers also accomplish and/or account for particular social actions *through* the form of reference." Stivers 2007: 95.

"[v]irtually any situation, any current state or history of a relationship—indeed, virtually anything—can be treated as a complainable." (Schegloff 2005: 464), which in reverse could be interpreted as 'anything can be treated as a non-complainable'.

In line 17 the complaint reaches its climax, and along with it the laughter: In a playful threat Madita warns the colleagues from the HR department to ever call her again. She begins the turn with an if-construction "wenn die mich noch einmal anrufen" ("if they called me one more time"), but leaves open the end, no 'then'-consequence is formulated. She starts her turn with a smile voice, then produces laughter-within-speech tokens and finally ends with a laugh particle, thereby achieving the complaint.

Madita's colleagues affiliate with her complaints in different ways: In line 18 Corinna aligns with Madita by producing a related assessment of the colleagues in the HR department in smile voice. Her expression "die kriegen auch nichts gebacken im Moment", which can be roughly translated into "they can't get anything right (in the moment)", constitutes an idiom. Along the lines of Drew and Holt's (1988) argument that idioms in complaint sequences are used by complainants when "recipients have withheld sympathizing or affiliating with a complainant" (Drew & Holt 1988: 398), it is safe to assume that in this case, the recipient, Corinna, openly displays affiliation with the complaint through the use of an idiom. She upgrades her affiliation in line 23 where she proclaims understanding, doing so with no trace of laughter. Robin, in line 24, aligns by asking for more information.

Summarizing the analysis, this complaint sequence shows the following features:

- The boundaries of the complaint sequence are identifiable: The complaint starts with a narrative in line 7 with the stressing of the number five, becomes apparent in line 12/13 again. It then finds a temporary climax in regard to both laughter and complaint with the 'threat' in line 17, which is produced in a smile voice and with laugh particles. Madita's colleagues assist her in constructing the complaint by smile (voice) (Robin, line 7, Corinna, line 15).
- Madita employs laughter and laughables in order to stay on an implicit level, she does not formulate explicit formulations (such as 'the colleagues from the HR department are wasting my time').

- The moral indignation is expressed through smile voice (lines 12/13, 17) and emphasis in the playacted threat (line 17). The co-participants affiliate through a sympathetic comment in smile voice (Corinna, line 15), expressed understanding (Corinna, line 20), and questioning (Robin, line 21).

As the analyses above have shown, laughter in SHL complaints serves to co-construct the complaint, display the complainant as trouble resistant (Jefferson 1984b), achieve implicitness and expressing moral indignation. Through laughing during complaining, the complainant constructs him- or herself as not being negatively affected by the transgression, thus 'showing good humor'. Laughter is hence produced as "*part of the act of complaining* [...]. It can even be part of getting a complaint taken seriously, precisely by signaling that the complainant is not disposed to make too much of it. [...] [I]t is doing what Sacks suggested might be necessary, avoiding finding yourself 'in a good position to be treated as complaining'." (Edwards 2005: 24).

The laughter also serves as a tool to achieve implicitness. Drew (1998) describes the "expression of indignation at one's treatment" as the "hallmark of complaint sequences" (Drew 1998: 322). Analysis suggests that this "hallmark" can be presented in talk in a business setting implicitly via laughables and laughter. Participants in business settings seem to retreat from openly stated, expressive complaints and rather employ laughter and laughables in order to do complaints. Thus, in a business setting it seems as if laughables occur at the place of "explicit formulations of the transgression" (Drew 1998), and by laughter the co-participants affiliate with the complainant. In SHL complaints, laughter makes it possible to explicitly complain about a colleague's misconduct. Their complainable behavior, however, remains implied at through presenting it as a laughable; its complainable quality is thus only alluded to via laughter.

The next section addresses down-to-top complaints and discusses the role of laughter in accomplishing these. Laughter is employed here by the complainant in a different way, which adds to the argument that laughter in complaint sequences is a central tool in co-constructing hierarchy in a business team.

Complaints from subordinate to superior: Naming a name + joint laughter is enough. Co-constructing complainable identities for others

This section analyses participants realizing a down-to-top (DT) complaint via laughter. It seems as if, when the organizational roles in terms of hierarchy become relevant and an employee complains about a non-present superior, laughter plays an essential role in accomplishing complaints. In contrast to SHL complaints, DT complaints show no explicit naming of the transgression. Laughter alone gets employed to actually do the complaint<sup>41</sup>. In terms of recipientship, both in SHL and DT complaint sequences, participants employ laughter to collaborate in evolving and affiliating with the complaint.

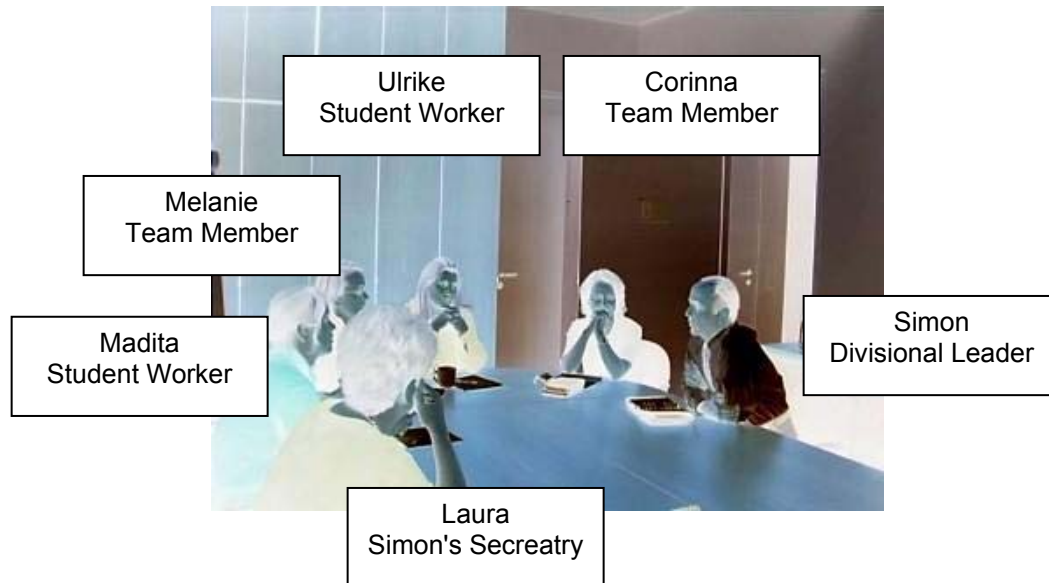
The following analyses show how the naming of a name+joint laughter is enough to co-construct complainable identities for persons higher in hierarchy. The first data segment shows a complaint of Laura, the divisional leader's secretary. She is responsible for computer software training for new employees within the insurance department ("Assekuranz", line 9), a division outside the HR department. Mr. Eckler, her cooperation partner in the insurance department, was not satisfied with the list of participants Laura prepared for an upcoming training. Laura implicitly complains about Mr. Eckler's conduct by naming his name in a laugh-inviting manner. As a result, she receives affiliation from Corinna who also cooperates with the insurance department and Mr. Eckler in the laughter and the complaint.

Below, see the seating arrangement of this meeting with the organizational positions of the participants:

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<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, out of the 9 complaint+laughter sequences, 6 are down-to-top. It can only be hypothesized to why that is – most certainly because laughter elates implicitness. On a more speculative note: There might be a tendency for employees to complain about their superiors rather than their team colleagues.

Graph #5.4, Seating Order, Meeting 010928



## Segment #5.3

LGH 010928, 0:35:58 (DT)

001 Laura: und es war sehr kompliziert die ganze sache?, weil: ich  
*and it was very complicated the whole thing?, be:cause*  
*\*mimics a list \*\*gaze to Corinna*

002-> ha\*tte schon eine schöne liste\* und dann \*\*kam  
*I h\*ad already a nice list\* and then \*\*came*  
*\*Laura lifts hands and gaze upwards, swings head moanfully*

003 [unser freund (.) \*her[r eckler? ]  
*[our friend (.) \*mis[ter eckler, ]*

004 Corinna: [hmff  
 005 Corinna: [herr eckler,] hhhehehe.hhm  
*[mister eckler?] hhhehehe.hhm*

006 (0.2)  
 007 Laura: und uh er hat gesagt (.) das is alles nich gut. HHEHHEheh  
*amd uh he said (.) that all is not good. HHE\*HHEheh*

008 .Hh und dann- es müssen die leute rein di:e die ganz neu  
*.Hh and then- the people who start all fresh in the*

009 im unternehmen anfangn=und das is ein problem weil  
*company need to get in=and that is a big problem because*

010 (0.2) es fangen STändig <neue mitarbeiter> fan£=bei  
*(0.2) there are ALL the time new employees £starting£=with*

011 der assekuranz  
*the assekuranz*

Laura reports on the "very complicated thing" (line 1) concerning the upcoming training event, in particular the participant she had prepared. She assesses it as "schön" ("nice"), line 2. Laura then utters "und dann kam unser Freund" ("and then came our friend") which in its format is revealing that the appearance of Mr Eckler stands in contrast to the "nice list". During the production of her turn, Laura bodily aligns with Corinna – she gazes and gestures at her.

Labeling Mr. Eckler as "our friend" implies that his conduct is of complainable nature (see "alternative recognition", Stivers 2007, above); the usage of the personal pronoun "our" is affiliative with Corinna. This way of introducing Mr. Eckler into the conversation gives Corinna the chance to show her affiliation with Laura at an early point, and she does so: In reaction to Laura's nonvocal activities, Corinna produces in line 4 a small laugh particle just before the utterance of "our friend", signaling that she is 'in' on the complaint to come. After Laura's labeling of Mr. Eckler as "our friend" and her micropause in line 3, Corinna jumps in with the naming of Mr. Eckler's name (line 5) and produces post-utterance laugh particles. In these very few turns Laura and Corinna have created a complainable identity for Mr. Eckler, simply by labeling him as "our friend", naming his name and producing joint laughter.

To sum up the analysis:

- Laura invokes laughter in order to actually express the complaint; in labeling Mr. Eckler as "our friend", she invites Corinna and others to laugh. Neither an actual complaint nor explicit formulations are formulated.
- Moral indignation is not expressed, but implied through laughter.

The next fragment also shows a DT-complaint in which the co-participants manage to create a complainable identity for a non-present superior. See again the seating arrangement with the positions each team member holds in the team:

Graph #5.5, Seating Order, Meeting 020130



The team discusses the design for a new training program. The customer is a department within the company. The topic is treated lightly and jokingly by the team members and everything is so far at a planning state. Melanie then asks directly about details (line 1), in answer to which Udo produces a complaint about the non-present head of the Human Resources (HR) department Ms. Heller (line 3). The segment shows that invoking shared (negative) knowledge and thus implicitly complaining about a non-present colleague higher in hierarchy can be realized via the orientation to laughter.

## Segment #5.4

LGH 020130, 0:54:46 (DT)

001 Melanie: vor allem wer (.) übernimmt dann diese in|ternen trrä-  
*above all who (.) takes over then these in|ternal trrai-*

002 =themen wie e tee vau? (.) .h [wird da[nn ne frau  
*=topics like IT? (.) .h [will th[en a misses*

003-> Udo: *\*Ulrike and Nora turn gaze to Udo*  
 [.Hhm\*dne (.) [magarethe  
 [.Hhm\*dne (.) [FIRST NAME

004-> *\*Udo bites on his pen*  
 heller?\*  
 LAST NAME?\*

005 *\*Ulrike smilingly looks down, draws face*  
 \*(0.8)





lectures, everything in talk can be a complainable: She joins Udo's alleged complaint about Ms. Heller which becomes obvious in her intonation (for more about how an utterance is hearable as a complaint, see Günthner 2000) and the disclosure of what was implicit in Udo's turn in line 3/4 -namely the understood fact that Ms Heller 'spreads herself thinly' when it comes to tasks in the organization.

Summarizing the analysis, this complaint sequence shows the following features in comparison with everyday complaints:

- Udo produces a laughable instead of a complaint. The other participants align with the implicit complaint via laughter; only Nora takes up Udo's contribution as a complaint.
- No moral indignation is expressed.

The two segments have shown how the mentioning of a superior's name+joint laughter serves to co-construct a complainable identity for the complaine. In both instances, it is not necessary to explicitly specify the misconduct the complaine had committed in order to realize the complaint. Merely joint laughter after naming the complaine is sufficient to imply the negative shared knowledge and realize an implicit complaint. Laughter by the recipients in these instances serves as a means to affiliate with the complaint, as it did within SHL complaints. It appears as if DT complaints differ from everyday complaints more than SHL complaint do, thus showing the restrictions of the institutional setting more clearly.

The fact that the complaine's complainable behavior is only hinted at via laughter is the distinction between DT and SHL complaints. In the latter, the transgression of the non-present colleague is explicitly named, though presented as a laughable. The hierarchical differences thus show in the co-construction of complaints via laughter: When the complaine is a person higher in hierarchy than the complainant, the complainable behavior is only hinted at via laughter, and is in no way verbally expressed.

So far, the paper has addressed the connection between the activity 'complaint+laughter' and identity work in terms of hierarchy and both the complainant's and complaine's identity construction. The next section explores the connection between 'badmouthing/complaint+laughter' and identity processes in terms of the interactional display of seniority.

#### **5.4. Local Identity Processes: Laughter in Complaints as a Resource in Demonstrating Seniority**

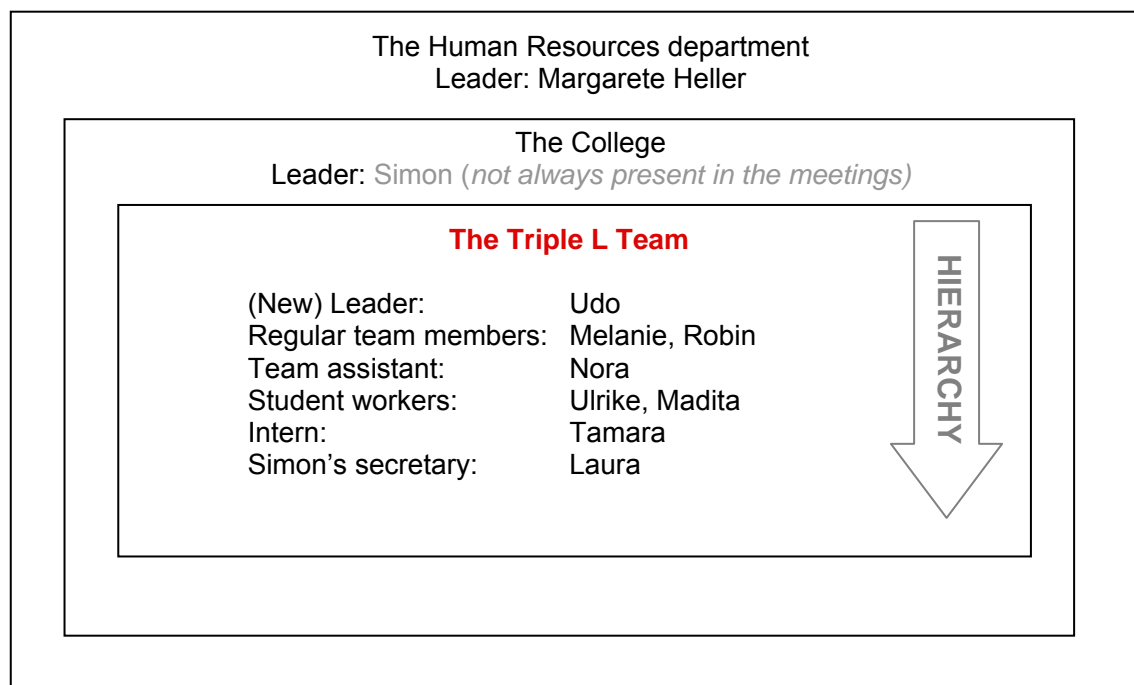
The issue of seniority has not been discussed much in CA research. Drawing on the findings from related disciplines such as anthropology, Albert's (1964) study of Burundi speech behavior is often cited. Here Albert shows that in terms of social role differentiation seniority is "the guiding principle of all behaviour" (Albert 1964: 37). Seniority is the main factor by which speaker order is determined: The senior person speaks first. His silence effectively silences all his inferiors. Watanabe (1993) and Hayashi (1996) have shown that in Japanese interaction, negotiations of gender and seniority play a significant role when it comes to turn-taking order and other speech strategies.

Seniority in a western business team is nowadays not so much an issue of age, but of the period of belonging to the organization as an employee, and to the team as a team member. The knowledge and experience gained in this time may be displayed in order to demonstrate seniority, which in turn is a major factor in the identity work of the participants. Made public, seniority may be employed to demonstrate authority in epistemic rights, and thus serves to negotiate a form of hierarchy that is not identified by work contracts.

The following analysis shows how seniority in a business team is displayed through 'complaint+laughter'. It becomes obvious that when a business team undergoes a change in leadership, the display of seniority is of particular importance. Through the analysis of two data segments, which occurred in chronological order, it becomes observable how participants manage (1) to display seniority, (2) the process of seniority achievement as a facet of local identity work in a business meeting, and (3) participants achievement by displaying seniority. The first case discussed shows how seniority counters organizational hierarchy. The second one, taking place three months after the first incident, shows how hierarchy catches up with seniority. While in the first incident the new team leader, Udo, does not participate in the laughter nor in the complaint, he is the one who invokes the negative shared knowledge about the non-present party in the second case, and thereby displays achieved seniority.

For a better understanding of the identity work in terms of seniority, it might be helpful to re-visit the structure of the HR department and the Triple L Team's position within it. This is relevant because Margarete Heller, the head of the entire Human Resources department, is the party that is talked about in both cases discussed below. Her organizational hierarchical position is higher than Udo's, who is the new leader of the Triple L Team. The College though, to which the Triple L Team belongs, is a subordinate part of the HR unit.

Graph #5.6, *Organizational Hierarchy with the Human Resource Department Under Special Consideration of the Triple L Team*



In both cases below, team members complain and/or talk negatively about the non-present Margarete Heller. Note that neither complaint is made explicit but rather hinted at by laughing and laughables, since they both constitute DT complaints.

Case 1: Seniority counters hierarchy - Complaints accomplished via laughables and laughter

The following segment shows how seniority counters organizational hierarchy in the Triple L Team. Tamara, the intern, has been reporting on a development process in another department she and her team colleague have initiated and now support as training experts. The results of the meetings, in which neither Tamara nor her colleague are allowed to participate, are somehow unsatisfactory, at least from Tamara's perspective. In her view, the responsible manager, Ms Heller, does not fulfill her duties as a moderator in a satisfactory way. Tamara implicitly complains about Ms. Heller's irregular participation in the meetings (lines 12/15). In response to this complaint, the two student workers Madita and Ulrike exhibit organizational 'insider' knowledge (lines 6 and 17) about Ms. Heller, thereby displaying seniority over the present new team leader Udo.

Graph #5.7, *Seating Order, Meeting 011031*



Segment #5.5

LGH 011031, 01:12:50 (DT)

001 Tamara: und: e ich m habe in:direkte hinweise dass sie kein  
*and: e I m have in:direct hints that they no*  
 002 *and I have indirect hints that they do not have a*  
*moderator haben,=da wundert es mich nicht dass die*  
*moderator have, =there amazes it me not that the*  
*moderator in that case it doesn't surprise me that the*

003 Tamara: [sitzung (auch ausnahmslos )]  
 [meeting (PRT exceptionless ) ]  
 [meeting ( without exception ) ]

004 Ulrike: [ja abba die magarete heller is doch] jedes mal  
 [yes but the FIRST NAME LAST NAME is PRT] every time  
 yes but margarete heller is with them every time  
 \*Udo turns gaze to Ulrike

005 \*dabei oda?=  
 \*there or?=  
 isn't she  
 \*Madita covers her mouth with hand,  
 with quivering shoulders

006 Madita: =>he<hhehh\* °hmmhmmh°  
 (1.0)

008 Tamara: du meinst als (.) [moderat- moderatorin? ]  
 youIF mean as (.) [moderat- moderator(F)? ]  
 you mean as a [moderat- moderator  
 \*(Udo smiles slightly)

009 Ulrike: [°si:e \*kennen magarete he|ller?°=  
 [°youF: know FIRST NAME LAST NAME?°=  
 you know magarete heller

010 Udo: =hmm.  
 011 Ulrike: °also die müsste ja moderations<skills>° habn.  
 °well DEFARF mustCON PRT moderation<skills>° have.  
 well she surely should have the skills to moderate a  
 meeting

012-> Tamara: NA skills sind skills (.) [<ABBA> wenn wenn sie imma  
 WELL skills are skills (.) [<BUT> if if she always  
 well skills are skills but when she always

013 Udo: [°t[ne°  
 014 Madita [°( )°

015-> Tamara: rein und raus rennt?  
 in and out runs?  
 runs in and out  
 (0.8)  
 \*Ulrike and Melanie both lean forward while laughing \*\*Madita laughs with  
 face and shoulders moving \*\*\*Udo turns face  
 towards Tamara

017 Ulrike: £\*s(h)t(h)i(h)[i(h)mmt(hh)\*\*hhehheHHE↑HHE↑\*\*\*  
 £ \*r(hhh) [igh(h)t(hh)\*\*hhehheHHE↑HHE↑\*\*\*

018 Madita: [hmm hehehe Hehehehe=  
 \*Melanie closes briefcase,  
 rests head on hand

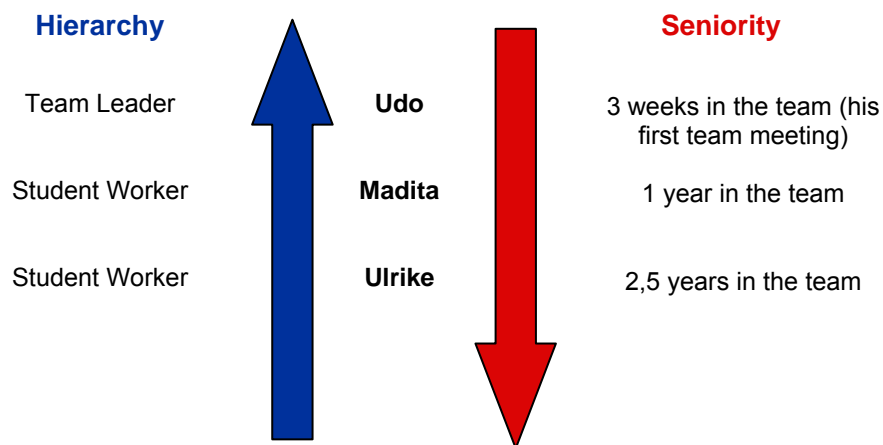
019 Melanie: [=hehehe\*  
 020 Ulrike: [ .HHH HHEHHEHHEHHE.HH HEHE  
 021 Robin: [(b)ä:::↓



After a pause of 0.8 seconds Ulrike, Melanie, and later Madita join the laughter, thereby aligning with Tamara's complaint.

When it comes to the local identities of the participants displaying seniority in this segment, it is interesting that it is the two student workers who first introduce laughter in this case, Madita (line 6) and Ulrike (line 17). Although Goffman notes that humor creates a "role distance" (Goffman 1961 [1972]: 84), one might assume that it is unsuitable for the student workers as juniors to laugh about a non-present superior – and Madita's body language in line 6 displays that there is something inappropriate in her laughter that she tries to cover it up. In addition, the two participants achieve something else by the laughter than simply aligning with Tamara's implicit complaint. They display identity as a group member, and they further display in-depth knowledge about the organization and its intimate details. In doing so, they display their seniority in the group and thereby signal epistemic authority (Heritage & Raymond 2005). Considering that the team leader, Udo, has at this point of time only been in the Triple L Team for about three weeks, the aspect of seniority, and with that epistemic rights, is crucial. Although Udo in this meeting is the person highest in the hierarchy of all present, he is the newest team member. Thus, his seniority is the lowest. To illustrate:

Graph #5.8, *Clash of Hierarchical Position and Display of Seniority*



The data show clearly how Ulrike displays high seniority: In line 9, she inquires whether Udo knows Ms Heller. After Tamara's turn in line 12/15, she is the first to laugh about the

complaint-indicative laughable, and the only one who vocally agrees ("stimmt" ("that's right"), line 17).

The next case shows how Udo does interactional work in order to earn seniority. Even as the team leader, thus the person highest in the hierarchy regarding work contracts, Udo, like everyone else in the team, has to work at the development of this feature of a team member's identity.

Hierarchy catches up with seniority - Earned seniority: How to display it and what participants can achieve by it

The following segment is taken from a meeting about three months later than the segment shown above and illustrates how hierarchy catches up with seniority. After a complaint-indicative question by Melanie (line1), Udo mentions the manager Ms Heller (line 3), thus making a very implicit complaint about her, or, at least, invoking shared negative knowledge about Ms Heller. His mentioning the manager's name elicits laughter. The fact that again the absent Ms. Heller becomes a topic in the meeting offers not only the chance to see that her shortcomings are indeed a piece of recurrently emerging shared knowledge in the team, it also shows that laughables and laughter in these segments serve to do identity work in terms of seniority.

Segment #5.6

LGH 020130, 00:54:46 (DT)

001 Melanie: vor allem wer (.) übernimmt dann diese in|ternen tträ-  
*above all who (.) takes over then these in|ternal ttrai-*  
002 =themen wie e tee vau? (.) .h [wird da[nn ne frau  
*=topics like IT? (.) .h [will th[en a misses*  
*\*Ulrike and Nora turn*  
*gaze to Udo*  
003-> Udo: [.Hhm\*dne (.) [magarethe  
*[.Hhm\*dne (.) [FIRST NAME*  
*\*Udo bites on his pen*  
004-> heller?\*  
*LAST NAME?\**  
*\*Ulrike smilingly looks down, draws face*  
005 \*(0.8)





Udo's turn in line 3 is treated in two different ways by his team members: Ulrike and Madita treat it as a laughable, as some kind of joke, observable in their reactions in line 10, 11 and 12. They laugh and thereby display affiliation with Udo, and align with his display of seniority. Interestingly, they only laugh openly after Udo has made the modality of his turn clear by producing the "HE:::J:::" in line 9. This utterance is surely not a reprimand for the co-participants, but stresses the laughableness in Udo's turn. Udo's body posture and facial expression after he mentioned the name and during line 9 displays some sense of delight in his own joke, almost even pride in his performance. In contrast to Ulrike and Madita, Nora takes Udo's contribution as a complaint, or at least as something complaint-indicative. In overview, here are the two reactions to Udo's turn:

### Initial Turn

*\*Udo bites on his pen*

3/4 Udo: .Hhm\*dne (.) [magarethe heller?\*

*.Hhm\*dne (.) [FIRST NAME LAST NAME?\**

### Reaction A

10f Ulrike: ehhe \*hHe=[hhahhahh†

12 (Madita): [ihhiihhihi°hi°.hhh

Ulrike and Madita treat it as a laughable, as some kind of joke. They laugh and thereby display affiliation with Udo.

### Reaction B

8 Nora: .hh=also einer ihrer betreuer (.)im endeffekt

*.hh=well one of her clerical assistants(.)as the bottom line*

Nora receives it as a complaint / complaint-indicative, also displaying affiliation with Udo.

Both activities, the joining of the joke and the joining of the complaint, show affiliation with Udo. By laughing with Udo about the slightly inappropriate laughable, Ulrike and Madita create some sense of camaraderie. Similar to what Jefferson et al. (1987) describe for laughter in intimate talk, it seems as if in this business setting, laughter in sequences

involving shared negative knowledge about non-present colleagues serve to build a sense of intimacy or, at least, closeness. Comparable to this, Bergmann (1987) portrays gossip as a group-building function, Evaldsson (2002) describes gossiping as providing rich resources for building a sense of solidarity among the participants. All three participants, Nora, Ulrike and Madita, display shared knowledge behind Udo's remark through their actions and thereby ratify Udo's seniority.

The two preceding data segments have displayed identity building as a process in business meetings and shown how invoking and producing laughter in complaint-indicative sequences about non-present superiors is a way for participants to display seniority. It appears that when changes in leadership occur, seniority and hierarchy in a team need re-negotiation. The sole fact that the work contract labels Udo as the team leader does not spare him from being obliged to earn seniority and display it. The analysis has shown how a team leader annexes shared negative knowledge and makes use of it in order to bring forward the process of his seniority in the team.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

Pursuing questions about the influence of laughter in complaint sequences in the interactional construction of hierarchy and seniority in business teams, the study has revealed that this combined activity plays a central role in both the co-construction and realization of hierarchy. Although it is not as simple as hierarchy being laughed into existence, participants indeed can and do employ laughter in order to indicate hierarchical distinctions in a business setting. Laughter in complaint sequences is a means to indicate organizational identities in regard to hierarchy by achieving different levels of implicitness. Analysis reveals that SHL complaints are more straightforward than DT complaints in terms of naming the complainant and implying the transgression. The degree of implicitness increases proportionally with the hierarchical position of the complaine. Laughter serves as a tool in achieving this implicitness.

It has been shown that when an employee complains about a colleague within the same level of hierarchy as herself, the complainant tends to employ laughter as a means (1) to co-construct the complaint with the co-present participants, (2) to display herself as trouble resistant (Jefferson 1984b), (3) achieve implicitness as it expresses the "moral indignation" (Drew 1998) the complainees conduct might cause, and (4) as a resource to seek affiliation with her co-present colleagues. Within SHL complaints, the complainees name and her transgression are explicitly named, though both are displayed as a laughable. The complaint is thus alluded to via laughter.

In cases of DT complaints, it appears that the higher the organizational position of the complainees, the stronger the role of laughter is in realizing the complaint. In other words: when the hierarchical disparity between complainant and complainees is substantial, laughter serves as one tool in carrying out the actual complaint. DT complaints can be realized through the plain naming of a superior's name+laughter. This serves to (1) co-construct a complainable identity for the complainees and/or the complaint itself, (2) achieve implicitness as laughter alludes to the complainees misconduct, and (3) as a resource to seek affiliation with the recipients of the complaint. In DT complaints, laughter is employed to only indicate a complainable behavior of the named complainees. The hierarchical indications thus are imminent in the combined activity complaint+laughter: If complainant and complainees are on the same hierarchy level, the transgression, presented as a laughable, can be named explicitly. If the complainees is a person higher in the hierarchy than the complainant, the complainable behavior is only indicated via laughter, and not expressed in actual words.

In both SHL and DT complaints laughter is employed as a resource for affiliation. In regard to affiliation with the complaint, participants' activities remain implicit: Laughter is employed as a resource for both complainant and recipient in seeking and displaying affiliation without expressively orienting to the complaint.

The analyses of complaint+laughter sequences have further shown how organizational roles are re-negotiated once a new team leader joins the team. Seniority as one facet of local identities is a process in identity work, and even persons high in the hierarchy need to do interactional work in order to achieve seniority. Invoking and producing laughter by indicating shared negative knowledge about non-present superiors serves as a means to display seniority. Recipients can align with this display by either reacting to this as a complaint or a laughable.

## Chapter 6

### **Vöge III: Multilingualism as a Resource for Laughter and Identity Work in Business Meetings. Three Cases.**

This chapter examines sequences in multilingual business meetings in which interlocutors orient to multilingualism. Using the methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA), it shows how multilingualism as a members' category (Sacks 1995) is made relevant in creating laughables and how these together with language alternation and/or orientation to multilingualism, build a resource for laughter and identity work. This is demonstrated with three cases from a 15 hour data base of German business meetings video taped in a Human Resource team belonging to an international company.

Multilingual settings provide a unique environment for using linguistic membership as a resource for laughter. Interactionally, laughter plays an important role for participants when orienting to work-relevant identities and building relations in this setting. By engaging in laughing, participants can enact a resource to activate or challenge identity-building activities. Through laughter, interactants infringe on social norms (Cosser 1960). Laughter can have both an affiliative and disaffiliative quality (O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983, Haakana 1999) in realizing local identities. This paper furnishes further examples of this feature of laughter by showing its local social consequences in an multilingual institutional environment.

#### **6.1. Introduction**

Orientation to multilingualism and/or language alternation<sup>42</sup> has been demonstrated as a conversational resource (Auer, 1984; Li, 1994; Alfonzetti, 1998, to name but a few) and as an instance of practical social action (Gafaranga 1999). Interactants employ the choice of language varieties in order to achieve different interactional goals including claiming group membership (Gafaranga 2001), rejecting affiliation with group members (Cashman 2001), and proposing identity-related accounts for language choice (Sebba & Wootton 1998).

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<sup>42</sup> This paper does not contribute to the discussion of terminology in regards to the difference between code switch, language switch/change and transfer. For this discussion, see for example Auer 1984, 1988, Gafaranga 1999. Throughout this paper I will use the term Gafaranga (2001, 2002) uses as an umbrella term when referring to "any occurrence of two languages in the same conversation" (Torrás & Gafaranga 2002): 'language alternation'.

Among bilingual speakers, language choice is a social activity and a membership categorization device (Gafaranga 2001, 2005).

The central theoretical concept of membership categories is central for the analyses in this paper. Initiated by Sacks (1974b, 1995), the following rules apply in doing Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA):

*1. Inevitability*

The categorization of participants happens unavoidably, regardless of whether the person in question feels as if he/she belongs to the category.

*2. Two-set-classes*

The generation of one category causes the generation of another category.

*3. Self- and other-categorization*

Categories can be made relevant for self or other(s).

There is an endless number of membership categories. A person can, for example, belong to the categories male, painter, speaker of English, learner of German, father, uncle, son – and all of this at the same time. Sacks notes:

"Each of these categories could apply to the same person. And it's perfectly obvious that Members do use one set's categories for some statements and another set's categories for other statements. If we're going to describe Member's activities, and the way they produce activities and see activities and organize their knowledge about them, then we're going to have to find out how they go about choosing among the available sets of categories for grasping some event." (Sacks 1995 (LC1): 41)

In other words, as one perspective on social identity, MCA shows that identity is not something people are, but "something they do" (Widdicombe, 1998: 191). "Identities are negotiated in and through social interaction, are interactionally accomplished objects" (Gafaranga 2001:1915). Sacks' "very central machinery of social organization" (Sacks 1995(LC1): 40) shows that instead of an external device that interactants carry with them in an unchangeable manner, social identity is constructed in interaction. This is done for self and others, as analysis reveals:

"Terms from membership categorization devices are mostly used as resources for identifying, describing, formulating, etc., persons [...]. These are empirical findings; they are not so by definition or stipulation". (Schegloff 2007: 456)

Thus, social identities are resources that people use in order to accomplish specific interactional activities.

Concerning the coherence between multilingualism and membership categories, it seems obvious that a person's multilingualism can be made relevant in interaction as a category – or not. Wagner (1998) states:

“[...] since membership is a sociological category, non-nativeness can not be used [...] without delivering proof that non-nativeness also is a relevant, sociological category. Seen as mere non-natives, the participants [of a particular Second Language Acquisition study] seem to act in a socially empty room.” (Wagner 1998: 108)

It seems evident from experience that, in order to achieve intersubjectivity with others, neither unblemished grammatical structures nor flawless vocabulary is required – not even first-language-users speak that way. The category 'Foreign Language User' is thus not at all times relevant in interaction. Linguistic identity is, though, a social identity:

"As a consequence, the issue of relating the social structure and the conversational structure in language alternation is dissolved. The conversational structure, an activity, is inseparable from the social structure. The social structure 'occasions' the conversational structure. In turn, it is through the conversational structure that the social structure is established." (Gafaranga 2005: 294)

Concerning the institutionality of the data, some theoretical features play a prominent role in the analysis. Institutional interaction shows particular constraints the participants orient to, which are due to the special environment. Drew und Heritage (1992: 22) name three features which characterize institutional interaction:

- Goal orientation: At least one of the participants is oriented to "some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question"
- Special constraints: There are "particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand."
- Inferential frameworks: Frameworks "that are particular to specific institutional contexts."



These institutional frameworks play a decisive role for the data analyzed in so far as that the organizational position of each participant has influence on the individual rights and obligations of the interactants. These are realized through interactional activities and thus produce local identities. The connection between local identities and the design of interactional activities has been described by Raymond & Heritage (2006). They show how ownership and epistemic responsibilities are realized in interaction:

"By looking at how persons manage the rights and responsibilities of identities – the territories of ownership and accountability that are partly constitutive of how identities are sustained as identities – we are witnessing a set of resources through which identities get made relevant and consequential in particular episodes of interaction." (Raymond & Heritage 2006: 700)

By epistemic authorities, Heritage & Raymond 2005) refer to

"[P]articipants' [...] management of rights and responsibilities related to knowledge and information. For example, conversationalists treat one another as possessing privileged access to their own experiences and as having specific rights to narrate them (Pomerantz 1980; Sacks 1984); [e.g.] patients offer medical diagnoses to physicians only under relatively particular circumstances (Gill 1998 [...]). In each of these cases, the distribution of rights and responsibilities regarding what participants can accountably know, how they know it, whether they have rights to describe it, and in what terms is directly implicated in organized practices of speaking." (Heritage & Raymond 2005: 16)

The present study further substantiates this phenomena by showing examples of how participants activate and implement epistemic authorities through their interactional activities in an institutional multilingual setting. In regards to the interrelatedness of multilingualism, social local identities and institutional interaction Drew and Heritage (1992) state

"In each case, considerations of social identity and task reconfigure the interpretative 'valence' that may be attached to particular actions in institutional contexts by comparison to how they are normally understood in ordinary conversation. Still more tangled and complex interpretative issues arise in interactions [...] where participants to an institutional interaction [...] do not share common cultural or linguistic resources." (Drew & Heritage 1992: 24f)

These "tangled and complex [...] issues" are at the core of this study. It provides an analysis of multilingualism in an institutional context (further examples of this in Torras & Gafaranga 2002, Kurhila 2004) and shows the local social consequences on identity work in an institutional environment.

Prior research has demonstrated that multilingual settings provide rich resources for identity work in (institutional) interaction. This paper goes beyond looking at language alternation and/or orientation to multilingualism in institutional talk and its relevance for local identities. It studies how multilingualism as a members' category is made relevant in creating laughables and laughter. The interactional consequences of laughter are analyzed in multilingual talk-in-interaction by examining sequences in which the laughable is clearly connected to multilingualism. This connection, as the paper reveals, builds a crucial resource for identity work.

Laughter has been shown to constitute a central resource in doing identity work (Jefferson 1984b, Jefferson et al. 1987, Glenn 2003b). It shapes participation and plays an important role for participants when orienting to work-relevant identities (Haakana, 1999, Dannerer 2002, Markaki et al., forthcoming, chapter 5 this study). Constituting an adjacency pair (Jefferson 1979), laughter can be managed in a sequence that includes or excludes co-present participants by affiliating or disaffiliating with it (O'Donnel-Trujillo 1983). By laughing, participants can activate or challenge identity-building activities, and even infringe on social norms (Coser 1960). "Laughter, then, may not always be a matter of flooding out, to be accounted for as something that happens to a speaker such that he *can't help lau:gh*, but can be managed as an interactional resource, as a systematic activity [...]" (Jefferson 1985:34). This study contributes to the analysis of laughter as an interactional resource by looking at laughter in a multilingual, institutional setting.

Using Conversation Analysis (CA) <sup>43</sup> the paper compares and contrasts three cases of laughter in which the participants make their orientation to multilingualism apparent and use it as a resource in order to do identity work. The comparisons are drawn under the analytic foci (1) orientation to multilingualism as a vehicle, (2) multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities in business meetings, and (3) laughter. All three cases show similarities in

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<sup>43</sup> For an overview on CA and its methodology cf. Drew 2004, Heritage & Goodwin 1990, Silverman 1998. For a detailed study of the CA approach to bilingual interaction, see Wei 2002.

regard to the following: (a) the laughable is connected to multilingualism, (b) the laughter has influence on group interaction and group constellation, and (c) the participants infringe on local social rules through laughing.

Also, in all cases participants employ multilingualism as a resource for doing identity work in terms of epistemic authorities (Raymond & Heritage 2006) and thus claim or disclaim territory of ownership and accountability.

The first case demonstrates how the interactants of the business meetings orient to language preference in the meetings and how they bring about local identities with the according epistemic authorities (Raymond and Heritage, 2006). The second segment shows a participant's effort to build an affiliation by making the membership category 'Foreign Language User' relevant for herself and for the person highest in hierarchy. This attempt to construct an in-group proves to be challengeable by the other team members. In the third data example, participants make a trouble source publicly accessible as a laughable by exhibiting its implicit inappropriateness, and thereby create closeness (Jefferson et al. 1987). To achieve this, the local identity of the trouble source's producer as a 'Foreign Language User' is made relevant.

## **6.2. Ethnographic Background**

The data for this study consists of 15 hours of video tapings, comprised of 14 business meetings within the Human Resources department of a major international financial service company. The meeting's participants vary in their origin: They come from Germany, Russia, Argentina and the United States. The company's official language is English, and all participants have sufficient English language competency. Nevertheless, the meeting's language is mostly German since all team members' first language is German with the exception of the departmental leader Simon (L1 Hebrew/English), and the intern Tamara (L1 Russian). Simon uses the team meetings as an occasion to improve his German and has asked explicitly that the team members continue speaking German.

All meetings are weekly informal 'insider' meetings; that is only members of the team participate, in which the team members report on current activities. On average, the meetings last about an hour.

The participants of the meetings know each other well on a work-basis and interact daily. The size of the team varies from 4-8 employees. In the meetings, no more than 11 people participate.<sup>44</sup>

During the data collection period, the team was subjected to a change in leadership and several other major personal changes. The segments analyzed in this paper stem from a period of appr. 8 weeks in which the team lacks a direct, regularly present sub-team leader. In this period, Simon, the departmental leader, attends the team meetings on an irregular basis to perform leadership duties.

In the following, the three cases of laughter in a multilingual institutional setting are analyzed. Starting with case 1 "In German" (section 3), the analysis first addresses the orientation to multilingualism as a vehicle, then turns to multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities and concludes with the examination of the occurring laughter. It alludes to the similarities all three cases show in regard to laughter and epistemic authorities.

### **6.3. Case 1 "In German": How Multilingualism Can Be Made Relevant and How It Can Be a Resource for Local Identities in Business Meetings**

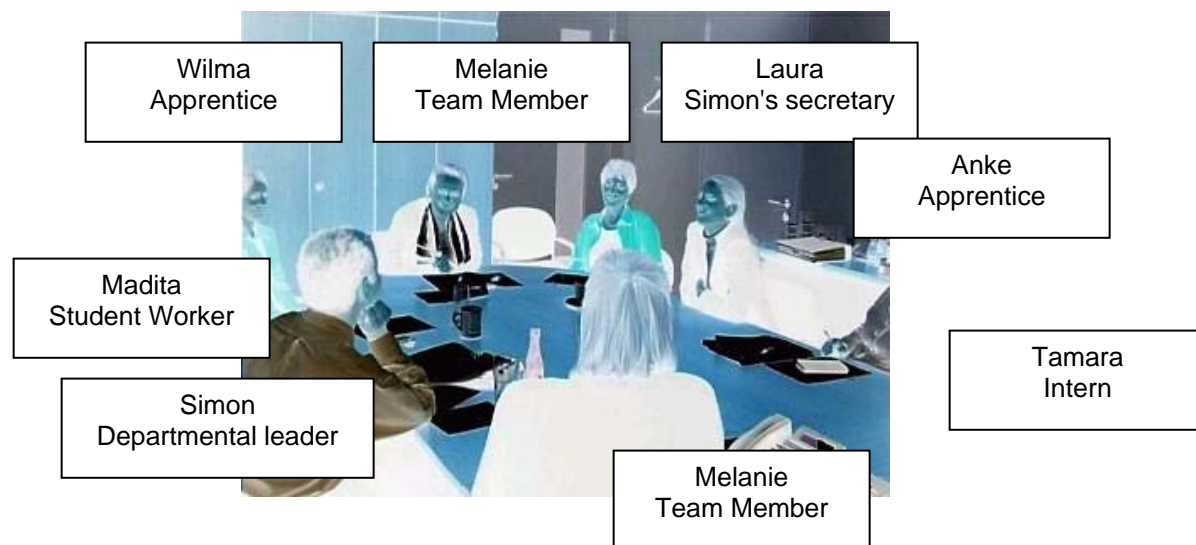
In the first case, "In German", the meeting's participants show orientation to multilingualism by 1) a language switch and 2) a metalinguistical negotiation of language. The epistemic authorities of the local identities are made relevant through the orientation to multilingualism, as it is the case in all three cases discussed here, and further through a particular recipient design. The sum of these factors serves as a basis for the collaboratively generated laughable. The transcript is printed below with a few prior details for explanation.

This piece of data shows an instance in which one team member (Melanie) presents new ideas for re-structuring the area for which she is responsible. Just before this segment, a language alternation from German to English has occurred, initiated by Melanie, who explained a certain topic to Simon who obviously has had problems in understanding. That sequence is now closed and Melanie begins to hand out handouts in English in preparation to her forthcoming report.

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<sup>44</sup> This number is generated from the team members + the departmental leader (Simon), his secretary (Laura), and max two apprentices, all of whom also occasionally participate in the meetings.

Graph #6.1, Case 1 "In German", Seating Order, Meeting 011013

Segment #6.1, Case 1 "In German"  
LGH 011013, 0:30:36

001 Melanie: it's it's just ehm (.) if you go through its eh the  
 002 objectives and then its de:tetailed into r:e:sources some  
 003 of them-  
 \*Melanie furrows brows  
 004 \*(0.2)  
 \*Melanie looks up from papers, first  
 to Simon, then into round

005 ->Melanie: in deutsch\* oda in englisch was wol[l(n sie)  
 in german\* or in english what wan[t you<sup>F</sup>  
 in German or in English what do you(<sup>F</sup>) want  
 [ \*S nods

006 ->Simon: [in deutsch. \*abba imma  
 [in german. \*but always  
 in German why certainly

007 Melanie: eh[m  
 008 (Nora): [ehehe[hehe  
 [ \*Wilma smiles ]

009 Anke: [haha[ha\*haha ]  
 010 Tamara: [hha[hhahha ]  
 011 Laura: [hhahha ]  
 [\*Melanie looks down at her papers]

012 Melanie: [\*zuerST die £ZIE(h)LE(h)£] (.) dann die  
 [\*fiRST the £GOA(h)LS(h) ] (.) then the  
 013 verschieden quellen  
 different sources

### Orientation to multilingualism as a vehicle

Multilingualism in institutional teams can be made relevant in many ways (Asmuß 2002, Mondada 2004). In case 1 the team openly orients to multilingualism through metalinguistically topicalization by one of the participants (Melanie, line 5). After three English turns, Melanie asks Simon directly "in Deutsch oder in Englisch, was wollen Sie" ("in German or in English, what do you (F) want"). She carries out a self repair by interrupting herself (line 3), and then, after a short break of 0.2 sec, by initiating language alternation from English to German. With this change into German she orients to the preference Simon has predetermined earlier before this meeting<sup>45</sup>.

By producing her turn in German, a pre-decision for German is linguistically and interactionally implicit in Melanie's question. In her question about Simon's language preference she formulates two alternatives: German and English. Melanie produces the question in German, so German is the preferred choice for next turn. If Simon decided to continue in English, he would have to carry out another language alternation. Alternatively, he would have to formulate a German directive towards Melanie to continue her presentation in English, to then leave it to Melanie to carry out the language alternation.

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<sup>45</sup> The following transcript shows the first time Simon participates in a team meeting (two weeks prior to the incidence in case 1). In this meeting, he gives a directive in regard to what language should be used in the meeting ("deutsch", "German", line 1) (there has been information about that before [not on tape]), and reason for his being there (line 6/7).

#### **Business Meetig 010928, 0:00:20**

001 Simon: so ich denke mich wir müssn fortfahren in deutsch  
*alright I think we have to continue to continue in German*

002 fortfahren aber wenn es zu kompliziert für mich ich  
*but when it gets to complicated for me I will*

003 spreche englisch, aber (.) deshalb isch habe keine große  
*speak English, but (.) that is why I won't contribute a*

004 teil zu fmake[n hehehe  
*fgreat dea[l*

005 (Melanie): [HEhe

006 Simon: ich bin hier zu lernen und verstehn was ist los in  
*I am here to learn and to understand what is going*

007 LifeLongLearning,  
*on in ((the Triple L Team)),*

### Multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities

According to Gafaranga, "[a]ny claim that a particular identity is significantly present in talk must be warranted by showing the work it has accomplished in the same talk." (Gafaranga 2001: 1915). The next paragraph shows how Melanie and Simon both accomplish work in order to show that the local identity 'Boss' or 'Person highest in hierarchy' become relevant.

Melanie and Simon cooperatively orient to Simon's epistemic authority as the person highest in hierarchy. In the beginning of her turn in line 5, Melanie looks at Simon, towards the end of it she turns her gaze towards all participants around the table. Through gaze and body posture it becomes apparent that Melanie's question is directed at Simon, and that she, together with the team, is awaiting Simon's response. Subsequently, Simon takes the turn and makes a decision about the language choice. The participants thus co-construct and make evident Simon's local identity as 'head of team' or 'person highest in hierarchy'.

Another feature that makes it obvious that Melanie's turn is directed at Simon is the recipient design. Melanie chooses a specific form of address in line 5. The address form "Sie" (displayed as "youF", you formal, in the transcript) is the formal address format in German (in contrast to the informal form "du"). It marks the relationship as a formal one. Usually, it is common practice in the team to address colleagues with the informal address form "du"+first name, only Simon is addressed by all team members with "Sie"+first name. Through her choice of the formal address format, Melanie implies the local identities boss → subordinate, her turn clearly contrasts other address forms used in the team. This contrast is possible in German<sup>46</sup>, but not in English, where the address form "you" does not allow the difference between formal and informal. It could be that Melanie chooses to produce her turn in German to make possible this contrast, which points to local identities.

The implicit formality Melanie has created through the form of address is then breached by Melanie using a colloquial sentence "was wolln se" ("what do youF want") (the colloquialness being expressed through the 'sloppy' production of the address form 'Sie' ("se")). Through the semantics of the modal verb "to want", she still expresses and reveals that it is in fact Simon's will that counts in the end of all decisions in the team. Being the person highest in the hierarchy, it is he who has the epistemic authority to enforce his preferences. Melanie thus semantically marks Simon's epistemic authority.

<sup>46</sup> and, of course, other languages like Spanish, French which make the formal address form possible.

### Laughter

Case 1 "In German" shows, like the other two cases to be presented in this study, that laughter in this multilingual, institutional setting besides being connected to multilingualism, achieves interactional goals in terms of influencing group interaction and group constellation, and enabling the interactants to infringe on local social rules. In case 1, this becomes obvious first in Simon's answer in line 6. Here it is observable that the answer receives laughter, and is thus categorizable as a laughable (see chapter 4 this study). In order to answer the question of how Simon's contribution receives the quality of a laughable it might be worthwhile to look at how the relevant membership categories in relation to the institution and to multilingualism generate a resource for laughter.

Simon answers Melanie at the first possible point of completion in overlap, producing the clear directive to continue in German. His turn is laughable through the orientation to, and the playing with, membership categories 'Boss' and 'Foreign Language User,' which both have been made relevant by Melanie in her question. Simon is not a first language user of German. His membership in the category 'Foreign Language User' is crucial in giving in turn in line 6 the potential for a laughable because he toys with that category. By using colloquial elements ("abba imma" ("why certainly")) and an emphasized nonchalant tone of voice (stressing of "deutsch"), Simon is 'doing being expert language user' and contrasts in that way his local identity as a learner of German. His second pair part to Melanie's question is clearly oriented towards colloquialism: "aber immer" ("why certainly"), has an implicative sense of 'keep it coming'. Thus Simon makes his categorization as 'Learner of German' a subject of irony and mocks the fact that he is being categorized as 'Foreign Language Speaker': His alleged deficiency in German is contrasted by his capability of producing a turn like a first language user in terms of speed, choice of words, prosody and timing.

Simon's status as 'Boss' is oriented to by both Melanie and Simon. Melanie orients to Simon's epistemic authority as a boss by clearly selecting Simon as the recipient to her question. Simon contrasts and simultaneously underscores his identity of 'boss' through the colloquialness of his answer "abba imma". Further, he makes a clear decision (or rather, confirms, since he made this decision prior to the meeting) in terms of language choice "in deutsch, abba imma" ("in German why certainly").



When looking at group interaction and constellation, it is noteworthy that Nora is the first to laugh after Simon's turn (line 8). Although it was Melanie who stated the question, she does not laugh and tries to continue with her report (line 7). During the whole sequence she stays in a serious mode, almost somewhat 'on hold' between line 5 and 12.<sup>47</sup> In line 12 it becomes observable that Melanie did notice the laughter sequence, but does not participate in it. Acknowledging the humorous 'in-between' sequence with a few laugh particles within her speech she takes up her turn from line 1, to then go into a serious mode - literally 'back to business'. Apart from Nora, the other team members laugh or smile as a reaction to Simon's turn in line 6. Maybe they orient to Simon's local identity as a boss – the team jointly laughs about a joke from the boss. In any case, they influence the group constellation through their activities: They are affiliating with Simon and at the same time disaffiliating with Melanie by not following her agenda.

The infringement of social rules occurs in Melanie's activities. She puts a local social rule up for discussion which has been previously established: The preferred language choice in the meetings. As a reminder: It is well known to the team that Simon wishes to use the meetings as a possibility to practice his German to all team members. The meeting's participants always communicate in German. Nevertheless, Melanie inquires about language choice and thus breaches a local social rule the person highest in hierarchy, Simon, has established. The team deals with this breach through laughter – Simon produces a laughable and the other participants (except Melanie) laugh. Thus, in collaboration with the team, Simon has found a safe way for both he and Melanie to deal with the trespass.

Case 1 "In German" has shown how participants can orient to multilingualism as a vehicle through meta-linguistic negotiation of language choice and language alternation. A particular recipient design in a bilingual interaction has been revealed to help epistemic authorities come into being, a feature which will be relevant in all three cases. Further, the laughter has been discussed from different perspectives. Turning to case 2 "You will miss us", the analysis shows how repair can be a key factor in orienting to multilingualism and to the category 'Foreign Language User', and how affiliation can be achieved through this orientation. Further, the similarities of all three cases, explicitly the orientation to epistemic

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<sup>47</sup> This might have to do with the fact that Melanie's question could have been related to the English handout.

authorities as well as the nature of laughable and the interactional relevance of laughter, are discussed in case 2.

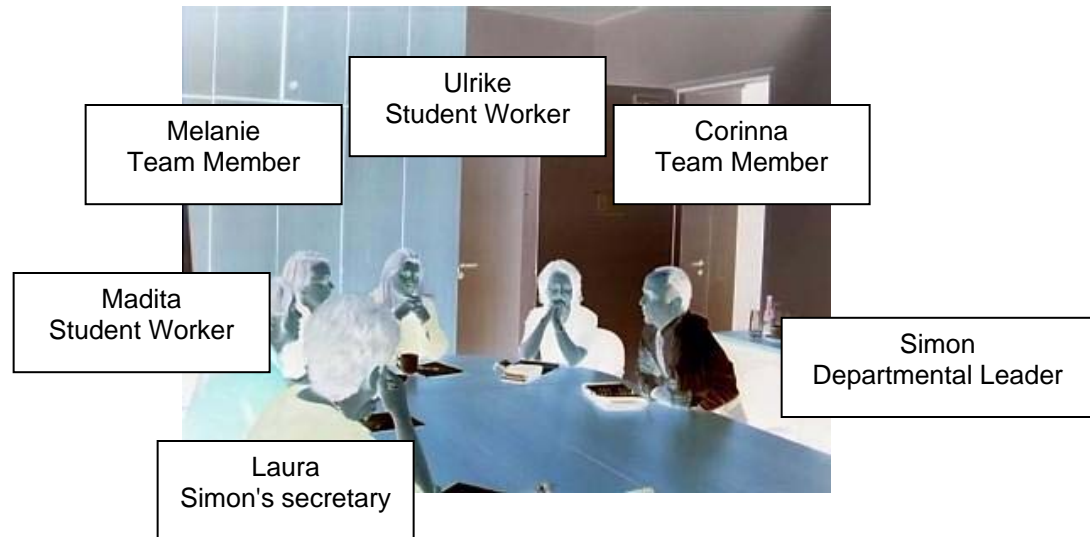
#### **6.4. Case 2 "You will miss us": Regional und Local Identities – Orientation to the Category 'Foreign Language User' for Self and Other in Order to Create Affiliation**

In case 2, the participants' orientation to multilingualism becomes apparent through language alternation and repair. Participants seek affiliation by orienting to the category 'Foreign Language User' for self and other, and through making regional and local identities relevant. A particular recipient design is employed for using multilingualism as a resource in identity work, like in case 1, and as a resource for establishing epistemic authorities. The laughter that is connected to multilingualism shows all features that case 1 and case 3 also reveal in terms of interactional relevance, namely influence on group interaction and constellation, as well as the infringement of local social rules.

In the segment, two language alternations occur: One from standard German into a regional dialect (line 8), and one from German to English (line 24). The first language alternation is the basis for affiliation work. In the analysis it becomes obvious how regional and linguistical backgrounds are made relevant in order to affiliate with the person highest in hierarchy. One team member (Melanie) tries to use multilingualism and regional foreignness as a resource for affiliation, and another de-constructs this approach by creating a laughable on this very basis. The second language alternation happens in form of a repair initiation. This initiation is designed by Melanie for the person highest in hierarchy, Simon, as the recipient of the interactional activity. Simon turns out to be the main recipient for Melanie in case 2.

In case 2 "You will miss us", the team reacts to Corinna's announcement of her leaving the team and the company. In the preceding 12 minutes Corinna has announced her upcoming change of position. Melanie is commenting on Corinna's career decisions and the consequences that it will have for her and the team. She then launches into a side sequence with Simon. Note: Due to the length of the sequence, transcript #6.2 is shown in (simplified) parts. Below see an illustration of the seating order:

Graph #6.2, Case 2 "You will miss us". Seating Order, Meeting 010928



In case 2 the orientation to multilingualism becomes manifest in two language alternations. Interestingly, the language alternation is now not only from German into English, like it was in case 1, but there is an additional language alternation from standard German into a regional German dialect. Both language alternations are initiated by the same person (Melanie) and build the basis for the affiliation with the team's head (Simon) on the basis of shared regional foreignness.

Part I shows the first language alternation, the change from standard German into a regional dialect.

## Segment #6.2, Case 2 "You will miss us", Part I

LGH 010928, 0:12:28

001     Melanie:            \*Corinna looks at Melanie, nods occasionally  
                           \*was kann man sich besserres vorrstellen als  
                           \*what better option is there as  
   \*Corinna smiles  
 002                        weiterbilder\*.hh wenn man so ne perrspektive hat mit dem  
                           a training employee.hh if one has such a perspective to  
 003                        was man gelernt hat das in praxis umzusetzen=is doch  
                           put in practice what one has learned that is in deed



044 Simon: aber [sie hat (0.2) sie haben das: s:e- eh (.) <Du:  
*but [you<sup>F</sup> has (0.2) you<sup>F</sup> have that: v:er- eh (.)<You:IF*  
*but you(F) has- eh you(F)'ve done that ver- you(IF*

045 ( ): [ɛja:hɛ  
 [ɛye:s hɛ

046 Simon: habst [das> sehr schnell °gemacht° [eh >gesagt<  
*haves [that> very fast °done° [eh >said<*  
*haves done that very fast eh talked very fast*

047 Melanie: [°(hast)° [ja  
 [°(have)° [yes

048 Melanie: ja=  
 yes=

049 (Laura): =EE:Hhe [ehh  
 050 Ulrike: [nhhehhehh [ehhehh

The second language alternation marks the change from German into English and happens in form of a repair initiation. Melanie asks a question about the comprehensibility of her earlier turn (in line 8): "was it too much of dialect", line 24.

Simon does not go along with her language alternation into English and replies in line 26 in German, thus resisting Melanie's initiation to alternate languages and resisting being categorized as an 'Incapable Foreign Language Speaker' who would need to be spoken to in his first language. In doing so, he substantiates what has been said by Auer (1988) about code switching: "[...] after code-switching, it is the newly introduced language that will be taken up by the co-participant. This is only a conversational preference, not an absolute 'rule' or 'norm'" (Auer 1988: 203).

In reaction to Simon's statement that his only trouble was in understanding the last sentence (line 26), Melanie interprets 'last sentence' as referring to her turn in regional dialect (line 8) and translates it into English. It is worth noticing that she initiates the translation for Simon with an "oh" (line 27), thus implying that this twist in the interaction is somewhat unexpected to her (Heritage 1984b), although it was Melanie herself who launched the repair initiation (line 24). Through Melanie's interactional activities in line 27, it now seems as if the initiative for repair lies with Simon.

In lines 44/46 Simon comments on the way Melanie produced her dialect turn, diagnosing what his trouble was. He identifies the speed, not the dialect, as the trouble source. For Simon as a user of German as a foreign language, it is almost impossible to detect the dialect in line 8, especially since Melanie's standard German is also shaped by the dialect. These diagnoses of the trouble, or "post mortems" (Egbert 2004), "occur after trouble resolution and are used by participants to draw a connecting line between the trouble and some other feature involved in the interaction. This is sometimes used for membership categorization." (Egbert 2004: 1475).

Simon's German turn in line 44/46 does not come without effort as it includes four repairs: three self initiated, self completed (SI, SC) repairs, and one other initiated, other completed (OI, OC) repair. The self repairs are about

- 1) the modal verb "haben" ("have"): Simon uses the third person singular form "hat", where it should be the second person singular form in formal address terms "haben". After a pause of 0.2 seconds he produces the correct form.
- 2) the form of address: instead of using the formal form of address "Sie", he employs, after a further pause and a hesitation marker, the informal form "du" which is common in the team. This might be due to the problematic differentiation between the terms of address for English speakers, and due to the difficulty with the ongoing turn, because Simon is usually the only one who addresses everyone in the team with the formal "Sie".
- 3) the participle: Simon corrects the rather unspecific participle "gemacht" ("made") into the more specific "gesagt" ("said"). Here, the verb itself and not the finite verb form gets corrected.

The OI OC repair occurs in line 47. The trouble source for this repair lies –again– in Simon's incorrect declination of the verb "have". This error is not corrected by Simon himself, but by Melanie in overlap to his ongoing talk. She initiates and completes the repair for Simon and thus carries out a twice-dispreferred action – Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) describe the preference for self initiated repair, the other completion of this repair doubles the dispreference – which is mitigated by low volume.

At first glance, one could assume that Melanie performs face threatening acts by doubting Simon's capability in German and then singling him out as the recipient in need for translation and correction. After closer analysis it becomes clear that Melanie makes the membership categories 'Foreign Language Speaker' and 'Regional Stranger' relevant for both herself and Simon and through that strives for affiliation. With the help of the third extract of case 2, the analysis shows how she does this.

Segment #6.2, Case 2 "You will miss us", *Part III* (simplified)

008 Melanie: dess du uns vermisst des (0.1) wisse mer=  
*that youIF us miss that (0.1) know we=*  
*that you (IF) will miss us we are aware of*  
 ((lines omitted))  
 024 Melanie: was it too much of dialect?  
 ((lines omitted))  
 027 Melanie: oh i said that (.) we know that (.) she will miss us  
*\*Ulrike and Corinna turn*  
*gazes towards Melanie*  
 028 Simon: a:h ahha and eh >how did you say it<?\*<br>
 ((lines omitted))  
 041 Melanie: i sai- eh ich e hab gesagt\* wir wissen (.) dass sie uns  
*- eh I e have said\* we know (.) that she us*  
*uh I u said we know that she*  
 042 vermisst  
*misses*  
*will miss us*  
 ((lines omitted))  
 052 Melanie: WE:ll if i say something really  
*\*Simon lets hands*  
*drop on table*  
 053 emotio[nal it comes in my o]wn dialect you know\*  
*\*Simon draws face,* *\*\* Simon points at himself*  
*head back* *shoulders raised*  
 054 Simon: [>\*jajaja<ja:: >°jaja°<\*\* ]  
*[>\*yesyesyes<yes::>°>yesyes°<\*\* ]*  
 055 Simon: °stimmt.°  
*°that's right.°*  
 056 (.)  
 057 Simon: °okee.°

By producing her turn in line 8 in dialect and marking it as being produced in that way, Melanie makes relevant the membership categories 'Multilingual Person' and 'Regional Stranger' for herself. At the same time, she makes these categories relevant for Simon by changing to English and asking him specifically whether he understood her utterance,

thus striving for affiliation. In line 24 this is clearly observable: She checks in English whether Simon understood her dialect turn. After first resisting the language alternation (line 26, Transcript Part II), he asks her to describe her turn in English (line 28). This is remarkable since Melanie cannot reproduce her regional dialect in English. In line 41/42, after a side sequence (discussed below), Melanie repeats her turn from line 8 without any dialect<sup>48</sup>. Simon has managed to maneuver her into a precarious situation in which he is in control: On the surface he surrenders into the position of an (incompetent) foreign language user, but at the same time he coerces Melanie into the category of 'Incapable Foreign Language Speaker' by asking for a reproduction of the dialectal turn in English. Thus, he goes along with the language alternation on the sequential level, but resists the employment of the membership categorizations for him. Something similar happens in line 52/53 when Melanie gives 'emotions' as the reason for her use of dialect. Simon agrees with Melanie's argument regarding 'emotionality' on the content level, but does so in German and thus defies her on the sequential level again. Repeatedly, he is reluctant to accept Melanie's initiation of language alternation.

One could say that Simon declines the categorization as 'Incapable Foreign Language Speaker', a category which Melanie apparently pursues to make relevant for him, but accepts to share with her the category 'Capable Foreign Language Speaker'. This analytical perspective is supported by the fact that Melanie uses her regional dialect as a resource for emotionality, which suggests that she feels 'at home' in both languages, her dialect and standard German. In agreeing with her, Simon implies that this is true as well for him and his multilingualism. Still, Simon resists the language alternation and keeps using German, although Melanie previously has given the account for her using dialect in English (lines 52ff). He affiliates in regard to content (he states to know the phenomena), but disaffiliates in regard to sequence structure (he declines the language switch, see Auer 1988). Simon balances out nonvocally the emerging discrepancy between decline and acceptance by expressing total agreement via embodied actions (pointing at himself, raises his shoulders in agreement) and facial expressions (line 54).

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<sup>48</sup> Two reasons make it hard for Melanie to reproduce her dialect in line 41: a) Simon's English request to Melanie to describe her utterance (line 28), and b) the lengthy laughter sequence in between (lines 29-40).



### Multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities

Identity work in terms of epistemic authorities is achieved through recipient design, similar to what was observable in case 1 "In German". It is evident that Melanie designs her utterance in line 24 to single out Simon as a recipient. This is apparent from her language choice and gaze. Her activities open up a dialogue structure for her and Simon and thus make the affiliation between them feasible. Melanie can assume that all other participants are capable of understanding her earlier turn "dass du uns vermisst..." ("that you will miss us.."), line 8, even though it is produced in dialect. On the whole, Melanie focuses her attention from line 24 exclusively on Simon, almost ignoring other participants from here until line 42. The other participants seem to be irrelevant as recipients of her dialectal turn. In line 52/53 when Melanie gives emotionality as the reason for her employing her regional dialect, she speaks English again and thereby chooses Simon as the recipient of her turn.

Through the recipient design of Melanie's activities she implicitly confirms Simon's identity as 'Hierarchy Highest' and thus the person with the most epistemic authority.

### Laughter

The laughter in case 2 shows even more clearly the interactional relevance of the activity in terms of group constellation and infringement of social rules. Part IV of the transcript shows how that happens. Here, Madita, the student worker, opens a side sequence. She takes over a turn which Melanie was selected to produce – the next turn to Simon's request to describe Melanie's turn from line 8 ("and how did you say it", line 28). The address form "you" in Simon's turn can only be meant to address Melanie. In taking over the next turn to Simon's request, Madita produces a laughable and thus breaks into the dialogue structure that Melanie has created. She thus de-constructs Melanie's identity work and her aspiration for affiliation with Simon.

## Segment #6.2, Case 2 "You will miss us", Part IV

028 Simon: a:h ahha and eh >how did you say it<?\*

029 (0.8)

\*Ulrike and Corinna  
turn gazes towards Madita  
\*\* Madita laughingly swings  
her upper body forwards

030 Madita: °dess \*de°- \*\*hehE[HEHA[HA hahahahahahehehehe  
°that you°- \*\*hehE[HEHA[HA hahahahahahehehehe

\*Melanie leans forward  
to Madita

031 Melanie: [\*wa(h)s was  
[\*wha(h)t what  
[ [ \*Corinna laughingly  
leans forward

032 Corinna: [hehHEHE\*HE .th.hhe th  
[ \*Ulrike laughingly  
turns away her upper body

033 Ulrike: [HAHAHA\*HAHAheheh

034 Simon: fthehewha(ha)tɛ

035 Madita: i(h)ich wo(ho)ltte dic(h)h ko(hh)piern .HHH (abba mir  
I(h) wa(ha)nted yo(h)u co(hh)py .HHH (but me  
I wanted to copy you but I

036 gelingt das)  
succeeds that)  
can't quite manage it)

037 [nich so schön wie dir HEHEH[ehehe .hhh das original is  
[not as beautiful as you HEHE[ehehe .hhh the original is  
as well as you do HEHEehehe the original version is

038 Ulrike: [fdas geht nichf  
[fthat goes notf  
[that doesn't work

039 Simon: [thehehe  
\*Ulrike turns gaze away  
from Madita towards Melanie

040 Madita: imma \*besser hmhmhehe .thhh  
always \*better hmhmhehe .thhh

041 Melanie: i sai- eh ich e hab gesagt\* wir wissen (.) dass sie uns  
- eh I e have said\* we know (.) that she us  
uh I u said we know that she

042 vermisst  
misses  
will miss us

In line 28 Simon finally complies with Melanie's language alternation into English. He even inquires further and asks Melanie to linguistically describe her turn from line 8: "and how did you say it?". Repair operations of this kind, quasi 1:1 repetitions, are difficult for the producer of a trouble source, and Melanie hesitates satisfying the requirement.

A gap of 0.8 seconds occurs (line 29), then Madita self-selects as next speaker and produces the turn for which Simon had originally selected Melanie. She starts copying Melanie, interrupts herself, though, after two short sounds "dess de" ("that you"), the first two sounds in Melanie's original turn in line 8. Then, she breaks off laughingly.

In annexing Melanie's turn, Madita damages Melanie's affiliation efforts and identity work. Putting an end to the gap, she breaks into the dialogue structure that Melanie created for herself and Simon, and makes the whole issue of using dialect and employing a foreign-language-using identity laughable by breaking out into explosive laughter. Though Madita affirms Melanie's identity as a 'multilingualist' by making it relevant, she at the same time devitalizes Melanie's attempts to categorize Simons as an 'Incapable Foreign Language Speaker' who is in need of translation. She does so by indicating that first speakers of German may be able to reproduce dialect, but just not "as well". In doing so, she implies that native speakers may have difficulties with dialect as well.

Melanie's own membership categorization makes her now the target of a laughable instead of delivering the resources for affiliation. All participants, including her boss, jointly laugh about the joke that builds on her talking in dialect. Madita succeeds in using the dialect as a resource for a laughable, preempts the serious explanation that Melanie gives for her using dialect (line 51, "emotional") and thus deconstructs Melanie's affiliation work.

Looking closer at the group constellation and group interaction, it becomes observable that Melanie does not share the laughter at any point during the side sequence (with the exception of an early orientation to laughter in her repair initiation *before* she understands what Madita is doing, line 31), but almost everyone else does. Consequently it is Melanie who closes the laugh sequence by producing a serious next turn in second position to Madita's account (line 35). Melanie ignores both the content and tone of Madita's contribution and starts her turn (line 41) in English "I sai-" to then carry out a self repair and reproduce her turn from line 8 in standard German. This almost has the effect of interactionally deleting the laughter sequence, as if the immediate previous turn would have been Simon's question in line 28 "and how did you say it". Through these activities Melanie distances herself further from the team. By not joining the laughter and almost ignoring the whole sequence, Melanie is positioning herself outside group.

Madita's laughter is joined by Corinna and Ulrike at an early point in overlap. This laughter is on the verge between 'laughing with' (Madita) and 'laughing at' (Melanie) 'Laughing at' has the potential to be a face threatening act and can infringe local social rules (see Glenn 1995). Looking at Madita's next turn in relation to the laughable (line 35), one can observe that she in fact orients to this potential danger: She attempts to atone for the damage that she might have caused by producing the laughter side sequence. Laughingly she gives an account of her activities and tries to excuse her potentially face threatening action by combining a compliment for Melanie with self-deprecation. This works to buffer the dispreferred activity. Nevertheless, the infringing quality of the laughter remains perceptible.

In summary, the analysis of case 2 "You will miss us" has shown how regional and linguistic identities can be made relevant in order to achieve affiliation. Further, it has shown how laughter can help to disaffiliate a person from a group and how a laughable can assist in breaching social rules while laughter at the same time can be employed to buffer this very infringement. The next case, case 3 "Private", deals with inappropriateness in the institutional setting. The analysis discloses how multilingualism is used as a resource to achieve inappropriateness and in what ways this interactional feature is used for affiliation. Once more, the similarities between the three cases in terms of orienting to epistemic authority and laughter become obvious.

### **6.5. Case 3 "Private": Being Boss and the Publication of Laughables – How Inappropriateness Can Have an Affect on Local Identities and on the Relationships among Participants**

The analysis of case 3 "Private" reveals how the interactants orient to multilingualism as a vehicle through repair and employ this for building affiliation. Case 3 shows in what ways multilingualism is used as a resource for orientation to local identities in terms of epistemic authorities (Raymond & Heritage 2006). This is similar to what was observable in case 1 "In German" and case 2 "You will miss us". Turning to the analysis of laughter, it becomes apparent that, again, the laughable is connected to multilingualism. The laughter affects the group constellation and makes it possible for the interactants to infringe on local social rules.

At first glance it may seem as if 'inappropriate behavior' is not necessarily a part of business interaction. In case 3, though, it becomes obvious that participants can orient to each other in an inappropriate way and that such interactional behavior has consequences in regard to membership categories, local identities and affiliation.

Again, because of a lengthy segment, the transcript is displayed in (simplified) parts. The data extract is taken from the same meeting as case 1 "In German". Melanie reports about a certain topic (which Simon would like to end at this point (closing implicit "so" (Meier 1997), line 1). He asks her to present on this at another time in a meeting with a more exclusive participant framework. To convey this, he uses the expression "vielleicht wir können über diese Thema privat sprechen" ("maybe we can talk about this in private") (line 1). The German use of "privat" turns out to be tricky in this context: Melanie makes Simon's minimal mistake publicly available through repair and implies an inappropriate innuendo.

Segment #6.3, Case 3 "Private", *Part I*

LGH 011013 0:47:09 (simplified)

			<i>*Simon drops his hand on the table</i>
001	Simon:	so .hh vielleicht wir können über diese thema (.) [ <i>*privat</i> <i>so. .hh. maybe we can about this topic (.)</i> [ <i>*private</i> <i>so. .hh maybe we can talk about this issue in private</i>	
002	Melanie:		[ja [yes
003	Simon:	sp[rechen und dann ein [pf (.) ( ) <i>t[alk and then a [pf (.) ( )</i> <i>and then a pf (.) ( )</i> [	<i>*Melanie furrows brow</i> <i>**Simon rests head on hand</i>
004	Melanie:	[ja <i>[yes</i> <i>yes</i>	<i>[*p:rivat nit. [<i>**aber</i> [<i>*p:rivat not. [<i>**but</i> <i>not in private but</i></i></i>
005	Simon:		[priva:t, [pri:vate,
006	Melanie:	£sp[äter(hh)£= <i>£la[ter(hh)£=</i>	
007	Laura:	[unta uns <i>[between us</i>	
			<i>*Melanie blinks at Simon</i>
008	Melanie:	=hehehehe† [HE^HE^ [HE^*HA^ [HA^	

### Orientation to multilingualism as a vehicle

In case 3 it is not the usage of another language which makes the orientation to multilingualism visible, but an other-initiated, other-completed correction of a single word. The rebuffering of "privat" (Simon, line 1) → "privat nicht" ("not in private"), (Melanie, line 4), draws attention to the fact that something is amiss with the word "privat". Melanie's suggestion for an alternative, "später" ("later"), which she offers smilingly in line 6, amplifies this notion. Simon's usage of "private" in German makes possible a subliminal innuendo: the word carries the semantic meanings<sup>49</sup>: 1. *confidential*, 2. *familiar, domestic, homely* 3. *not official, not public* in German. The semantics allow an innuendo, but do not make it inevitable. However, through Melanie's interactional activities (repair, smiling, laughter), she points to the trouble source and subtly implies an innuendo. In doing so, she breaches both the institutional setting and the hierarchical structure.

Although it is not necessary for the sake of intersubjectivity to explicitly identify the trouble source in this case (see Jefferson 2007 on non-correction gratuity), Melanie decides to make Simon's non-native usage publicly available with an OI OC repair. Her repair is thus potentially problematic in terms of:

- the preference for self-correction (Schegloff, Jefferson, Sacks 1977): An other-initiated, other completed repair is twice dispreferred;
- the ethnographic and local structure of the team: Simon being the hierarchy highest and Melanie the newest member of the team in terms of seniority. She declines a directive from her boss (to talk about an issue between the two of them), breaks out of the interactional frame set by Simon, and opens an insertion sequence;
- the possible face threat by referring to Simon's incapacities as a user of German and thereby making him a target of a laughable;
- the hint towards an inappropriateness ("privat" as in the context of something ambiguous): Melanie moves on a level which is implicitly inapt.

Although her other initiated, other completed repair and the resulting 'publication' of the inappropriateness is potentially problematic, Melanie achieves at the same time affiliation through her activities. While holding the risk of a dispreferred activity and thus the defamation of her boss, Melanie's activities enable her to get closer to Simon -

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<sup>49</sup> Source: Duden Fremdwörterbuch (Foreign Word Lexicon), 1990

or at least give the impression they are close. In their paper on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy, Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff describe this phenomena:

"The introduction of improper talk may have an interactional basis. That is, it is a convention about interaction that frankness, rudeness, crudeness, profanity, obscenity, etc. are indices of relaxed, unguarded, spontaneous; i.e. intimate interaction. That convention may be utilised by participants. That is, the introduction of such talk can be seen as a display that speaker takes it that the current interaction is one in which he may produce such talk; i.e. is informal /intimate. Further, the introduction of such talk may be [...] a consequential, programmatic action." (Jefferson, Sacks, Schegloff 1987: 160)

Melanie makes use of this convention: When she offers an alternative for "privat", she does so smilingly with post-utterance laughter (line 6). As an embodied action she blinks at Simon while laughing. Thus, she invokes a sense of conspiracy between her and Simon which serves to create a 'we'-group. The aspired affiliation is stressed through laughter, embodied actions and looks, and is based on the orientation to multilingualism through the orientation to erroneous foreign language use.

#### Multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities

The next part of the transcript gives further insight into how local identities and epistemic authorities are brought into existence by participants. The focus here is on Simon, Melanie and Laura, his assistant.

#### Segment #6.3, Case 3 "Private", Part II (simplified)

04/06 Melanie: ja p:rivat nit. aber £sp[äter(hh)£=  
*yes p:rivat not. but £la[ter(hh)£=*  
*yes not in private but*

007 Laura: [unta uns  
*[between us*

\*Melanie blinks  
 at Simon  
 008 Melanie: =hehehehe↑ [HE^HE^ [HE^\*HA^ [HA^  
 009 Laura: [ʔunta unsʔ  
 [ʔbetween usʔ  
 010 Simon: [UNTa [uns  
 [BETWEEn[us  
 011 Laura: [n:hhe[he  
 012 Simon: [was is [privat=  
 [what is [private=  
 what does private mean  
 [Eh:hhehh  
 013 Nora:  
 014 Melanie: =^hha[:h  
 \*Melanie turns gaze  
 smilingly to Laura  
 015 Laura: [\*privat is bei [ihnen z- eh [zu hau- ]  
 [\*private is at [youF a- eh [at hom- ]  
 private means at your place  
 016 Madita: [( ) [°ins bett.°=>HÄha<[ha:hh  
 [( ) [°into bed.°=>HÄha<[ha:hh  
 \*Anke throws  
 head back, laughs silently  
 with open mouth  
 017 Simon: [intimisch?\* ]  
 [intimate-ish? ]  
 grammatically incorrect form of intimate]  
 018 Simon: hehe=  
 019 Melanie: =>hahhahh< ^HE^HA^HA^  
 \*Wilma looks at Simon, smiles  
 020 Laura: [\*nEIn ʔzu hau:se zu hau:seʔ  
 [nO ʔat ho:me at ho:meʔ  
 \*Simon lifts one hand  
 021 Simon: ja sie können \*zu hause [hehe ʔbei uns zu m(h)i(h)r nach  
 yes youF can \*at home [hehe ʔat us to m(h)e(h) at  
 yes you can come home hehe to our place to me  
 022 Melanie: [HEHEhehe.hhh  
 \*\*S turns gaze away from Melanie,  
 looks down at papers on table  
 023 Simon: hause k(h)ommen\*\*=  
 home c(h)ome\*\*  
 at home  
 024 Melanie: =.HHhehhehh[.HHH  
 \*Simon points\*\*Simon leans backwards  
 at papers  
 in front of him \*\*\* Melanie hugs her arms,  
 slowly stops laughing  
 025 Simon: [\*wir können \*\*über diese thema \*\*\*sprechen.  
 [\*we can \*\*about this topic \*\*\* talk.  
 we can talk about this topic.  
 026 aber,  
 but,  
 027 (0.2)  
 028 Simon: ja.  
 yes.



- 029 (0.2)
- 030 Simon: ein paar änderungen und ich [denke sie können das in  
*a few changes and i [think youF can that in*  
*a few changes and I think you can present that*
- 031 Melanie: [ja  
 [yes
- 032 Simon: ressortgespräch=  
*resort talk=*  
*in the*
- 033 Melanie: =okee=  
 =okay=
- 034 Simon: =ehm (.) [präsen[tieren.  
*ehm (.) [pres [ent*  
*resort talk*
- 035 Melanie: [hmh? [okee  
 [hmh? [okay

Simon's membership categorizations as 'Foreign Language User, 'Man' and 'Boss' are crucial in making his turn a resource for affiliation (and also for making it a potential laughable which is discussed in detail below). Melanie makes use of and plays with these categories. With her correction of "privat", Melanie orients to Simon's identity as a foreign language speaker. The implication of the innuendo works here because of the obvious difference in gender and the general assumptions of flirting and/or inappropriate behavior between men and women<sup>50</sup> at work. Simon's epistemic authority as 'Boss' becomes relevant through Simon's own actions: His directive that the topic is better discussed in private (line 1) signals that he is in the position to give directives. His next directive in line 30 shows that it is him who makes decisions about which topics are to be discussed in the leaders' meeting.

After having reached the climax of the sequence – and interestingly it is Simon who helps the joke on his behalf to its climax as will become obvious below – Simon elegantly manages to move away from the implicit inappropriateness through self-repair (line 21). In this moving out of the inappropriateness Simon's local identity of 'Boss' shows again. The analysis reveals how swiftly he is able to achieve this: In line 21 he smilingly offers Melanie to come to his home to discuss the matter, on the surface going along with her innuendo, but inviting her to "our place", thus making the membership category 'married person possibly with family' relevant for himself, including his wife/family as hosts and

<sup>50</sup> I am aware that flirting between two people of the same sex is just as likely. However, the stereotype that a male boss would allure his female subordinate into a 'private' meeting is more common. It is this stereotype that Melanie plays on here.

excluding the assumption that his invitation could be in any way romantically inspired. He then smilingly self-repairs the pronoun from "us" to "me", but he already has achieved the dissipation of the romantic or sexual innuendo. In line 25, Simon manages to completely leave risky waters and bring the interaction 'back on track'. With no trace of laughter or smile he connects to his turn from line 1-3<sup>51</sup> and repeats that he and Melanie "can talk about this topic". His body posture is directed at the papers in front of him, thus signaling involvement in the work activity. Towards the end of line 25 Melanie only hesitantly leaves 'laughter modus', and Simon delays his turn in line 27 and 29 with pauses of each 0.2 seconds, maybe to give Melanie time to move out of the laughter sequence with him. In line 32/34 Simon suggests that Melanie should present the topic in the "Ressortgespräch", an executives' meeting. He is back in the institutional frame, and he has taken Melanie with him. Simon displays in his way of handling the potentially risky situation, the epistemic authority of a superior. Competently, he has moved out of a situation that could have been potentially problematic for him.

Having analyzed how Simon makes his hierarchical position a social reality, it is all the more obvious that Melanie's teasing plays on Simon's organizational position as well: Making publicly available the mistake and thus drawing attention to a potential laughable is both more risky and incisive if the trouble source's producer has such a high position in the team. Melanie acts antipodal to hierarchy. Coser (1960) shows that humour and teasing from bottom to top in an institutional team can be a means to invert hierarchy. Melanie plays with this inversion and uses it as a further means to achieve affiliation.

When looking at Laura's conduct (Simons' secretary), it is worth noting that she also does identity work in order to display epistemic authority. It is observable in her activities that she realizes her structural role as Simon's assistant and her relative closeness to him interactionally: She is the first one to help him out of a potentially tricky situation. In line 7 she offers in overlap a harmless explanation for "privat". She smilingly remains involved without joining the laughter. In response to Simon's question "was ist privat" ("what does private mean"), line 12, she is the first one to reply. Here, too, she offers an innocent<sup>52</sup> description of "privat" – "zu Hause" ("at home"). When the laughter is at its climax in line 16-19, Laura repulses the sexual innuendo with a loudly produced "nein" ("no"), line 20.

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<sup>51</sup> The same is observable in case 2 "Vermissen" from line 45 onwards.

<sup>52</sup> Especially innocent in comparison to what Madita offers in line 16.

Interactionally she creates distance to the inappropriateness for both herself and Simon and removes him from the line of fire.

### Laughter

As stated above, the laughable in case 3 "Private" is connected to multilingualism, like the laughables in case 1 and 2 are, as it is Melanie's repair which assists in categorizing Simon as a 'Foreign Language User' that makes the laughable publicly available. The subsequent collaborate activities of the participants draw even more attention to Simon's minor mistake and thus make the resulting sexual innuendo and laughter possible. Hence the participants (with the exception of Laura) make the trouble source accessible as a laughable for all participants.

#### Segment #6.3, Case 3 "Private", Part III (simplified)

01/03 Simon: wir können über diese thema (.) privat sprechen  
*we can talk about this issue (.) in private*

04/06 Melanie: p:rivat nit. aber £sp[äter(hh)£=  
*not in private but £la[ter(hh)£=*

007 Laura: [unta uns  
*[between us*  
*\*Melanie blinks*  
*at Simon*

008 Melanie: =hehehehe↑[HE^HE^[HE^\*HA^[HA^

009 Laura: [£unta uns£  
*[£between us£*

010 Simon: [UNTa [uns  
*[BETWEEn[us*

011 Laura: [n:hhe[he

012 Simon: [was is [privat=  
*[what is [private=*  
*what does private mean*

013 Nora: [Eh:hhehh



The adjective 'intimate' carries in German an almost clinical connotation and is, especially in contrast to Madita's figurative description, very direct. Although grammatically not fully correct, the word-merge from 'intim' (German) and 'intimate' (English) with the English ending -ish is understood without problems by Simon's co-participants, no attempts of repair are made. Subsequent to "intimisch" Simon produces post-utterance laugh particles and thus recognizes the 'joke on his behalf' and joins it, turning the 'laughter about him' into a 'laughter with him' by participating in the joke. Melanie's almost ecstatic laughter in line 19 marks the climax of the laughter sequence.

Case 3 "Private" has shown how inappropriateness, invoked through categorizing other as 'Foreign (Faulty) Language User', can be a resource for laughter and affiliation. Like in all three cases, the realization of epistemic authorities through the orientation to multilingualism has been revealed. The analysis of the interactional relevance of laughter has furnished a further example in which laughter enables interactants to infringe on social rules. Following, some concluding remarks.

## **6.6. Conclusion**

The analysis of the three cases has revealed how multilingualism as a members' category is made relevant in creating laughables and how these together with language alternation and/or orientation to multilingualism build a resource for laughter and identity work in business meetings. The paper has shown that a bi- or multilingual identity is not necessarily a "transportable identity" (Zimmerman, 1998), but occasioned and employed to approach interactional goals. The orientation to multilingualism has an influence on the local identities in a business team and their relations with each other. "Language itself is a social structure; language preference itself structures society." (Gafaranga 2005: 298). This is true for the particular social setting of a business team. This study has shown how interlocutors shape the institutional environment they interact in through language preference and the orientation to multilingualism. Drew & Heritage have a point in saying that social identity work gets "more tangled and complex where participants to an institutional interaction [...] do not share common cultural or linguistic resources." Drew & Heritage 1992:24 It also gets very interesting and resourceful.

Multilingualism as a members' category can be made relevant by participants for self or other in aspiration of affiliation or disaffiliation and to establish epistemic authorities. It is, as the analyses have disclosed, a rich resource for laughter. For a recap of the analytic topics the three cases were examined under, the following table gives a short overview:

Graph #6.3, *Analytic Topics*

<b>Analytic Topics</b>	<b>Case 1</b>	<b>Case 2</b>	<b>Case 3</b>
<b><i>Orientation to multilingualism as a vehicle</i></b>			
Meta-linguistic negotiation of choice of language	X		
Language Alternation	X	X	
Repair		X	X
Membership Categorization 'Foreign Language User' for Affiliation		X	X
<b><i>Multilingualism as a resource for orientation to local identities</i></b>			
Recipient design	X	X	
<b>Epistemic authorities: Territory of ownership and accountability</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b><i>Laughter</i></b>			
<b>Laughable connected to multilingualism</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Group interaction and group constellation</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Infringement of local social rules</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

Interestingly, the three cases showed clear parallels in terms of (a) multilingualism being a resource in the realization of epistemic authorities and (b) multilingualism being connected to the laughter/laughable.

In all three cases, epistemic authorities were realized in orientation to multilingualism. In case 1 "In German", this was done through the specifically addressed question about language preference and the subsequent directive by the person highest in the hierarchy. In case 2 "You will miss us", this occurred through a recipient design that selected exclusively

the person highest in the hierarchy as the only recipient to a dialectal turn, thus building an attempt to form an affiliation by making relevant the categorization 'Local/Regional Foreigners' for self and other. In case 3 "Private", the realization to epistemic authorities happens in Simon's handling of the laughter sequence, which is based on an inappropriateness, invoked by his subordinates, and the subsequent directives he gives. This gives evidence to the hypothesis that multilingualism provides rich resources for realizing epistemic authorities in institutional interaction. Through language choices and the orientation to multilingualism, interlocutors are 'doing' social identity and bringing about epistemic authority.

The laughable in every case is connected to multilingualism: In case 1 the laughable was the second pair part to the inquiry about language preference, an answer that was given in a distinctive 'First Language User' manner. In case 2 the laughable turned out to be first a dialectal turn and then the mocking repetition of it, and in case 3 it was a trouble source due to the false word usage of a foreign language speaker, and the OI OC repair of it.

Further, in all three cases laughter has been shown to have vast influence on (c) group interaction and group constellation, and can be employed to (d) infringe local social rules. In all three cases the group constellation was affected by who laughs along, who does not laugh along, and who might be 'laughed about' (Glenn 1995). The analyses have thus furnished further results to prove that laughter has both affiliative and disaffiliative qualities, and that these can be employed by the interactants adequately. It has been shown that laughter plays an important role for participants when orienting to work-relevant identities as well as to work-relevant relations and aspired affiliations, like the one between superior and subordinate, and that participants make use of this interactional tool accordingly.<sup>53</sup>

So, through laughter, participants are enabled to activate, but also to challenge membership categorizations that others have brought about for self or other. The analyses have provided evidence that laughter employs interactants with a tool to either breach local social norms or deal with those infringements, while at the same time supplying them with a resource that can achieve affiliation with others. This way, laughter constitutes a somewhat 'protected area' for both breaching local social rules and cushioning these infringements.

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<sup>53</sup> It is further striking that in all three cases the agenda is being abandoned. Also, in all three cases it is Melanie who is in some way involved in a language alternation, and the one who seeks affiliation with Simon.

Even if all it still may be little projectable what participants altogether achieve through laughter since the possibilities seem fathomless, it has been shown that the production of laughables and subsequent laughter is a central part of identity work. Multilingual settings provide a unique environment for using linguistic membership as a resource for laughter.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

In this final chapter, I present and discuss the main conclusions reached in this dissertation about laughter in interaction, bringing together general findings as well as the results specifically relevant for the three overarching topics this dissertation has recurrently addressed ('Institutional Business Interaction', 'Membership Categories and Identity Work' and 'Multiperson Setting'). The findings are discussed related to CA research. I conclude with final remarks on further research, implications and perspectives.

#### 7.1. The Organization and Interactional Consequences of Laughter

This dissertation set out to investigate what happens in talk when people laugh or do not laugh in an institutional business setting. The basic research questions were:

- How is laughter organized? Can it occur in every position in talk?
- What is the interactional relevance of laughter in talk, that is: What do interactants achieve by laughing/not laughing when engaged in interaction?

Applying the methodology of CA in researching laughter as a social, interactional phenomenon, this study has come to the following conclusions.

Concerning the organization of laughter, chapter 4 in particular revealed that laughter relative to its laughable can be positioned in two different places: (A) *Laughter in first position* (same-turn display of something laughable) and (B) *'Laughter in second position'* (next-turn display of something laughable). When examining both positions, it turned out that there is a preference for the self-initiation of laughter, that is, for 'Laughter in First Position' (A). A frequency count showed that 67% of laughter occurrences happen in first position. Also, analyses revealed that 'Laughter in Second Position' (B) has a great potential to constitute a disaffiliative action in talk. Moreover, analyses in chapter 4 showed that laughables can occur in all positions in talk, and nothing in interaction can be definitely excluded as a potential

source for laughter. This dissertation thus states that laughter has an omnipresent potential for occurrence in talk. These findings add to the groundbreaking research of Jefferson (1979, 1984, 1985) who initially investigated the sequential organization of laughter. The present study contributes to showing that laughter in a multiperson institutional setting is, just as in dyadic interaction, a product of coordinated actions, and that its different positionings have certain interactional consequences.

Regarding these consequences, or, more precisely, focusing on the interactional relevance of laughter, the analyses in chapter 4, 5 and 6 disclosed that laughter can have an affiliative as well as a disaffiliative quality. While the discussion in chapter 4 showed that the positioning of laughter has a vast influence on its interactional relevance in terms of disaffiliation - it showed that, when laughter occurs in second position it has a strong disaffiliative quality and tends to elicit no subsequent laughter from the producer of the laughable -, chapter 5 revealed that laughter in talk is a means to seek affiliation with co-present colleagues. Chapter 5 discussed that, in complaint sequences, laughter is an implicit means for co-participants to affiliate with the complaint: It is employed as a resource for both complainant and complaint's recipient in seeking and displaying affiliation without expressively orienting to the complaint. Chapter 6 investigated laughter in regard to its influence on group constellation. It revealed that this constellation is strongly affected by acceptance and declinations of laugh invitations, as well as by who might be 'laughed about' (Glenn 1995). These analyses provide further results to show that laughter has both affiliative and disaffiliative qualities, and that this fact is being employed in talk. In investigating the affiliative and disaffiliative aspects of laughter, this study adds to the findings of O'Donnell & Adams (1983), and in doing so contributes to our understanding of laughter in regard to (dis)affiliation.

As a tool to infringe local social rules, laughter has been analyzed in chapter 6 to employ interactants with a means to either breach local social norms or deal with those infringements, while at the same time supplying them with a resource that can achieve affiliation with others. This way, laughter constitutes a somewhat 'protected area' for both breaching local social rules and cushioning these infringements.

Further, this study has revealed that laughter is a means to both ensure and interfere with intersubjectivity (chapter 4). Laughter in first position helps interactants to ensure intersubjectivity by indicating the orientation to laughter in the laughable producer's contribution, thus helping the recipients to understand the trajectory of the contribution at an early point in talk. Laughter in second position, however, has a disaffiliative quality in that the producer of a laughable might be left unaware of what actually is laughable in his/her contribution. This increases the potential for a breach of intersubjectivity, and interactants might need to do work in order to restore intersubjectivity.

This dissertation has shown that laughter is employed to achieve implicitness in complaints (chapter 5). Analyses revealed that in complaints on the same hierarchical level, laughter is employed as a means to co-construct the complaint with the co-present participants, and to display herself as trouble resistant (Jefferson 1984b). In cases where there is a discrepancy in regard to hierarchy between the complainant (subordinate) and the complaine (superior), it has been revealed that the role of laughter in realizing the complaint is in reciprocal relation to the organizational position of the complaine: When the hierarchical disparity between complainant and complaine is substantial, laughter serves as one tool in carrying out the actual complaint, as it serves to co-construct a complainable identity for the complaine and/or the complaint itself. In that way, laughter operates to achieve implicitness.

In addition to the core, general research questions, this study recurrently addressed three overarching topics involving laughter in all three analytic chapters. In the following sections, the findings specific to these overarching topics are highlighted and discussed.

## 7.2 Laughter in Institutional Business Interaction

This dissertation specifically addresses questions about laughter in an institutional business setting. As outlined in the introduction to this study, the dissertation has presented some results to the following research questions within this particular realm:

- Does laughter in a business environment have special interactional characteristics in comparison to laughter in everyday interaction?
- Is its organization different compared to mundane interaction?
- Can hierarchy be laughed into, or out of, existence?
- Can seniority be displayed through laughter?
- Does laughter in business meetings deflect from the agenda, or, put more bluntly: With all the laughter going on, are business meetings really about business?

Concerning the special interactional and organizational characteristics of laughter in an institutional business setting, compared to mundane everyday interaction, this dissertation has shown laughter as both context-free and context-sensitive (chapter 4). Having analyzed the details of displaying something as a laughable in first position and comparing this to findings about how interactants do this in everyday interaction (Jefferson 1974), the present study has found that there are differences, no matter whether the participants are engaged in dyadic everyday or multiperson institutional setting. It has thus been stated that laughter seems mostly to be of overriding position when it comes to settings. This yields the analytic result that the organization of laughter is context-free. At the same time, laughter is context-sensitive: The indication of roles and identities relevant in a business context are a prominent vehicle for laughter. Laughter is thus context-sensitive as interactants exploit certain aspects of the context as laughter sources.

When looking at the coherence between laughter and the orientation to hierarchy and seniority, the present study has shown that laughter can be a tool in interactionally constructing hierarchy and seniority, as discussed in chapter 5. In complaint sequences, participants employ laughter in order to indicate hierarchical distinctions in a business setting. Hierarchical discrepancies are in reciprocal relation to the strength of laughter's role in

realizing complaints. The orientation to hierarchy is thus immanent in the combined activity complaint+laughter. Also, laughter plays a central role in displaying seniority: Invoking and producing laughter by indicating shared negative knowledge about non-present superiors serves as a means to display seniority. Recipients can align with this display by either reacting to it as a complaint or a laughable.

Further, it has been indicated that there is an orientation to hierarchy when recurrently the boss becomes the 'object' of a laughable, as analyses in chapter 6 revealed. Laughter can, as discussed earlier in section 7.1., be a means to create affiliation. In a business setting, it might be particularly desirable to achieve affiliation with persons higher in hierarchy than oneself, with the purpose of gaining advantages from this affiliation, be it local or in general. In seeking affiliation with superiors through laughter, laughter is then a tool to orient to hierarchy.

Regarding the question whether laughter deflects from the agenda of a business meeting, chapter 4 (see particularly 4.4.) and chapter 6 (see particularly 6.4.) have shown that creating laughables can in deed result in a 'side sequence' and momentarily deflect from the agenda. However, these side sequences are usually still 'about business', as during these, the participants employ laughter as a tool to do local identity work and orient to work-relevant Membership Categories. In regard to what constitutes institutional interaction, Drew & Sorjonen (1997) state:

"The institutionality of dialogue is constituted by participants through their orientation to relevant institutional roles and identities, and the particular responsibilities and duties associated with those roles; and through their production and management of institutionally relevant tasks and activities. The study of institutional dialogue thus focuses on the ways in which conduct is shaped or constrained by the participants' orientations to social institutions [...]. Analyzing institutional dialogue involves investigating how their orientation to and engagement in their institutional identities is manifest in the details of participants' language, and their use of language to pursue institutional goals." (Drew & Sorjonen 1997: 94)

This dissertation has shown that not only through language, but also through laughter, participants orient to "relevant institutional roles and identities", and also to the "responsibilities and duties" that come with these identities. Taking this into account, it

becomes obvious that laughter sequences generally do not deflect from doing business, but play a major part in the management and production of 'doing having business meetings'.

As laughter in regard to both institutionality and identity work is so narrowly linked, section 7.2. and 7.3. are heavily intertwined. I discuss in the following the results of this study in terms of how participants make these identities relevant through laughter.

### 7.3. Laughter in Regard to Membership Categories and Identity Work

The issue of laughter in regard to Membership Categories and identity work is, as mentioned above, closely connected in this study to the topic of laughter in institutional business interaction: The Membership Categories and local identities discussed as oriented to or constructed in talk have mostly to do with the institutional business setting<sup>54</sup>. Research

<sup>54</sup> Most categories discussed in this dissertation, though, are related to the institutional organization. However, there are of course many Membership Categories the participants of the business meetings orient to, and some are not work-related, as for example chapter 6 on multilingualism has revealed. The extract below is a further example.

#### Business Meeting 011114, 0:48:55

001 Laura: und es waren alles leute die haben da gearbeitet  
*and there were all people who worked there*  
 002 die alle viel jünger waren als ich=Und <Dann war  
*who were much younger than me:And <Then there*  
 003 noch zusätzlich> daz[u (.) in: der toilette so ein  
*was in addition to that> (. ) in the restroom such a*  
 004 (Madita): [°hmmfff  
 005 Laura: li:ch[t  
*li:gh*[t  
 006 Madita: [A:hahha[hha[hha °hhhah hhhah hhhah ° ]  
 007 Nora: [EHhhehh  
 008 Corinna: [hhehh[ehhe  
 009 Laura: [ich hatte die depressionen des]  
*[I had the depression of the]*  
 010 jahrhu:[nderts [ich dachte [( )meine güte bist du  
*cen:[tury [I thought [( ) my God you are*  
 011 Madita: [°HHHAAhhhh  
 012 Nora: [ehehehe  
 013 Robin: [HAHHhahha  
 014 Laura: fu::ra:lt j[a also  
*fan::cient y[es well*  
 015 Robin: [hhahhahha  
 016 Madita: [hahahahahh  
 017 Corinna: fspieglein spieglein an der wand?f  
*fmirror mirror on the wall?*

In this extract, the four female colleagues orient to the Categories 'Age' and something that could be termed 'Outer Appearance' through a laughable. Prior to this extract, the women have talked about "the horrible light in the elevator" that makes them look like "dead". Laura in line 3 alludes to this by

questions concerning laughter in regard to Membership Categories and identity work were posed in the introduction as follows:

- How can organizational roles and work-related identities be a source for laughter?
- How does laughter influence the orientation to Membership Categories and identity work?

Being locally produced, step-by-step developed and transformable at any given moment (Heritage 2004), social local identity needs to be established and negotiated. Laughter seems to be a central tool for participants to do so. As identity is "something [people] do" (Widdicombe 1998: 191), interactants employ laughter as one tool to do it.

Chapter 4 has discussed the context-sensitivity of laughter as participants employ laughter to create laughter sources that are closely connected to Membership Categories in an institutional business environment. Analyses show that in nearly half of the laughter instances, the orientation to and indication of organizationally relevant roles constitutes a laughter source. In doing so, the participants exploit details of the context in an indexical way for producing laughter.

Laughter in complaint sequences is a means to indicate and influence the orientation to Membership Categories and local identities in regard to hierarchy by achieving different levels of implicitness, as chapter 5 has argued. The findings in this realm add to Haakana's (1999) results that institutional roles are oriented to through laughter. By the combined activity laughter+complaint, participants in a business meeting manage the degree of implicitness of a potentially problematic activity (complaining about a superior). Analyses show that the degree of implicitness increases proportionally with the hierarchical position of the complainees. Laughter is here a means to not only indicate to organizational identities and hierarchy in general, but to point to detailed nuances in the hierarchy structure.

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reporting about a light in a restroom that made her look "ancient" (line 14). She produces her telling as a laughable by intonation (e.g. line 2: loudness and tempo, line 3: stressing), irony (leaving out the description of the light, referring to it as "such a light") and smile voice (line 14). The co-participants align and affiliate with her telling through laughter. Corinna, in line 17, makes the Category 'Outer Appearance' explicit by citing the famous line of the fairy tale Snowwhite "Mirror mirror on the wall", thus referring vain and looks.

Chapter 6 has discussed how laughter is a central tool for interactants in shaping the institutional environment through language preference and the orientation to multilingualism. Laughter here has been shown to be a rich tool to orient to multilingualism. The three cases analyzed in chapter 6 showed how epistemic authorities can be realized by orienting to multilingualism through laughter, for example when superiors deal with laughter sequences that are invoked by subordinates, and based on an inappropriateness, thus constituting a 'laughing at' (Jefferson 1974, Glenn 1995) incidence.

In general, the analyses in this dissertation show that through laughter, participants are enabled to activate, orient to and challenge (work-related) Membership Categorizations that others have brought about for themselves or for others. Laughter thus plays an important role for participants when orienting to local identities as well as to work-relevant relations and potentially local beneficial affiliations.

#### **7.4. Laughter in Multiperson Settings**

This dissertation is exclusively concerned with the study of laughter in a multiperson setting; there are no incidences of dyadic interaction in the data. As mentioned in section 3.3.2.2., most CA studies on laughter concentrate on dyadic interaction. One of the central research questions this dissertation addressed is thus:

- How does the multiperson setting influence the organization of laughter sequences in comparison to dyadic interaction?

Of course, when there are only two interlocutors, the producer of a laughable can only receive one kind of reaction at a time, for instance either an acceptance of a laugh invitation or a declination (Jefferson 1984b), or the orientation to the laughable as one different activity. When there are more than two interactants engaged in talk – in the present study the number of participating employees is never less than 4 (see section 1.3.), different members might take a prior contribution as diverse activities. Chapter 4 and 5 have shown that one contribution can be taken as a laughable by recipient A, while recipient B reacts to it



as a complaint. In these cases, the producer of the laughable may be under the constraint to produce a next action to both recipients' reactions.

Further, in a multiperson setting laughter employs interactants with tools to co-construct a joint complaint (chapter 5). Joint laughter after naming a complainee is sufficient to imply the negative shared knowledge and realize an implicit complaint. Although interlocutors in dyadic interaction can jointly construct, or more precise, jointly agree on a complaint (e.g. through "response cries" (Goffman 1981), see Drew 1998), the power of the combined action laughter+complaint is stronger in multiperson settings, for the simple reason that there can be a 'we-group' that 'gangs up' against the complainee, while in dyadic interaction there is only one potential counter part.

Along this line of argument, chapter 4 has shown that laughter in second position has an even higher risk of disaffiliation in a multiperson setting. When the laugh initiation is produced by someone other than the producer of the laughable, the actual producer of the laughable might be unaware of what the laughable in his/her contribution is. He/she could consequently be faced with many co-participants who all know and 'get' the laughable, who consequently all laugh, and who thus build an affiliation from which he/she is excluded. The preference structure of laughter positionings which prefers laughter in first position (see chapter 4) might thus be enhanced in a multiperson setting.

As a last point in this discussion, chapter 6 has shown how laughter is a means to dismantle a dialogue structure that has been created by one colleague with the leader of the department. Laughter in this regard is then, in a multiperson setting, a means to open up a dialogue sequence to the whole group, while disassembling the one-on-one structure two interactants have constructed.

## **7.5. Conversation Analysis**

This dissertation pertains to CA research in that it describes the organization and the interactional consequences of laughter in institutional interaction (see e.g. Haakana 1999, 2001, 2002; Greatback & Clark 2001; Osvaldsson 2004). It particularly addresses laughter in business meetings. As CA studies how "the work of the constitutive institutions of societies" (Schegloff 1996:4), among these business institutions, are brought about through interaction,

this study adds to findings about how bigger sociological concepts are realized in the micro-details of everyday life, such as through laughter in interaction.

More specifically, this dissertation adds to CA research in the aspects 'Laughter and Sequence Organization', 'Laughter and Preference Structure' and 'Laughter and Complaints', as discussed in the previous sections. It has shed light on these fine-grained details of laughter in interaction, and thus added to the 'bigger picture' of what laughter does to interactants when engaged with others.

### **7.6. Further Research**

While this study has analyzed and described laughter in institutional business interaction, its organization and its interactional consequences, future research will have to investigate the differences between laughter in common everyday interaction and laughter in institutional interaction in more detail than this study was able to. As the present study has only touched upon this comparison (chapter 4), future research might extend this study's findings on the context-sensitivity of laughter. Also, future research will show whether this study's findings can be echoed in other linguistic or regional contexts, such as business teams in Southern America or Asia. Other studies will be able to explore laughter in data collections collected in other business teams with a more distinct or flatter hierarchy than the Triple L team has. The interactional implications of laughter such as its influence on group interaction, as well as other aspects of its occurrence, might further equip our knowledge about the interactional consequences of laughter in this regard.

A further perspective for future studies is the investigation of laughter in regard to leadership and gender. The data of this dissertation provides interesting material for exploring both issues, as (a) a change in leadership occurred during the period of data collection, (b) this change was from a female to a male leader, and (c) all in all, there are only two male team members in the Triple L team, both of them in a high position within organizational hierarchy. Being equipped with that kind of ethnographic data, questions in regard to the interactional realization of leadership styles (not constrained to only gender issues, but also in that aspect interesting), the influence of gender and hierarchy on laughter in business

meetings, and differences between male and female laughter in general (Jefferson 2004) can be investigated.

As I have mentioned, this study yields analytic results that point to the assumption that, in multiperson settings, the preference structure of laughter is stronger than in dyadic interaction. However, this dissertation has provided a preliminary account for this, and the result has to be more exhaustively investigated in future studies.

Also, while this study has shown the consequences of the combined activity laughter+complaint, other combined activities will have to be analyzed in future research, such as laughter+repair, laughter+decline, and many more, to complete our understanding of laughter.

### **7.7. Final Remarks**

This study has shown the role laughter plays in institutional business interaction, and how its sequential organization has an influence on this role. It has been investigated in which ways laughter interferes with or supports participants' local identity work. In the tradition of Durkheim, Goffman and Garfinkel, this dissertation explored with CA methodology how laughter plays a role in how people make sense of their world, how they display this understanding to others, and how they produce the mutually shared social order in which they live. Implications of this study certainly include the view of laughter as part of business reality, and as a central tool by which interactants in business meetings orient to their organizational roles. This, in turn, might result in applications through trainings and/or manuals for business employees and employers, to learn more about the 'power of laughter'. However, this study did not set out to provide a practical guide of what to achieve by laughing. Although I have touched upon the discussion of whether laughter impedes or assists participants in a business meeting in doing their business, I do not aim to give practical directives of how to laugh in business meetings in order to achieve a certain goal. I propose that potential future trainings should be based on empirical findings such as those this study presents, rather than on theoretical perspectives on laughter in interaction.

This dissertation has contributed to the view of laughter as one tool to achieve many interactional goals. It is almost as if sometimes, 'All You Need is Laugh'.

## Appendix A Transcription Notation

### Abbreviations

PRT	→ Particle
DEFARF	→ Definite article, female
DEFARM	→ Definite article, male
F	→ Formal (used with forms of address: "youF" - "Sie")
IF	→ Informal (used with forms of address: youIF - "Du")
PLIF	→ Plural, informal (used with forms of address: "youPLIF" - "Ihr")
PLF	→ Plural, formal (used with forms of address: "youPLF" - "Ihnen")
PST	→ Past tense
RFX	→ Reflexive form in German

### Symbols

Transcription conventions are according to Jefferson (1984a), plus some further symbols. All symbols used in this study are described below.

[	Point of overlap onset
]	Point of overlap termination
=	Latched talk, either by same speaker or next speaker
(1 . 4)	Pause / gap between utterances (here: 1 second, 4 tenths of a second)
(. )	A very short untimed pause, under one tenth of a second

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<u>word</u>	Speaker's emphasis
wo::r:d	Lengthening of the preceding sound
wo-	Cut-off
?	Intonation: Rising
,	Intonation: Continuing
.	Intonation: Falling (final)
↑word↓	Intonation: Marked shifts into higher or lower pitch in the utterance
WORD	High volume, loud in relation to surrounding talk
°word°	Low volume, quieter than surrounding talk
>word<	Produced quicker than surrounding talk
<word>	Produced slower than surrounding talk
(     )	Unintelligible speech
(word)	Unclear speech, indicates transcriber's uncertainty about a word
.hh	In-breath
Hh	Out-breath

hhHEHEhhehhheh	Laughter
w(h)or(h)d(h)	Within-speech laughter
£word£	Smile voice
^word	High-pitched, creaky onset
wor*d	Non-vocal activities happening during talk
((word))	Transcriber's comment

## Appendix B

### English Summary

The dissertation *All You Need is Laugh - Interactional Implications of Laughter in Business Meetings* investigates the interactional relevance of laughter and its organization in an institutional business setting. It studies laughter as a social, interactional phenomenon and presents three independent empirical analyses on how laughter is a tool for participants in talk to achieve numerous interactional goals.

The study is based on 15 hours of video taped business meetings, comprised of 14 team meetings within the Human Resources department of a major German -US-American financial service company. The introductory chapter 1 contains a closer description of the data.

Applying the methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA) in researching laughter, the dissertation addresses the following research questions:

- What is the interactional relevance of laughter in talk, that is: What do interactants achieve by laughing/not laughing when engaged in interaction?
- How is laughter organized? Can it occur in every position in talk?

To complete these core research questions, the study recurrently addresses the three overarching topics 'Laughter in Institutional Business Interaction', 'Laughter in Regard to Membership Categories and Identity Work', and 'Laughter in Multiperson Setting' in the empirical chapters.

Chapter 2 provides insight into the methodology of CA. Instead of giving a general introductory overview of the method, this chapter describes CA from the angle of CA research within business communication. Postulations and objectives of CA and its relevance for business communication research are discussed, as well as the procedures for data collection in an institutional environment, and transcription. The chapter further presents basic CA notions that recurrently underlie the analyses in the analytical chapters, such as turn-taking, repair, complaint and Membership Categories.

Chapter 3 supplies background information on the different theories of why, how and in which situations people laugh. The chapter starts out with a broad and general scientific perspective on laughter, drawing on research in the disciplines of literature and philosophy. Here, laughter theories from central researchers in the field like Schopenhauer (1819), Freud (1905), Bergson (1911), and Bahktin (1984) are touched upon. The chapter also introduces the psychological and philosophical theories of why people laugh (*superior/hostility* theory, theory of *incongruity*, *relief* theory).

The focus is then narrowed to a social research CA approach to laughter. First, the chapter concentrates on humor research (e.g. Chafe 1987, 2007), discussing studies on humor at work (e.g. Coser 1960, Holmes 2000, 2006). Then, the chapter moves to the focal point of this dissertation and addresses studies of laughter from a CA perspective (Jefferson 1979, 1984b, 1985, 2004; Jefferson et al. 1987, O'Donnell & Adams 1983, Glenn 2003). Going into further detail, the state of the art in regard to CA studies of laughter in institutional settings (Adelswärd & Öberg 1998; Haakana 1999, 2001; Osvaldsson 2004) are introduced.

Chapter 4 is based on the analyses of 98 instances of laughter drawn from the 15 hours of videotaped business meetings. It explores laughter as a potentially ubiquitous element of interaction through (1) showing two different positionings of laughter in talk; (2) uncovering a preference for laughter in first position through quantitative and qualitative analysis; and (3) examining laughter as both context-free and context-sensitive. The chapter compares the activities of laughter and repair and shows parallels in regard to mechanism, organization,



preference and interactional relevance, thus demonstrating the omnipresent potential of the occurrence of laughter.

The chapter examines that laughter relative to its laughable can be positioned in two different places: (A) Laughter in first position (same-turn display of something laughable) and (B) 'Laughter in second position' (next-turn display of something laughable). In position (A) a producer displays his/her understanding of something in his/her own turn as laughable. This can be achieved in talk through verbal and/or nonverbal activities which hint at the fact that the speaker indicates a laughable meaning to his/her contribution. With laughter in position (B), another interactant than the producer of the laughable displays his/her understanding of something in the previous turn as laughable. This can be achieved by two major techniques: (1) uttering next turn with laugh particles in-speech, smile voice and/or post utterance laughter, and (2) producing laugh tokens in next position to the target turn or in overlap, or ironic remark.

Further, analyses in chapter 4 reveal a preference for laughter in first position. In addition to a frequency argument (67% of laughter occurrences happen in first position), this is backed up by the fact that laughter in second position has a sense of challenge to it, and has been analyzed to constitute a disaffiliative activity.

As a third point, chapter 4 shows laughter to be context-free in its sequential organization. In analyzing the technical details of displaying something as a laughable particularly in first position it reveals that these details show no difference, no matter whether they are performed in a dyadic everyday (Jefferson 1974, 1979; Glenn 2003; O'Donnell-Trujillo & Adams 1983) or a multiperson institutional setting. At the same time, the study shows laughter to be sensitive to context. Chapter 4 exposes laughter as an indexical for specific aspects of the institutional context. A frequency distribution of laughter sources in business meetings suggests that the indication of roles and identities relevant in a business context are an eminent vehicle for laughter in the business meetings. In making these work-related identities relevant and exploiting them for laughter, participants display the understanding of own or other's turn as laughable and interactionally point to a specific aspect of the institutional context.

The chapter shows that by initiating laughter in second position, interactants can achieve disaffiliation. Finally, analyses reveal that laughter has both the capacity to ensure and interfere with intersubjectivity.

Chapter 5 investigates how hierarchy and seniority are made relevant and 'brought into existence' in talk-in-interaction. It reveals that the combined activity 'indirect complaint+laughter' plays a central role in both the interactional co-construction and realization of hierarchy and seniority on a micro-level of talk.

Hierarchy is oriented to through laughter+complaint sequences in the data in two ways: (a) when complainant and non-present complainees are on the same hierarchical level, and (b) when the non-present complainees' position is higher in the hierarchy than the complainant's. The analyses show that hierarchical indications are imminent in the combined activity complaint+laughter.

In complaint sequences in which complainant and complainees are on the same hierarchy level (a), laughter enables the complainant to implicitly express potential indignations that the complainees' conduct may have caused by presenting those as laughable. Laughter here is employed as a means for the complainant (1) to co-construct the complaint with the co-present participants, (2) to display herself as trouble resistant (Jefferson 1984a), (3) to achieve implicitness as it expresses "moral indignation" (Drew 1998) about the complainees' conduct, and (4) as a resource to seek affiliation with her co-present colleagues.

In cases of considerable hierarchical disparity between complainant (subordinate) and complainees (superior) (b), laughter serves as one tool in carrying out the actual complaint, so that the complainant does not have to verbally express any misconduct. It appears that the higher the organizational position of the complainees, the stronger the role of laughter is in realizing the complaint. Laughter in these cases serves to (1) co-construct a complainable identity for the complainees and/or the complaint itself, (2) achieve implicitness as laughter alludes to the complainees' misconduct, and (3) as a resource to seek affiliation with the recipients of the complaint. Thus, laughter serves as a means to manage the degree of implicitness, which increases proportionally with the hierarchical position of the complainees.

Chapter 6 examines sequences in multilingual business meetings in which interlocutors orient to multilingualism. The analysis of three cases reveals how multilingualism as a members' category (Sacks 1995) is made relevant in creating laughables and how these together with language alternation and/or orientation to multilingualism build a resource for laughter and identity work in business meetings.

The chapter shows that a bi- or multilingual identity is not necessarily a "transportable identity" (Zimmerman, 1998), but occasioned and employed to approach interactional goals. The orientation to multilingualism has an influence on the local identities in a business team and their relations with each other. The chapter shows how interlocutors shape the institutional environment they interact in through language preference and the orientation to multilingualism.

The three cases analyzed in chapter 6 show parallels in terms of (a) multilingualism being a resource in the realization of epistemic authorities and (b) multilingualism being connected to the laughter/laughable. In all three cases, epistemic authorities were realized in orientation to multilingualism. The laughable in every case is connected to multilingualism. Further, in all three cases laughter has been shown to have vast influence on (c) group interaction and group constellation, and can be employed to (d) infringe local social rules. In all three cases the group constellation was affected by who laughs along, who does not laugh along, and who might be 'laughed about' (Glenn 1995). The analyses have thus furnished further results to show that laughter has both affiliative and disaffiliative qualities, and that these can be employed by the interactants adequately.

Through laughter, participants are enabled to activate, but also to challenge membership categorizations that others have brought about for self or other. The analyses have provided evidence that laughter employs interactants with a tool to either breach local social norms or deal with those infringements, while at the same time supplying them with a resource that can achieve affiliation with others. This way, laughter constitutes a somewhat 'protected area' for both breaching local social rules and cushioning these infringements.

In the final chapter 7, the main conclusions reached in this dissertation about laughter in interaction are presented and discussed, bringing together general findings as well as the results specifically relevant for the three overarching topics this dissertation has recurrently addressed. The findings are discussed related to CA research. Proposals for future research include the investigation of differences between laughter in common everyday interaction and institutional interaction; explorations of laughter in institutional contexts within other linguistic, regional and socio-cultural contexts; and studies of the coherence between laughter, leadership and gender. Also, further research in the field of laughter in multiperson settings, as well as more exhaustive studies concerning laughter plus other activities such as repair or decline, is suggested.

Chapter 7 summarizes the dissertation findings and concludes with building a bridge between the approaches of Durkheim, Goffman, Garfinkel and the present study's approach to data. It argues that, as an implications of this dissertation's findings, instead of theoretical concepts about laughter, empirical studies should build the basis and be represented in trainings given for employers and employees about the 'usage' and advantages of laughter in a business environment.

Appendix A provides a list of transcription symbols and abbreviations used in the transcripts. Appendix C gives a Danish summary of the study.

## Appendix C

### Dansk Resume

Denne ph.d.-afhandling *All You Need is Laugh - Interactional Implications of Laughter in Business Meetings* [*All You Need is Laugh – Interaktionelle implikationer af latter i forretningsmøder*] undersøger latters interaktionelle relevans og organisering i en institutionel virksomhedskontekst. Latter forstås som et socialt og interaktionelt fænomen og præsenterer tre uafhængige empiriske analyser af, hvordan latter fungerer som et redskab i interaktion, som deltagerne kan benytte til at opnå forskellige interaktionelle mål.

Undersøgelsen er baseret på 15 timers videooptagelser fra tyske virksomhedsmøder, der stammer fra i alt 14 møder i Human Resource afdelingen på en stor tysk-US-amerikansk finans og service virksomhed. I kapital 1 beskrives datamaterialet mere detaljeret.

Med udgangspunkt i samtaleanalysen, CA (Conversation Analysis), er afhandlingens centrale forskningsspørgsmål, som følger:

- Hvad er den interaktionelle relevans af latter i samtale, eller: Hvad opnår deltagere, når de benytter eller ikke benytter latter under den interaktion, som de er engageret i?
- Hvordan er latter organiseret? Kan den optræde i hver position til en sekvens i samtalen?

I afklaringen af disse centrale spørgsmål forholder afhandlingen sig i de empiriske kapitler til tre overordnede temaer: 'Latter i institutionel virksomhedsinteraktion', 'Latter i forhold til medlemskabskategorier og 'identity work'<sup>1</sup> og 'Latter i flerpersonelle settings'.

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<sup>1</sup> *Identity work* er et begreb, som peger på det arbejde eller den indsats, som en person udfører, for at gøre bestemte medlemskabskategorier relevante.

Kapitel 2 giver indblik i CA's metodologi, men i stedet for at give en generel indledning til metodologien, beskrives CA fra et virksomhedskommunikativt perspektiv. CA's krav og mål såvel som dataindsamlingsprocedure inden for den institutionelle tilgang samt transskription diskuteres. Kapitlet præsenterer desuden grundlæggende CA begreber som tur-tagning, reparation, klage og medlemskabskategorier.

Kapitel 3 giver baggrundsinformation om forskellige teorier om hvorfor, hvordan og i hvilke situationer, latter optræder. Kapitlet indleder med et bredt og generelt videnskabeligt perspektiv på latter med forskningsresultater fra discipliner som litteratur og filosofi. Latterteorier af centrale forskere inden for feltet, såsom Schopenhauer (1819), Freud (1905), Bergson (1911) og Bahktin (1984), berøres. Kapitlet indfører også psykologiske og filosofiske teorier om, hvorfor mennesker ler (*superior/hostility theory, theory of incongruity, relief theory*). Senere fokuseres på en social forskningstilgang til latter, der først koncentrerer sig om en diskussion af undersøgelser af humor generelt (fx Chafe 1987, 2007) og humor på arbejdspladser (fx Coser 1960, Holmes 2000, 2006), og derefter snævrer fokus ind til afhandlingens omdrejningspunkt, som er: forskning i latter fra et CA perspektiv (Jefferson 1979, 1984b, 1985, 2004; Jefferson et al. 1987, O'Donnell & Adams 1983, Glenn 2003). Siden introduceres den nyeste udvikling inden for CA forskningen af latter i institutionelle settings (Adelswärd & Öberg 1998; Haakana 1999, 2001; Osvaldsson 2004).

Kapitel 4 er baseret på analyser af 98 tilfælde af latter i de 15 timers videooptagelser fra forretningsmøder, som er afhandlingens empiriske fundament. Kapitlet udforsker latter som et potentielt set allestedsnærværende element i interaktion, ved (1) at vise to forskellige positioner af latter i samtale; (2) at afdække en præference for latter i første position gennem kvantitativ og kvalitativ analyse; og (3) at undersøge latter som såvel *kontekstfri* og *kontekstfølsom*. Kapitlet sammenligner aktiviteterne 'latter' og 'reparationer' og viser paralleller mellem de to med hensyn til deres teknik, organisering, præference og interaktionelle relevans, hvorved det allestedsnærværende potentiale for latters optræden demonstreres.

Kapitlet belyser, hvordan latter, afhængig af det der grines af, kan være placeret på to forskellige steder i en samtale: (A) Latter placeret i første position: latteren optræder i samme tur som det, der grines af (same-turn display), og (B) latter placeret i anden position: latteren optræder i den tur, der følger efter den tur, hvor det, der grines af, optræder (next-turn display). I (A) viser den talende sin forståelse af noget i sin egen tur som lattervækkende. Dette kan i samtale opnås gennem verbale og/eller nonverbale aktiviteter, som antyder, at den talende indikerer en forståelse af eget bidrag som lattervækkende. Ved latter i (B) viser en anden af de interagerende end den, der producerer den lattervækkende tur, sin forståelse af noget i den foregående tur som lattervækkende. Dette kan opnås gennem to vigtige teknikker: (1) ved at ytre den næste tur med latterpartikler i selve talen, med 'smilende stemme' og/eller med "eftersætningslatter", og (2) ved at producere lattertegn i næste position i forhold til den pågældende tur eller i overlap, eller som en ironisk bemærkning.

Endvidere afslører analyser i kapitel 4 en præference for latter i første position. Udover et frekvensargument (67% af tilfældene af latter, sker i første position) bakkes denne kendsgerning op af, at latter i anden position har en særlig udfordring i sig, og har været analyseret som konstituerende en disaffiliativ aktivitet.

Som en tredje pointe viser kapitel 4, at latter i sin sekventielle organisering er kontekstfri. I analysen af de tekniske detaljer af at fremvise noget som lattervækkende, specielt i første position, afsløres det, at der ikke er forskel på, om de tekniske detaljer optræder i en dyadisk hverdagssetting eller i en multipersonel institutionel setting. Undersøgelsen viser endvidere, at latter er følsom i forhold til konteksten. Kapitel 4 viser latter som et indeks for bestemte aspekter ved den institutionelle kontekst. Frekvensdistributionen af latterkilder i forretningsmøder antyder, at indikationen af de roller og identiteter, som gøres relevante i en forretningskontekst, er et eminent middel for latter i forretningsmøderne. Ved at gøre disse arbejdsrelaterede identiteter relevante og udnytte dem til latter, viser deltagerne deres forståelse for egne eller andres tur som lattervækkende og peger på et bestemt aspekt af den institutionelle kontekst.

Kapitlet viser, at de interagerende, ved at initiere latter i anden position, kan opnå disaffiliation. Endeligt afslører analyserne, at latter har kapaciteten til både at sikre og gribe ind i intersubjektivitet.

Kapitel 5 udforsker hvordan hierarki og seniorstatus bringes ind i "talk-in-interaction". Det afsløres, at aktiviteter, der består af en kombination af 'indirekte-klage+latter', spiller en central rolle i både den interaktionelle medkonstruktion og i realiseringen af hierarki og seniorstatus på et mikroniveau af samtalen.

I data orienteres der mod hierarkiet gennem latter+klage sekvenser på to måder: (a) når den, der klager og den ikke-tilstedeværende person, der klages over, er på det samme hierarkiske niveau, og (b) når den ikke-tilstedeværende person, der klages over, har en position, der er højere i hierarkiet end den, der klager. Analysen viser, at antydninger til det sociale hierarki er umiddelbart forstående i aktiviteter, der kombinerer klage+latter.

I klagesekvenser, hvor den, der klager, og den, der klages over, er på det samme hierarkiske niveau, sætter latter den, der klager, i stand til implicit at udtrykke potentiel harme over handlinger, som den person der klages over kan have forvoldt, ved at præsentere dem som lattervækkende. Latter optræder her, som et middel for den der klager (1) ved at genskabe klagen med de andre tilstedeværende deltagere, (2) ved at vise sig selv som modstandsdygtig over for uroligheder (Jefferson 1984a), (3) ved at opnå implicitthed som et udtryk for moralsk harme (Drew 1998) over den der klages overs handlinger, og (4) som en ressource til at søge affiliation hos de tilstedeværende kolleger.

I tilfælde af betydelige hierarkiske forskelle mellem den, der klager, (underordnet) og den, der klages over (overordnet), fungerer latter som et redskab til at fremsætte den aktuelle klage på en måde, så den, der klager, ikke verbalt behøver at opføre sig dårligt. Det lader til, at jo højere position den, der klages over har i organisationen, des stærkere en rolle spiller latter i udførelsen af klagen. Funktionen af latter i disse tilfælde er: (1) at medkonstruere en klagende identitet i forhold til den, der klages over og/eller selve klagen, (2) at opnå implicit at klage over en overordnets utilladelige opførsel, og (3) en ressource til at søge kontakt med modtageren af klagen. Således fungerer latter som et middel til at håndtere graden af implicitthed, hvor implicittheden stiger proportionelt med den, der klages over's, hierarkiske position.



Kapitel 6 undersøger de sekvenser i flersproglige forretningsmøder, hvor samtaleparterne orienterer sig mod flersproglighed. Analyser af sådanne tre tilfælde afslører, hvordan flersproglighed som en medlemskabskategori (Sacks 1995) gøres relevant ved at skabe lattervækkere, og hvordan disse, sammen med skift af sprog og/eller orientering mod flersproglighed, bygger en ressource op for latter og identity work i forretningsmøderne.

Kapitlet viser at en to- eller flersproglig identitet ikke nødvendigvis er transportabel (Zimmerman 1998), men foranlediget og anvendt til at nærme sig interaktionelle mål. Orienteringen mod flersproglighed har indflydelse på de lokale identiteter i en virksomheds teams og deltagernes indbyrdes relationer. Kapitlet viser, hvordan interagerende former de institutionelle omgivelser, som de interagerer i, gennem deres sproglige præference og orienteringen mod flersproglighed.

De tre tilfælde, som analyseres i kapitel 6, er parallelle i forhold til (a) at flersproglighed anvendes som en ressource i realiseringen af autoriteter, og (b) at flersproglighed forbindes til latteren/det lattervækkende. I alle tre tilfælde blev autoriteter realiseret i en orientering mod flersproglighed. Det lattervækkende i hvert tilfælde er forbundet til flersproglighed. Endvidere blev det i alle tre tilfælde vist, at latter langt overvejende har indflydelse på (c) gruppeinteraktion og gruppekonstellation, og at den kan bringes i anvendelse med henblik på at (d) bryde lokale sociale regler. I alle tre tilfælde blev gruppekonstellationen påvirket af, hvem der ler med, hvem der ikke ler med, og hvem der muligvis bliver grinet af (Glenn 1995). Analysen har således givet anledning til flere resultater, der viser at latter har både affiliativ og disaffiliativ kvaliteter, og at disse på passende vis kan anvendes af de interagerende.

Gennem latter bliver deltagerne i stand til at aktivere, men også at udfordre, de medlemskabskategorier, som andre har bragt på banen om sig selv eller andre. Analysen er evidens for at latter kan fungere som et redskab for de interagerende til enten at bryde lokale sociale normer eller at håndtere disse brud, mens den samtidigt udstyrer dem med en ressource, som kan hjælpe dem til at opnå affiliation med andre. På denne måde udgør latter, i en vis grad, et 'beskyttet område' for både at bryde lokale sociale regler og at nedtone disse brud.

I det syvende og sidste kapitel præsenteres og diskuteres de hovedkonklusioner, som er opnået i denne afhandling. De generelle resultater, som er relevant for de overordnede emner i afhandlingen, bringes sammen, og resultaterne diskuteres i relation til CA-forskningen. Forslag til videre forskning inkluderer: undersøgelse af forskelle mellem latter i almindelig hverdagsinteraktion og institutionel interaktion; undersøgelse af latter i institutionelle kontekster med andre lingvistiske, regionale og sociokulturelle kontekster; og undersøgelser af sammenhængen mellem latter, ledelse og køn. Endvidere foreslås der fremtidig forskning i latter i flerpersonelle settings, samt mere detaljerede undersøgelser af latter i forhold til andre aktiviteter – såsom reparation og nægtelser.

Kapitel 7 samfatter afhandlingens resultater og bygger bro mellem tilgange inspireret af Durkheim, Goffman, Garfinkel og denne undersøgelses tilgang til data. På baggrund af afhandlingens resultater, argumenteres der for, at empiriske undersøgelser af latter, frem for teoretiske begrebsliggørelser, bør udgøre fundamentet for og være repræsenteret i den træning, som der gives til ledere og ansatte, så de opnår viden om brugsnyttens og fordelene ved at benytte latter i virksomheder.

*Appendiks A er en oversigt over de transskriptionssymboler og forkortelser, der anvendes i transskriptionerne.*

*Appendiks B er et Engelsk resumé af afhandlingen.*

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