

## **Summary in English**

### **Formulations in institutional interaction: the practice of 'summarizing' in the police interview, job interview and journalistic interview**

This thesis demonstrates how participants design a generic interactional phenomenon like 'summarizing' in institutional settings and specifically how they structure the interaction toward the institutional goals of a police, job and journalistic interview. In conversation analytic literature, the phenomenon of presenting what the interlocutor has just said, has been named 'formulations'. By scrutinizing the interactional organization of formulations and by analyzing their contribution to the construction of the police, job and journalistic interview, this thesis extends theoretical knowledge about formulations as a conversational phenomenon and about the interactional organization of these three institutional settings. In addition, I describe the implications the sequential analyses may have for offering communication advice to professionals of these institutions (police officers, recruiters, journalists). Conversational skills are important for professionals in order to fulfill their daily institutional tasks and therefore a significant part of their education consists of training and receiving advice about verbal interaction with suspects, applicants and interviewees. Existing training manuals/curricula and handbooks are mainly based on personal experiences from professionals instead of empirical observations of exactly what happens in institutional interactions.

The first chapter of this thesis briefly sketches the scientific and social relevance of this research on formulations in three institutional settings. The central research questions are:

- 1. How are formulations sequentially embedded in these three settings?*
- 2. What information does this provide about the institutional characteristics of the three settings?*
- 3. Which implicit theories about interaction can be found in the manuals and curricula for police officers, recruiters, and journalists?*

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4. *What are the similarities and differences between communication advice and the everyday conversational practice of police interviews, job interviews, and journalistic interviews?*

In chapter 2 and 3 the research questions and research design are placed in a more detailed theoretical framework. Based on a literature review about 'formulations' and 'institutional interaction' in *chapter 2*, I argue that my study can provide insight into this specific interactional phenomenon and also into the institutional 'fingerprint' of the police, job and journalistic interview. This study on formulations in three institutional settings is in line with other conversation analytic studies that focus on one specific interactional phenomenon within various settings. These various studies have shown that characteristics of an institutional setting can be uncovered by this comparative perspective of one interactional phenomenon. The literature review of studies on formulations in institutional settings makes clear that the identification and definition of formulations varies enormously. Therefore, in conversation analytic literature it is stressed that knowledge about formulations should be extended based on the definition of Heritage & Watson (1979). Furthermore, I argue that the empirical observations of formulations in police interviews, job interviews and journalistic interviews can be applied to the conversational practice of these institutional interactions.

*Chapter 3* focuses on the comparison between the three institutional settings and the comparison between communication advice and conversational practice. This chapter contains a description of the two different data sets and an account of the method of analysis. The first set of data consists of a collection of handbooks for professionals in the three institutions (the police officer, the recruiter and the journalist). By means of a literature study, I examined the recommendations for the use of summaries in police, job and journalistic interviews and the underlying ideas about interaction. The second data set consists of a collection of 20 audio recordings of each setting. This collection of more than 42 hours of interactional data has been analyzed from a conversation analytic perspective, mainly because of the methodological assumption that the sequential embedding of formulations provides insight into the 'fingerprint' of the specific institutions. Due to the widely divergent approaches to analyzing formulations in existing studies, the identification of formulations was an intensive process. In total I have analyzed close to 200

formulations, of which 92 were in the police interviews, 43 in the job interviews and 63 in the journalistic interviews.

*Chapter 4* presents the findings of the literature study on communication advice. In the handbooks for the three professional groups, no difference was found concerning the functions of summarizing. Functions that are mentioned in all handbooks are: checking understanding, structuring the conversation, closing (a part of) the conversation and summarizing as a signal of listening. However, the main difference between the various types of advice given in the handbooks for the three professional groups concerns the way the summarizing advice is embedded in specific models for professional interaction. For example, in handbooks for police officers and recruiters, ideas about interaction are specified in more detail than in handbooks for the journalist. Advice about summarizing for the police officer is embedded in a model for police interviews and advice about summarizing for the recruiter is embedded in an ideal model for job interviews. These models for professional conversations are based on how professionals think the interaction should take place, which does not necessarily match the conversational practice of the professionals. Based on the results of the literature study on advice about summarizing, I argue that conversation analytic research on the interactional embedding of 'summarizing' or 'formulating' provides insight into the interactional organization of institutional tasks and goals and how advice for professionals can profit from these insights.

The remaining chapters report the conversation analytic study of formulations in the three different institutional settings. In *chapter 5* the sequential organization of formulations in the police interview is discussed. Two types of formulations are described: legal formulations and confronting formulations. Both play a central role in the construction of the suspect's statement during the interview. The legal formulations are embedded in the process of gathering information and the construction of the written record that is produced during the interview; by means of a legal formulation the police officer (P) and the suspect (S) focus on the exact formulation of the suspect's statement for the police record. For example:

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P: so herewith you confess to be guilty of dealing in narcotics, <methadone>pills.

The analysis demonstrates that the response of the suspect to legal formulations by the police officer is related to the particular phase of the interview: the bigger the implication of guilt, the more the suspect's response is sequentially delayed and minimally designed. The suspect does have the opportunity to respond to a legal formulation given by the police officer, but it is the institutional version of the police officer that is typed up in the police record.

The confronting formulations are embedded in the negotiation between the police officer and the suspect about the degree of truthfulness of the suspect's story. Generally during a police interview, the police officer critically listens to the suspect's story. Only if the suspect's story is consistent, does the police officer treat the story as 'truthful'. The analysis demonstrates how formulations enable the police officer to lay information from the suspect's statement on the table: when the police officer thinks that several aspects in the suspect's statement are inconsistent, the police officer confronts the suspect with these inconsistencies. By contrasting two elements from the suspect's story, the police officer orders the suspect to retract at least one of his statements. For example:

P: → no you [are not talking honestly.[now, [you just said  
S: [do you know why, [okay, [yes  
P: → you just said that you don't know how how she wanted to  
pay.  
S: yes that's [what I'm saying  
P: → [and now you suddenly you do mention a bank  
card.

The suspect's responses to the police officer's confronting formulations illustrate that the suspect interprets these formulations as confronting acts. In the data, three types of responses can be identified: (1) the suspect provides an alternative that refutes the inconsistency; (2) the suspect persists that both statements are true; (3) the suspect admits that one of the two statements (might) not be true. After the suspect's response, the police officer types up the suspect's statement in the police record. In short, both legal and confronting formulations play an essential role in the construction of an institutional version of the suspect's story.

*Chapter 6* zooms in on the characteristics of formulations in job interviews. Two types of formulations have been identified that play a role in the selection process: (dis)qualifying and challenging formulations. With (a) qualifying and (b) disqualifying formulations the recruiter (R) demonstrates how he or she evaluates the information that the applicant provides.

Examples:

- (a) R: °okay°.  
so indeed you are (0.5) used to to u:h p!ut down  
tasks on someone else's desk;
- (b) R: myes,  
(0.5)  
•h so you have not been bu:sy ((coughs)) with this in  
a function like uh this;

By transforming the applicant's answer into a version that highlights the qualities of the applicant (qualifying formulation) or a version that stresses the deficiencies of the applicant (disqualifying formulation), the recruiter shows that the applicant's utterances are continuously assessed in terms of the job requirements. After a qualifying formulation the applicant affirms or nuances the essence of the formulation; while after a disqualifying formulation the applicant mitigates the essence.

With the second type of formulation, the challenging formulation, the recruiter marks that the applicant should provide more or other information. At the same time, the recruiter adjusts the evaluation criteria. For example:

R: but the ↑kind of work,  
you do not have requirements for the kind of work. (0,5)

After the applicant has formulated an answer to the recruiter's question, the recruiter lets the applicant know that the answer is not yet good enough or sufficient. After these kinds of formulations, the applicant usually provides an answer that is different from his/her original answer; apparently, the applicant interprets the formulation of the recruiter as an invitation to revise the answer. The analysis of



version of a more neutral utterance of the interviewee. These formulations are characteristic for interviews in which the interviewee is held accountable for certain results (political decisions, or a lost match of the national football team). For example:

IR1: so we do have a national coach,  
(0.9) •h who actually does not(.) dare to say well,  
>actually with me you've got the right person<.  
(1.2)

In my data, challenging formulations seems to be characteristic for sequences in which the interviewer and the interviewee move in opposite directions: the interviewer invites the interviewee to air his/her personal opinion, while the interviewee couches his/her opinion about actual issues in diplomatic terms. With challenging formulations the interviewer 'pushes' the interviewee to express his personal opinion more straightforwardly. In this way the interviewer shows that he or she is not just passing through information that the interviewee would like to share, but that the interviewer acts as a critical spokesperson for the overhearing audience. In some political interviews in my collection, the interviewer uses a series of formulations: with a first formulation the interviewer creates a step up towards a more confronting formulation. In short, the analysis of formulations in journalistic interviews illustrates how the interviewer accentuates certain elements of the interviewee's story with formulations in order to provide information that is *more common*, *more personal* or *more suggestive*. The different types of formulations in my dataset are related to the story that the interviewer and interviewee co-construct during the interview.

*Chapter 8* focuses on the comparison of the interactional analyses of formulations in police interviews, job interviews and journalistic interviews (chapter 5, 6, 7). In all three settings formulations are part of the process in which the professional, together with the lay person, constructs the lay person's story within the specific institutional context of the police, job and journalistic interview. The interactional and sequential embedding of formulations in the three settings shows that formulations are designed differently and that their function is related to the institutional tasks of the

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police officer, recruiter and journalist. For example, formulations in the police interview are part of the writing process of the police record and formulations in job interviews are part of the assessment procedure of the applicant.

Furthermore, chapter 8 draws a comparison between the study of communication advice (chapter 4) and conversational practice (chapters 5, 6, 7). In the handbooks that I studied, the police officer, recruiter and journalist are told when and why they should use a summary, while conversational practice shows *how* these professionals exactly organize summaries and how the interlocutor responds to these summaries. In this chapter I argue that there is a gap between communication advice and conversational practice: advice about 'summaries' are much more limited than the actual use of formulations in the three institutional settings. The conclusion of this chapter is that conversation analytic findings should be used to optimize communication advice; it should be more detailed and more tailored to the conversational practice of the police, job and journalistic interview.

*Chapter 9* formulates an answer to the research questions. In this thesis I have demonstrated that formulations are a generic phenomenon in institutional talk and that the precise design and sequential embedding varies per setting. The analyses in this thesis illuminate that formulations are part of the process in which the professional constructs the lay person's story within the institutional framework of the police, job and journalistic interview. Furthermore, I conclude that my interactional analyses are significant for the conversational practice of police officers, recruiters and journalists. While communication advice for these three professional groups are mainly based on ideas about professional norms, the analyses provide insight into the specific role of summaries in institutional settings based on empirical observations of the way interlocutors organize these institutional conversations. Based on the interactional analyses, ideas about interaction that are prevalent in these three professional groups can be adjusted and nuanced in order to solve interactional issues that police officers, recruiters and journalists have to deal with. Chapter 9 concludes with some suggestions concerning the application of the interactional findings and ideas for future research on formulations in institutional interaction.