

Turn-sharing and joint narrative in an ELF business meeting

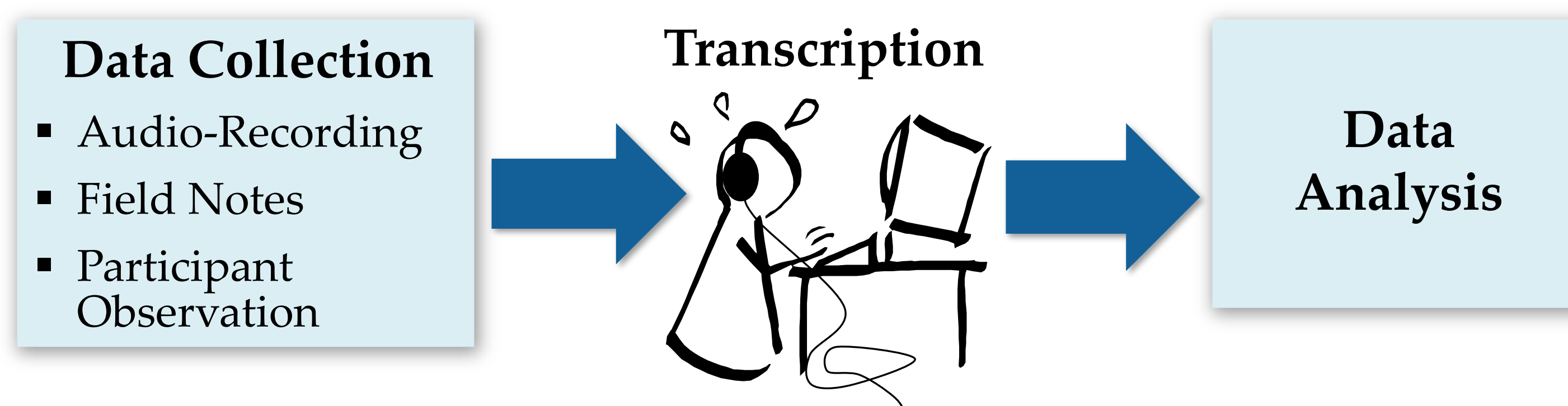
BACKGROUND

This VP is part of a larger PhD research project on collaborative and competitive turn interventions in ELF business meetings, such as turn completions, interruptions, ... etc.

Turn Intervention

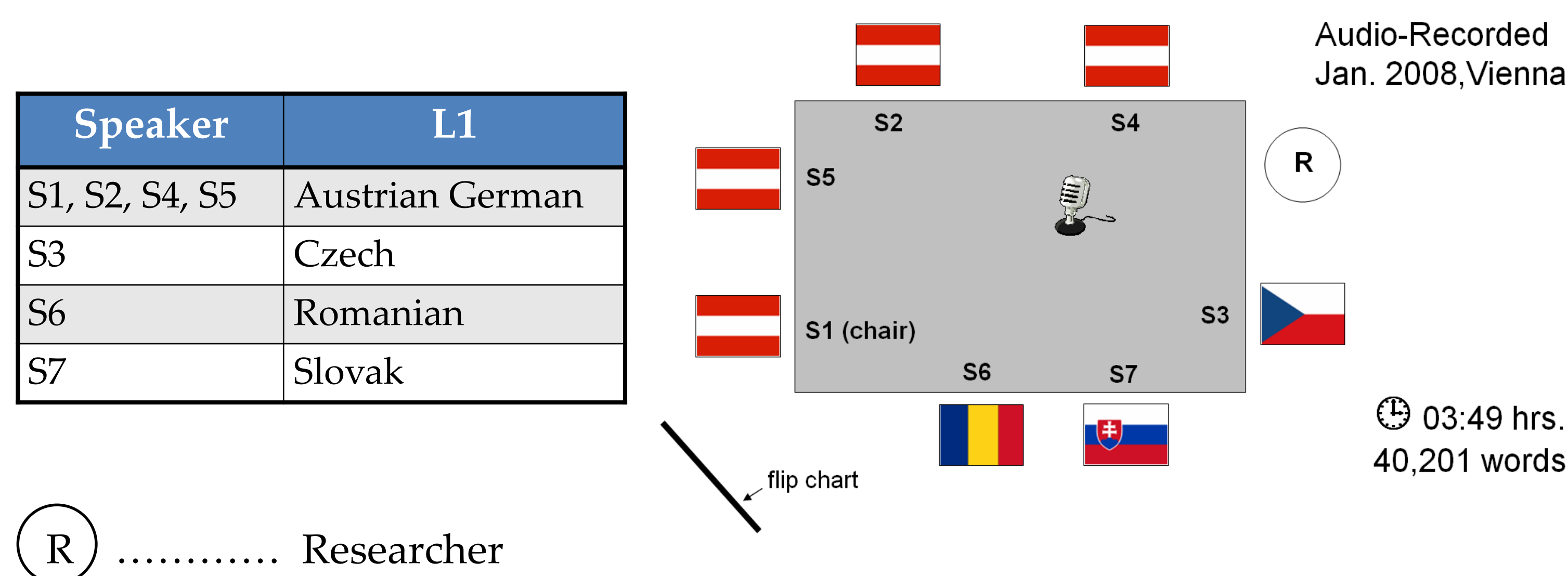
[...] any utterance by a member of the group which cuts into the ongoing speech of another, whether or not it causes overlapping speech. (Watts 1991: 4)

RESEARCH DESIGN



PARTICIPANTS AND DATA

- Meeting of 'Communication Specialists' at department of internal communication of a large Austrian bank.
- Participants act as editorial board for an online employee magazine.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Previous work has shown that

"workplace anecdotes [...] are sometimes joint constructions, collaborative achievements by more than one speaker" (Holmes and Marra 2005: 200)

- Can co-narration also be observed in this ELF workplace meeting?
- Which strategies are used by participants to achieve co-narration?

ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE

"Story-Plot":

How to turn an ugly fair-venue into a suitable location for a Christmas party for retired employees.

OVERLAPS (in blue)

the relatively large amount of overlap indicates the joint construction of the story sequence

PERSONAL PRONOUNS (in italics)

The use of 'we' throughout the sequence...

- constructs co-narratorship
- signals S5's willingness to portray S1 as co-narrator
- demonstrates shared experience of S1 and S5

BACKCHANNELING

- frequent backchanneling in general
- S1 backchannels most frequently, preparing/establishing her role as co-narrator
- S1 uses "anticipatory laughter" (Lerner 1992: 249) to signal shared knowledge (e.g. line 9)
- laughter is also used by audience → appreciation of humor of story (lines 31+38)

COMPLETIONS & ELABORATIONS (in bold)

- turn completion adding/correcting a fact (line 13)
- S1 adds the comparison to "hospital atmosphere" which turns out to be crucial for the narrative's humorous effect in lines 29-30.

REPETITION (underlined)

S5 adopts this phrase which S1 uses in her elaboration above and repeats S1's formulation verbatim

Data Extract "Christmas Party" (Editorial Board Meeting)

- S5: ... the thing was (.) er *we* had to t- (.) to take (.) a very (.) erm just terrible conference hall
- yeah for this (.) christmas party (.) **<1>and</1>** *we* never imagined (.)
- Sx-1: **<1>mhm</1>**
- S5: that there would be EVER (.) **<2>some some</2>** KIND (.)
- Sx-1: **<2>@@@</2>**
- S5: some slightly kind of christmas atmosphere yeah? (.) and then erm (.) *we* had *we* built up a
- very nice relationship to the **<3>p:erson who is in charge of illumination yeah?</3>** (.)
- S1: **<3>@@@@@@@@</3>**
- S5: and he said (.) don't worry *S1* (.) i make something nice for you (.) and then *we* said please
- something with a warm impression something cosy (.) so what he did is (.) orange yeah **<4>lots**
- of orange</4>** (on a screen) (.)
- S1: **<4>and blue @@@</4>**
- S5: blue (.) [...] then from the (.) from the bottom red light **<5>yeah?</5>** and then white stars
- around you could somehow project these stars (.)
- S1: **<5>@@@</5>**
- S5: and at the b-beginning it was like fire you **<6><@>know?</@> @</6>** (.)
- SS: **<6>@@@</6>**
- S5: but then *we* got used to it there was a big christmas tree
- S1: mhm
- S5: and and yeah i think (.) it was the best you could do out of this terrible (.) fair venue
- <1>actually</1>** it was for fairs {clears throat}
- Sx-1: **<1>mhm</1>**
- S1: **first of all it looked like (.) like a hospital (1) <2>(xxx) @@@</2>**
- Sx-f: **<2>@@@@@@@@</2>**
- S5: **<2>yeah when you came in (.) all</2>** these white tables you know with the white clothes for eating
- S1: mhm
- S5: **it looked like a hospital** and *we* thought for (.) people around seventy it's not **<3>so nice yeah**
- when they see a hospital atmosphere</3>** (.)
- SS: **<3>@@@@@@@@</3>**
- S5: **<4>so S1 said what shall *we* do? and i had NO clue yeah?</4>** how to change this because (.)
- they just had this very tiny (.)
- S1: **<4><@>@@@@@@@@<soft></4>**
- S5: er red er plants for christmas you know? this with this red leaves
- S1: **this was the only color point <5>@@@@@@@@</5>**
- S5: **<5>yeah (.) but but tiny (.)</5>** you couldn't even see them
- SS: @@@@

SUMMARY

- ➔ Although S5 is the main narrator, S1 as a second knowledgeable participant collaborates with S5 to jointly deliver the narrative.
- ➔ Use of 'we', turn completions and elaborations demonstrate S1 and S5's shared knowledge of the recounted episode.
- ➔ Features characteristic of story sequences in ENL workplace settings can also be observed in this ELF business meeting.

References:

Holmes, Janet and Meredith Marra (2005): "Narrative and the construction of professional identity in the workplace". In: Joanna Thornborrow and Jennifer Coates (eds.): *The Sociolinguistics of Narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 193-213.

Lerner, Gene H. (1992): "Assisted Storytelling: Deploying Shared Knowledge as a Practical Matter". *Qualitative Sociology* Vol. 15, No. 3, 1992, 247-271.

Watts, Richard J. (1991): *Power in Family Discourse*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.