

Prof. Dr. Christian Schwägerl
Hochschule Osnabrück
Institut für Kommunikationsmanagement
Kaiserstr. 10c
49809 Lingen
Germany

c.schwaegerl@hs-osnabrueck.de

“Interrupting my business:“ The intersubjective construction of *authority* in interaction.

The paper suggests to take an ethnomethodological and a frame semantics perspective on how speakers verbally negotiate “authority” in institutional settings. In organizations, the fixed institutional order formally legitimates professions, roles, and official duties. Formal status, however, is a variable in interaction that speakers do not solely orient to in their verbal activities, as linguistic research into superior-inferior encounters in organizational settings suggests. The displays of both “authority” and “power” are subject to meaning negotiation and need to be ratified by the participants, as the present material shows.

The paper suggests to firstly distinguish “authority” with the related concepts “status” and “power” considering the ways these concepts are displayed in communicative practices and the ways these practices shed light on the participants’ subjective understanding of these concepts (cf. Brock & Meer 2004; Schmitt & Heidtmann 2002; Müller 1997). Secondly, the paper argues that “authority” and “power” are socially produced in interaction. The findings of conversation analysis (CA) studies in organizations, for example, suggest that the display of “authority” and of “power” as well as its ratification is a product of many linguistic and social parameters (cf. Schwägerl 2013).

Following the idea that interactions are sense structured, the paper suggests to apply CA to reconstruct the participants’ subjective understandings of “authority” in the present data. Informed by frame semantics, the analysis examines this subjectivity with regard to the “frame elements” (Fillmore & Baker 2010, p. 324-326) of the concept: the “agent”, “theme”, “source” and “subject” of “authority”, as noted in its FrameNet database entry (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/index.php?q=frameIndex>, accessed March 18, 2016).

The discussion of selected sequences in the transcript aims to include the interrelation of the “social situation” (Goffman 1981), formal aspects (e. g. the sequential order, timing, phonological and prosodic features), lexical choice, syntax, local semantic coherences and the emergence of keywords that assume a particular interactional relevance in subsequent turns. In specific, the analysis inspects the speaker-specific presuppositions of authority as a conceptual framework to carry out official duties. It reconstructs the context-dependent meanings of *authority*, of *my* as a definite pronoun in *my business* (41), *judgment* (131-132), and the frame of *religion* (138) and its associated elements *church* (141) and *belief* (147). The aforementioned frame elements are relativized to the dynamics of the situation as the analysis of speaker turns and lexical as well as grammatical aspects suggest.

The use of pronouns, for example, hint to the “source” of authority the speakers refer to in their display activities, as showcased in the following: with the repeatedly produced *we are not issuing marriage licenses today* (14), Kim (addressed by the two speakers in the preceding lines 1-13 with *you*) asserts in 14 her refusal to meet the request of the two men, with *we* actualizing the perspective of the institution. She continues to argue, however, from the perspective of a non-institutional “source” of authority. WHITE’s (32) *under whose authority* triggers Kim’s *under God’s authority* (33-34). David previously referred to an institutional “source” (*the induction is the order*, 22, and *the Supreme Court denied your stay*, 25), whereas *under God’s authority* shifts the meaning of authority from an institutional understanding to a religious. *God* is, in this frame, the “source” of authority, and, in Kim’s understanding, the ultimate authority as shown in the use of *judgment: you all face your consequences when it comes time for judgment* (131,132), ascribing “god” the semantic type of the “sentient” of *judgment*. The ensuing sequences suggest that Kim’s reference to divinely ordained authority is rejected by the participants. They claim the government to be the “source” of authority over the “subject” of authority (here: *issuing a marriage license*): *god does not belong in the country clerk’s office*, 83-84.

You are interrupting my business (41) sets off a negotiation on the understanding of *my business* in the context of Kim’s institutional authority, duties involved, and her voluntarism to refuse

the request. OTHER's *it's not your business* and David's *I am paying you your salary* (43-45) suggest a different understanding about her official duties in the institution and, ultimately, different understandings about the "agent" and the "source" of authority.

The discussion of the approach suggested may include a methodological aspect. Assuming that frames and their elements are part of a shared interindividual knowledge system, the question arises in how far frame analysis can be integrated into the concept of CA as a radically empirical method (cf. Deppermann 2008). CA elaborates on observable procedures and accomplishments in interaction (ibid.), such as either the ratification or the rejection of a speaker's lexical use of "authority" in a specific context, and – as in the present empirical material – the voluntarism to not issue a marriage licence as an exercise of power associated with the subjective understanding of authority displayed in Kim's utterances. In the case of the transcript provided, frame elements may serve as a helpful resource to describe speakers' activities. In another step, their activities can be related to possible understandings of these complex concepts in more detail and the ways single frame elements may assume relevance in the process of meaning negotiation, as is the case when speakers directly refer to these in their responding activities (e. g. WHITE's *god does not belong in the country clerk's office*, 83-84).

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