

**Whose side are you on? On the role of eye gaze in teasing sequences in face-to-face interaction**

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Eye gaze has been described as a powerful instrument in social interaction, serving a multitude of functions and displaying particular patterns in relation to speech, gesture and other semiotic resources. Recently developed data collection techniques, including mobile eye-tracking systems, allow us to generate fine-grained information on the gaze orientation of multiple participants simultaneously while they are engaged in spontaneous face-to-face interactions. In this presentation, we provide an illustration of how mobile eye-tracking data may be used for both qualitative and quantitative explorations into the working of the ‘gaze machinery’ in (inter)action. More specifically, we will zoom in on teasing in face-to-face interaction as a subtype of the complex cognitive-pragmatic phenomenon of irony. The intrinsic layered nature of this phenomenon, as well as its social dynamics with teasers, targets and accomplices, requires a form of negotiation between speakers and their addressees. In this negotiation process, eye gaze behaviour (along with other nonverbal resources) seems to play a relevant role.

Using a corpus of spontaneous three-party interactions in which participants wore head-mounted eye-tracking systems, we analyse all participants’ gaze behaviour patterns in two types of teasing sequences: those in which the target of the tease is one of the participants (internal teases) and those in which the target is not present (external teases). Combining quantitative distributional analyses (for speaker and addressee gaze patterns) and qualitative micro-analyses of teasing sequences, we show that different gaze patterns emerge for internal versus external teases. During internal teases, speakers overwhelmingly look at the target of their tease, thereby not only verbally but visually targeting them. Furthermore, during internal teases, targets often avert their gaze, and the third participants alternate their gaze between the target of the tease, and the speaker. During external teases, the speaker’s gaze is more equally distributed over the addressees and all participants adhere to a more ‘default’ gaze pattern. Our findings highlight the multifunctionality of eye-gaze in interaction, and the influence of the specific participation framework and teasing constellation on gaze distribution over all participants in teases in conversation.