

THE CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN EVERYDAY GERMAN NARRATIVES – INTERACTIVE USES OF 'DENSE CONSTRUCTIONS'¹

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Abstract

This paper investigates ways in which participants in everyday German narratives construct emotions as social phenomena; i.e. in particular, how they organize and communicate emotional involvement. I will argue that contextualizing emotions and affects permeates various levels of linguistic and interactional structures – even grammar: Participants in everyday German storytelling use specific syntactic patterns as resources for indexing affective stances and making past events interpretable and emotionally accessible to their co-participants. The analysis concentrates on particular syntactic resources (such as averbal constructions, infinite constructions, minimal syntactic phrases etc.) used to contextualize affect and emotion. Instead of treating these 'dense constructions' (e.g. averbal constructions "I:CH (.) mit meinen sachen rAuf, [...] ICH (-) wieder rUnter, "; 'me (.) with my stuff upstairs, [...] me (-) down again,') as elliptic structures and conceptualizing them as incomplete or reduced sentence patterns, this study explores the specific forms and functions of 'dense constructions' in interactive usage. I will argue that 'dense constructions' – even though they do not follow the rules of the grammar of Standard German – represent conventionalized patterns participants use to fulfil various communicative tasks in specific communicative genres. In producing such 'fragmentary gestalts', conversationalists index sudden, reflex-like actions, and thus, stage dramatic, emotionally loaded events for their co-participants to "re-experience" (Goffman 1974/1986: 506).

Keywords: Everyday narratives; Storytelling; Grammatical constructions; Emotion(s); Emotional involvement; 'Dense constructions'; Affective stances; German interactions.

1. Introduction: An interactional approach to the study of language and emotions

Anthropologist William O. Beeman once stated,

"Linguists of all breeds seem to develop cold feet when it comes to discussion of the expression of emotion in language." (quoted by Judith Irvine 1990: 126)

This reluctance to get involved with "the expression of emotion in language" is due to a pervasive attitude towards emotions as subjective, inner experiences – in contrast to the

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rule-governed structures that linguistics as a discipline has had as its focal point for many decades (Irvine 1990: 126; Günthner 1997a).

As early as 50 years ago, Roman Jakobson (1960) treated the "emotive" function as one of the basic functions of language use and criticized the tendency of linguistics to concentrate primarily on the referential use of language. According to Jakobson (1960: 354) the emotive function of language which "aims at a direct expression of the speaker's attitude" towards her/his speech "flavors to some extent all our utterances, on their phonic, grammatical, and lexical level".

Despite Jakobson's attempt to include the emotive function in language models, most linguistic theories still overlook the relationship between language and emotions.² And linguistics is not alone in this reluctance to address emotion in language: "[t]he most widely discussed models of emotion in more recent psychology and neuroscience tend to disregard the role of language as well as of other cultural sign systems." (<http://www.languages-of-emotion.de/en/about/profile.html>).

Over the last three decades, various studies within Linguistic Anthropology, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and Conversation Analysis have addressed the question of how participants in interaction display emotions and affectional stances.³ These studies have not only shown that "language has a heart" (Ochs/Schieffelin 1989) but also that "the heart has a language" (Caffi/Janney 1994). They focus on the communication of emotions in 'talk in interaction'. In general, these approaches adhere to a social constructionist viewpoint (Harré 1986): Emotions are not conceived of as merely the expressive results of psychological processes internal to the participants, but as forms of social action (Irvine 1990: 128; Günthner 1997a). The communication of emotion is treated as an interactional achievement, which is produced and interpreted within everyday discourse as part of social action (Günthner 1997a, 2000; Fiehler 2001; Drescher 2003). In analyzing interaction for how emotions are displayed⁴ a number of questions arise:

- How do participants construct affective/emotional⁵ meaning in their everyday interactions?
- What verbal and nonverbal resources do they use to produce and interpret affective/emotional stances?
- How do displays of emotion interact with social expectations in particular situations and genres?

Empirical studies of emotions as situated practices in interactions reveal that linguists have underestimated the extent to which grammatical, lexical, prosodic and interactional phenomena in everyday interactions serve the communication of emotions.

² Significantly enough, those few researchers who actually addressed the relationship between language and emotions like Edward Sapir (1921), Karl Bühler (1934/82) and Roman Jakobson (1960) worked in interdisciplinary areas between anthropology, psychology, literature and linguistics.

³ Cf. Irvine (1982, 1990, 1993); Lutz (1982, 1990); Lutz/White (1986); Ochs/Schieffelin (1989); Besnier (1990, 1994); Kulick (1992); Fiehler (1990, 2001); Caffi/Janney (1994); Capps/Ochs (1995); Christmann/Günthner (1996, 1999); Günthner (1996, 1997a;b;c, 1999a;b, 2000, 2009); Niemeier/Dirven (1997); Kotthoff (1998, 2002); Goodwin/Goodwin (2000); Drescher (2003); Selting (2010).

⁴ Cf. also Goodwin/Goodwin (2000: 33).

⁵ Ochs/Schieffelin (1989: 7) use 'affect' as a broader term than 'emotion'. For them, 'affect' includes not only 'emotions' and 'moods', but also 'dispositions', 'attitudes', 'assessments' etc. Cf. also Günthner (1997a) and Selting (2010) on uses of the concepts 'emotion' and 'affect'. In this paper, however, I will use the terms "emotion" and "affect" interchangeably.

They point to the fact that emotions – as multichannel phenomena – flood "linguistic form on many different levels of structure in many different ways" (Besnier 1990: 421); and linguistic resources for contextualizing emotional involvement not only include lexical, phonological, and discourse structures but also syntactical features. So far, however, actual research on syntactic features employed for affective purposes is still rare (Irvine 1982; Ochs/Schieffelin 1989).

In this paper I want to focus on syntactic procedures participants employ to construct interpretable emotions in everyday interactions. In particular, I will analyze how certain syntactic constructions,⁶ so-called 'dense constructions' (Günthner 2006, 2007, 2009), are used as resources for indexing emotional involvement in everyday storytelling. The term "indexicality" refers to features, which anchor linguistic structures in actual context of use, rendering language fully operational as communicative action (Gumperz/Jacquemet 2009: manuscript). Indexicality enhances or broadens the ability to understand how concepts such as identity, emotions, affective stances, and ideology work in interaction. In connecting indexicality (Silverstein 1979) with communicative practice (Bourdieu 1982; Hanks 1996; Günthner 2000), I adhere to a process-oriented approach to interaction, which combines the analysis of syntactic (and prosodic) features used to index emotion/affectivity with the study of interactive constructions of communicative activities and genres.⁷

The analysis is based on a corpus of 91 everyday interactions (30 to 180 minutes in length), collected from 1989 to 2009 in different parts of Germany. These audio recordings of naturally occurring German interactions include informal face-to-face conversations among friends and family members, office hours at university, genetic counselling sessions, radio phone-in programs, as well as data from a reality TV-series 'Big Brother'. The transcription is based on GAT ("Gesprächsanalytische Transkriptionskonventionen"; Selting et al. 1998); i.e. a transcription system developed by a group of German interactional linguists in 1998. (The notation conventions can be found in the appendix.)

2. 'Dense Constructions' and the display of emotional involvement

In everyday storytelling, German-speaking interactants frequently make use of syntactic patterns which oppose the grammar of Standard German, as they use no finite verbs (and sometimes no verbs at all). However, I shall argue that these 'ungrammatical', averbal constructions (which I call 'dense constructions') represent conventionalized patterns used for indexing emotional involvement in everyday storytelling (Günthner 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010).

⁶ Cf. Günthner/Imo (2006); Imo (2007); Birkner (2008); Günthner/Bücker (2009) for an interactionally based concept of "constructions".

⁷ For the concept of 'communicative genres' see Luckmann (1988); Günthner (1995); Günthner/Knoblach (1995); Günthner/Christmann (1996); Günthner/Luckmann (2001).

2.1. Infinite constructions in everyday storytelling

One type of 'dense construction' frequently used in everyday storytelling is the 'infinite construction'.

In the following transcript segment, Nils reconstructs how he missed his train, which was announced as being late:

- (1) ZUG VERPASST – 'MISSED THE TRAIN'
- 1 Nils: steht dort zwanzig minuten verSPÄTung.
it says there's a twenty minute delay.
- 2 es war=n SAUwetter,
the weather was beastly,
- 3 **ICH (.) in die bAhnhofshAlle,**
I (.) into the station concourse,
- 4 <<all> damit mir nich so kalt wird,>
<<all> so that I don't get too cold,>
- 5 hab mich hingesetzt,
sat down,
- 6 TRINK nen kaffee,
have a cup of coffee,

In reconstructing his experience of having missed the train, Nils (in line 3) produces the averbal construction "*ICH (.) in die bAhnhofshAlle*," ('I (.) into the station concourse,').

This construction, which forms an own TCU ('turn construction unit'), consists of a subject - in form of the 1st person pronoun ("*ICH*"; 'I') - and the prepositional phrase "*in die bAhnhofshAlle*," ('into the station concourse,'), but it holds no verb.

In contrast to the rules of declarative clauses in standard German, this syntactic construction is 'deviant', as the obligatory position of the so-called German 'sentence-brace' is left empty:

front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	End field
<i>ICH (.)</i> 'I (.)'	Ø	<i>in die bAhnhofshAlle,</i> 'into the station concourse,'	Ø	

The standard German sentence would look like one of these variants:

front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	end field
<i>Ich</i> 'I'	<i>bin</i> 'am [have]'	<i>in die Bahnhofshalle</i> 'into the station concourse'	<i>gerannt/geeilt/gegangen...</i> 'run/hurried/gone...'	

<i>Ich</i>	<i>rannte/eilte/ ging...</i>	<i>in die Bahnhofshalle.</i>		
T'	'ran/hurried/ went...'	'into the station concourse.'		

Even though infinite constructions such as "*ICH (.) in die bAhnnhofshAlle*," ('I (.) into the station concourse,') contradict rules of German grammar, they represent a conventionalized pattern, frequently used within particular genres; within everyday storytelling for example.

Typically, the construction starts by referring to a character in the story, usually the protagonist "*Ich*", as in (1) *ZUG VERPASST* – 'MISSED THE TRAIN'. After a short pause, the event or social action, which the protagonist experiences or carries out, is introduced (such as "[...] (.) *in die bAhnnhofshAlle*," ('[...] (.) into the station concourse,'). The 'missing' verb can easily – but not always unambiguously – be reconstructed. In the 'infinite construction' in (1) *ZUG VERPASST* – 'MISSED THE TRAIN', it can be reconstructed either in the perfect tense ('*Perfekt*') as "*bin gerannt/geeilt/gegangen in...*" ('have run/hurried/gone into...') or in the past tense ('*Präteritum*') "*rannte/eilte/ging in ...*" ('ran/hurried/went into...').

By introducing the agent ("ICH"; 'I') first, then referring to his/her action (e.g. "*in die bAhnnhofshAlle*"; 'into the station concourse,') and thereby leaving the positions of the verbal brace empty, the construction is condensed. Besides the omission of the verb, other semantically redundant material as well as conjunctions, connective particles, etc. are generally left out, too. As a result, the recipients are confronted with only the *who* and *what* of the narrative event.

As in segment (1) *ZUG VERPASST* – 'MISSED THE TRAIN', once a speaker introduces an infinite construction, recipients generally refrain from taking over. Instead they treat the sequence as 'extraordinary'; i.e. as speaker's space for performing the narrative.

The infinite construction "*ICH (.) in die bAhnnhofshAlle*," ('I (.) into the station concourse,') consists of a [pronoun + prepositional phrase], however, participants also produce infinite constructions with the pronoun being followed by a participle phrase: [pronoun + participle phrase].

The following segment is taken from an interaction between Lena and her cousin Anna. Lena talks about her panic disorder. To illustrate her experience, she reconstructs a panic attack she had some years ago. A new tunnel in her hometown had just been inaugurated, when she decided to drive through it with her two children. While she was driving her car, she suddenly had a panic attack:

(2) *EINWEIHUNG DES TUNNELS* - 'INAUGURATION OF THE TUNNEL' (*PANIK-ATTACKEN* - *LENA*)⁸

273 Lena: dann oimol (0.5) war de FILip ond de JUStus dabei,
 then one time (0.5) filip and justus were with me,

274 no isch de TUNNEL eingWEIHT [wore,]
 then the tunnel was being [inaugurated,]

275 Anna: [mbm]

⁸ The participants speak with a Southern dialect ('Swabian').

- 276 Lena: no hab i gSAgt,
 then I said,
 277 HU- huRRA
 hu- huRRAh
 278 HEUT fahre mer (.) s'erschte mal
 durch de TUnnel.
 today we're going through the tunnel
 for the first time.
 279 **ICH (.) KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese,⁹**
 I (.) no five meters there inside been,
 I (.) no five meters into it,
 280 (0.5)
 281 FURCHTbar. (.)
 horrible. (.)
 282 VOLLbremsung GMACHT.
 slammed on the brakes.
 283 i- i w-WEISS net,
 I- I don't know
 284 sen mir DURCHgfahre,
 did we drive through,
 285 <<hi> oder ben i RÜCKwärts gfahre.>
 <<hi> or did I drive backwards.>
 286 i WEISS es nemme.
 I can't recall.

After having set up the scene by providing the background information (i.e. the inauguration of the tunnel in her hometown) and introducing the characters involved (Lena and her children Filip and Justus), Lena stages her pleasant anticipation of driving through this newly built tunnel with her children for the first time. The direct reported speech with the exclamatory "*HU- huRRA*" (line 277) is aimed at portraying her affective stance towards the planned excursion. Right after the affectively loaded reported speech, Lena introduces the infinite construction: "*ICH (.) KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese*," ('I (.) not five meters into it,') (line 279), which builds up a contrast to the joyful anticipation of the event.

Again, the construction starts with the 1st person pronoun, referring to the protagonist "*ICH*" ('I'). After a minimal pause, Lena reconstructs what has happened: "*KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese*," ('not five meters into it,'). The verb form "*gwese*" ('been') is a past participle form in German; the finite verb (i.e. the auxiliary "*bin*"; 'was/have') has been omitted.

Even though, in this construction, the right verbal brace is filled with the past participle, the construction is still 'deviant', as the finite verb – and thus the verbal part which carries information about person and tense – is missing:

⁹ As in this utterance the German syntax varies significantly from the English, I insert an interlinear gloss between the verbal transcript segment in German and the free translation.

front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	end field
<i>ICH</i> (.) 'I (.)'	Ø	<i>KOIne fünf MEter do</i> 'no five meters there'	<i>DRIN gwese,</i> 'inside been,'	

A standard German sentence would look like this:

front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	end field
<i>Ich</i> 'I'	<i>bin</i> 'am'	<i>keine fünf Meter</i> 'no five meters'	<i>drin gewesen,</i> 'inside been'	

As in the previous example, the infinite construction "*ICH* (.) *KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese*," is characterized by first referring to the agent (the protagonist) and then introducing the event which advances the plot line (the rhematic part):

actor	Event
<i>ICH</i> (.) 'I (.)'	<i>in die bAhnhofshAlle,</i> 'into the station concourse,'
<i>ICH</i> (.) 'I (.)'	<i>KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese,</i> 'no five meters into it,'

Beyond their characteristic syntactic architecture, infinite constructions show a specific prosodic design (Sandig 2000; Günthner 2007, 2009): The constructions, in general, start with an accentuated pronoun "*ICH*". In accentuating the thematic part (i.e. the first person pronoun) in combination with the short pause that follows it, speakers create a certain tension and draw recipients' attention to what follows. The rhematic part usually carries several accentuated syllables. This combination of short intonation phrases and dense accentuation (Uhmann 1996) creates a marked rhythm.

As Selting (1994, 2010) and Goodwin/Goodwin (2000) argue, prosodic features do not function as isolated displays, but they form meaningful events by virtue of the way in which they are embedded within particular sequences of action. In the interactions at hand, speakers combine a marked syntactic 'gestalt' and a prosodic design which contextualize emphasis (Selting 1994; Sandig 2000; Schwitalla 1997/2011) and frame the portrayed event as highly dramatic.

Speakers, however, do not only use this marked syntactic pattern to reconstruct past events in general, but they adopt this construction as a strategy to engage and heighten the emotional involvement of the listener.

So far, we have looked at infinite constructions made up of prepositional or participle phrases. The rhematic part of an infinite construction, however, can also consist of a verb particle: [pronoun + verb particle]. Again, the finite verb with its grammaticalized information about person and tense is missing.

In the following segment, Arne, a university professor, recounts what went wrong at his recent lecture. He produces two infinite constructions within one turn:

(3) *VORLESUNG* – 'LECTURE'

- 10 Arne: *s=war echt en theAter; (-)*
it was such a hassle; (-)
 11 **also I:CH (.) mit meinen sachen RAUF,**
so I (.) with my stuff up,
 12 *in=nen hÖrsaal,*
into the lecture hall,
 13 *das MIkro war aber nich DA;*
but the microphone wasn't there;
 14 **ICH (-) wieder RUNter,**
I (-) again down/down again,
 15 *dann musst ich NOCH mal wieder durch das geWÜsel*
durch.
then I had to get through the bustle/the crowd again.

After the assessment of his lecture "*s=war echt en theAter;*", 'it was such a hassle;' (line 10), Arne stages this hassle – by means of an infinite construction: The TCU "*also I:CH (.) mit meinen sachen RAUF,*" ('so I (.) with my stuff up,') (l. 11) starts with the discourse marker "*also*" and the accentuated deictic form "*I:CH*" ('I'), introducing the protagonist. Following a short pause, the speaker uses the non-finite form: "*mit meinen sachen RAUF,*" ('so I (.) with my stuff up,'). The second infinite construction "*ICH (-) wieder RUNter,*" ('I (-) again down/down again,') parallels the first one: In both cases the infinite constructions carry no verb. Instead, the speaker presents accentuated verb particles ("*RAUF,*" and "*RUNter,*"):

front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	end field
<i>also I:CH (.)</i> 'I (.)'	Ø	<i>mit meinen sachen</i> 'with my stuff'	<i>RAUF,</i> 'up,'	
<i>ICH (-)</i> 'I (-)'	Ø	<i>wieder</i> 'again'	<i>RUNter,</i> 'down,'	

Infinite constructions, thus, form bi-partite constructions, consisting of the introduction of the agent and the mentioning of the new narrative event. Both parts (divided by a short

pause) are adjacently placed within one TCU. Even though the finite verb (and thus, the inherent grammatical linkage) is missing, the two parts are semantically tied:

introducing the agent ¹⁰	introducing the narrative-advancing event
<i>ICH</i> (.) 'I (.)'	<i>in die bAhnhofshAlle,</i> 'into the station concourse,'
<i>ICH</i> (.) 'I (.)'	<i>KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese,</i> 'not five meters into it,'
(also) <i>I:CH</i> (.) '(so) I (.)'	<i>mit meinen sachen RAUF,</i> 'with my stuff up,'
<i>ICH</i> (-) 'I (-)'	<i>wieder RUNter,</i> 'again down,'

As mentioned above, in our data the production of an infinite construction triggers no immediate recipient reactions; co-participants neither take over the floor, nor do they produce any continuers, etc.. Instead they treat the ongoing sequence as speaker's space for performing her/his narrative. This restraint from taking over or even providing verbal reactions seems to be connected to the sequential placement of the infinite construction within the narrative flow. As Selting (2010: 272) points out:

"...emotive involvement in general or the specific affect in particular (...) does not seem to be something that uncontrollably flows out of an individual or can be captured with reference to only its individual or cognitive reality. Emotive involvement and affectivity is displayed, responded to and negotiated in talk-in-interaction. This is what we call the 'management of affectivity by the participants in interaction'."

Part of this 'management of affectivity' in the cases at hand, is that participants do not use this syntactic construction to introduce just any sort of event, but to proceed from a reporting to a scenic presentation, and thus to an emotionally charged portrayal of the more dramatic events of the story (and not vice versa). The use of infinite constructions is closely related to what Hopper/Thompson (1980: 280f.) refer to as "narrative foregrounding":

"In any communicative situation, narrative and non-narrative, some parts of what is stated are more relevant or central than others. That part of a discourse that does not immediately contribute to a speaker's goal, but which merely assists, amplifies, or comments on it, is referred to as BACKGROUND. By contrast, that material which supplies the main points of the discourse is known as FOREGROUND...The foregrounded portions together comprise the backbone or skeleton of the text, forming its basic structure; the backgrounded clauses put flesh on the skeleton, but are extraneous to its structural coherence." (Hopper/Thompson 1980: 280f.)

Infinite constructions carry "narrative-advancing information" (Hopper/Thompson 1980) and work as "foregrounding" strategies, which advance the actual story line.

¹⁰ The observation that the agents in our examples are always introduced by first-person pronouns is based on the fact that in these everyday narratives speakers reconstruct their own (mostly affectively loaded) experiences.

Also in the following transcript segment, the infinite construction (line 78) presents the "narrative-advancing information". Loni reconstructs how someone tried to steal her purse while she was sleeping on a train:

(4) *SCHLAFWAGENÜBERFALL* – 'RAID IN A SLEEPING CAR'

- 71 Loni: und dann (...) so eh merk=ich=so,
 and then (...) so eh I=notice,
 72 so ein ein rAscheln,
 a kind of rustling sound,
 73 [so Ähnlich;
 [or something] like that;
 74 Rosi: [hm]
 75 Loni: irgendwIe war da was;
 somehow there was something there;
 76 da seh ich so=n schatten Über MIR,
 then I see a kind of shadow over me,
 77 merk ne HAND an meinem kopfkissen;
 notice a hand at my pillow;
 78 <<f> ICH (.)voll geschrIEn;>
 <<f> I (.)totally screamed;>
 79 brutAl. Echt.
 brutal. really.
 80 da sind die andern (auf)gewacht.
 then the others woke up.

Loni first presents an orientation and provides the background information (she hears a rustling sound and realizes that there was something happening while she was trying to sleep on the train'). The infinite construction in line 78: "<<f> ICH (.) voll geschrIEn;>" ('<<f> I (.) totally screamed;>') displays the typical bi-partite structure with the introduction of the agent ("ICH"; I) and the mentioning of the new narrative event "<<f> voll geschrIEn;" ('I (.) totally screamed;'). Both parts are adjacently placed within one TCU. Even though the finite verb, and thus the inherent grammatical linkage is missing, the two parts are semantically tied.

Formally, the construction shows parallels with reported speech, where the narrator first introduces the character and then begins her/his communicative action (e.g. 'I: get out!').

By means of infinite constructions, speakers not only reconstruct past events, but they stage these past experiences and contextualize their emotional involvement in the presented actions. Infinite constructions not only introduce material which supplies essential points of the story and "comprise(s) the backbone or skeleton of the text, forming its basic structure" (Hopper/Thompson 1980: 280f.), but they also function as rhetoric resources used to build up emotional tension. The combination of the syntactically 'dense construction' with prosodic features marking "emphatic speech style" (Selting 1994) index "peaks of involvement" within the domain of storytelling.

A closer look at the sequential environment reveals that participants use these syntactic patterns in everyday storytelling to switch from "a long shot to a close-up" ("Fern- zur Nahaufnahme" in Bühler's (1934/82: 392) terminology):

Nils uses the infinite construction to switch from outlining the narrative background to presenting the main story line:

- (1) ZUG VERPASST - 'MISSED THE TRAIN'
 2 Nils: es war=n SAUwetter,
 the weather was beastly,
 3 **ICH (.) in die bAhnhofshAlle,**
 I (.) into the station concourse,

Lena introduces the infinite construction to stage the dramatic event, i.e. her panic attack in the tunnel:

- (2) EINWEIHUNG DES TUNNELS - 'INAUGURATION OF THE TUNNEL' (PANIK-
 ATTACKEN - LENA)
 277 Lena: HU- huRRA
 hu- huRRAh
 278 HEUT fahre mer (.) s'erschte mal
 durch de TUnnel.
 today we're going through the tunnel
 for the first time.
 279 **ICH (.) KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese,**
 I (.) no five meters into it,

With the infinite construction in line 11 Arne switches from his assessment of the event to its staging, and in line 14 he switches from reporting about the missing microphone to staging his own hectic actions:

- (3) VORLESUNG - 'LECTURE'
 10 Arne: s=war echt en theAter; (-)
 it was such a hassle; (-)
 11 **also I:CH (.) mit meinen sachen rAUf,**
 so I (.) with my stuff up,
 12 in=nen hÖrsaal,
 into the lecture hall,
 13 das MIkro war aber nich DA;
 but the microphone wasn't there;
 14 **ICH (-) wieder rUnter,**
 I (-) again down/down again,

In line 78, Loni switches from the reconstruction of her perception to the staging of her dramatic action:

- (4) SCHLAFWAGENÜBERFALL - 'RAID IN A SLEEPING CAR'
 75 Loni: irgendwIe war da was;
 somehow there was something there;
 76 da seh ich so=n schatten Über MIR,
 then I see a kind of shadow over me,
 77 merk ne HAND an meinem kopfkissen;
 notice a hand at my pillow;
 78 <<f> **ICH (.)voll geschrIEn;>**
 <<f> **I (.)totally screamed;>**
 79 brutAl. Echt.
 brutal. really.

The infinite construction in line 279 is followed by other fragmentary patterns: The adjective "*FURCHTbar*" ('horrible'), which is produced in a separate intonation phrase, stands alone. It functions as a sort of exclamation, indicating Lena's emotional involvement in the portrayed event. This emotionally loaded assessment is directly followed by another dense construction, which portrays Lena's reflex-like action: "*VOLLbremsung GMACHT*." ('slammed on the brakes. '; line 282). This fragmentary pattern resembles the infinite constructions described above insofar, as it consists of a participle construction without a finite verb and represents an independent turn construction unit. However, unlike in the infinite constructions presented above, the agent is not mentioned; i.e. the construction carries no subject. This, however, seems to create no interpretation problem for the co-participant, as the agent "*ICH*" ('I') introduced in the infinite construction in line 279 ("*ICH* (.) *KOIne fünf MEter do DRIN gwese*,"; 'I (.) no five meters into it,') remains interactively and cognitively active throughout this sequence.

Thus, this segment reveals how a narrator (Lena) uses various 'dense constructions' in succession, in order to reconstruct her panic attack and, at the same time, to communicate/relay her emotional state – the sudden and overpowering feeling – during the actual event.

In the following segment, we can observe a whole string of 'dense constructions', which are organized in short intonation units. Tina reconstructs how she was brought to hospital after she had had a panic attack. In lines 253ff. she uses a list of averbal constructions to reconstruct her experience in hospital:

- (5) *PANIK-ATTACKEN: TINA* – '*PANIC-ATTACKS: TINA*'
 251 Tina: un dann ins krankenHAUS,
 and then to the hospital
 252 un dann fängt man an zu FRIEren;
 and then you start to feel cold;
 253 **in DECKen gewICKelt,**¹³
 in blankets wrapped,
 wrapped in blankets,
 254 **HEIzung uffjeDREHT,**
 heater up turned,
 turned the heater up,
 255 **aber FENster AUF.**
 but window open.
 256 aber diese symptOMe,
 but these symptoms,
 257 diese KÄLte.
 this cold.

The fragmentary patterns in lines 253-255 neither carry any finite verb nor any subject. The first 'dense construction' starts in the passive voice: "*in DECKen gewICKelt*," ('wrapped in blankets,') (line 253). With "*HEIzung uffjeDREHT*," ('turned the heater up,'), the speaker shifts back into the active voice, producing a participle construction. (The verb form "*uffjeDREHT*," ['turned up'] is a past participle form in German.) The construction "*aber FENster AUF*." ('but window open.') consists of the adversative conjunction "*aber*" ('but'), the object "*FENster*" ('window') and the verb particle "*AUF*"

¹³ Also in this segment I will insert an interlinear gloss between the transcript segments in German and their free translations in lines 253 and 254.

('open') and refers to the protagonist's action of opening the window, which cohesively ties back by building up a contrast to the turning up of the heater.

Although these constructions show no subject as in "*VOLLbremsung GMACHT*." ('slammed on the brakes.'). (2) *EINWEIHUNG DES TUNNELS* – 'INAUGURATION OF THE TUNNEL'), this time the preceding subject ("*man*"; 'one'; in line 252: "*un dann fängt man an zu FRIEren*"; 'and then you start to feel cold;') cannot be interpreted as still holding valid for these dense constructions. Instead, it is the protagonist (the "*Ich*", 'I') who is the agent throughout this sequence of fragmentary patterns. This might be an indication that 'dense constructions' in general are conventionalized patterns, narrators use to portray their own part experiences.

As the data reveal, by employing 'dense constructions', interactants distribute quickly following actions over various turn construction units, organized in short intonation phrases. This stringing together of several fragmentary 'gestalts' in short, emphatically marked intonation units and the leaving out of semantically redundant material contributes to indexing a dynamic, emphatic rendition of events.

3. Conclusion

The analysis has shown ways in which participants construct emotions as social phenomena; i.e. how they organize and communicate emotional involvement as interactive events through particular verbal and non-verbal (prosodic, etc.) practices within emergent social interaction.

Furthermore, we have observed that contextualizing emotions and affects permeates various levels of linguistic and interactional structures – even grammar: Participants in everyday storytelling use syntactic patterns as resources for indexing affective stances and making past events interpretable and emotionally accessible to their co-participants. In producing 'dense constructions', speakers index sudden, reflex-like actions, and thus, stage dramatic, emotionally loaded events for their co-participants to "re-experience" (Goffman 1974/1986: 506).

In everyday storytelling, narrators do not just report 'what happened', but they put these events en scène, portraying 'what happened' relative to their subjective perspective. As Walter Benjamin (1955/77: 230) once pointed out: "Traces of the narrator stick to every narrative just as traces of the potter's hand stick to his pottery-bowl" (own translation).

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Appendix: Transcription conventions (based on GAT; Selting et al. 1998)

[]	overlap
[]	
=	latching of new turns or single units
(.)	micro-pause
(-), (--), (---)	short, middle or long pauses of ca. 0.25 - 0.75 seconds, up to ca. 1 second
(2.0)	estimated pause of more than ca. 1 second
(2.85)	measured pause (measured to hundredths of a second)
and=uh	slurring within units
:, ::, :::	lengthening, according to duration
uh, ah, etc.	hesitation signals, so-called "filled pauses"
'	glottal stop
so(h)o	laughter particles during speech
haha hoho heehee	syllabic laughing
((laughing))	description of laughter
?	high rise
,	rise to mid
-	level pitch
;	fall to mid
.	low fall
((cough))	paralinguistic and non-linguistic actions and events
<<coughing>>	accompanying paralinguistic and non-linguistic actions and events over a stretch of speech
<<surprised>>	interpretive comments over a stretch of speech
()	unintelligible passage, according to its duration
(such)	presumed wording
al(s)o	presumed sound or syllable
(such/which)	possible alternatives
((...))	omission of text
	specific line in the transcript which is referred to in the text
ACcent	primary or main accent
Accent	secondary accent
!AC!cent	extra strong accent
`SO	fall

˘SO	rise
–SO	level
^SO	rise-fall
˘˘SO	fall-rise
↑˘	small pitch step-up to the peak of the accented syllable
↓˘	small pitch step-down to the bottom of the accented syllable
↑˘SO or ↓˘SO	conspicuously high or low pitch step-up or down to the peak or the bottom of the accented syllable
<<f>>	forte, loud
<<ff>>	fortissimo, very loud
<<p>>	piano, soft
<<p>>	pianissimo, very soft
<<all>>	allegro, fast
<<len>>	lento, slow
<<cresc>>	crescendo, becoming louder
<<dim>>	diminuendo, becoming softer
ACcent	primary or main accent
Accent	secondary accent
!AC!cent	extra strong accent
˘SO	fall
˘SO	rise
–SO	level
^SO	rise-fall
˘˘SO	fall-rise
↑˘	small pitch step-up to the peak of the accented syllable
↓˘	small pitch step-down to the bottom of the accented syllable
↑˘SO or ↓˘SO	conspicuously high or low pitch step-up or down to the peak or the bottom of the accented syllable
<<f>>	forte, loud
<<ff>>	fortissimo, very loud
<<p>>	piano, soft
<<p>>	pianissimo, very soft
<<all>>	allegro, fast
<<len>>	lento, slow
<<cresc>>	crescendo, becoming louder
<<dim>>	diminuendo, becoming softer
<<acc>>	accelerando, becoming faster
<<rall>>	rallentando, becoming slower
.h, .hh, .hhh	in breathe, according to duration
h, hh, hhh	out breathe, according to duration.

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