

## **9 HIDDEN DIALOGUES: TOWARDS AN INTERACTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS**

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### **Introduction**

Bringing together oral history, conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, this chapter studies dialogical patterns in video-taped testimonies of Holocaust survivors. These biographical interviews are understood as results of a recorded interaction: the narration and its layers of meaning are co-constructed in a working alliance between interviewer and narrator, with both participants using specific verbal and non-verbal resources. By analyzing examples of repetitions and of re-tellings within testimonies, the authors explore the potential of an interdisciplinary cooperation between historians and linguists in understanding the dialogical character of oral history interviews.

Usually, the disciplines of history and linguistics work quite separately, although texts are central to both of them, mostly in written form. Gradually, however, researchers in both disciplines are becoming more interested in spoken language corpora (for linguists) or oral history collections (for historians).

Oral history interviews contain important research data not only for historiography, but also for linguistic research, cultural and literary studies, psychology and sociology (cf. Andresen, Apel, Heinsohn 2015, Knopp, Schulze, Eusterschulte 2016). Rarely, however, have they been used in interactional or corpus linguistics, although they constitute a rich and very specific corpus of spoken language. This has several reasons. First, the interview collections are scattered over many, mostly non-academic institutions, poorly catalogued and only partially digitized. Second, in oral history projects, the interviewees are chosen for thematic clusters instead of linguistic or social categories. Third, most transcripts are somewhat polished and are not machine-readable. These obstacles can be overcome, however. With the digital turn in history and the increasing number of digital interview archives, the potential for interdisciplinary cooperation is growing.

On the other hand, oral historians have not worked with existing linguistic corpora for different reasons. Apart from their sometimes limited affinity to digital technology, they often resent quantitative methods applied to such an essentially qualitative source as an individual life-story narration. Deeply rooted in hermeneutical research, oral history is opposed to any kind of de-contextualization and would not analyze short segments of speech without their biographical and historical context, an approach

which seems to be widespread in linguistics—and maybe inherent to many digitally supported research approaches. Furthermore, few historians (and other people) are familiar with the specialized terminology applied in many linguistic publications.

Yet, oral history, and also qualitative social research, should cooperate with corpus and interactional linguistics, and vice versa, because both disciplines are not only interested in the same sources (for historians) or data (for linguists). Both also tend to look at the interviews as situated, embodied social interaction. This kind of common ground is essential for all interdisciplinary ventures.

Applying linguistic methods, historians could refine their established historical methods of source criticism, namely applying the *who, what, where* etc. questions, to oral history interviews. The linguistic analysis of the multimodal interaction shows precisely *how* the sources were created in a dialogical, embodied conversation between interviewer and narrator. In this chapter, the focus on the interviewer's role supports a deeper understanding of *who* created the narration and *to whom* it was addressed, i.e. the target audience intended by the narrator.

In the following sections we will summarize some strands of prior research in linguistics and oral history that might be absolutely familiar to scholars of one, but not necessarily the other discipline.

## Interviews in Oral History

Oral history interviews can be defined as audio- or video-recorded biographical narrative interviews. Typically, these two- to three-hour interviews contain few interviewer questions and long autobiographical narrations by the interviewee.

Over the past 50 years, museums, archives, research institutes, and non-governmental initiatives have created large collections of such narratives for individual research or public purposes. Hundreds of interview collections in Europe and beyond contain tens of thousands of interviews, which constitute an extremely useful resource for multidisciplinary research in many fields within the social sciences and humanities.

Thousands of people reflect upon their values and identities, and tell their experiences of war and dictatorship, emancipation and freedom, migration and globalization. For many underprivileged parts of societies, including peasants, migrants, women, opposition groups, or minorities, oral narrations captured in audio-visually recorded interviews were or are the only possible way of expressing their perspectives. These voices constitute a fundamental part of Europe's linguistic heritage, covering a wide range of languages and dialects.

Nonetheless, oral history as a sub-discipline of historiography has remained small and somewhat marginalized in much of continental Europe, contrary to the Anglo-Saxon world and to Latin America. In Germany, it has developed since the 1980s as a

qualitative-hermeneutical approach inspired by qualitative social research (Rosenthal 1995) and in opposition to the structural and quantifying paradigm of social history dominant at the time. Case studies using small groups of individual interviews looked for aspects of cultural meaning or personal agency, often focusing on underrepresented groups like women, migrants, or victims of racial and political persecution. Interviews with members of this last group, specifically with Holocaust survivors, are often called testimonies and have received widespread attention in media, culture and politics (Wieviorka 2006; Sabrow and Frei 2012; Andresen, Apel, Heinsohn 2015).

Since the 1990s, life-story interviews have become central in research about the Holocaust and other mass atrocities like Nazi forced labor, communist or Francoist repression. While written documents about deportation, exploitation, and extermination often either reflect the perpetrators' perspective or are missing altogether, the survivors' testimonies convey the victims' manifold *Erfahrungsgeschichte* (Niethammer and Leh 2007) and allow for a deeper understanding of the atrocities' aftermath in individual biographies and post-war societies.

Whereas some historians, usually analyzing contemporary written records, discard survivors' testimonies as unreliable artifacts created long after the historical events, oral historians are eager "to examine the historical agency in these eye-witnesses' narratives [...], making historical inquiry the combined study of both what happened and how it is passed down to us" (Young 1997: 56f., cf. Hartman 1996).

In these settings, the individuality of each testimony is highly valued—as is the respect towards a Holocaust survivor's personal life story. Oral historians have always focused on subjective experiences, individual memories, biographical meaning, and cultural context. Any kind of de-contextualization—structural(ist) explanations, generalizing theories, or data-driven statistics—is either not needed or, at worst, distorting.

Given this tradition, this kind of data, and the limited resources in their projects, oral historians usually have analyzed individual interviews, often conducted by themselves (e.g. Felman and Laub 1991; Hartman 1996; Grinchenko 2009; Greenspan 2014). Rarely, however, have they embarked on larger, comparative studies (Browning 2010; Plato et al. 2010; Thonfeld 2014).

Nowadays, the rapid development of digital technologies has inspired the creation and curation of large-scale interview collections (Apostolopoulos and Pagenstecher 2013; Apostolopoulos et al. 2017; Pagenstecher 2017). These digital environments support quantitative and comparative approaches to their corpora and allow one to watch and listen to the interviews in a much more comfortable and efficient way than before.

In the age of the tape recorder, the oral historian usually worked with a textual representation of the recording in the form of a verbatim or lightly edited transcript. This analysis of a written approximation to the spoken word often neglects the non-verbal dimensions of the testimonies. Today, digital technology offers the possibility to study the audio-visual sources themselves, including the multiple modalities of text, speech, silence, gestures and facial expressions captured in the video images and the

audio track (de Jong et al. 2008; Lichtblau 2011; Truong et al. 2014). Only few studies, however, have done this, mostly using interviews in Yale's Fortunoff archive (Hartman 1996; Pinchevski 2012; Greenspan 2014; Hamburger 2016) and in Claude Lanzmann's famous *Shoah* film (Chare 2015).

## Interviews as Conversation and Interaction

Linguists, especially conversation analysts and interactional linguists, have mostly been interested in everyday conversations such as talk-at-work, dinner conversations, or chats over a drink with friends, but increasingly have also analyzed interviews as real-time interactions. Major obstacles for the study of interviews were the lack of homogeneous data and the lack of data from different languages.

While corpus linguistics has made tremendous progress in the digitally supported analysis of large amounts of written text, the treatment of spoken language has remained a "blind spot" (cf. Mair 2013). Many corpora of spoken language are based on media contexts rather than spontaneous private interaction, and often are accessible only as transcriptions, not as audio or video data.

Oral history collections, however, allow for the investigation of a large and rather homogeneous data set of thousands of interviews in many different languages. The audio- or video-recorded interviews share an overwhelmingly similar setting and similar topics, are of roughly the same duration, and were conducted with interviewees of similar age and elapsed time since their—often traumatic—experiences.

Understanding oral history interviews as recorded conversations can lead to the application of methods of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Interaction Linguistics (IL). CA uses naturalistic observation and detailed microanalysis of participants' conduct in actual instances of naturally occurring interaction as a technique for the empirical description of the practices and methods the participants of an interaction themselves use to produce, interpret, and co-ordinate their actions and activities in social interaction (cf. Heritage 2010). Depending on the sequential context in which it is used, speakers can be shown to use certain practices methodically for implementing various actions (e.g. initiating repair/signaling hearing trouble, foreshadowing disagreement, expressing disbelief). CA does not depart from preexisting analytical categories but intends to reconstruct the participants' categories, employing an emic perspective. In doing so, a given participant's reactions to the other participants' actions are central: In their reactions, participants signal each other how they understood a previous action (next turn proof procedure). This means that interaction is analyzed in terms of sequences of actions and displays of understanding.

Interactional Linguistics (IL) full-heartedly subscribes to the methodological framework and the inventory of communicative actions established by CA, but adds a more linguistic, i.e. structure-oriented perspective, based on the analysis of spoken

corpora instead of a single conversation. IL methodology postulates the interdependence between the structure of a language and the structures of interaction (Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 2000: 82). In other words, linguistic structures or patterns are seen to be sedimented solutions for specific tasks. Linguistic structures are “best practiced solutions” so to speak for managing recurrent interactional problems (cf. Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 2001: 261–264).

Thus, IL tries to empirically reconstruct context-specific form-function relationships or patterned regularities between the deployment of certain linguistic forms and specific interactional functions in particular sequential or interactional environments (cf. Barth-Weingarten 2008: 85). In practice, it identifies particular (clusters of) linguistic (e.g., phonetic, prosodic, morpho-syntactic, lexical) resources that are constitutive of specific communicative tasks. In this paper, the repetition of stretches of utterances will be shown to solve the communicative task of negotiating the topic of ongoing speech (see below).

Such linguistic solutions to communicative problems are not seen to be attributable to only one speaker but are inherently dialogic as they serve to manage interactive tasks. Within the methodological framework of corpus-based IL, data is analyzed as an integral part of the context in which it occurs, which may require analytic attention on various levels of granularity (turn-constructional units, turns, a part of or the entire dialogue etc., cf. Linell 2009, 2015).

### Interviews as Narrative Dialogue

Through an analysis of these interviews not only as written texts but as multi-modal interactions (from an interdisciplinary perspective cf. Norris et al. 2015) we can investigate the adaptation processes during which the interviewer and the narrator negotiate shared meanings and intersubjective standpoints, anticipate possibilities for misunderstanding (Deppermann 2015), and solve conflicts. The conceptualization of an interview as interactional rather than merely textual requires a comprehensive investigation of at least three types of interaction:

1. Reference and response phenomena between interviewer and interviewee, both verbal after a turn and non-verbal (gestures, looks) as well as verbal during turns, i.e. while one of them is speaking.
2. Adaptation of utterances to the specific interactional partner, where their (expected) background knowledge, interests, identity, and emotions are taken into account (recipient design).
3. Joint construction of meaning through a mutual set-up of contexts. Questions and answers, reactions and interpretations unfold against the backdrop of the context that has been agreed upon and that provides a frame of reference.

For the purpose of this chapter, oral history interviews are thus understood as narrative dialogues, enabled through a working alliance between the narrator and the interviewer.

Obviously, oral history interviews are not only autobiographic sources, but also results of a technically recorded dialogue with an interviewer in a specific setting. This has been underlined by critics who discard survivors' testimonies as unreliable sources for historical events and assign the status of a mere social artifact to these interviews (Bourdieu 1986). Indeed, oral history aims at understanding subjective meanings rather than at retrieving historical facts. Experienced interviewers are well aware of the "dialogical relationship" in oral history, where the "sources are not found, but co-created by the historian [...] in a dialogic exchange" (Portelli 2005).

It is a specific form of dialogue, however: In the biographical-narrative interview, the interviewer tries to elicit long self-structured narrations by restricting himself to short questions and—ideally supportive—interventions. This interviewer, largely silent and mostly invisible in the video recordings, plays a crucial role, however, as a "listener" to and "facilitator" of the testimony (Felman and Laub 1991: xvii; Lichtblau 2011; Pinchevski 2012). Thus, the narrative dialogue is largely a hidden dialogue, mostly not visible on the video, sometimes difficult to hear on the audio, and often not transcribed adequately. The interviewee, on the other hand, takes center-stage in narrating his/her life story, and becomes the narrator—this term will be used throughout this chapter— rather than only the respondent.

This narrative dialogue is a double-layered one: The narrator does not only talk to the interviewer, but also to the camera, and through the camera to an, albeit vaguely defined, audience of future generations (Pinchevski 2012: 149). How this "overhearing audience" of future recipients (cf. Poppe, Buchholz, Alder 2015: 206) is imagined by the speakers is mostly unknown, but definitely depends on the context of the interview project (Michaelis 2013; Shenker 2015; Taubitz 2016).

As Friedman (2014: 291) suggests, "layers of meaning are co-constructed from the embodied interaction of interviewer and narrator". In a successful interview, the narrator and the interviewer build a working alliance, called "complicity" (Jureit 1999: 159) or *Erzählgemeinschaft* (Nägel 2016), which helps the narrator through the difficult and often painful process of remembering, articulating and evaluating personal and sometimes traumatic experiences, and which creates a meaningful narration.

These working alliances—the term we use in a more specific way here than in its original therapeutic meaning—contain negotiations and conflicts. As has been shown for exemplary interview sequences though a scenic narrative microanalysis (Hamburger 2016, cf. also Poppe, Buchholz, Alder 2015), the power-relations between interviewer and narrator have shifting balances. In large collections, researchers like Browning (2010: 6) often come across "impatient and clueless" interviewers who interrupt the narrators. In some—archived, but rarely analyzed—interviews the

working alliance is full of tensions or even fails completely. These tussles “are particularly interesting”, however, for Cole (in Cole and Greenspan 2016): “Oral history is a co-produced source, but the idea of tussles suggests that co-production is not straightforward.”

But how can we identify moments of negotiation or conflict between interviewer and narrator in a testimony in a systematic way? From a linguistic perspective, certain language patterns with a specific dialogical function can signal the ongoing process of creating and maintaining the working alliance. One of these elements is repetition, which will be looked at in the first of two case studies in this chapter.

Although there has been little comparative analysis of interviews from the various, scattered oral history collections, different narrator types with a different degree of agency have been identified in case studies (Michaelis 2013; Laub and Bodenstab 2010). On the other hand, there are also diverging cooperation patterns which can be correlated to the interviewing methods and the institutional settings of a specific interview project (Michaelis 2013: 205ff.), to gender differences of narrators and interviewers (Pagenstecher and Tausendfreund 2015) or to different national cultures of remembrance (Thonfeld 2014; Plato et al. 2010).

Comparisons of different oral history interviews are difficult, however, because of the individual character of each life-story narration. Therefore, repeated interviews with the same narrator, or re-tellings, can facilitate a comparative analysis of the context and dynamics of interaction, and of the hidden dialogue between interviewer and narrator (cf. Kasten 2017: 16–21, *this volume*). Such a re-telling is analyzed in the second case study below.

### Sources: Interview Archives at Freie Universität Berlin

The sources (or data) analyzed in this chapter are available at the interview archives at the *Center for Digital Systems (CeDiS) of Freie Universität Berlin (FUB)*. Since 2006, CeDiS has been creating or hosting four major collections with testimonies focusing on the Second World War and Nazi atrocities. The *Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation (VHA)*, the online interview archive *Forced Labor 1939–1945 (Forced Labor)*, the British-Jewish collection *Refugee Voices (Refugee Voices)*, and the new interview archive *Memories of the Occupation in Greece (MOG)* contain thousands of audio-visual life-story interviews, amongst them the interviews with Henry G. and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch analyzed in this chapter. To make the recordings accessible and stimulate their reception in research and education, CeDiS has created transcripts, translations, online archives and learning applications. Additionally, its team is engaged in academic debates through publications and conferences like *Erinnern an Zwangsarbeit* (Apostolopoulos and Pagenstecher 2013) and *Preserving Survivors Memories* (Apostolopoulos et al. 2017).

In 2006, Freie Universität Berlin became the first site outside the United States with full access to the Shoah Foundation's *Visual History Archive* (VHA, VHA-FUB). The collection contains 53 000 interviews with Jewish Holocaust survivors, but also other victim groups like Sinti and Roma, political prisoners, or homosexuals. Liberators and helpers were interviewed, too, as were witnesses of other 20th century genocides.

Whereas the Shoah Foundation had not transcribed the 53 000 interviews in the main archive, CeDiS did transcribe a sub-collection with 908 German-language (plus 50 foreign-language) testimonies following detailed guidelines. These transcripts are time-coded every minute and aligned to the videos, enabling full text search over all 958 interviews (Abenhausen et al. 2012). Among these, there is also the 40-page transcript of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's interview recorded on 8 December 1998 (VHA, interview 48608) which will be analysed below. The Shoah Foundation offers the German transcripts as a kind of subtitles within their online archive—for universities which have subscribed via the Visual History Archive's new commercial provider ProQuest (USC 2016; currently, FUB's copyright of the transcriptions is not mentioned in the archive). Numerous publications (e.g. Michaelis 2013; Bothe and Brüning 2015; Shenker 2015; Taubitz 2016) shed light on interview settings and methods.

In the interview archive *Forced Labor 1939–1945: Memory and History* (Forced Labor), 590 former forced laborers tell their life stories in 190 video recordings and 393 audio recordings. The testimonies were recorded in 2005 and 2006 by 32 partner institutions in 25 countries (Plato, Leh, Thonfeld 2010; Thonfeld 2014). They have been transcribed, aligned to the media files with sentence-based time-codes, translated into German, indexed and made available in an online archive together with accompanying photos and documents (Apostolopoulos and Pagenstecher 2013). On the project website, some interviewers reflect on their methods and experiences (*Expertengespräche*).

About a third of the interviewees were prisoners of concentration camps—many of them Jews or Roma. The biographical interviews do not only relate to Nazi forced labor, they also touch upon various other historical aspects of the Century of Camps, from Holodomor to Perestroika, from the Spanish Civil War to the Yugoslav Wars. This *Forced Labor 1939–1945* archive contains two video interviews analysed below with Holocaust survivors Henry G. and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, incidentally both recorded on March 17, 2006, one for two hours in New Haven, the other for 3,5 hours in London (Forced Labor, interviews za577 and za072).

## Methods: The MOCA Platform at the Freiburg University of Freiburg

Contrary to other oral history collections where much research still relies on written transcriptions, the new digital environments at CeDiS come with time-aligned

transcriptions, media files, and metadata, and allow for thematically focused searches and annotations throughout the video-recordings. From their onset, however, the archives were mainly aimed at historians, educators, and the general public, supporting qualitative and hermeneutic analyses and the respectful engagement of learners with individual testimonies. Therefore, the orthographic transcripts were polished slightly, and no tools for corpus-linguistic analyses were integrated. Given the growing importance of interdisciplinary Digital Humanities approaches, however, using such tools on these collections can provide a future perspective for oral historians and linguists alike.

For the case studies in this chapter, our joint linguistic and historical approach was based on MOCA, an online platform for Multimodal Oral Corpus Analysis. MOCA has been under development since 2001 in the departments of Romance and Germanic Languages at the University of Freiburg, in close collaboration with Universities in Luxembourg and Louvain-la-Neuve. It supports the collaborative analysis of audio and video files with their respective transcriptions and metadata. Based on a MySQL database, it uses PHP as programming language and HTML5 for streaming. As a multi-user environment, MOCA offers safe and personalized access to the data through fine-grained user-rights management. It supports the analysis of audio- and video-taped testimony with a number of different linguistic methods such as the identification of repeated word patterns, as discussed below.

In this chapter, the archives' original orthographic transcriptions are used because they are available for the whole collection of hundreds of interview hours. At later stages of interdisciplinary cooperation, it could be preferable to use a linguistic transcription system (e.g., GAT, the *Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem*, Selting et al. 2009) in order to take prosody, pauses, etc., into account, although the digital archives support direct access to the audio-visual data.

### **Case Study 1: Repetitions in Interviews**

Listening closely to an oral history interview, actual dialogues turn out to be much more complex than just a tidy sequence of interviewer questions and narrator answers that we know from journalistic interviews. The analysis of the interviewers' questions and comments, and also of the very moments before and after these interventions, reveals different mechanisms of interaction between both participants: there are pauses and interruptions, cases of simultaneous speaking and of repetition. As the following analysis of a single interview shows, repetitions play an important and changing role in the working alliance between narrator and interviewer.

Working with corpora of authentic interaction, both interactional linguists and conversation analysts have shown time and again that dialogue partners tend to repeat stretches of prior speech almost verbatim (cf. Skrovec 2012 for a comprehen-

sive overview of prior research on this topic). In the dialogue, repetitions create the feeling of being well understood by the interaction partner (Gülich and Mondada 2008). However, repetition also displays synchronization and resonance between the speakers and thus enhances the shared feeling of togetherness (Kim 2015; Pfänder and Schumann 2016), i.e. of sharing similar knowledge and of working together on the same project. In our case studies, both understanding the information and togetherness are not given, but often have to be constructed and negotiated (Ehmer 2011).

In order to both find and analyze strategies of negotiating and of ensuring understanding, we searched for all those moments within a testimony at which either the interviewer or the narrator repeated the other's words exactly. Using the MOCA platform, we searched for repeated bi- and tri-grams, i.e. two or three words that occurred in the exact same order and form at least twice. The two-hour testimony of Holocaust survivor Henry G. (HG), interviewed by Dori Laub (INT) in 2006, is the example we chose for this case study. The interviewer is an experienced interviewer, a well-known psychiatrist specializing in trauma research (Laub and Bodenstab 2010). He is a child survivor himself, just seven years younger than Henry G. Both interviewer and narrator left what today is Ukraine after the Holocaust, first to Israel, then to the USA (Mayer 1998). The fact that the interviewer shares some experiences with the narrator is as important as his approach based on psychoanalysis and trauma research (Hamburger 2016).

This interview contains various instances of repetition, three of which are presented and discussed here—with the repeated word printed **boldly**. In the first example, repetition is a means for expressing understanding and agreement (or affiliation, as conversation analysts would call it). Talking about pre-1939 religious life and Zionism in his Carpathian home-town, Henry G. describes a local Rabbi's emigration to Israel (Henry G. 2006, tape 1, min. 24:27):

HG: There was music, trumpets, I don't know, drums, whatever. He had a carriage, he was sitting right in the carriage, and he went to the train station and from the train station he went wherever and he reached Israel.

INT: **You remember that?**

HG: **I remember that**, yeah yeah. It was very nice, yeah. I remember, for instance, we went to ...

In this sequence, the interviewer voices a slight doubt whether Henry G. really remembers this event personally and asks for clarification "you remember that?". With his repetition "I remember that", the narrator not only confirms this, but starts giving other examples of his detailed childhood memories over the following minutes. Thus, the repetition does not only ensure understanding within the dialogue, but also allows the narrator to shift the topic of the narration slightly and to organize the following stretches of discourse.

In the second example, the interviewer uses repetition in order to pinpoint a topic and ask for more detailed information on that topic (here: the duration of the stay) – thus clearly displaying understanding (Henry G. 2006, tape 1, min. 40:56):

HG: Ultimately they took us to **the brick factory** and they put us in the, in the, in the wagons.

INT: How long were you in **the brick factory**?

HG: Maybe a day, maybe a half of day, you know.

Repetition here slows down the narration and prevents the interviewee from skipping the brick factory episode too quickly and moving on to the topic of the wagons right away. Thus, it allows the interviewer to negotiate what they are talking about. In the minutes before, Dori Laub intervenes several times trying to force Henry G. into a chronological narration of his experiences in the ghetto, the brick factory and the wagons—with limited success.

In the next example, repetition is not so much about negotiating what they talk about, but negotiating the understanding of historical facts (Henry G. 2006, tape 1, min. 31:21):

HG: And the men, the fathers were taken away to the slave battalions, the Munkaszolgálat. It was really rough it was.

INT: Those were battalions sent **with the troops**?

HG: Sent the, yeah, **to the troops**, to serve the soldiers, to serve the soldiers in the battlefield, you know. And uh those didn't fare well.

The narrator mentions the Slave Labor Battalions or *Munkaszolgálat*, which male Hungarian Jews were drafted into after the adoption of anti-Jewish laws in Hungary in 1939. Talking to an expert interviewer, he does not explain this term, but moves on directly to an evaluation. The interviewer interrupts him and asks for an explanation, probably thinking about the future audience of the testimony. At that moment, the narrator echoes part of the interrupting utterance, but substitutes the preposition 'to' instead of 'with', inducing a subtle yet distinct change of meaning, eliminating any notion of togetherness or common experience, let alone collaboration that could arise from the word 'with'.

Sometimes repetition is used as a means for some sort of other-initiated repair. In the following example, the narrator repeats an explanation given by the interviewer to make his own narration understandable (Henry G. 2006, tape 1, min. 30:03):

HG: And the Hungarians came, **they left**, the Hungarians came in, so I pass ...

INT: **The Czechs left.**

HG: **The Czechs left**, and the Hungarians came.

Finally, self-repetition may be used to prevent a change of topic. In the next example, the narrator insists on continuing his argument, even though the interviewer wants to change the topic (Henry G. 2006, tape 1, min. 39:37).

HG: And, uh, I remember some of the people some of the people, uh, they became leaders of the ghetto, you know, and what happens to human nature that they start to act like, uh, I don't know if you've ever heard about Rumkowski. **Rumkowski was a, a fool.**

DL: Let's talk about your ...

HG: I know, I might. Just to say something: **Rumkowski was a fool**, and he was thinking he was the king of the Jews, and he was serving the Germans.

In this example, the interviewer and the narrator actively negotiate deontic authority, the question of who will talk about which topic at a given time during the interview. The interviewer wants the narrator to focus on his personal experience instead of discussing general historical arguments, but the narrator sticks to his topic, which, as evidenced by the subsequent minutes of the interview, he uses as an example for contextualizing his own experiences by comparing these to an example which would be well-known to his future audience.

Other examples could demonstrate additional functions of repetitions in the narrative dialogue of a testimony, such as expressing empathy, deeply felt understanding or togetherness (Kim 2015), but for reasons of space we cannot go into more detail here. Further studies, using quantitative approaches supported by the MOCA software, will certainly shed more light on the distribution of these different kinds of repetitions throughout a given interview. A higher number of negotiating repetitions could be expected in the first phase of an interview when both speakers have to create their working alliance and its dialogical mode. Turning the argument around, analyzing verbal repetitions could help detecting important or controversial topics and sequences in an interview. Future studies could compare these results with other interviews either by the same or by other interviewers and look for more general tendencies.

## Case Study 2: Retellings in Interviews – a Case Study

In different oral history collections, some narrators were interviewed several times over a longer period of time, some wrote written testimonies or testified in court as well. Re-told testimonies with the same interviewers (Laub and Bodestab 2010, Greenspan 2014) or different interviewers (Kangisser Cohen 2014; Bader 2015) have been analyzed, discussing how institutions, media, and time shape these repeated narrations. Important factors in this are the changing memory discourse in society,

the narrator's increased narrative experience, but also different methods and techniques of the interviewer.

Conversation analysis conceptualizes oral re-tellings within the context of actual interaction. These are co-produced by two or more participants and are aligned to the respective contexts and aims of a specific instance of interaction. Linguistic and structural similarities and differences between different instantiations of a retold narration are the result of the adaptation of a particular instantiation to the narrator's communicative goals and the respective interactional situation. A comparative analysis of different instantiations allows one to investigate the impact of individual interactional contexts and individual dynamics in interaction on the composition of individual retellings (Norrick 1997).

This section will discuss a different example, since an earlier interview with Henry G., the narrator quoted above, was not transcribed (Henry G. 1996). Instead, it will compare two testimonies of the well-known Holocaust survivor Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who had been a cellist in the women's orchestra at Auschwitz and later became co-founder of the English Chamber Orchestra. Apart from publishing her memoirs, she gave many different interviews throughout the decades—from the first BBC interview recorded in liberated Bergen-Belsen in April 1945 to a three-dimensional holographic interview at the University of Southern California in September 2015 (Pagenstecher 2017). The first interview we looked at was conducted in 1998 by Scottish journalist Joanna Buchan, and the second one in 2006 by German historian Christoph Thonfeld. The transcripts quoted below were created in different projects and follow different transcriptions guidelines.

At the age of 18, Lasker-Wallfisch was imprisoned in her home-town Breslau (today Wrocław). In the following excerpts, she talks about an experience in prison before she and her sister were deported to Auschwitz. The prisoners had to work for a toy factory and came into contact with one of the company's forewomen:

Excerpt 1 (Anita Lasker-Wallfisch 1998, min. 22:00 until min. 24:00):

But the important thing about the soldiers is that the girl who brought these soldiers to the, to the cell, was not a prison guard. She was obviously employed by the, er, toy soldier factory or something. And she used to breeze in and breeze out and soldiers here and colour this and the other. (-) And when my sister had gone she started talking to me and asked me where my sister was. And (-) a really very nice and remarkable relationship (-) developed there. She was obviously a very nice young girl. I would very much like to meet her again. Now she must be over eighty, now, but (-) she was, as far as I am concerned, she was tremendous support. // INT: What was her name? /// <German> Fräulein Neubert. She was very small and we used to call her <German> Püppchen, (-) you know, little doll. <Coughs> And she=er, (-) she used to

open the cell door and say <loud> “What do you need?” <whispers> and then she used to shut it and then we started talking very softly in case another guard hears it. And she was very interested in everything and she used to bring=er\_, I found at the bottom of the, the soldiers, (-) some bread or a piece of cake or something, which her mother had sent us. You know, very touchy. To us this was a terribly important thing, you know, nobody was nice to us. (-) She was te-, terrific.

Excerpt 2 (Anita Lasker-Wallfisch 2006, tape 3, min 15:15 until min 16:42).

But even in prison I had a, I don't know whether that interests you, but I had an experience, which was very, I mean, people always ask me, “Was there anything good that ever happened to you in those days?” I said, there is only one good thing that happened, that was the girl that brought us the soldiers to paint, that was our work, to paint the toy soldiers, who was terribly nice. And eventually, we developed a sort of friendship with her, and she used to open the cell, because, you know, prisons are places with a lot of gossip. You mustn't be seen to be nice to the prisoners. She used to open the cell and said, „Brauchen Sie was?“ [harshly], and then she used to come in and shut the door, and then we would whisper etc., etc.. And she was obviously, she brought us something, something to eat from her mother, terribly nice, wonderful for us. We used to call her Püppchen, she was a very small lady, and she used to bring these ... she showed us what colour and what etc., etc. Anyway, this Püppchen, eventually then my sister wasn't there anymore, and then we started to get more and more talkative, and eventually, when I was sent to Auschwitz, she came to say good-bye and we, sort of, little sayings which her mother sent me to give me courage, and I think, a piece of bread or cake or something. I mean, I shall never forget it, wonderful. OK, end of that story.

A cursory analysis of the two excerpts exhibits striking differences right away. In 1998, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch relates her experience with a female German forewoman as one of several answers to the interviewer's question about how she was treated, and as a single positive exception to the rule. In the moment of stance-taking, she seeks empathy and conformation from the interviewer, using the phrase “you know”. The forewoman's nick-name “Püppchen” is introduced before the kernel story, providing an image of the person and setting the tone.

In terms of stance, we find similar stance-taking devices, i.e. ways of positioning herself, in both narrations, but more distance in the second excerpt:

1998

To us this was a terribly important thing, you know, nobody was nice to us.

(--) She was te-, terrific.

2006

[...] who was terribly nice [...] terribly nice, wonderful for us.

In 2006, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch proactively narrates her experience without being prompted by the interviewer. She exhibits high agency here, attributing a high level of relevance to her story. Tellability is established right in the beginning with the phrase “people always ask me”. The narration starts with “There is only one good thing that happened”, and has a clear end marked by “end of that story”. It provides much more background information than before. We also find very well-constructed, almost pre-formulated sentences such as “not only do I remember her, she was the highlight of my life in those days”, creating an impression of some sort of distance. The forewoman’s nick-name “Püppchen” is provided after the core story, just to complete the picture. It is thus part of a story-telling routine. In sum, we can identify the following differences between the two versions:

- The 1998 version is situated in a clearly interactional context, answering an explicit question from the interviewer. The 2006 version, on the other hand, is proactively offered and narrated without any cues from the interviewer. In 1998, the phrase you know is a direct appeal to the interviewer’s empathy which is not needed anymore in 2006.
- The 1998 version is shorter, provides fewer details and is less complete as a story as it lacks an ending. It does not provide a lot of background information and includes fewer comments on the narration. The few comments are about how she felt during the events narrated, not about how she feels at the moment of the interview.
- The 1998 version seems more direct and unique, where the 2006 version uses more elaborate structures that are reminiscent of written language, including subordination and formulaic chunks. Its final phrase “end of that story” evokes the notion that “Püppchen” is just one of many stories.

This increased narrative experience becomes very clear when comparing the language in the 1998 and 2006 interviews. Lasker-Wallfisch’s performative effort became more elaborate and successful in her later narration in which she directly quotes other people more often. In the 1998 version, she describes her introduction to the orchestra at Birkenau using indirect speech: “So, she asked me to play something.” In the 2006 version, however, she uses a direct quotation: “And she gave me a cello and said: ‘Play something.’”

This exemplary result is corroborated by several quantitative comparisons: In 1998, there are about 100 instances of direct speech, in 2006 about 320 instances. The transcript of the later interview, which is just over 50% longer, contains more than three times as many quotation marks. This seems to be a general tendency in narrating: When studying re-tellings in other contexts, linguists have found a move towards performativity, marked by an increase in direct speech. More experienced narrators give their testimony with more performative elements and an enhanced narrative authority.

Lasker-Wallfisch's more elaborate narration in 2006 was also enabled by a different interviewing method. A quantitative comparison of the two transcripts demonstrates a different interaction between narrator and interviewer. Both interviewers—Scottish BBC journalist Joanna Buchan in 1998, German Historian Christoph Thonfeld in 2006—intervened roughly once per minute throughout the interview—which seems to be an average value (cf. Michaelis, 2013: 288). But half of Thonfeld's interventions were just supporting incentives to continue (e.g., mumbling “hm”), whereas Buchan asked many factual questions, sometimes interrupting Lasker-Wallfisch's narrative flow. In fact, Lasker-Wallfisch was only able to take up her narration again within no more than five words in merely 13 of Buchan's interventions. Buchan's factual questions (31 what-, 17 how-, 13 where-questions) probably corresponded to the Shoah Foundation's VHA question list (cf. Michaelis 2013: 233).

These results stem from different professional backgrounds of the individual interviewer, but also point to different methodological guidelines in the interviewing projects. Digital interview collections can support such comparative analyses of transcripts on a larger scale, helping us to better understand the working alliance between narrator and interviewer which is influenced by many different factors.

Finally, the language of the quote attributed to the forewoman changes from English in the 1998 version to German in the 2006 version. In the 1998 excerpt, the quote is only a little louder than the rest of the narration and is provided in English, the language the interview is being conducted in.

1998	2006
What you need?	Brauchen sie was?

In the 2006 excerpt, the quote is much louder, very harsh in tone and in German, imitating the narrated event directly. The effect here is one of distance through staging. In addition, it references the cliché of German as a loud and harsh language.

The language used in Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's two testimonies differs remarkably. In 1998, she uses only a handful of German words, apparently taken over from the SS, such as *Zählappell* or *Notenschreiberinnen*. In all survivors' testimonies, the German perpetrators' camp language has entered the victims' memories narrated in another language. In 2006, however, her German mother-tongue surfaces regularly, even for

specific topics from the pre-war period (such as *Frontkämpfer* or *Kultur*) and the post-war period (such as *Gedenkstätte* or *Neonazis*). The main reason for this could be the German interviewer. During the second interview, Lasker-Wallfisch certainly knew that Thonfeld would understand every German word, even in its fine-grained nuances. In comparing multiple accounts, it has been noted that bilingual narrators deliberately apply specific wordings in each language. For instance, when Polish Auschwitz survivor—and memorial guide—Jerzy Hronowski called the perpetrators “the Germans” in his Polish, and “the Nazis” in his German-language testimonies, he carefully addressed his different target groups (Bader 2015: 210, fn. 8).

But there may be other reasons as well. In the seven-year period between the two interviews, Lasker-Wallfisch cautiously re-opened herself towards her country of birth and persecution, visiting Bergen-Belsen and other places several times. Thus, it would be interesting to study these deliberate or unwilling German “quotations” in detail, looking for instance at which topics or perspectives are worded in English, and which in German. This could be part of a larger comparative study of multilingual testimonies; this is a very common type of testimony due to many survivors’ experiences of deportation and forced or voluntary migration before, during and after the war.

## Conclusion

This chapter has studied narrative patterns in video-taped interviews with Holocaust survivors understood as results of a recorded interaction. Three testimonies of two narrators from the oral history archives at Freie Universität Berlin were analyzed with the MOCA software developed at the University of Freiburg. Combining questions and methods from oral history, conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, the chapter has analyzed the working alliance between interviewer and narrator, with both participants using specific verbal and non-verbal resources to co-construct the narration and its layers of meaning.

Two preliminary case studies, one on repetitions and one on re-tellings, analyze the interaction between the interviewer and the narrator that constitutes the oral history interview. The case study on repetitions in Henry G.’s testimony has shown different functions of repetitions in the narrative dialogue. Further studies should analyze the distribution of these different kinds of repetitions throughout other interviews in order to explore the functions of repetitions in different working alliances.

The case study on Anita Lasker-Wallfisch’s re-tellings demonstrated a gradually increasing performativity and story-telling experience on part of the narrator, but also the importance of different interviewing methods based on the professional, project and language backgrounds of the individual interviewers. In the future, such re-tellings can be analyzed more systematically in order to identify similar and different dialogical elements.

The resulting array of typical patterns of interaction could then be studied with more quantitative approaches: Similarities and differences can be correlated with biographical or sociolinguistic variables of the narrators and the interviewers such as nationality, age, gender, experience group and professional, institutional or political affiliation. Interactional patterns can probably also be shown to differ with regard to specific topics in the narration.

Going beyond the mere textual analysis, future studies should also address the multimodality of the interaction in video-recorded interviews, and take a closer look at facial expressions, gestures, periods of silence and other elements of non-verbal interaction. Instead of monolingual, monomodal, textual and “tidy” data which existing language technology is most capable of handling, linguistic tools need to address the challenge posed by multimodal, multilingual, spoken, informal and unplanned communication.

The combination of oral history sources, linguistic methods and an interdisciplinary research setting has proved promising. A linguistic approach can help historians to listen more closely to the details of narrating, focusing on specific word patterns rather than on the general historical context. On the other hand, oral history’s specific reflectivity on the constructed and medialized character of its sources highlights the interpretative and subjective dimensions in defining types, encoding criteria, and developing algorithms for corpus-linguistic analysis of spoken corpora.

The testimonies studied here are particularly valuable because they constitute a unique record of the narrators’ suffering and surviving. This quality is not affected by the mass of a text or sophistication of retrieval and analysis techniques. However, it is through the complementary use of such techniques that we can develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of these narrations.

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