

Learning how to play the game: An investigation of role-played job interviews in East Germany*

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Abstract

The political and economic changes which have taken place as part of the transformation of the German Democratic Republic into the 'New States' (Neue Bundesländer) of the Federal Republic of Germany have also had important repercussions on the communicative genres used in official and semiofficial situations in the East of Germany. The present paper investigates one of the genres, i.e., the job interview. On the basis of role-played data which were recorded in East and West Germany in 1993 it is argued that East and West German participants employ very different stylistic resources. The differences are analyzed on various levels, focussing on the more formal means used by East Germans, their borrowings from the state-and-party style, and the stylistic incongruities and breaks that were found to be characteristic of their performances. These differences are interpreted in terms of a process of acquisition of a communicative genre hitherto largely unknown or dealt with under very different conditions.

Keywords: East-West communication; job interviews; German unification.

Introduction

One of the most obvious ways in which the German unification of 1990 has affected East Germany linguistically is the disappearance of old and the appearance of new communicative genres. Being formal solutions to recurrent practical problems of communication in a society (Luckmann 1986, 1988), the type and structure of these genres are dependent on and indicative of social structure. Consequently, it can be of little surprise that a shake-up as fundamental as the one East Germany has undergone during and after the so-called *Wende* (lit. 'turning') has led to the introduction of new communicative genres into the speech ecology, which were

unknown or little used in the times of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The particular genre investigated here—the job interview—belongs to the first kind. It was chosen for this study because it is deeply associated with Western economic discourse in which the notion of competition plays a decisive role, i.e., where one sells one's labor in a market and because job interviews of the Western type were largely unknown in the GDR; the economical system seems neither to have required them nor was the concomitant economical discourse of competition and selling one's own labor valid. In post-*Wende* East Germany, the job interview has assumed eminent importance, given the deteriorating situation of the job market. It is therefore a particularly dynamic part of the changing speech ecology of the East.

After some notes on the data investigated and on the job interview as a Western speech genre, I will analyze the rhetorical performance of the East German participants proceeding in three steps, each focussing on a set of differences in their communicative style as compared to that of West Germans in a similar situational context. In a first step, it will be shown that East Germans (in the role-played data setting) find it difficult to cope with the (prototypical) style of the Western job interview which is comparatively informal and egalitarian, a difficulty which is evidenced by their highly depersonalized (in particular, deagentivized) and formal way of speaking. These difficulties experienced by the East German speakers resemble in some respect those of (other) members of non-Western cultures which have been reported in the academic literature. In a second step, it will be shown that overlaying this formal and deagentivized style, the performance of the participants in the role-plays is characterized by quotations and borrowings from East German official jargon as it was used in pre-unification times, which turns this performance into a very particular one. Finally, in a last step I will argue that the quotations and borrowings from the official jargon are not used in a straightforward, but rather in a 'broken' way, i.e., that the East German participants' performance in the interview reflects a clash—or rather, incongruity—between the demands of the Western genre, partly known or presumed to be known on the basis of post-unification experiences, and the communicative resources available to them qua membership in the East German (communicative) culture.

1. The data: A flashlight on East Germany in year 'three' after unification¹

The following analysis is mainly based on a collection of 18 role-played job interviews collected in 1993 in a northern German town in

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. They were recorded in the context of a training program organized by a private West German company, and sponsored by the *Arbeitsamt* (Employment Office). The task of this program was to initiate unemployed East Germans into the rules and vicissitudes of the capitalist job market, in particular to train them for future job applications. In the program, the (West German) adviser helped participants to look for suitable and adequate jobs by searching newspapers and by making unsolicited applications, trained them to write applications for jobs, including a curriculum vitae, and explained the (often hidden or coded) meaning of a 'reference' (*Arbeitszeugnis*). He continued at some length through exercises based around a hypothetical assessment center, and then, in the last days of the three-week course, the job interview was practised on the basis of role plays which were regularly recorded on video and then discussed in the group. The recordings used in this investigation were made on two occasions, i.e., with two different groups of participants. All were unemployed academics, so-called *Führungskader* 'leading cadres' of the former GDR. They were in their late twenties to early forties. For comparative purposes, role-played job interviews in the context of similar West German training program were recorded as well.²

Of course, an analysis of what happens in role plays cannot be regarded as an analysis of actual job interviews. In particular the interviewers, who were also played by participants in the training program, had to deal with a role they were not acquainted with at all; this unfamiliarity affected the whole scenario. The applicants, on the other hand, played themselves, and the job for which they were interviewed was one they had actually written an application for. Contrary to 'real life' situations, where personnel recruitment managers in East Germany are usually West Germans, the role-played interview was thus performed by East Germans only.

Role plays do however provide excellent access to the metapragmatics of the job interview as seen by these groups of East German speakers. They are 'in vitro' performances of the communicative genre, an undisturbed acting out or even staging of behavior considered to be appropriate for this particular occasion, and represent more directly the underlying norms and expectations which are brought to the situation by participants than verbal behavior in an actual job interview. In addition, all role plays were routinely commented upon after the interview by both participants (the 'employer' or interviewer and the job-seeking candidate), by the group, and by the trainer. These comments reveal the criteria used to judge the applicants' performance and are an important analytic resource.³

2. The job interview—a paradoxical gate-keeping situation

Although job interviews are of vital importance to career success in Western societies, their structural features (in terms of the communicative genre they represent) have not been studied frequently. Among the larger studies, Adelswärd (1988) presents an investigation based on 48 job interviews for a trainee program in a Swedish company, and Komter (1991) analyzes 35 authentic job interviews from various contexts conducted in the Netherlands.⁴ Using methods informed by conversation analysis, both investigations identify five (topically defined) sequential phases in 'how the participants conduct the business they have met for' (Komter 1991: 21), namely, 'small talk', 'information on job and company', 'information on applicant', 'information on administrative details', and again 'small talk'.

Komter shows that in job interviews, transitions from one phase into the next are highly explicit, and the list of topics on the official agenda of the interview is more or less a closed one. On the highest level of topic introduction and topic change, it is clearly the interviewer who is dominant. However, as Adelswärd (1988: 67) underlines, the applicants are responsible for 'providing the stuff that conversation is built upon' on the lower, subtopic level, i.e., their active participation in the interview is absolutely required. Also, explicitness on the official agenda is counterbalanced by the extreme implicitness of the participants' background expectations, aims and interests. As both authors underline, it is on this level, that of the hidden agenda of the job interview, that an applicant's success is decided upon.

Thus, while it is on the official agenda of the job interview to exchange information—about the company for the applicants, and about the applicants regarding their qualification for the job for the company—the hidden purpose is to evaluate the applicant as a person: 'viewed in this way, the explicit agenda is just the means for solving the underlying problems of the implicit agenda' (Adelswärd 1988: 56). Both parties are of course aware of this hidden agenda. In particular, applicants know that it is vital to present as favorable a picture of themselves as possible; therefore, any activity they engage in—from small talk at the beginning of the interview to asking questions about the company to answering the interviewer's questions about past professional experience—has, in addition to what it appears to be on the surface, another, more important aspect: that of self-presentation. In fact, while this 'presentation of self' (Goffman 1959) is an integral component of all interaction, the job interview may be one of the few communicative genres in which self-presentation is the main (although not officially acknowledged) purpose.

The typical Western job interview is organized in a rather non-hierarchical and informal way; particularly in interviews for advanced positions such as the ones investigated by Komter (1991) and Adelswärd (1988), and in the present study, interviewers strive to establish an egalitarian mode of interaction. Nonetheless, the hidden agenda of the job interview presupposes a sharp asymmetry of the two parties. Even when the applicants are in the conversationally active role of asking questions, or when participants seem to exchange informal jokes or politeness tokens, it is always the applicants who are the object of an evaluation. Nevertheless, they are required to play the game, collaborating with the interviewers in maintaining the appearance of a friendly conversation or informal exchange among equals, and to avoid that of an examination or even interrogation. The relatively low level of formality is therefore at odds with the character of the job interview as a decisive, gatekeeping encounter in which the interviewee is examined and which is the basis for decisions which may be of vital importance for his or her future.

All in all, the job interview in its modern form has many features of a typical communicative genre in Western, post-industrial societies, in which hierarchies are downplayed (although they are obviously existent), power relations are concealed but nonetheless provide orientation, and cooperation and equality are stressed. It is therefore a highly cultural event, and one with which applicants from a different cultural background cannot be taken to be familiar *per se*. In fact, a number of studies on intercultural job interviews have pinpointed instances of failure which can be attributed to co-participants' diverging cultural backgrounds and their situational enactment in the job interview (cf. Roberts and Sayers 1987; Akinnaso and Ajitutu 1982; Gumperz et al. 1979). How much of these failures is due to a lack of familiarity with the requirements of the genre and how much can be seen as a direct consequence of the applicants' own cultural backgrounds at large is often hard to decide (cf. Sarangi 1994; Roberts and Sarangi 1995).

The present study started from the assumption that western communicative genres such as the job interview are in several ways incompatible with the speech ecology of the East European socialist societies in which social interaction is reported to have taken place either in a highly ritualized, hierarchically structured official world or in the egalitarian, informal world of the family, neighborhood, or work 'collective' (cf., among others, Hellmann 1989: 34). How participants in role played job interviews deal with this lack of compatibility will be investigated in more detail.

3. Rhetorical performance and communicative style in East German role-played job interviews: A first approximation

How do the East German 'learners' cope with this speech activity, which is not only difficult to cope with per se but clearly was not part of their pre-unification speech ecology? Extract (1) is a short but typical example from an interview with a young technical engineer (called Herr Marotzke here) who has applied for a job at a middle-sized company which sells building machines.

Extract (1)⁵

- 01 Interviewer 1: ja; dann (.) noch eine frage? (0.5) wir haben – die
 02 absicht, = in absehbarer zeit – nach östen hin zu
 03 expandieren, – weil wir der meinung sind, = der
 04 markt (0.5) ist für uns (0.5) noch offen und
 05 erschließbar, (1.0) [da wir aus! nl
 06 Mr Marotzke: ((clears throat))
 07 Interviewer 1: ihren unterlagen entnehmen = daß sie: – auch
 08 rüssischkenntnisse besitzen, (0.5) ist unsere frage
 09 dahingehend: – würden sie bereit sein, (1.0) ein: =
 10 sérvicenet, – in den baltischen staaten, oder in
 11 rüßland; (1.0) aufzubauen, = oder mützuhefen, =
 12 diesen aufzubauen, dieses {>} aufzubauen.
 13 (1.0)
 14 Mr Marotzke: da kann ich ihnen erst mal ein: (.) grundsätzliches 'já'
 15 auf ihre frage, (1.0) entgegenhalten, – natürlich, ich
 16 habe: – rüssischkenntnisse, – die: a:ber (0.5)
 17 vervollständigt – werden müssen, 'h weil momentan
 18 (0.5) méines erachtens nach nicht in der lage bin,
 19 mich: – fließend in russisch – zu verständigen,
 20 'h aber wenn: ihre firma angedacht hat, = das
 21 sérvicenet (.) in richtung östen auszubauen,
 22 'h dann: darf ich vielleicht mal fragen, = dann
 23 müßte eigentlich angedacht sein, um einen (.)
 24 niederlassungs- oder betriebsleiter 'h im östen,
 25 'h ob dort angedacht ist von ihrer firma: – einen
 26 qualifizierungs – förbildungslehrgang, in eh
 27 rüssisch anzubieten, wo ich meine beréitschaft
 28 natürlich sofort signalisiere, 'h um dort
 29 eh – ein: (0.5) gútes, funktionierendes –
 30 sérvic- und vertriebsnetz aufzubauen. (1.0)

Interviewer 1:

o.k. then – another question? – we have – the intention to expand in the foreseeable future – into the East, – because we are of the opinion, the market – is for us – still open and developable, – since we see from/ y/ your documents = that you – also have a knowledge of Russian, – our question is to the effect that – would you be willing – to set up a: service network, – in the Baltic states, or in Russia, = or help to set up to set it up. there I can first of all – advance a – fundamental 'yes' to your question, – of course, I have – knowledge of Russian, – which however – needs – to be perfected, 'h because at the moment – in my opinion not in a position, to – communicate – fluently in Russian, 'h but if your company considers expanding the service network in the direction of the East, 'h then: may I perhaps just ask, = then one actually would have to consider, in order for a – director of a branch or company 'h in the East, 'h if it is considered there by your company – to offer – a qualification – training course, in eh Russian, where I of course immediately signal my readiness, 'h in order to eh – set up a: – good, working – service and sales network there.

Mr Marotzke:

The speaker of extract (1) may be compared with a West German role-playing applicant, here called Mr Baumann, in a similar context, i.e., also commenting on his knowledge of foreign languages:

Extract (2) (Western role-played job interview)

Interviewer 2: = {p} (in) diesem zusammenhang. – {<} ah: wie stehts mit {>} ihren äh sprachkenntnissen? außer englisch hab ich gehört?

Mr Baumann: ja also englisch: äh – würd ich behaupten is äh – sehr gut in wort und schrift, = ja? – also weil ich eben zwei jahre auch ne schule besucht habe, 'h eh (.) französisch, = is sicherlich ausbaufähig, = ich (.) hab – fünf jahre langan der schule französisch gehdth, mir fehlt eigentlich an (.) praxis, 'h aber: – ich bin überzeugt davon, = wenn ich: eh eh 'öfters mal die gelegenheit hätte zum beispiel in fränkreich, eh mich aufzuhalten, 'hh daß des: – eh sicherlich ausbaufähig is.

Interviewer 2: ((clears throat))

- Interviewer 2: in this context – ehm how about your ehm knowledge of languages? apart from English I heard?
- Mr Baumann: well o.k. English ehm – I would say ehm is – very good in spoken and written – you see? – because as I said I also went to school [viz., in the USA] for two years, 'h ehn – French, = can of course be developed, = I – had French – for five years at school, actually what's lacking is – practice, 'h but – I am convinced, if I had ehm a chance to stay for instance in France from time to time, 'hh that this – ehm can of course be developed.

In this section, some important differences in the rhetorical performance of East and West German applicants are presented, starting from an analysis of extracts (1) and (2). These differences recur throughout the data as will be shown by reference to further extracts.⁶

3.1. *Displays of competence and incompetence*

A first difference can be found on the sequential level and concerns the way in which the two participants structure their response. The East German participant is confronted with a question on his willingness to work for the company in some East European country; in formulating his question, the interviewer presupposes the applicant's knowledge of Russian. Although it is conversationally demanding to attack presuppositions, the applicant chooses to do so: he 'gratuitously' comments on his knowledge of Russian by agreeing 'in principle' but not wholly with the presupposition. In fact, so he argues, his Russian is less fluent than the interviewer may think, and he goes on to ask for a company-sponsored language course (a topos frequently found in the Eastern data: the company takes care for its employees and 'develops' their abilities).

The Western applicant proceeds quite differently: again, the question presupposes good knowledge of English and inquires after the applicant's other linguistic competences. Again, the applicant chooses to comment on the presupposition, but this time not by upgrading it (as the East German applicant did) but by upgrading it (from the interviewer's neutral statement to 'very good in spoken and written' English). He then proceeds to describe his knowledge of French, not as insufficient (which it doubtlessly is compared to his English) but rather as having the potential to be developed – not through the help of the company, but through practice.

The difference in the sequential structure of answers to questions directly or indirectly concerning the applicants' abilities and competences is striking: the Eastern structure of positive answer + negative qualification

has no counterpart in the West German data, where rather the format of negative answer + positive qualification, or positive answer + upgrading/evidence is found. (For details see Kreßin 1995.)

3.2. *De-agentivization*

On the 'stylistic' level, i.e., that of selecting linguistic means from lexicon and grammar appropriate to the situation, the first difference between West and East German role plays is that in the latter a very depersonalized language is found. Rather than being a general avoidance of the first and second person singular personal pronouns *ich/du*, this phenomenon is due to the avoidance of these pronouns as grammatical subjects with agentive function in a main clause. (It is, of course, exactly this grammatical position and function of the personal deictic pronoun which is most typical of spoken, colloquial language.) A number of grammatical strategies serve this de-agentivization.

- (a) A rather straightforward strategy which is used in extract (1) is that of replacing the deictic personal pronoun by a social role or institution with which the *ego* or *tu* in the speech situation is associated. As a consequence, the applicant does not speak of the *ego* or *tu* in the second part of his answer (from line 20 onwards, 'but if your company considers ...'), but rather of the 'director of the branch or company' (referring to his future professional role) and 'your company' (*totum pro parte* for the addressee).
- (b) Another depersonalizing grammatical strategy is the use of 'coercive' modal expressions such as *zu tun haben* 'have to do' or *Aufgabe sein* 'be one's task/duty', or of passives. An example in extract (1) is the modal passive construction *Russischkenntnisse, die aber vervollständigt werden müssen* 'knowledge of Russian which however needs to be perfected'. (Compare the very different modalization used by the West German applicant in (2), who speaks of something that *can* be developed – instead of something that *has to be* perfected.) Earlier in the same interview, the applicant of extract (1) had described his past job as follows.

Extract (3)

- Interviewer 1: *vielleicht könnten sie – kurz charakterisieren, = wie ihre bisherigen entscheidungs und verantwortungsbereiche aussahen, 'h in und wie – sie ihre – leistungsfähigkeit – und ihren leistungssstil – einschätzen würden: – aus ihrer sicht.*

Mr Marotzke: ((omission))

*in der funktion als produktionsleiter war ich verant-
wortlich für ein team von insgesamt 'hh 32 mitar-
beitern? – die ich anzuleiten hatte, (0.5) deren
tätigkeiten ich zu koordinieren hatte? [...] dort
waren – wie gesagt (·) leitungsaufgaben – wahr-
zunehmen? (1.0) die arbeit – zu rechlertfertigen
gegenüber dem (·) direkten vorgesezten, ((etc.))*

Interviewer 1: maybe you can – briefly characterize, = what your
area of decision-making and responsibility has been
so far, 'h and how you would – see – your –
managerial capacities and – your leadership style –
from your point of view.

Mr Marotzke: in the function of production supervisor I
was responsible for a team of a total of hh 32
employees – whom I *had to train*, – whose activities
I *had to coordinate*? [...] there – managerial tasks
had to be – looked after – work – had to be justified
to the – direct superior ((etc.))

The speaker presents himself as a person who had certain obligations
to fulfill in his job, presupposing that this was not his own
will but his duty; the agentive role of *ego*, which in addition partially
disappears in passive constructions, is reduced or backgrounded.

(c) Another frequent grammatical strategy can be observed in extract
(4), again taken from the same interview. The interviewer has asked
if the applicant is willing to take a Russian language course; he
answers:

Extract (4)

((following interviewer question whether the applicant would be
prepared to take language lessons in Russian in the evening hours))

Mr Marotzke: *auch unter diesem aspekte (1.0) besteht bereitschaft
meinerseits.*

Mr Marotzke: from this perspective, too – there is readiness *as far
as I am concerned.*

The interesting grammatical detail is the use of the adverbial *meiner-
seits* which is quite rare and sounds a bit outmoded to West German
ears.⁷ (A rough translation would be, 'as far as I am [my side is]
concerned'.) This derivational structure is a grammatical reflex of
the strategy of avoiding the first/second person pronoun in agentive

subject position. Also compare extract (5):

Extract (5)

Interviewer 3: *welche gehaltsvorstellungen (0.5) bestehen Ihrerseits
frau Pilger.*

Ms Pilger: *eh: f: nach den: – wésttarifen würde das ungefähr bei
{>} ungefähr bei – vierzig- bis fünfzigtausend
liegen? (2.0)*

Interviewer 3: what expectations regarding salary are there – *as far
as you are concerned, Ms Pilger.*

Ms Pilger: ehm f: according to – West German salary rates this
would be about about – forty to fifty thousand? (2.0)

In this case, it is the interviewer who avoids an agentive subject,
which shows that the subject-avoiding style is not restricted to the
applicants in the role-played data. Here, a more personalized style
would fill the subject position with the addressee pronoun *Sie*. Instead
of the personal pronoun, the speaker moves the abstract noun *welche
Gehaltsvorstellung* 'what salary expectations' into subject position,
while the logical subject is relegated to the adverbial phrase *Ihrerseits*
'as far as you are concerned'.

(d) At times, the first person personal pronoun is simply deleted:

Extract (6) ((question about hobbies))

Interviewer 4: *'hh sie sind noch {f} jüngeresse? (1.0) haben sie denn –
eh: – freizeit werden sie áuch haben, = sie werden ja nicht
nür arbeiten, = welche (1.0) ambitionen haben sie dá?*

Mr Meise: *also in meiner freizeit kóch ich und báck ich sehr
gerne? – als hóbbys noch modélleisenbahn, – kak-
téen, – aquariat aquárium, – und in meiner freizeit
reísen – mit áuto rúcksack, {>} zélt, früher zu fuß,
mit rúcksack und zélt. die welt (·) kénnenlernen,*

Interviewer 4: you are still a bachelor? (1.0) which – ehm – I mean
you also have leisure time haven't you, = you won't
work all the time, = which (1.0) ambitions do you
have here?

Mr Meise: o.k. in my leisure time I like cooking and baking? –
as hobbies also model trains, cacti – aquariat aquar-
ium – and in my leisure time travelling – with car,
rucksack, tent, in former times on foot, with rucksack
and tent. Get to know (·) the world,

The first person pronoun is dropped together with the verb (the equivalent of English 'as hobbies, I also have ...' would be the only form permitted, even in colloquial German). The same strategy of deagentivization by deletion of the first person pronoun may be observed in extract (1), lines 17–18 (*weil* [ich] *nicht in der Lage bin* ... 'because [I] at the moment in my opinion am not in a position ...').

(e) Finally, and very typically, de-agentivization is a consequence of a high degree of nominalization. For example, the applicant's turn in extract (1) is answered by the interviewer as follows:

Extract (7)

Interviewer 1: *der aspekt, – einer intensiven sprachausbildung, (1.0) steht sicherlich – im zusammenhang – mit der (1.0) ausdehnung unseres wirkungsbereiches (1.0) in die östeuropäischen länder (1.0) im vordergrund?*

Interviewer 1: the aspect – of intensive language training – surely stands in the foreground – in connection with – an expansion of our range of activities – into the Eastern European countries?

3.3. Formality

As shown in extract (7), agentive subject avoidance is compatible with/ embedded in a grammatical style which sounds very formal, in the sense of displaying a degree of syntactic complexity which is unusual for spoken language: a high degree of syntactic embedding, many nominalizations and an abstract and select vocabulary. Consider extract (8):

Extract (8)

Interviewer 3: *= also mit welchen erwartungshaltungen, 'hh gehen sie an eine eventuelle anstellung (1.0) (in unserer firma).*

Ms Pilger: *ich gehe grundsätzlich an die erwartungshaltung (.) diesbezüglich ran: daß ich sage ich möchte in meiner position gefördert und gefördert werden? das heißt also aufbauend auf den fähigkeiten und kenntnissen die ich besitze, die (nun auch) vorliegen das heißt kundengespräche:, arbeitsorganisation:, (1.0) bankgeschäfte (), – (), daß ich dähingehend – die unterstützung habe, – durch, – die filialleitung? – bzw. (den bankdirektor) bzw. den filialleiter, 'h daß dort möglichkeiten geschäffen werden der – weiterbildung.*

Interviewer 3: with what expectations do you approach a possible appointment – (with our company).

Ms Pilger:

I basically anticipate an attitude, 'hh – relating to that I say I want to be helped and challenged in my position? this means building on the skills and knowledge which I have, which () are already present, that is dealing with the customers, labor organisation, – bank transactions (), that I get support in this sense, from the management? – or – (the director of the bank) or the manager, 'hh that possibilities are created for in-service training.

The complex hypotactic construction in the second part of the applicant's answer includes the gerundial *aufbauend* ... 'building on', formal and high register expressions such as *diesbezüglich* 'relating to this, regarding this', and nominal style in *Unterstützung durch die Filialleitung haben* 'to have support from the management', or *Möglichkeiten geschaffen werden* 'possibilities are created', which nicely enables the speaker to avoid agentive expressions in subject position.

Maybe the most striking single feature of the formal grammar employed both by the East German applicants and the interviewers is the avoidance of simple verbs and the use of function verbs such as *haben* 'have', *machen* 'make, do', *nehmen* 'take' with nominal objects instead. Observe in the very beginning of extract (1) the construction *ein ja entgegenhalten* 'present a 'yes' as an answer' 'to hold a 'yes' against [something]', instead of simply *bejahen* 'say yes', and further on, in *der Lage sein* 'to be in a position to' instead of simply *können* 'can, to be able to', *Bereitschaft signalisieren* 'to signal readiness' instead of *bereit sein* 'to be ready'. Further typical examples may be found in extracts (9)–(12).

Extract (9)

Mr Hebelherr: *ich habe: ehm – schon während meiner bundeswehrzeit? (.) ins auge gefaßt? (.) ehm: – mit meiner frau mich selbstständig zu machen?*

Mr Hebelherr: I ehm – already envisaged ['set my eyes upon'] during my time in the army ehm: – becoming self-employed together with my wife?

(instead of: *ich wollte* ... 'I wanted to ...')

Extract (10)

Interviewer 3: *'h un:d ich möchte ganz gerne mal in erfahrung bringen, 'h woraus das interesse besteht, = ihrerseits, h ihre arbeitskraft und unserem fl unserm unternehmen – 'h zur verfügung gestl – zu stellen,*

Interviewer 3: and I would like to *discover* [lit. 'bring into experience'] where the interest lies as far as you are concerned in putting your capacity for work at t/ at the disposal – of our company,
(instead of: *wissen* 'to know')

Extract (11)

Dr Bedell: *ja: = ich: f meine daß personalentwicklung, wenn man h sie qualitativ sieht, – auch sehr stark – eh – in kontakt tritt, – mit fragen – der – freizeitgestaltung.*

Dr Bedell: o.k. I f think that personnel development if you h look at it qualitatively very much – eh – comes into contact – with questions – of – leisure time activities,
(instead of: *sich berührt mit/zu tun hat mit* 'has to do with')

Extract (12) [directly precedes extract (14)]

Interviewer 7: (*wollen*) *sie dazu mal ausführungen machen?*

Mr Lohmann: *ausführungen dazu kann ich machen, ja,*

Interviewer 7: (would) you like to make comments about that point?

Mr Lohmann: I can *make comments* about that point yes,

(instead of: *dazu kann ich etwas sagen* 'I can say something about that')

4. A second approximation: The relevance of official GDR jargon

Up to now, it has been shown that East Germans answer questions about their abilities and competences in a more 'modest' way,⁸ that they conceptualize the job interview as a very 'formal' situation in which a 'formal' grammar and lexicon is appropriate, and that they tend to de-agentivize their style of self-presentation. (The latter feature may be linked to both 'formality' and 'modesty', of course.) This may look like a 'natural' state of affairs which can be explained quite easily: Since they are and know themselves to be in a weaker position than applicants from the West (who know both the genre and the job market itself much better, given their cultural background), East Germans resort to a more formal and modest rhetorical style.⁹ While this explanation is clearly not wrong, it is also far from capturing adequately the cultural meaning of the formal speech style observed.

In order to fully understand the East German participants' speech style, another characteristic feature needs to be taken into account: the rhetorical style discussed needs to be seen as including and co-occurring with

elements of the official GDR communicative jargon used in written and spoken statements by party and state representatives.¹⁰

This official style of the German Democratic Republic was extremely formal and de-agentivized, and therefore shows some superficial resemblance to the Eastern performance style in the job interviews. Further similarities include the following characteristics, all of which are absent from the Western (role-played) interview data.

- (a) There are no backchannel signals from any party. Not a single continuer indicates to the speaker that his or her recipient is still available, not a single tag question elicits such a continuer. Speaker turns are very long, few turn transitions are realized, and there are very few instances of simultaneous talk.
- (b) The prosodic mode of delivery is slow, articulation is careful, and there are many pauses within turns or turn components, at syntactic boundaries of any kind, but even within complex words (particularly, compounds). Filled pauses, however, are infrequent. There are few *ehms*, which indicates an extremely careful monitoring of speech.
- (c) Applicants not only express themselves very indirectly (as we saw in the case of agentive subject avoidance and of nominalizations in which the agent is unexpressed), but also exceedingly vaguely at times. The following two extracts (13, 14) are taken from applicants' self-presentation in the biographical part of the interview.¹¹

Extract (13)

Interviewer 6: *und daraus ergibt sich auch äh für mich nochmal eine frage, 'hh haben sich ihre erwartungen; über ihre bisherige berufliche laufbahn, schon erfüllt. (2.0)*

Dr Bedell: *ich bin ja (1.0) m – wenn ich mich an (1.0) die jugendzeit, zurückerinnere mit dem – vorsatz (·) ins (0.5) berufliche leben – eingestiegen, = daß ich mal spórtjournalist werde, = das: – ging damals, – aus bestimmten gründen nicht, – eh: – ich hätte mir auch sehr güt eine – entwicklung in der landwirtschaft weiter f: vorges:teilt, = ich hatte ja (0.5) eine auslandsaspirantur in (·) móskau, = das ging dann auch (·) aus káderpolitischen gründen, (0.5) nicht mehr, (0.5) dá hátt ich – eigentlich – sehr gerne weitergearbeitet. meine (1.0) diplómarbeit, – hat eine: (·) sehr interessante aussage zum dem gebiet (0.5) der internationalen zusammenarbeit gemacht, = und – da lág es eigentlich, ndhe, (0.5) da weiter zu arbeiten. – aber ich – hab mich*

doch dann – letztlich den (0.5) ansprüchen der gesellschaft gestellt, = *und* – *einen neuanfang* () ((etc.))

Interviewer 6: and that raises eh for me yet another question, 'hh have your expectations regarding your professional career already been fulfilled. (2.0)

Dr Bedell: when I recall my youth, I started – my professional career with the intention of becoming a sports journalist, that was not possible at the time *for certain reasons*, – eh – I could have well i: imagined a – further development in agriculture, as you know I had – a post-graduate research position in Moscow; that too became *for reasons of cadre politics*, not possible any more, I would actually – very much liked to have continued working there. My – graduate thesis, – made a *very interesting statement* on the topic – of international cooperation, and actually, it would have been natural – to continue working there. – but I – *finally faced up* – to the demands of society, and a new start () ((etc.))

Certain forces and obligations are alluded to but never made explicit which are said to have influenced this person's career. Vague expressions such as these were frequently used in the official state discourse of the GDR, and East Germans were able to 'decode' a number of them. On the other hand, a statement such as that in extract (13), in which failures and break-off points in one's own professional career are mentioned but not sufficiently explained, would unavoidably lead a Western job interviewer to insist on a clarification, and it might even trigger negative conclusions. Since the pragmatic inferencing rule for the job interview in the West is that whatever is concealed is negative, the Western-style job interview strongly discourages such adumbrations of failed career routes.

Extract (14) ((directly after the exchange reproduced as extract [12]))

Mr Lohmann: *ich hatte ja während meiner dienstzeit insgesamt – h – mit h – den verschiedensten menschen zu tun*, (0.5) *ich habe sowohl, – innerhalb, (0.1) meiner schiffsbesatzung eine gewisse rolle gespielt, (0.1) wie ich bereits sagte, ich war kommandant, (1.0) habe dann – im späteren – innerhalb von arbeitsteams, – gewisse aufgaben lösen müssen, – war entweder – mitarbeiter in diesen arbeitsteams? – zeitweise aber auch, und mehrere jahre, als leiter dieser arbeitsteams, – eingesetzt, und hatte dort aufgaben, die*

eigentlich über den normalen rahmen meiner dienststelle hinausgingen, – und zwar war ich verantwortlich, (0.5) für die ausbildung (0.1) und führung von arbeitsteams, die jeweils aus – vier bis acht mann bestanden, – über – längere zeit (1.0) verantwortlich; hatte die aufgabe wie gesagt diese arbeitsteams auszubilden, = rein fachlich konnte ich das nicht, – in jeder beziehung, das war auch nicht meine aufgabe? – mir unterstanden dort – die verschiedensten spezialisten? – ich hatte dann: die aufgabe –, in – polen, – diese arbeitsteams jeweils (0.5) zu leiten.

Mr Lohmann: I had to deal during my service as whole – h – *with h the most varied people*, – I had a *certain role to play* – in the crew of the ship, – as I said, I was commander, – then – later on – *I had to solve certain problems* in teams, – I was either – a member of these teams? – but partly and for several years also employed as leader of these teams, and there it was my task, which actually went beyond the normal limits of my duties, in fact I was responsible, – for the training – and leadership of teams, which each consisted of – four to eight men – over – a longer period of time – responsible, it was my task, as I said, to train these teams, in purely technical terms I wasn't able to do that, – *in every respect*, that was not my task? – I had under me – *various specialists*? – I then had the task – in – Poland – of leading these respective teams.

The statement sounds redundant and evasive to West German ears. Again, its vague style prompts the inference that the applicant does not want to answer the question regarding his professional experiences within the army. As in the previous extract, the depersonalized style of this passage portrays almost all activities reported as things the applicant 'had' to do or which were 'his task'.

(d) The monological character of speakers' contributions to the job interview is further supported by the opening formulae used to frame elaborate turns:¹²

Extract (15)

Interviewer 1: *welchen kundendienst sollte ihrer meinung nach, (0.5) ein unternehmen, wie unseres bieten,*

Mr Marotzke: wenn ich mal so kurz dazu sagen darf, – ((follows two transcript pages of a monological turn))

Interviewer 1: what kind of customer service should be offered by a company such as ours according to your opinion
 Mr Marotzke: *if I may just briefly say,*

Extract (16)

Interviewer 5: *sie haben sich jetzt für = ne arbeit in der freien wirtschaft entschieden. – warum in der freien wirtschaft, und nicht zum beispiel in = er (.) verwältung. oder (in = ner) behörde.*

Mr Marotzke: (3) *erst einmal muß ich die frage so beantworten daß ich: (.) in der verwältung oder einer: – behörde, – für eine tätigkeit in der verwältung oder behörde nicht in frage käme? ((etc.))*

Interviewer 5: now you have decided to work in the private sector. – Why in the private sector and not for instance in the (state)) administration. (or) a government authority.

Mr Marotzke: (3.0) *first of all I have to answer your question like this, that I: (.), would be out of the question – for a position in the administration or a – government authority? ((etc.))*

(e) The preceding point leads up to the important issue of idiomatic expressions quoted from the East German, state-and-party jargon (such as *Ausführungen machen* 'make comments' in extract (12) or *aus kaderpolitischen Gründen* 'for reasons of cadre politics' in extract [13],) which doubtlessly contribute to the contextualization of the particular speech style employed. In addition, some lexical items associated with this jargon occur quite regularly, particularly when administrative matters are discussed.

East German *officialese* has received some attention in the linguistic literature (cf. e.g. Fix 1992; Teichmann 1991; Fraas and Steyer 1992; Bergmann 1992), where it has been described as a sterile, frozen, hypertrophic *langue de bois*, void of actual content. However, this jargon is usually thought to have been used by party and state officials only, and particularly in written statements.¹³ The present data show that its use extends far 'beyond' this domain.

5. A third approximation: East Germans between traditional linguistic means and modern Western speech genres

In the preceding section, we have identified the GDR jargon or style which speakers *quote*, or allude to. Of course, this is not an innocent style.

Speaking of 'quotations' from (instead of 'use' of) the GDR official state-and-party jargon is essential here. The important caveat is on the functional level. There is no indication that by quoting from its style participants wished to borrow the old state's authority. Rather, it seems that elements of this jargon were used in a rather ad hoc and random fashion in order to cope with a situation which, in these participants' perception, required a formal stylistic register, the exact structural characteristics of which were not sufficiently known.

Note that although participants in these training courses quoted some formal aspects of the GDR official jargon, these quotations were selective. For instance, we do not find the hyperboles and euphemisms, nor the militant (Bergmann 1992) pathos of communist rhetoric (Fraas and Steyer 1992). But perhaps most dramatically, speakers distanced themselves from GDR state-and-party jargon by the enormous fragility of their quotations from it. Far from being able to construct an integrated and 'smooth' text surface, we find style switches, syntactic break-offs, disobeyed rules of co-occurrence and lexical blunders. Through these surface troubles, speakers constantly make it clear that what they are speaking is not 'their' language. The whole hypertrophic and hypercomplex syntactic apparatus consistently demonstrates just how far speakers fall short of having it at their disposal.

A final look at the first extract illustrates the point. The first clause, *da kann ich Ihnen erst mal ein grundsätzliches Ja auf ihre Frage entgegenhalten* 'there I can first of all advance a fundamental yes to your question', is not only hyperformal, it also sounds strange because the verb *entgegenhalten* 'advance' (lit. 'to hold something against [someone]') is not co-selected by *ein grundsätzliches ja* 'a fundamental yes': the only properly co-selected verb would have been *antworten* 'to answer' as in *da kann ich Ihnen erst mal grundsätzlich mit ja antworten*. A second derailment occurs in line 18 where the use of *meines Erachtens* 'in my opinion' is not adequate in a sentence in which the speaker talks about his own abilities, to which he has privileged access. (*Meines Erachtens* contrasts the speaker's opinion with that of another person.) The simple modal particle *wohl* would have been more appropriate to the kind of hedging performed in his statement in accordance with the modesty-and-deference style. The next co-selection problem occurs in line 22. In the pre-sequence *darf ich vielleicht mal fragen* 'may I perhaps just ask', the informal modal particle *mal* is out of place; in fact, it turns the very polite style the speaker is trying to achieve into the very opposite, and sounds rather impatient. From this clause onwards, the hypotactical structure becomes more and more jumbled.

Of course, such grammatical anacoluthons, and particularly lapses from hypotactical into paratactical or asyndetic syntax, are a regular feature

of spoken language; however, their frequency in these data is striking. Some further examples of clashes between formal and informal lexical and syntactic means or of incorrect lexical co-selections may be found in extracts (17–18) and extracts (19–21), respectively.

Extract (17)

Interviewer 8: *welches verhältnis haben sie – zu – téamarbeit, vor allen = dingen wie stéllen sie sich den zukünftigen vórgesetzten vor.* (1.0)

Mr Meise: ((omission))

ich hätte Sie gern speziell diesbezüglich schon ánge-sprochen, (– um genau –), um auch étwas ráuszukriegen, – wie das betriebsklima ist,

Interviewer 8: what attitude do you – have – towards – team work, above all how do you picture your future superiors. (1.0)

Mr Meise: ((omission))

particularly in this regard I would have liked to approach you (in order to) suss out a bit what the working climate is like,

(Informal rauskriegen is incompatible with formal *ich hätte Sie gern speziell diesbezüglich schon angesprochen*.)

Extract (18)

Interviewer 1: *es könnte sein, = daß sie mal – für ein hálbes jàhr, (1) in rußland tätig sein würden.* (2.0)

Mr Marotzke: *das könn't ich mir auf jéden fall vorstellen,*

((omission))

und dárf ich mal fràgen, = ob ihre firma dort = eh: ins áuge gefaßt hat, (0.5) dort eh besóndere konditionen, 'h (2.0) zu: – an den mánn zu bringen,

Interviewer 1: it is possible, = that you will have to work – for half a year, (1) in Russia. (2.0)

Mr Marotzke: I could certainly imagine to do that,

((omission))

and may I ask if your company has envisaged here – 'selling' the man eh special conditions –

(*An den Mann bringen* 'to sell' something to someone' is very informal and does not co-select *Konditionen* 'conditions'; it implies that the goods disposed of are of minor value.)

Extract (19)

Interviewer 1: *wéliche gründe – haben sie bewógen, sich ausgerechnet – bei únserem – unternehmen, (1) únser – unternehmen anzuschreiben*

((omission))

Mr Marotzke: ((...)) *aus diesem gründe hab ich es ins áuge gefaßt? ehm mich (.) einem (.) unternehmen (0.5) anzubieten, ...*

Interviewer 1: which reasons – motivated you to write – to our com-pany in particular

((omission))

Mr Marotzke: ((...)) for this reason I envisaged ehm – offering – myself – to – an enterprise ...

(*Sich anbieten* 'to offer oneself' does not co-select *Unternehmen* 'enterprise, business'.)

Extract (20) ((in the context of the interviewer's question of managerial qualities; cf. extract [3]))

Mr Marotzke: ... *des wéiteren eh: – waren mir unterstell:t – zwei – sáhbearbeiterinnen. (1.0) für die ich verántwortlich zeichnete, ...*

Mr Marotzke: ... in addition eh – there were subordinate to me – two – clerks, (1.0) for whom I held responsibility, ...

(You cannot *verantwortlich zeichnen* 'take responsibility for something' – lit. 'sign as responsible' – for humans in German.)

Extract (21) ((the interviewer has confronted Mr Bering with the fact that he used to be employed as a cattle breeder in GDR times while he now has applied for a job in the environmental sector))

Mr Bering: ... [*habe ich*] *mir zéit genommen, um: eine gewisse selbsfindung – eh: zu tätigen,*

Mr Bering: I took the time to eh effect a certain self-discovery, (*Selbsfindung* – literally 'finding oneself' – does not go with the verb *tätigen* 'to effect, to transact', which is part of an administrative register or style.)

In sum, the particular stylistic resources employed by East German participants in role-played job interviews are those appropriate for a 'formal' situation; however, this formality is not simply what one would find in any hierarchical or bureaucratic encounter. Instead, participants

in this training program draw on East German communicative resources by quoting the East German official jargon and communicative style, resources which are not available for (and not used in) job interviews in the West. These quotations must be seen as an attempt to deal with the demands of a new genre. Similar to a vacuum, the Western job interview attracts formal means from adjoining genres with which participants are more familiar. At the same time, the state-and-party style is 'broken' by the selectiveness of the quotations from it, by the admixture of a modesty-and-deference style marked by negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987), and by the surface turbulences in the usage of the official jargon. We may conclude that what is involved is an ideologically 'innocent' (i.e., neutral) borrowing of elements from a discourse, which is, however, objectively not 'innocent'.

6. The training program as a hegemonic context

Despite the fact that both institutional roles in the job interview were played by East Germans, and despite that fact that the verbal resources employed were partly East German ones, 'the West' was omnipresent in the training program. It was so not only because of the physical presence of the West German trainer and researcher, but also, and even more importantly, because of the inherent tension between the Western communicative genre on the one hand, with its specific structures, tasks and demands, and the available East German stylistic resources. The demands the genre puts upon participants are not in accordance with what these styles allow and even prescribe them to do. Western genre and (pre-*Wende*) East German style(s) are at odds

- i. because the one encourages explicit and implicit displays of one's abilities and prior experiences, but the other modesty and concealment of one's abilities
- ii. because the one builds on active contributions by the applicant, but the other on the avoidance of the agent-subject
- iii. because the one is based on a superficial ideology of equality beneath which power relations are hidden, but the other exposes and underlines these power relations through formality and submission
- iv. because the one is supposed to take place in an ostensible atmosphere of informality, but the other prescribes formality
- v. because the one (at least superficially) requires and values frankness, but the other indirectness and vagueness; etc.

As an immediate and destructive result, the clash between the demands of the new communicative genre and the linguistic and other

communicative resources available to deal with these demands seems to have caused the breaks and faults we find in the text surface of the data: on the one hand, the East German participants in the role-played interaction may have felt quite at ease with the performance style of their co-participants, which mirrored their own style and was built on the familiar (although not explicitly noticed) patterns of GDR rhetoric, but on the other hand, everybody seems to have been fully aware of the fact that this rhetoric was not transferable without adaptations to the new genre.¹⁴

But the clash between the speech activity and the resources at hand also positively brought into play stylistic elements which index another frame of knowledge, another 'culture', another 'discourse', i.e., that of the West. As a result, we observe a mixture of East German and West German structures. This infiltration of Western elements needs to be understood as a consequence of the thoroughly hegemonic character of the training program. The program's explicit purpose was to teach the East German novices to capitalism how to survive linguistically in the new world. Both the trainer and the participants accepted the tacit assumption that this purpose could only be reached by learning to play the game the way it is played in the West.

Expectably, learning how to play the game the Western way was most successful at the *lexical level*, where old and new words stood side by side. For while a number of purely East German words were consciously or unconsciously retained, a very large number of new, Western words were also used by the same speakers. A clear example of the resulting East/West mix is extract (8), in which the grammatical style is purely East German and contrasts with the new West German vocabulary (*Kundengespräche, Arbeitsorganisation, Bankgeschäfte, Filialleitung*).

Most dramatically, East and West German vocabularies are in contrast when they compete visibly with each other, as in the following case:

Extract (22) ((after interviewer's question regarding the purpose of the army unit in which Mr Hebelherr was employed in former times))

Mr Hebelherr: (1.0) *eh: führung von! – kollekt! – äh – téams? – ja: und diese teams, zum erfolg führen, das ist eigentlich die; – aufgabe der armée.* (0.5)

Mr Hebelherr: – ehm leading! – collect – äh – teams? – yes: and leading these teams to success, this is really the; – responsibility of the army.

This speaker self-repairs the East German term *Kollektiv* 'collective' through self-interruption and replacement with the West German term *Team*.

However, it is not just West German words that replace or contrast with East German terms. The same process of mixing results in the juxtaposition of West and East German *topics and topoi*—the way in which West and East German communicative cultures prescribe and pre-structure what can or should be talked about, and how (cf. Auer et al. 1997a). A recurrent phenomenon is that Western *topoi* such as 'economic expansion', 'on-the-job training', 'after-sales service', 'contented customers' mix with East German *topoi* regarding, e.g., the social care East German companies used to extend to their employees and their families, such as 'kindergartens/nursery schools', 'holidays', even 'family planning'. The latter *topoi*, which frequently played a role in the interviews, were usually corrected by the trainer in the ensuing discussion.

7. Conclusion

This article has tried to elucidate some of the ways in which language shapes and reflects the relationship between the East and the West in Germany after the reunification; in particular, it has dealt with the way in which the integration of the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany has had repercussions on verbal resources and verbal practices in the East. I have argued that in the process of gaining hegemonic control over the East, Western discourse(s) has/have shattered and fragmented a formerly highly controlled, tightly structured, 'reliable' discursive framework characteristic of the official language of the GDR.

Today, in the year eight after unification, the process of hegemonic assimilation of East Germany by the West has in part proceeded a good deal further; partly it has met with more or less conscious resistance and a revival of East German cultural emblems. The analysis presented here cannot therefore claim to capture more than one small aspect of a complex ongoing process, the outcome of which remains open in many respects.

Appendix: Transcript of a West German role-played job interview

Hamburg, 7/1994

applicant (B): Frau Karin Verheyen (pseudonym)

II: ja = herzlich willkommen, – frau verheyen,

B: guten tag,

II: wir – möchten uns zunächst mal ganz herzlich bei ihnen für ihre – bewerbung (.) bedanken, – die aus – drückerlei (.) gründen (.) besonderes interesse (.) bei uns her (.) vorgerufen hat,

(p) oh das ist ja schön;

um ihnen – eh – ist ja aus ihrem lebenslauf und ihren aktivitäten; – deutlich: – zu erkennen daß sie; (1.5) das ganze bisher sehr wlotoffen angegangen sind, das eh ist nicht nur für unser unternehmen von (.) interesse, = sondern (.) scheint mir auch allgemein ein wichtiger punkt zu sein, dann ist es ihnen gelungen ihr (.) geisteswissenschaftliches studium mit vielfältigen praktischen erfahrungen zu garnieren? das ist heute ja durchaus auch nicht immer üblich, – und drittens freuen wir uns natürlich (.) daß sie: – nachdem sie vor fünf jahren; bei uns gearbeitet haben es offensichtlich ihnen so gut gefallen hat, daß sie (h) nun wieder auf unser unternehmen zurückkommen. (2.5)

ja, ich hab da zunächst = ne frage, = was hat ihnen eigentlich (.) bei uns so gut gefallen daß sie sich (.) nun wieder bei uns bewerben.

(I) also ich fand das damals sehr schön eh (.) im team zu arbeiten, die atmosphäre hat mir sehr gut gefallen; danach hab ich in anderen firmen gearbeitet, 'h wo die atmosphäre nicht so war; {acc} = und ich denke das ist sehr wichtig? weil man dann auch (.) eher noch zeigen kann; eh – was man sozusagen alles drauf hat. = denn – (nun ja) wenn die atmosphäre nicht stimmt dann – eh kann es sein – daß diese sachen (I) auch nicht = eh zum tragen kommen;

mhm

{faster} und bei mir ist es so daß ich diese atmosphäre bräuche um mich wohl zu fühlen, und mir – eh auch zu zeigen was ich kann;

könnten sie ihre erwartungen an: ihre zukünftige ställe noch etwas konkretisieren;

ja also ich möchte gerne, (1.5) eh – {acc} ja also ich hab ja damals: eher als sekretärin, hier gearbeitet, (1.5) so: möchte ich = s nicht weiterführen, = also ich denke ich könnte (.) in dem bereich anfangen, und dann eben – zeigen (.) eh – durch (.) vertieftes (.) einarbeiten und so weiter – daß ich; daß ich mehr kann? daß ich also – eh – dabei bin, bei wichtigen entscheidungen; = daß ich (.) eh durch, – praktisches mitarbeiten einfach – immer weiter mit in den betrieb be mit reinkomme; = und – eh – und dann ganz natürlich auch mehr verantwortung übernehme.

= ja; trotzdem tut sich zunächst natürlich eh: für den betrachter eine gewisse kluft auf; zwischen

{pp} mhm

einem (.) ein a abschluss als angehende islammwissenschaftlerin; und der ehemaligen dienstfähigkeit,

mhm

und nun mitarbeit sagen wir mal in einem; zwar mittelständischen aber doch eher kleineren hh unternehmen; – m man fragt sich dann als – personál (.) mensch immer, – {acc} taucht da immer so das stichwort überqualifikation auf; wie: gehen sie damit um; wie sehen sie das.

'h = ja ich denke das ist kein problem; denn die anderen mitarbeiter bei ihnen – hh eh die haben ja ähnliche abschlüsse; also zum beispiel der eine kollege is: ein ausgebildeter eh geologe, {acc} = und so weiter, # und das ist also (.) heute ein (.) ganz hervorragender kaufmann, hh und (.) ich denke eh – also soweit ich das – von vorher be e:hm (1.5) eh beurteilen kann, hh eh daß (I) daß das nicht so wichtig ist. = also ich hab mir dadurch, – durch mein studium eh sprachqualifikationen angeeignet, = und ich denk auch daß ich jetzt; hh mit unseren künden, = in den (.) verschiedenen ländern besser umgehen kann, {acc} einfach durch die sprache auch, dadurch daß ich – die (.) {<} kultür

sehr gut kenne?

{(clears throat)}

(1.5)

B: und – ehm – daß: – also die: noch vertiefte praxis: = also auch richtig im käufmännischen: = daß ich dann also verträge abschließe; {acc} = daß ich einkäufe verkaufe# hh das möcht ich dann eben noch weiter bei ihnen lernen; = und ich denke daß ich (.) erstmal auch dadurch einfach ein gewinn sein kann daß ich diese, hh sachen die ich auch schon vorher hier gemacht habe übernehme, und dann (.) das andere – ((snaps fingers)) so

I1: ja

B: eben mit

I1: sie haben ja auch schon reichlich erfahrung in der wirtschaft ge gesammelt, so daß (.) wir auch nicht (.) davon ausgehen daß sie nicht wissen auf was sie sich einlassen. hh sie ham sehr breiti ihr ist ihr studiüm dokumentiert. [eh] [mhm]

B: und da ist unter anderem eine veranstaltung islamische wirtschaftsgeschichte [dabei was] haben sie denn da gemacht;

B: ja

B: ehm (.) da war es so daß wir (.) anhand eines bestimmten ländes: eh und das war ägypten: auch mit eh (.) verfolgt haben wie sich dieses land entwickelt hat;

I1: ja

B: also es ging (.) ganz früh in der geschichte los, bis heute;

I1: ja; (.) was fällt ihnen denn ein so zum stichwort (.) wirtschaftsbeziehungen; beerdét.) vorderer orient;

B: ehm – hh also (jetzt,.) (.) speziell für ihre firma, [oder] [nei]

I1: eher allgemein.

I1: eher allgemein.

B: – eher allgemein; = also (.) daß im momént, = daß ja so gemacht wird daß: – eh oft (.) von offizieller seite: sehr viel über deutsch arabische beziehungen gesprochen wird, daß man: ehm – daß (1) daß im momént, = also gerade jetzt in den (1) stáaten; = e: hm des – nahen östens doch (.) viele (.) andere (.) länder auch; – mehr eh kontakte haben als (.) die deutschen, also auch seit (.) dem gólfkrieg? (1.5) und daß e: hm (1.5) deutschland jetzt wieder versucht sich da: ehm verstärkt (.) präsent zu zeigen; (1) [also] [ja:]

I1:

B: {p} in der ((clears throat)) wirtschaftlichen beziehung;

I1: ham sie ne vorstellung in welche richtung das noch weiter, gehen, könnie? welche perspektiven sich da: auch dann wieder im blick auf unser unternehmen; – eh (.) ergeben könnien?

B: ja also (.) ihr unternehmen e:h – arbeitet ja im momént (.) mit dem irán, mit der türkei und mit syrien? und ich denke da könnie man eben mm ehm auch noch, (1.5) zum beispiel jordanien oder – eh ägypten; (1.5) {>} als neue märkte eröffnen; oder auch [nordáfrika;]

I1: hm

B: also nordáfrika würde mich ganz (.) {<} besonders interessieren;

I1: ja – sie sind ja im bereich spráchen sehr versiert, = mit énglisch (.) franzósisch (.) arabisch, was sie hier (.) ángeboten haben, hh eh haben sie das auch ein bißchen im bezuch auf die ökonómie schon betrieben? oder – wie sieht es da aus;

B: hh also ich hábe ja:; ehm (.) da ja ihre (.) unternehmenssprache énglisch ist, (hhhh) als ich bei ihnen gearbeitet habe; – hh mit ihnen énglisch kommuniziert, ehm (1.5) ansonsten hab ich (.) also speziell (1) wirtschaftstermi (.) terminologí (.) terminologie nicht gemacht aber – ich denke da (.) könnie ich mich (.) schon noch einarbeiten; {acc} das ist nicht so schwer das sind halt# (.) [bestimmte] [ja]

I1:

8) vokabeln; und die kann man sich schnell áneig [nen;] [ja]

11) konstruktíonen, = da ist ja dann auch nicht immer alles was im allgemáinen korrekt ist; = eh

8) hm

11) ham sáchen die: – in der fáchsprache die dann benúzt werden sind ja nicht immer dann korrektes énglisch, aber – ja; (1.5) ehm {p} ich würde sonst zum nächsten themenbereich übergehen? oder,

[ich hab keine] weiter;

13) ich hab schön nochmal ne frage [dazu,] [mhm]

8) ((clears throat)) sie: ham ja jetzt ein (.) wirklich qualifiziertes: eh studiüm hinter sich?

13) mhm

13) ehm – ham natürlich, mm das ham sie so geáussert, eh – schön gesagt daß sie érstmal so auf: dem spráchlichen bereich: den (.) éinstieg wagen wollt [en,] um sich [mhm]

8) dann weiter (.) hóchzuarbeit [en;] [mhm]

13) (.) klein

8) hm

13) das heißt aber natürlich bei einem: unternehmen wie wir es sind, daß éigentlich immer auslandsaufenthalte damit verbunden is.

8) mhm

13) und (.) jetzt tut sich, = oder (.) wie schätzen sie das ein; = sie – können ja nun doch etwas durch ihr studiüm und, – auch áufenthalte diese länder,

8) mhm

13) wie schätzen sie denn die stellung einer frau dort ein (1) als geschäftspartnerin.

8) ja; also ich denke das ist kein so großes problem wie es von deutschen unternehmen gesehen wird: denn es gibt auch in den ländern sehr viele geschäftsfrauen, hh u:nd das ist érstmal (.) prinzipiell kein problem von (.) der eh arabischen seite; = also da gibt es eine áus-

nahme, = das wäre saudiaráben? hh wo eine frau alleine nicht éinreisen kann; {<} aber alle anderen länder?# hh ehm haben auch selber – eh (.) beruflich tátige frauen; = auch (.) {acc} zum teil in hóheren positionen; {acc} = das sind sehr wénige; # = aber hh wenn man eh weiß wie man jemanden úngehen muß (.) ist das éigentlich kein problem. das wird hier oft so gesehen, [aber] [mm]

13)

8) aber das iss: ehm (.) ich denke daß: (.) daß man da auch was hinéinprojiziert zum téil; (1.5) also sie würden sagen da wären sie für sich mütig, und (.) würden es áuf = n versuch drauf ánkommen lassen.

8) ja; [also ich] weiß daß es für [saudi] arabien wenn sie mit [ja]

13) hhja

8) saudí arabien (.) {acc} arbeiten; = daß ich dann nicht allein in diese länder rei = in dieses land reisen kann. = aber [hhh] [mhm]

13)

8) ehm – und vielleicht auch speziell – überhaupt auch die gólfstaaten. eh – aber (.) die anderen länder: die jetzt mehr am mittelmeeer gelegen sind: eh = haben selber qualifizierte frauen die auch (.) berúfstátig sind. (1) so daß: daß ehm (1.5) {>} so daß ich da kein problem sehe. – es kommt áuf das land drauf an. (2)

- 11: wie stellen sie sich denn ihre berufliche zukunſt so in den nächsten jahren vor.
 B: h=ja; ich möchte also (.) gern in ihrem (.) unternehmen als gleichberechtigte partnern
 zum schluß, eh im team mitarbeiten? (1) und ich weiß natürlich daß das ein bisschen zöl
 dauert? man muß (.) viel lernen? = und – ich denke aber daß: (.) daß ich das: im laufe
 der zeit schon (lerne) und da hätte ich sehr viel lust zu. – weil es eben bei
 ihnen (.) alles sehr (.) eh (1) {p} doch# auch sehr viel
- 11: ja
 B: spaß macht. = also es iss= ein interessanter, – eh interessante firma, und (.) es ist auch
 (1) ja es= ist (.) immer wieder neu. {p} sozusagen#
 11: ja; sie können ja unser unternehmen, sie wissen auch daß vierzig stundenwoche eh da nich
 unbedingt a angesagt ist,
 B: ja; das weiß ich. (hh)
 11: eh – erzählen sie mir wenn ich noch etwas (.) persönlicher frage,
 B: mhm
 11: sie sind jetzt sechszwanzig,
 B: mhm
 11: verheiratet,
 B: mhm
 11: stellt sich natürlich (.) für einen arbeitgeber, insbesondere in einem kleinen unternehmen
 wo man auf –
 B: mhm
 11: die mitarbeit jeder (.) einzelnen kräft angewiesen ist; h die frage bei einer einstellung
 wie sieht es eigentlich (.) mit dem thema familienplanung aus. (1)
 B: hh also ich bin schon sechs jähre verheiratet, = und (.) ich habe das bis jetzt eigentlich
 sehr gut; – ja mit meinem mann vereinbaren können; = und ich denke das wird – auch in
 näherer zukunſt kein problem sein. da: – also (.) was die arbeit betrifft. = also ich hab
 auch (1.5) eh (.) studiert? und – habe das (.) irgendwie geschäft und – das wird auch (.)
 {>} auch wieder kein problem sein.
 11: hm, (1) mir ist noch eine kleine sache aufgefallen, sie haben (.) ihren namen hier mit karin
 verheuen (.) angegeben,
 B: ja.
 11: in dem einen zertifikat;
 B: und einmal mit karin
 11: wird das mit karin ching chong eh geführt. wie
 B: ja hh das is,
 B: eh das ist darauf zurückzuführen daß ich also schon damals verheiratet war? hh und daß
 es (.) daß ich in england geheiratet habe; (1.5) und damals – noch nicht klar war wie (.)
 mein name weitergeführt wird. da: in england der name des mannes automatisch, an die
 frau übergeht, dies aber in deutschland nicht so gehandhabt wird; und das wurde (.) also
 erst, ((snaps fingers)) nach dem england (.) aufenthalt als ich zurückgekehrt bin; dann
 hier geklärt daß ich (.) meinen namen (.) beibehalte. (1) {p} das is das is der name meine
 mames; der dort in dieser urkunde steht;
 11: ja (2.5) ((turns to other interviewers)) noch?
 13: {pp} ich hab alles;
 11: von ihrer seite,
 13: {pp} achso; der gehaltswunsch,
 11: ja; hhh
 13: hhh

- (1) ja; also – ham sie eigentlich schon (.) konkrete vorstellungen was sie: (.) verdienen möchten
 bei uns?
 B: (3.5) ich möchte: – eh – ja sie haben mich auch damals ja ehm eigentlich sehr fäir
 bezahlt? (1) und eh haben gesagt sobald ich mich: eh (.) dann – verbessere und zeige was
 ich kann werden sie das auch honorieren? (1)
 11: das ist auch immer noch so.
 B: ja, (hhh) und eh – ich denke (2) dja vielleicht bei: (1) viertausend viertausendfünfhun-
 dert würde ich gerne anfangen, und dann (1) eh – darauf aufbauend (.) je nachdem was
 ich leiste; [das] ...
 11: [ja] – das ist natürlich brutto (.)
 ? (laughter)
 B: ja, da haben wir uns ja schon damals drüber gestritten, eh das hatten sie damals brutto
 verstanden; {acc} = ich hatte das (.) netto verstanden; und wir [sind dann (hh)
 na ja wenn sie
 11: jetzt sagen viertausendfünfhundert, dann sind wir (.) bei netto fast bei zehntausend
 märk; – eh – das: werden sie nicht als anfangs:gehalt (.) sich vorstellen;
 B: (2) ja gut. also ich seh das auch eh als {>} anfangs:gehalt brutto. aber dann vier-
 tausend(h)fünfhundert(h) bitte (hhh)
 11: na gut. {p} ja. {p} wenn die: kolleginnen – keine weiteren (.) fragen haben; (1.5) vielen
 dank, frau (.) {acc} verheuen.

Notes

- * This paper is based on an invited lecture given at the Sociolinguistics Symposium at Lancaster in 1994 which has been thoroughly revised for this publication. The title, of course, alludes to Roberts 1985.
1. The term *Ostdeutschland* 'East Germany' is the prevalent one today. Other terms such as *die Neuen Bundes-Länder* 'The New States' or *das Beirrittsgebiet* 'the joining area' have special connotations and are mainly used in official statements.
2. Needless to say that no claims to representativity can be made.
3. A complementary investigation of real job interviews, comparing 20 East and 20 West German applicants, is underway (DFG grant AU 72/10). It shows that the features of the East German applicants' performance in the role plays only appear in a much attenuated fashion in 'real life'. One of the reasons for this is that West German interviewers influence the style of the interview and directly confront applicants with a Western style. Even more important is another difference: applicants in real-life job interviews for leading positions are a selection of candidates already familiar with the Western-type job world. 'Weak' applications are filtered out at previous stages of the selection process. It is likely that many of the participants in the role-played interviews will never be so successful as to reach the interview stage. This means that, on the one hand, our role plays are clearly not representative of real-life job interviews; on the other hand, it also means that they represent the East German communicative styles better than the 'real' job interviews for which applicants are chosen not least on the basis of their professional experiences in West Germany and with West Germans. Further details on the investigation may be found in Auer et al. (1997a/1997b), Birkner and Kern 1996.
4. Other studies are Grieshaber 1987 and Roberts 1985.

5. Transcription conventions are those used in conversation analysis. However, note that ' ; ' denote strong ('primary') and less strong ('secondary') 'sentence' accents, / marks a break-off (if phonetically marked), - marks a pause not exceeding 0.5 seconds, = marks latching, : marks lengthening, and > , < mark decreasing/increasing loudness, respectively. In order to preserve the stylistic character of the German version, the English translations are not fully idiomatic—the original German is not idiomatic either, for reasons outlined in the text.
6. The analysis will focus on stylistic and rhetorical aspects of the East German applicants' performance, which are generally absent in the performance of West German applicants in comparable role-play situations. However, an example of a (short) role played job interview recorded in West Germany (Hamburg) is reproduced in the Appendix.
7. Structurally, it is derived from the archaic genitive of the first person pronoun, the noun *Seite* 'side' and the adverb forming suffix -s.
8. 'Modesty' is indeed one of the self-ascriptions East Germans used in the discussions after the role plays.
9. In fact, Celia Roberts has drawn my attention to the fact that in terms of formality of the linguistic means employed, the East German style can even be compared to that of applicants of Indian descent in Great Britain (cf. Gumperz and Roberts 1991).
10. Fix (1992: 25–26) gives a striking example of how all official statements had to be translated into this jargon.
11. It may be argued against this interpretation that applicants may have good reasons to conceal certain parts of their pre-unification professional career as 'leading cadres' of the socialist regime. While we cannot exclude such intentional concealment in the case of extract (14)—the applicant was a high-ranking army officer—information provided by the first applicant (extract 13) in the discussion of his performance prove that what is at stake is a matter of performative style, not of facts, for this applicant was severely handicapped in his professional career by his critical stance towards the East German regime.
12. A sequential analysis of these opening formulae cannot be given here for reasons of space. Being routines, they do not 'mean' what they 'say', e.g., in extract (15), where a *short* answer is presaged. Rather, their main function seems to be to meta-pragmatically frame the subsequent turn, but also to distance this answer-turn from the preceding interviewer question, creating a cleavage or delay.
13. Compare Teichmann 1991. But note that Bergmann (1992: 135–136) mentions 'Versatzstücke' [fragments] of the party jargon which infiltrated everyday language. Fix (1992: 25) concedes that the official discourse had an impact on private life: it 'beeinflusste Sprachgefühl und -geschmack und prägte die Erwartungen an kommunikatives Handeln' [influenced the feeling for and of the language and shaped expectations of communicative behavior]. Lerchner (1992: 312–314), notes that the old norms of communication were projected into the new, post-GDR world and continued to be used unconsciously, but he stresses that this projection only occurred in situations of structural similarity to the old 'official' ones.
14. For instance, role-playing and observing participants in the training program stated in the discussions following the role plays (partly while looking at the video recordings) that turns were too long, that there was too little dialogue, that speakers behaved as if reeling off a ready-made text, etc. Not only these features were noticed, but also the performers' modesty-style; participants themselves often complained that they had 'made themselves too small', that they had been behaving in a 'over-restrained' fashion, and their colleagues criticized them for not being self-confident enough.

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