

Calls to the Language Consulting Centre: An Analysis of Interaction Progress

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Abstract

The Language Consulting Centre (LCC) of the Czech Language Institute has been offering telephone consultations for almost eighty years, in addition to traditional written answers. During that time papers about the content of queries were published fairly regularly, but the interaction between callers and LCC employees was mostly disregarded (with a few recent exceptions). Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive description of telephone interactions with the LCC. For this purpose, I examined parts from 63 recordings of authentic phone calls to the LCC, specifically 63 telephone openings, 102 language queries, 102 answers, 101 reactions to answers and 63 telephone closings using the methodology of conversation analysis. Through a comprehensive comparison of cases I identified recurring components in interactants' utterances. These components are used for various purposes such as establishing contact and providing self-identification during telephone opening, defining the topic of the query, thematizing knowledge deficit in a query, providing a solution, reflecting work with resources in an answer, accepting the answer in a reaction or closing a phone call. This categorization demonstrates that interactions with the LCC consist of complex utterances that reflect the norms of the genre of telephone language consulting. In other words, the interactants are well aware of limitations, how they can engage in language consultation, and what they can expect from each other.

Keywords

answer, closing, conversation analysis, institutional interaction, language consulting, Language Consulting Centre, opening, overall structural organization, phone call, query, question, telephone conversation