

Methodological challenges in bringing together grammar writing and interactional linguistics

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For many years, I have participated in attempts to build a comprehensive grammar of Danish talk-in-interaction, using methods from both grammar writing and interactional linguistics (DanTIN, 2025; Steensig et al., 2023, 2025).

By “grammar writing”, I mean the construction of comprehensive, descriptive grammars of a language. By “interactional linguistics”, I refer to attempts to unravel the logic and systematicity of linguistic items as they are used by participants to make sense of what is going on in interaction.

Most grammatical analysis stays within the boundaries of sentences and use methods like substitution and commutation tests to determine the status of linguistic items. And there is a focus on placing items within a hierarchical structure, “the grammar”. Interactional linguistics analyses the real-time production of items, which may extend beyond sentences and words, using participants’ displayed understanding to determine practices and regularities. Traditionally, there is less focus on structures and more focus on understanding the logic of people’s use of linguistic items in interaction (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018).

In my talk, I will show excerpts from Danish talk-in-interaction to discuss fruitful combinations of methods as well as problematic clashes. I do not have finished solutions to all the problems, but I will propose practical solutions to some and more general principles that may solve others.

REFERENCES:

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