

# **Breathing Behaviour and Non-Lexical Vocalisations in Talk-in-Interaction**

**Richard Ogden, University of York**

**Marina Cantarutti, University of York**

**Jürgen Trouvain, Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken**

Speaking relies on breathing; and breathing behaviour underpins many underexamined sounds in conversation: audible in- and out-breaths, clicks ('tsk', 'tut' sounds); laughter, sighs and gasps. These non-lexical vocalisations (Keevallik & Ogden, 2020) are common in conversation, and have crucial functions like regulating turn-taking, commenting on talk, displays of shared pleasure or expressing a feeling. A growing body of work in the psychological and cognitive sciences argues that humans are designed for dialogue rather than monologue, implying that sounds like these are central to how we understand conversation and social relationships.

While there are experimental phonetic studies of breathing in conversations (e.g., Włodarczak & Heldner 2000; Rochet-Capellan & Fuchs 2014) with respiratory kinematic and audio data, there is a lack of studies which examine how breathing works in dialogue (Fuchs & Rochet Capellan 2021; but cf. Torreira, Bögels & Levinson 2015). Conversely, studies in Conversation Analysis (CA) (e.g., Robinson 2023) use real-life data, but they generally lack high quality phonetic records and kinematic respiratory data, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of how these processes are managed in detail. Our knowledge of the phonetic form and positioning of non-lexical vocalisations and the link to breathing behaviour in spoken talk-in-interaction is very limited: the forms and functions of variability are poorly understood; we need data that allows for both interactional and kinematic phenomena to be observed, and an interactionally informed understanding of how breathing and speaking in conversation are intertwined. Interactional issues that warrant further study involve the affordances of contextual and production issues at different moments in interaction considering, for example, lung volume changes, and the potential of coordination of behaviours across speakers.

This poster will introduce a new project (starting in January 2026) that examines the role and use of breathing and breathing-related NLVs in talk-in-interaction. Audio, video and respiratory kinematic data will be recorded from pairs of speakers in three languages (English, German and French). This will allow for a detailed investigation of the phonetic form, position and function of NLVs. The project will combine instrumental and interactional approaches to the phonetics of talk-in-interaction (Ogden, 2021) to investigate the relationship between breathing and affiliated vocalisations in natural spoken interaction in English (including as a second language), German and French. Our aim is to identify and explain the variable forms and functions of breathing and affiliated sounds, such as audible breath noises, laughter, and tongue clicks, and investigate how such sounds contribute to the fine-grained timing, turn construction, and social organization of conversation. This will enable us to explore and understand the emergent nature of turns at talk, marked by pauses, turn-taking cues, unfolding syntax, and signs of speech planning, and ultimately visualise and model the core elements of this linguistic organization.