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**The pragmatics of communicative competence.
The case of interactions between university professors and
students.**

Volume I

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6.3.3. Information Management

The transfer of information is probably one of the most important aspects in this type of events for the following reasons: (i) the institutional function of the university is the transmission of knowledge; (ii) we are dealing with a transactional encounter where the main goal of the participants is not to establish or maintain a social relationship but to obtain certain information which is essential for the development of the larger task in which they take part (i.e. the academic course); and (iii) the information the participants possess and the way they convey it affect both the face of the participants and their relationship. Because of these circumstances, the interest of this 'interactional requirement' is centred around the ways in which speakers can signal (i) the relevance of certain units of information in relation to others, (ii) the modality with which the information is conveyed and the extent in the application of the information, and (iii) the relationships existing between the different units of information conveyed.

A. Focusing of information

In general we could say that all the structures mentioned in this section show the common characteristic of bringing certain information to the focus of the sentence. One of the most common devices is the use of pseudo-cleft sentences (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1387-1389), where the subject is either the pronoun **what** or a noun phrase of generic reference, both followed by the verb **to be** and the relevant information. The importance of focusing constructions as contributions to the clarity of the message is seen in the fact that it is usually the Professor, the participant with the complex and important information to be conveyed, the one who uses them.

(46)

P Yeah. You, you know, **what you really run into in that was, is that - all that stuff is transferred, is decentralized.**
(738-739)

(47)

(P) You kind of like try to do two paragraphs or one paragraph on each of the styles. - And in a paper like this, **one thing you could say is that Joos recognizes five styles A B C D - E - F - And and don't try to replicate Joos. You know, you can't - discuss each of those five styles.** (118-123)

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In (46) the Professor is focusing on the problem of the decentralization of education in the U.S. In (47) the focus is a specific strategy to develop a paper.

Another structure which appears in the data as a means to bring into focus certain information is the relative pronouns **this/that** followed by the verb **to be** conjugated in the present or past tense and a **wh-pronoun** (with the exception of **who**).

(48)

P Uh so, there's a whole, you know you can attack **this** from a variety of ways. - If you look at the monographs or the articles on health that you can glean out of the literature. You'll have to scavenge around. **That's, what I want you to do is** to go find stuff. (583-587)

In (48) the Professor realizes his direction (i.e. "you'll have to scavenge around") may not have been given the necessary relevance. Thus, he feels it necessary to add immediately the segment "that's, what I want you to do is", which is a combination of the two focusing structures mentioned so far ("that's what I want you to do" + "what I want you to do is").

The two other devices for focusing information are characterized by the fact that they are not part of the same clause as the one containing the relevant information. They are parenthetical phrases or clauses with the cataphoric function of announcing the relevance of the coming information. One of the structures includes the cataphoric pronoun **this** (e.g. **why don't you do this, this is just priceless, let's look at this**) and **he**

other one could be considered a pseudo-directive also pointing at the coming proposition ((you) see).

(49)

(P) So now he is retired in Burel. So, anyway. We went down to see him and, this is just priceless, you know, you get down there and it's like going into a middle class mig Huaylas migrant house in Lima. Right? (4412-4417)

In (49) the Professor wants to focus the attention of the addressees on the description of the house where his Peruvian friend lives.

Extract (50) is a very useful example to help explain the focusing function of the expression (you) see since the speaker in his effort to make the information even more marked (i.e. exclusive use of pre-recorded sounds as background) he resorts to two focusing structures ("see"; "that's why").

(50)

S1 Yeah. One of the hard things you've got to - deal with is the sound levels too. Because you don't have any
S2 Well, that's
S1 |See, that's why we'll we'll just use all, you know, - pre-recorded sounds background. (1358-1362)

B. Assessing information

The introduction of a certain dose of modality in the information conveyed is perhaps one of the most common characteristics present in the data. The goal of this strategy is

essentially to assess the degree of certainty of a piece of information. However, as was shown in section 6.1 on the multifunctionality of linguistic items, the ultimate goal of this strategy may have to do with the presentation of self and the need to diminish the assertiveness of a statement in order to be accepted.

One important meaning included in modality is *subjectivity*. It is mainly marked by the presence of the first person pronoun (I/we), accompanied by verbs indicating the speaker's epistemic relationship with that information and conjugated both in the present and the past tense. The great variety of 'markers of subjectivity' can be seen in the following list: I know, I guess, I think, I remember, I figured, I'm sure, I would rather, I hope, I suspect, I say, I understand, I feel, I believe, I bet, I doubt, I recall, I confess, I tell, I suggest, I see, I'm afraid.

(51)

- S1 Oh, who's this person in Berkeley about the hotel?
P Oh, Stefano Varese.
S2 I don't remember that we've got hotel reservations.
(392-294)

(52)

- (P) I think that would be, that'd be good to follow up on. And then you would, you would then have that comparative data. - uhm - And I I would think that, I mean, around the university you could find twenty-year olds. (952-956)

Both in (51) and (52) we have the speaker assessing the different degrees of uncertainty of the information supplied (i.e. to have hotel reservations; follow up a line of research; find twenty-year-old black girls).

Sample (53) shows that it is also possible to communicate subjectiveness in the apprehension of the world by means of verbs conjugated in the third person (e.g. *it seems, it looks like, it sounds*).

(53)

- S Do you think that would give me the b - I mean, >
P |uh
> S I'm just thinking, - fifty pages ju' t sounds to me like so
much (1638-1640)

The use of modal verbs is another characteristic which points to the relationship between the participants and the information supplied. As Quirk *et al.* (1985: 219) say, this is precisely the basic meaning of modality: "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgement of the likelihood of the proposition he expresses being true". In (54) and (55), then, we have different signals of the degree of likelihood of the propositions in which modal verbs appear. The first example involves a deduction (i.e. to be of Aztec origin) which might, however, be contradicted by reality. The modals "might" and "could" in (55) express possibility and, thereby, uncertainty for the propositions (i.e. you want to do; you use) to be ultimately true.

(54)

P And little expressions and, you know, it's very complicated. It must be an Aztec - thing because I don't do they don't do this in other parts. Do they do that in Spain?
(4215-4217)

(55)

(P) What what you really might wanna do is set up a chart with the different styles' and then the >
S |Mhm
> **P** different markers like what what words you could use.
(86-89)

The connection between the two previous ways of marking modality (parenthetical verb - modal verb) may be seen in the fact that it is possible to find combinations of the two in expressions like **I can recall, I have to confess, I would think/say, I must say, etc.**

(56)

S Ok (Oh, is there any way I can leave this [showing a set of sheets] with you? Because I need to get I've got a class in just a few minutes.
P Leave it with me. I'll give it to him
S Ok () It's the observation These [pointing at one of the sheets] were very interesting **I must say** (2652-2656)

With the expression "I must say" in (56) the Student modalizes her statement, presenting it as a sincere recognition of a fact (i.e. "these were very interesting").

A third marker of modality suggesting the kind of epistemic relationship between the speaker and the reality commented is the use of adverbs functioning as disjuncts, "expressing an evaluation of what is being said either with respect to the form of the communication or to its meaning" (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 440). The following is a list of the disjuncts which appear in the data: **ideally, of course, obviously, apparently, definitely, possibly, hopefully, indeed, evidently, surely, perhaps**⁵.

(57)

- (P) and see, you know, what – how things are handled in the communities and how important they are. And so, >
S | Mhm.
> P there there's dozen of books – and **indeed** articles on on specific topics. (2926-2929)

In (57) the Professor expresses his degree of conviction about the existence of "articles on specific topics" by means of the disjunct "indeed".

5 Quirk *et al.* (1985: 620-623) distinguish two main kinds of 'content disjuncts' according to their meaning: (i) degree of truth (e.g. undeniably, maybe); (ii) value judgement (e.g. rightly, obviously).

There is a second group of expressions-included as part of this strategy, whose function is that of assessing a statement from the point of view of the degree to which it can be considered as the only possible reality or as one of the possible realities. The best way to show how the strategy works is by means of an example taken from the data, (58), and see how the meaning of the utterance is affected by the application of the strategy.

(58)

[The student is making a phone call from the teacher's office]

P I don't know what. Say, just say

S I tried (h) to (h) call (h) you ? (42-43)

In (58) we have a repair by the Professor in which he adds a modifier to the directive **say**. The function of this modifier is that of reinforcing the original meaning conveyed by the exclusive use of the verb 'you needn't say anything else'. If instead of "just say" the Professor had chosen to use "say, for example," the meaning would be different: 'what I suggest that you say to them is only one of several possibilities'. What we have here, then, is an assessment of the universality of the statement by means of a modifier inserted in the utterance.

All the expressions belonging to this second group have an adverbial nature, that is to say their function is to modify the semantic extent of the verb or mention the circumstances in which the proposition is valid. Whereas most of them are

intended to suggest that there is more than one possible reality (like, partly/part/partially, in general/generally, especially, basically, let's say, essentially, say, for instance, mainly, at least, as a general rule, usually, in a sense, if only, for example), a few expressions reinforce the universal application of the statement (just, in fact, actually) ⁶.

(59)

P And that book that that Suzanna showed you is the - essentially all Andean - and doesn't involve urban settings. Say if you do two weeks to explore that you have to get into some of the coastal literature. (637-640)

(60)

P I mean it's the whole thing in California. It's the image making business. I doubt whether Reagan could in fact have been elected in any other state. (3742-3744)

In (59) the particle "essentially" serves the Professor to slightly reduce the semantic extent of the statement "the book is all Andean". In the same way, "say" preceding the clause "if you do two weeks to explore that" indicates that the number of weeks mentioned by the Professor is not an unquestionable reality but only a hypothetical one. In (60) "in fact" contributes to reinforcing the impression of reality of the affirmation "have

⁶ In Quirk *et al.* (1985: 586-612) all these items are classified as *subjuncts*, because they have, "to a greater or lesser degree, a subordinate role in comparison with other clause elements".

been elected". The utterance "I doubt whether Reagan could in fact have been elected in any other state" suggests that he could have been a candidate but was not elected.

C. Signalling logical relationships

This is one of the areas where the linguistic description at the level of the sentence can be integrated into a more comprehensive description of discourse. The particles studied as part of this aspect fall mainly under the grammatical category of conjuncts (Quirk *et al.* 1985), adverbials which are not part of the closely interrelated clause elements such as Subject, Complement or Object, and which have a semantic role of "conjoining independent units rather than one of contributing another facet of information to a single integrated unit" (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 631). Apart from this connective function in monological texts, the interest of the items studied lies in the fact that they are used to connect responses in dialogue indicating "the direction of transition between what has just been said and what is about to be said" (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1469). The connectors included in this section must fulfill the following requirements: (i) they have a literal (logical) meaning as connectors, (ii) they can appear in monological texts connecting the clauses of an utterance, and (iii) they can link the content of different turns of speech, either by the same

S2 When you turn your, when you turn your paper in turn it in on a due date, a paper due date.

P Mhm.

S2 Not in between.

[]

S1 Because I was gonna write the third paper when I got a chance. - I just wanted to turn it in with the film, unless you wanna (.....) - if I get it done - (.....)
(1425-1437)

We can see in (61) how the logical connector "because" is separated from the utterance it connects (i.e. "Should I turn this in and the fourth paper? Or do you want me to turn in the fourth paper?") by a series of turns and a short pause. Nonetheless, it succeeds in introducing a justification for the question uttered at the beginning of the extract. The same happens with "so" in (62) connecting the content of the two turns by the Student in a relationship of result/consequence.

(62)

P So, you're all clear now or not?

S |Almo, yeah. Nobody came until, into town, to see her until two weeks after that. I felt so bad, you know, because I was the only person in town and she was in the hospital and she's so disoriented.

P aaah

S And so, my aunt came down two days ago and she's staying with her at her house. So I don't have to worry about now. But I was real far behind in school, anyway.

(2796-2804)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Focusing of information		A.0.1. Pseudo-cleft sentences
		A.0.2. <i>this/wh</i> + copula + wh-pronoun
		A.0.3. Cataphoric <i>this</i>
		A.0.4. <i>(you) see</i>
B. Assessing information	B.1. Epistemic relationship	B.1.1. Parenthetical verbs (<i>I'm sure .. , I suggest</i>)
		B.1.2. Modal verbs
		B.1.3. Disjuncts (<i>ideally, perhaps</i>)
		B.2.1. Subjuncts (<i>usually, especially</i>)
C. Signalling logical relationships	C.1. Result/inference	C.1.1. <i>so, then, so that, which means that, therefore, that way</i>
	C.2. Cause/warrant/motive	C.2.1. <i>because</i>
	C.3. Sequence	C.3.1. <i>(and) then</i>
	C.4. Addition	C.4.1. <i>and, also, too, more than that, in addition to, which, as well as</i>
	C.5. Concession	C.5.1. <i>still, except that, anyway, anyhow, after all</i>
	C.6. Contrast	C.6.1. <i>but, whereas, otherwise</i>

6.3.4. Goal

The achievement of a series of goals is the ultimate justification for this type of speech event. All the interactions studied are characterized by the students' pursuit of very specific goals which will allow them to obtain certain academic and social benefits.

Because of its clear institutional and transactional nature, the type of encounter studied is subject to a series of constraints born out of the fact that it is usually a ritualized interaction with consequences in the social situation outside the interaction itself. These two aspects, the ritual and the outcomes of the interaction, are studied as part of the 'interactional requirement' labelled as Goal.

In the first place, we have all those actions the aim of which is to keep up with the rules of the interactive ritual. Each participant knows that he/she has a pre-established role to play, and that this role involves the realization of a series of actions, verbal and non-verbal: greet, thank, give permission to sit, etc. Secondly, there are all those actions which refer directly to the transaction which is being negotiated.

A. Attending to the ritual

In the type of semi-institutionalized encounters we are analyzing the observance of certain interactional rules is essential in order to achieve the intended outcome. This is why it has been deemed necessary to include as part of the Goal 'requirement' all those ritual actions which tend to appear at the initial and closing stages of the encounter, framing it as a specific part of the life of an institution.

Because of their regular presence at the beginning of the encounter we could say that the Student's introduction of his/her goals as well as the Professor's requests towards the end of the conversation to introduce any other goals are in themselves essential parts of the interactive ritual.

Apart from the previous two, there are also other actions that seem to play an important role in the development of the encounter. One of these actions is the student's acknowledgement of the impositive action that the encounter supposes for the Professor. The linguistic realization of this action takes the form of apologies (sorry to uh take up your time), requests (do you have a minute?) and expressions of gratefulness.

An even stronger regularity than the previous one is the tendency of the participants to commit themselves to some immediate future action towards the end of the encounter. The

most common examples of this type of action involve two types of speech acts: directives for future actions (uttered by the professor) and promises/commitments for future actions. Next below, (63) and (64) are two examples of the contributions through which one of the participants commits himself/herself or the others to some future action directly related to the subject of the interaction.

(63)

P Ok then. Let me know. Just make up your budgets (530)

(64)

S Well I'll see you on Monday, though. (2806)

The encounters are usually closed with an exchange of *ok* or *alright* (or both) usually initiated by the student, indicating that both parties are satisfied with the outcome of the conversation. The Student's closing token *ok* is almost always accompanied by an expression of gratefulness. Extract (65) may be considered as a fairly complete example of the different steps involved in closing an encounter⁷: (i) the first "ok" by the Student is interpreted as a possible pre-closing by the Professor; (ii) the Professor invites the Student to confirm his interpretation of the possible pre-closing by means of "ok?"; (iii)

7 See Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

the Student confirms the closing by making a future arrangement; (iv) the Professor accepts the future arrangement ("ok"); (v) the Student's "thank you" displays his recognition of the unequal type of encounter which is being closed; (vi) the Professor accepts the student's recognition.

(65)

P And that book that Suzanna showed you is the - essentially all Andean - and doesn't involve uh uh it wouldn't involve coastal - or urban settings. Say, if you do two weeks to explore that you have to get into some of the coastal literature

S Ok.

P Ok?

S Ok. Alright. I think it'll work pretty well. Yeah.

[[knocks on the door]]

P Ok.

S Thanks.

P Yeah. (637-647)

B. Focusing on the transaction

Apart from the one-word tokens **ok** and **alright**, the use of which is associated with the acceptance of a goal, one of the first things one notices in analyzing this type of transactional encounters is that all of them are characterized in the very initial stages by the explicit introduction of the goal with which the Student approaches the encounter. The usual structure in which the conversation is initiated is a Student's statement of his/her need, hedged with certain non-impositive particles like

the use of past tense (I wanted), parenthetical verbs (I was thinking; I was considering) or downtoners (I wanted a little bit more to know; I just uh wanted to let you know).

The importance of an explicit recognition of the primarily transactional function of the encounter was also pointed out in the previous section, in trying to explain the presence of an expression of gratefulness as part of the typical closing sequence. The relevance of this function is also corroborated by the fact that whenever the Student does not accomplish this task in the initial stages of the interaction, the Professor can request him/her to state the purpose of the encounter (what can I do for you?; what's up?) or (in the event that he anticipates the student's goal) question him/her directly on the goal (got that thing?; what have you done in your paper so far?).

Requests for the Student to put forward his/her goal in the encounter tend to reappear at stages where the Professor considers that he/she has given enough information to the student to accomplish his/her goal (ok?; what else can I do to help?). These utterances give the Student an opportunity to introduce other goals he/she may have in his/her agenda. At this point the student can choose between introducing a new goal, as in (66), where he introduces the goal of obtaining a video camera for the project, or closing the event, as in (67).

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(66)

P Ok. What else can I do to help?

S I guess we need the camera for Friday. (1404-1405)

(67)

(P) ok?

S Ok. Good enough. Thank you. That should get me started.
(2091-2092)

The fact that goals are usually presented at the very beginning of the conversation does not necessarily mean that explicit references to them disappear from the rest of it. The difference between goals presented in the initial stages of the conversation and goals presented in the middle is that in the latter case they are presented as questions rather than statements. The explanation for this might be found in the rigidity of the ritual which has a clear time-space for the introduction/announcement of goals at the beginning of it. Thus, any other goal which has not been announced at the beginning (or simply the reintroduction of one which has already been dealt with) must be 'disguised' as a question.

(68)

S So, as far as this class is concerned you would say that as
as being an an ok.

P Ok topic. Yeah. (1991-1993)

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(69)

S Ok. Oh, is there any way I can leave this with you ? (3652)

(70)

**S [laughter] I wonder if I could come in and go through this
(3588)**

The Student's goal in (68) is to obtain the Professor's clear acceptance of a topic for a paper. In (69) the Student wants the Professor to give her class assignment to the Teaching Assistant in charge of the group in which the Student is included. Finally, in (70) the Student's aim is to be able to go into the Professor's office outside the regular class-period

The Professor's references to goal's, apart from requests to the Student to present them, usually take the form of directives, and they are also hedged with non-impositive particles. Extract (71) shows the amount of 'face-saving work' that the professor uses to preface the presentation of alternative goals to that of the student. The Professor's goal is to convince the Student to complete her honours programme.

(71)

**(P) Let me suggest some things and see how they sound. -
And and it's, and and I don't wanna talk you into
something that you - you don't want to do. - But I also
wzanna salvage [laughter] if (h) we (h) can (1584-1587)**

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Extract (72) is another example showing how the Professor responds to a question by the Student concerning one of his goals (i.e. subject and organization of the paper). Again, the professor is using non-impositive expressions like "well", "I think" and "kind of" prefacing the directive.

(72)

- S What about at this foundational stage? What would you (.....)**
- P Well, I think you have to again to do kind of an exploratory exploration of the literature (2021-2024)**

GOAL

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Attending to the ritual	A.1. Presentation of goal (opening phase)	A.1.1. Verb of intention/internal state in the past tense and 1st person (<i>I wanted</i>)
	A.2. Acknowledgement of imposition	A.2.1. Apology (<i>sorry to take up your time</i>); request (<i>do you have a minute?</i>); expression of gratefulness in the closing phase (<i>thanks, thank you</i>)
	A.3. Closing	A.3.1. <i>ok, alright</i>
	A.4. Future arrangements (closing phase)	A.4.1. Imperative mood; future tense (<i>I'll see you on Monday</i>)
B. Focusing on the transaction	B.1. Acceptance of goal	B.1.1. One-word token (<i>ok, alright</i>)
	B.2. Presentation of goal	B.2.1. (See A.1.1)
	B.3. Request for goal	B.3.1. Question (<i>what can I do for you?, got that thing?</i>)
	B.4. Directions	B.4.1. Imperative mood
	B.5. Requests for direction	B.4.2. Non-imposing expression (see Imposition, strategy A)
	B.6. Future arrangements	B.5.1. Question
		B.6.1. (see A.4.1.)

6.4. Strategic competence

The phenomena included under strategic competence have to do with the solutions the participants present to solve communication problems caused, in the first place, by their limited capacity to produce and process messages. The second type of problems is originated in the nature of language itself, a system which is in need of some 'auxiliary devices' (both verbal and non-verbal) to fulfill as accurately as possible all the communicative intentions of its users. As in the previous sections, the present analysis will be limited to those linguistic solutions that speakers present

6.4.1. Human Constraint

The type of problems related to the human being's limited capacity to produce and process information can be divided into three main groups according to the variety of verbal solutions found in our data. In the first place we have all those repairs for lack of precise information. Here the solutions we found fall into five main groups. (i) substitute generic word; (ii) modifying expression indicating the inclusion of other possibilities not mentioned; and (iii) expression acknowledging the lack of precise information; (iv) request for repair; and (v) repair. In

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the second place, it is necessary to consider the way in which the speaker copes with the time pressure (i.e. the need to produce and process messages without stopping the verbal activity).

A. Compensating for problems in information transfer

In the English interactions analyzed, problems in the process of transfer of information may be caused by two different circumstances. In the first place, the speaker may lack the precise information he/she is expected to convey. In the second place, there might appear problems related with understanding or simply acoustically capturing the information supplied during the communicative activity

One of the possible options available to the speaker when he/she lacks the precise information required (or when he/she simply does not feel necessary/appropriate to supply it!) is to use a substitute general item like **thing** or **stuff**. After these two words, the next preferred substituting items are some-pronouns (**something**, **somebody**), **wh-ever** pronoun/adjective, and the indefinite adjective **some**. A more informal and much less frequent solution is the expressions **bla bla bla** or **so so so**

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(73)

P Oh, somebody else's got agriculture and somebody else is doing work organization And that would overlap inevitably >

S |Hm.

>P with (the thing on) irrigation. Irrigation is very important >

S |yeah

>P in the Andes, and (all the the) problem of water management stuff i i i is really critical. But I think probably it would be, would overlap too much with some of these other things. (2900-2907)

The substitute words in (73) are "somebody", "thing", "stuff" and "things". The pronoun "somebody" substitutes the name of a student, and "thing", "stuff" and "things" refer to areas of inquiry. Substitutes like "stuff" and "things" give the Professor the opportunity of introducing the consideration of potential topics (i.e. different aspects of water management; different areas of inquiry) without having to mention them explicitly.

The second strategy to make up for the lack of precise information is that of attempting an approximation to the precise information, although never abandoning the suggestion that it is not information which can be taken literally. This is done by means of adding certain expressions hinting at the imprecise or incomplete nature of the information supplied. The structure that appears most frequently is that in which the modifying expression consists of a coordinated phrase introduced by **or** or **and**.

Most of these modifying coordinated expressions include one of those general items included in the first substrategy (e.g. **thing, stuff, some-pronoun**). Examples of expressions introduced by or are: **or something/anything/somewhere (like that), or so, or this sort of thing**. The following expressions are all introduced by and: **and (all that) stuff, and all, and everything, and things like that, and all that sort of thing, and a lot of stuff like this, and all that kind of stuff, and things, and so (and so), and so forth and so on**.

(74)

- P |We just finally, I hadn't heard anything till we just called down two days ago. **Reservation and stuff (.....)**
- S1 |Ok. So, what hotel is it gonna be at?
- S2 **Something de los Angeles.**
- P Yeah. **Misión de los Angeles, or something like that.**
(462-467)

In (74) "and stuff" serves the Professor to make his utterance include all the other aspects involved in organizing a trip; "something" and "or something like that" are substitutes for the real name of the hotel at which the conference is to take place.

However, as (75) shows, it is possible to find a coordinated expression which consists of a precise second option.

(75)

- P |And so, anyway. He migrated to the States about seventy: **two or so, or seventy three, and started working as a janitor in a Social Security building in Brooklyn.**
(4344-4346)

The interest of (75) lies in the fact that the speaker first chose a much more general expression ("or so") and then he decided to reduce its potential for inclusiveness by adding a specific year ("or seventy-three")

Some of the expressions that were mentioned as markers of modality can also be included here as markers of 'approximation'. I am referring to parenthetical verbs like *I think, I guess* and adverbs like *probably* and *maybe*. The close relationship between the items in this second group and those in the first (i.e. coordination by means of *and* or *or*) can be seen on those occasions where items from both groups co-occur, as in (76).

P In demographic terms you're dealing with the dependents. People who are non-productive in effect. And in, with kids this goes up to, say, the age of eight or nine probably And with the older people this probably starts after what whatever the age of sixty or sixty five and up (2048-2051)

The uncertainty with which the information is conveyed in (76) is indicated by the coordinations "eight or nine" and "sixty or sixty-five". This impression is reinforced by the almost contiguous repetition of the adverb "probably" and the generic substitute pronoun "whatever".

One last group of items which is used to indicate approximation rather than precise information consists of prepositions like *about, around, somewhere between... and...*

and like.

(77)

S | I was really busy too. I didn't know, but I came here I guess
like a week ago Monday, you know, you were gone, and
then I came back. And you've been in and out I guess.
And um and my grandmother fell and broke her hip,
you know. (2786-2789)

In (77) again we have a case of co-occurrence of items which have been introduced as part of different groups indicating imprecise information: a parenthetical verb ("I guess") and a preposition ("like").

The third substrategy used in cases of lack of precise information is simply to acknowledge the inability to produce the information required. This can be done in an explicit way by means of a statement referring to the reason for the breakdown in communication (e.g. I don't know, I don't/can't remember, I forget), or in an implicit way by asking a question about the missing information.

Both possibilities are exemplified in (78), where the Professor's utterance is interrupted twice due to breakdowns in communication caused by his temporary incapacity to recall certain information. In the first instance ("was it Miller Light or something?") we have a request for confirmation addressed to the Student, which she tries to fulfill with "uhu:". In the second instance (i.e. "I can't remember which guy it is") the breakdown is acknowledged by mentioning the speaker's incapacity to recall

the information.

(78)

P Have you ever seen these beer ads that they do in uh - for uh was it Miller Light or something? And they have the >

S |uh:

> P football players come on and talk to each other and stuff You know, they have these different things, and then this one (there's) this Mexican boxer, and the American football players sitting down, says ay uh: you know I can't remember which guy it is one of these great big linesman type. (4147-4154)

A fourth substrategy connected with the speaker's intent to avoid breakdowns in communication involves actions showing that the process of transfer of information is undergoing some problems. Although in principle one could think that the most explicit way of showing lack of understanding could be simply to state it (e.g. **I don't understand**), this is never the case in our data. This might be because of the danger of this action being understood as showing unwillingness to cooperate in the construction of meaning. Thus all the expressions that can be classified as requests for repair take the form of questions on the intended meaning of one of the participants. The most cooperative way of carrying out this task seems to be hypothesizing on the possible meaning (e.g. **(do) you mean ...?**). A second possibility is a direct question on the meaning intended (e.g. **Peruvian Times?, what do/did you mean?, what does that mean?**). Extract (79) exemplifies both strategies. The

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Student, faced with the potential misunderstanding, suggests a possible interpretation ("you mean still bringing in the uh kinship aspect of it"). After the Professor has rejected that interpretation, the Student, instead of venturing another, requests directly a further explanation directly ("what did you mean?")

(79)

(P) And and and write a - very focused paper on: - you know, whether the stories and s structures of the Populvuh are still with people today in a nearby Mayan - community

S You mean still bringing in the uh kinship aspect of it ?

P No.

S (Or what did you mean? (1606-1611))

The speaker responsible for the supply of information may not need the feedback of the receiver to realize that the information has not been properly conveyed/received or that it may involve some problems in understanding. One possibility is to supplement the meaning intended with other propositions introduced by **I mean/I don't mean**.

(80)

(P) These are substantial studies that have a lot of information. So you can kind of go to them and use them as a reference. I don't mean read the whole book

S Mhm

P I mean just look up the topics and kind of explore the books for information about the topic (2913-2918)

The clarification of the message in (80) (i.e. to use monographs as sources of information) is effected in two stages. In the first one, with the expression "I don't mean" the Professor discards the easiest interpretation, which is to read the whole book. In the second step, he develops the idea which was first presented in a rather ambiguous way (i.e. "go to them and use them as a reference" ---> "look up the topics and explore the book for information about the topic").

On other occasions, rather than supplement previous information the speaker must correct it. In this case the introductory expressions found in the data are **pardon me** or a plain **no** invalidating the previous information.

(81)

(P) the thing is that he uh - uh [*S takes out a cigarette, P signals to S requesting one*]

S Like one?

[*P takes a cigarette and lights it up*]

P Uh - is that he uh - when he became president or or. **pardon me**, governor of California is that they they moved into that big time in California. (3724-3730)

The breakdown in (81) ("president" instead of "governor") is solved by the introduction of the apologizing expression: "pardon me", which is immediately followed by the correct information.

B. Maintaining the verbal activity

Silence in conversation is a synonym of inactivity by Western standards. Inactivity affects the presentation of self in a negative way because it is interpreted as lack of a defined personality. Thus, it is perfectly understandable the degree to which participants in a conversation try to avoid potential periods of silence caused either by a sudden breakdown in the process of production (e.g. loss of the line of thought) or by the need to concentrate momentarily on an activity (mental or physical) different from that of sustaining the turn taking activity (e.g. trying to remember something; looking for an object).

Extract (82) exemplifies the need to fill out a period of silence and excuse the lack of interactivity occasioned by the fact that one of the participants is 'selfishly' concentrating on a different activity. In the extract below, the Professor is searching through a university film catalogue. As we can see, it is not the regular exchange of turns that has been momentarily suppressed but the pursuit of the main goal of the encounter (i.e. to obtain sources of information for a research project). This is the reason why the Professor feels it necessary to 'excuse' the delay or lack of activity directly connected with the fulfillment of the Student's goal.

(82)

- S** **The library here has it?**
P **No. This is the film.**
S **Oh, the film. Oh, ok.**
P **Moooohh. Where is this thing? I'll find it in a minute but
that would be good because it I'm sure it's the exact
same kind of (2321-2325)**

Short pauses can be filled out with one of the following vocalisations : **uh, uhm, mm**. The function of these items is usually to give the speaker some time to articulate his/her thoughts. However, their frequent presence in turn-initial position gives them a second function which could be defined as turn-starters. Their role could be compared to that of items like **well, now, but, and, etc.** which Sacks *et al.* (1974: 719) call *appositionals* because they "satisfy the constraints of beginning (...) without revealing much about the constructional features of the sentence thus begun, i.e. without requiring that the speaker has a plan in hand as a condition for starting". We see, then, that they are basically floor-holding devices which the speakers use to keep the turn which they have just been given or to maintain it for a longer period of time.

Whenever the subject feels the need for a potentially longer pause the solution adopted is no longer one of the vocalisations mentioned but a fully articulated utterance referring more or less explicitly to the kind of activity which is hindering the smooth development of the interactive activity (e.g. **let me look at it, let's see, I'm trying to remember now, I'm**

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going to put some hot water, let's see if I can find it, I'm gonna write this down, I have to look at my book).

(83)

(P) It'd be worth a try. - What was the paper on?

S Uhm it was, ^ let me see what was it? ^ - Oh, kinship structures among peasants.

P Mhm.

S And uh ^ what did it focus on ^ - I think it it was mostly focused on on Latin America, since that was what he >

P |mhm

>S pulled most of his material for the class out of.

(1667-1672)

In (83) we see how on two occasions the Student first resorts to vocalisations as repairs (i.e. "uhm"; "uh") and then, when she realizes she needs more time to construct the requested message (i.e. topic of paper she wrote in one of her courses), decides to use fully articulated repairs (i.e. "let me see what was it"; "what did it focus on").

HUMAN CONSTRAINT

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES	
A. Compensating for problems in information transfer	A.1. Substituting item	A.1.1. General item (<i>thing, stuff</i>)	
		A.1.2. <i>some</i> -pronoun, <i>wh-ever</i> pronoun	
		A.1.3. <i>bla bla bla, so so so</i>	
	A.2. Approximation	A.2.1. Coordination (<i>or, and</i>)	
		A.2.2. Parenthetical verb/adverbs (<i>I think, maybe</i>)	
		A.2.3. Preposition (<i>about, like</i>)	
	A.3. Acknowledgment	A.3.1. Explicit statement (<i>I don't remember</i>)	
		A.3.2. Question	
	A.4. Request for repair	A.4.1. Yes/no question (<i>do you mean...?</i>)	
		A.4.2. Wh-question (<i>what do you mean?</i>)	
	A.5. Repair	A.5.1. <i>I (don't) mean</i>	
		A.5.1. <i>pardon me, no</i>	
	B. Maintaining the verbal activity	B.1. Fillers	B.1.1. Vocalisation (<i>uh, mm</i>)
		B.2. Fully articulate utterance referring to the activity interrupting the conversation	

6.4.2. Language constraint

This 'interactional requirement' allows us to study all those devices which are available to the speaker to increase the effectiveness of the language system as a means of communication of all kinds of information, from the most objective facts to the most subjective feelings or impressions. One of the first aspects to consider is the use of a variety of items which are aimed at reinforcing or reducing the literal meaning of the expression modified. In the second place, there are all those metaphorical expressions which are part of ordinary language, and which are used instead of other more standard and literal expressions because of their increased effectiveness in conveying an intended meaning. In this second group, it is also possible to include the different possibilities of expressing emotional states such as amazement, anger, etc.

A. Adjusting the literal meaning

The first group of modifiers includes all those particles preceding lexical items (mainly verbs, adjectives and adverbs), with the function of emphasizing the literal meaning of the modified item. The two most frequent particles by far are *real/really* and *just* (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 447).

(84)

- S** And uh so, I **just** have a **really** hard time being able to get out of bed that early in the morning to get in here.
(2605-2606)

Extract (84) shows the Student's efforts to emphasize his inability to get to class on time because of her room-mates.

According to the data analyzed, both particles can modify verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The adverb **just** also appears modifying the pronoun **everything**. The possible combinations are exemplified in (85).

(85)

- it's **really** not enough (133)
- a **really** good piece (416)
- whoever **really** studied the (417)

- he's **just** really smart (417-418)
- they've **just** never seen them (863)
- you **just** can't be as precise (1262-1263)
- they've gotten by with **just** absolutely everything (3703-4)

Apart from **really** and **just** there are four other particles which appear in the data with a fairly high degree of frequency, and with the same function of reinforcing the literal meaning of the expression they modify. These are the adverbs **actually**, **right**, **at all** and the periphrastic verb **do**.

(86)

- S1 **Because I think every bit of this tape is gonna be -
the sound is gonna be dubbed into it.**
- P | (.....) | **!sure there's no problem
at all**
- S1 **I I don't**
- P | **I mean, other than actually doing it [laughter] >**
- S1 | (.....)
- S2 | **well (.....)**
- > P **technically it's not a problem. (1307-1314)**

In (86) "at all" reinforces the negative meaning of the verb, and "actually" directs the addressee's attention to the action referred by the verb "doing".

The rest of particles developing this emphasizing function do not appear with such a regularity and they are mostly adverbs: **absolutely, totally, ever, completely, well, exactly, tremendously, extremely, all, incredibly.**

The function of the second group of modifiers is the opposite to that of the first group. In this case the particles inserted are intended to reduce rather than emphasize the literal meaning of the modified expression. Two of the most representative examples are the expressions **kind of** and **sort of**, used before verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

(87)

- P **And uh see some whatever you get, some, you know, clever
ways of getting some new information on this, and >**
- S | **mhm**
- > P **what could make it sort of a really anthropological kind
of study and not just a (.....) (3493-3497)**

Extract (87) has already been mentioned to exemplify one of the strategies to diminish imposition. One way of doing this is precisely to question the exact semantic application of the word modified (i.e. study).

Other expressions restricting the absolute meaning and which are also quite frequent in the speech of the participants are fairly, like, pretty and quite. With a similar function although much less frequent we can find the adverbs relatively, rather, virtually, somehow and the adverbial phrases in a way/sense.

B. Appealing to non-literal meaning

Not all the interactions analyzed present the same great variety of images. There is one specific encounter (T9) in which both participants abandon the academic goals with which the Student had approached the interaction and adopt a very informal tone with a non-academic topic (the President of the U.S.A.). It is important to point out that in this case both participants used imagery with a much higher frequency than previously in the same conversation, when the topic was an academic one. One possible explanation for this might be that the use of images depends not only on the style of the speaker but also on the degree of involvement of the participants in the situation (cf. Tannen 1984).

The use of images in conversational language is mentioned by Chafe (1984: 1099). He found that the conversational samples he analyzed showed "a tendency toward concreteness and imageability". The function of imagery as facilitator of the act of communication by means of creating involvement of the participants is clearly pointed out by Tannen (1989: 135):

A major form of mutual participation in sense making is creating images: both by the speaker who describes or suggests an image in words, and the hearer or reader who creates an image based on that description or suggestion. Furthermore, (...), the power of images to communicate meaning and emotions resides in their ability to evoke scenes. Images, like dialogue, evoke scenes, and understanding is derived from scenes because they are composed of people in relation to each other, doing things that are culturally and personally recognizable and meaningful.

The metaphors that appear in the encounters analyzed belong to colloquial language, and they range between some which are very well known (e.g. till they come out of your ears, scared to death, turn on, blow, struggle, nuts, eat up time) and some which are very idiosyncratic of the specific person or socio-cultural context (e.g. pour over, at the drop of a hat, scavenge around, crap, money block, boo-boo). Extract (88) shows the relevance and effectiveness of imagery. In this case the participants have become quite involved talking about the President of the nation.

Analysis of the American encounters

(88)

- (P) He could never have made it in New York.
They'd eat him alive.
- S | Yes.. Definitely.
- P And somebody like Mario Cuomo would've split him up
little pieces. I mean, [laughter] literally. He never
could've won. (3747-3751)

Apart from images, there is another group of expressions of an interjectional nature which serve the speaker to express his/her emotional state. The expressions including the words **god** and **goodness** (e.g. **my goodness**, **oh god**) are more frequent than any of the others. There are other expressions which are simply vocalisations/euphemisms for **god** and **Jesus** (e.g. **gosh**, **jeez**) whereas others are simply vocalisations (e.g. **oh::**, **ah::**, **peehh**). Apart from these two possibilities, there are also fully articulate utterances like **I can't believe this** or **you made my day**, which also express an emotional state.

(89)

- P2 Allaa?
- P1 Yes? - Who is it? - Hi Linda!
- P2 | Hi. (h) I (h) couldn't (h) wait. (h)
I'm (h) sorry
- P1 | Oh:: boy! - Thank (h) you! [laughter] Oh (h) >
- P2 | Excuse (h) me. [laughter]
- > P1 you (h) made (h) my (h) day! (1836-1841)

The emphasized segments in (89) are intended to convey the happiness of P1 for the present he has received from P2 (i.e. Mexican tortillas).

LANGUAGE CONSTRAINT

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Adjusting the literal meaning	A.1. Emphasis	A.1.1. Adverbial modifiers (<i>just, realtually, right, at all, completely, all, incredibly</i>)
	A.1.2. Periphrastic verb (<i>do</i>)	A.2.1. Premodifiers (<i>kind of, sort of</i>)
	A.2. Reduction	A.2.2. Adverbial modifiers (<i>like fairly, pretty, somehow, in a way, in a sense</i>)
	B. Appealing to non-literal meaning	B.1. Images and metaphors
B.2. Exclamations		B.2.2. Vocalisations (<i>oh, ah, peeh</i>)
B.2.3. Fully articulate utterance (<i>I can't believe this</i>)		

CHAPTER VII. ANALYSIS OF THE CATALAN ENCOUNTERS

7.0. Introduction

The extension of the analysis of twenty professor-student encounters in an American university with another five encounters of the same type in a Catalan university is intended to suggest the possibility that the framework offers to approach the analysis of verbal interaction from a contrastive point of view.

Efforts towards describing systematic differences in terms of strategies and goals that speakers of different languages use in verbal interaction involve two main shortcomings¹. In the

1 The most representative of these efforts is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Research Project (Blum-Kulka, S. *et al.*, eds., 1989), which focuses on two speech acts (requests and apologies) in eight languages or varieties. The original project participants were S. Blum-Kulka, C. Faerck, J. House-Edmonson, G. Kasper, E. Oishtain, E. Rintell, J. Thomas, E. Weizman, N. Wolfson, E. Ventola and H. Vollmer.

first place, they take the unit of the speech act as the basis for contrast, without questioning the specific definitions that participants in an encounter may make of the situation according to their socio-cultural background. What this means in terms of their analysis is that, for example, when testing subjects on the speech act of apology, they force them to carry out this task, independently of whether the situation calls for an apology or not in their particular culture. In the second place, these studies seem not to take into account an idea proposed by the ethnomethodologists, among others, that meaning is not a pre-existing reality but something which is progressively and cooperatively constructed and deconstructed in the course of an interaction. As Gumperz (1989:1) says:

Interpretations are ecologically constrained by considerations of sequencing, conversational management and negotiations of meaning, and, since sequencing is by its very nature an interactive process, they are cooperatively made and validated.

In order to confront those two problems the present framework takes as the unit of analysis the speech event instead of the speech act. The problem of the progressive construction of meaning is tackled by, firstly, working on real interactions collected in a natural setting instead of laboratory conditions. Secondly, the strategies that speakers use are neither functionally nor formally defined *a priori* as a series of potential linguistic structures they may use.

7.1. Sociolinguistic competence

7.1.1. Presentation of Self

A. Avoiding assertiveness

Although it is in the interest of both the Professor and the Student to present themselves as sure of what they know, they must always tread carefully on this area not to sound excessively axiomatic. The more axiomatic a person is in his/her statements the higher the risk of failing to be accurate with the reality. Therefore it is in the benefit of one's credibility to avoid this risk.

This is the way to interpret the presence of the question tag *no?* in both the Professor's and the Student's utterances, where at the same time that it indicates uncertain knowledge it contributes to express the required lack of assertiveness. Notice in (1) that the Student is merely repeating what the Professor has just said (and, therefore, it is not possible to interpret the question tag as a marker of uncertain information). Nevertheless, she still adds the question tag.

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

(1)

P Al ser mestra tu, si em veus a veure un cop al trimestre i et
prescates als: exams - i em fas el treball
corresponent - per mi, doncs si això ho fas bé - vull dir
la prova que facis doncs te'n surts'

S Ja.

P No hi ha problema. Eh?

S O sigui, un cop al trimestre venir-lo a veure >

P |(.....)

>S comentar el com va el treball, tot això, no? >

P |Sí (.....)

>S | presentar-me a les proves. (638-650)

Another way of diminishing the assertiveness of one's discourse is to hedge it with a series of words which make the statement or the question less blunt. There is a first group of expressions by means of which the speaker indicates uncertainty. It consists of parenthetical verbs like *semblar*, *suposar*, verbal periphrases like *intentar (de) + verb*, *mirar de + verb*, as well as other expressions with a similar meaning (*no ho sé, si és possible, potser*).

(2)

S |Hauria de demanar apunts de primer no?

P Sí. - Sí. Sí.

S |I anar repassant.

~ (.....)

S O prendre classes de llatí.

[]

P Bé. Com que és llatí vulgar, el llatí que et poden donar ar.
és llatí clàssic. I: ss no sé fins a quin punt et pot ser
molt útil. (548-557)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

In (2) the Professor wants to communicate to the Student his scepticism about the usefulness of taking private classes in Latin. The hedging work is seen clearly if we consider that in essence the message intended is no other than "no et serà útil".

The third type of hedging involves a group of expressions which, again, diminish the force of the utterance. However, in this case it is not a matter of showing uncertainty but rather adding an element to avoid the absolute meaning of the expression modified. The difference is clear if we compare the force of the following hypothetical utterance, (a), with the actual utterance in which the data appeared, (b).

(3)

- P | Mhm. Em vas portar la: la fitxa ja?
S | (a) No
 (b) No No la tinc encara. No. (245-247)

The expression "no la tinc encara no" in (3) cannot be considered as a justification for not having given a personal identification card to the Professor because both the Student and the Professor know that it is the responsibility of the former to have it from the very moment she registers for the course. Therefore, the segment does not restore the face of the Student by means of justification. The effect of the expression is more in the direction of making the answer less direct by introducing a new verb, pretending that the negation "no" is not directed at the action mentioned by the Professor ("portar") but rather at

the one mentioned by the Student ("tenir").

The expression *exactament* can also accompany direct questions or negations with the aim of reducing their directness. This is the case of (4), where the Professor seems to want to disguise his apparently unjustified lack of knowledge about the Researcher's background (the Professor is a member of the Board of Advisers of the cultural institution financing the Researcher's project, therefore he read about the Researcher's background previously; he mentions this in the segment emphasized in italics).

(4)

S | Clar. El que passa, mira jo al juny vaig presentar el, bueno
un projecte de. d'investigació de treball (.....)

P | *Sí. Sí. Sí. El em pensava
que el guardava aquí, però resulta que el tinc a casa. Ara l'he
estat buscant però el tinc a casa. Em sembla, bé, recordo
que el vaig llegir abans abans de l'estiu.*

S | Sí. Llavors, bueno, (doncs) no sé com
s'articula tot això. No? Es a dir Què hem de fer o com =

P = *ab sí eh exactament tu de quina especialitat ets?*
(1196-1207)

B. Explaining and justifying

To explain and justify one's actions is a necessary requirement for the subject if he/she is not to be seen as an arbitrary sort of person whose actions are not the product of careful thinking. Since this is mainly an activity based on speech

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

actions, the speaker must on certain occasions explain previous utterances which may affect his/her face.

(5)

P Eh? Es tracta de fer-hi pràctica amb això. Perquè ja sé per experiència que és difícil d'arribar-hi.

S |Al (h) ser (h) novato'

S Al ser novato'

P No. No. Vull dir eh totbom hi ha passat per aquí. Eh?
(1088-1092)

In (5) we can see the Professor explaining a previous statement of his, which the Student seems to have interpreted as directly addressed to him.

Apart from repairing certain messages by offering an explanation, the speaker must also justify the presence or absence of certain verbal or non-verbal actions.

(6)

P Eh però els exemples es poden variar. Pot canviar la manera d'explicar. De vegades s'hi pot afegir alguna cosa. I ho dic això perquè avui mateix hi he afegit - eh - alguna cosa en el primer bloc concretament de: sobre les funcions del llenguatge. (128-132)

(7)

S Mm farem com hem fet aquesta vegada. No? Vull dir que si tinc algun dubte o hi ha alguna cosa que li vull comentar, truco i quedem. No?

P Sí. Sí. Tu t'apuntes una sèrie de - de coses que em vulguis comentar =

S = Sí. Sí. Sí.

S Es que ara preguntes concretes no en tinc. No?
(781-787)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

In (6) the Professor proves his general statement that certain aspects of the course may be different from one year to the next by means of a specific example. Extract (7) includes a justification by the Student for the fact that she is not making specific questions on the contents of the course.

C. Displaying a positive self

The individual's wants for negative and positive face depending on perceived dimensions of distance and power are distributed in interaction by using different strategies. The social self is not something that pre-exists but something which must be constantly constructed and deconstructed in order to become accepted in a specific social situation. In this section we will concentrate on those strategies undertaken by the individual himself/herself to show the positive aspect of his/her public face, that is to say, "to be thought as normal, contributing member of his social world" (Scollon and Scollon 1983: 166).

On the part of the professor we observe a tendency to explicitly state his preferences by means of utterances in which he presents himself as a coherent character. Perhaps the most explicit linguistic features in this sub-strategy are the presence of the first person singular pronoun (jo).

(8)

PT En principi es serveixen els apunts de l'any passat. Eh no obstant això, jo sempre aconsello que s'estigui en contacte. (108-109)

In (8) the Professor is advising the Students to keep in contact with other students who can attend classes regularly.

The self of the Student, in order to be socially accepted, must be one which incorporates the idea of academic seriousness as well as responsibility. Notice in (9) the insistence (expressed in four different turns) of the Student on showing the consistency of her intention to undertake a future action recommended by the Professor (i.e. to hand in her personal identification card as soon as possible).

(9)

PJ Si No. Això de de la fitxa m interessa perquè sinó després perdó () de vista i hi ha tanta gent per la casa que
S | Sí. Jo jo ja.
Després de Nadal perquè ara venen les vacances ja i
PJ Hm. Sí,
vull dir m ho envies després de Nadal. Però no esperis al >
S | Sí sí
> PJ mes de març. No esperis al març quan tornis a venir >
S | No. No. No. No. No esperaré no
> PJ Perquè al final haurà passat molt de temps
S | Després de Nadal ja les donaré totes i ja està
(832-844)

D. Emphasizing modesty

As was said in the analysis of the American encounters, the task of 'emphasizing one's modesty' is mainly undertaken by the Student and it is directly connected with the Modesty Maxim in Leech's Politeness Principle which can be expressed as (a) minimize praise of self, and (b) maximize dispraise of self (Leech 1983: 136-138). In the two examples included below we can see that this strategy consists of disclaiming any of the rights to be taken as (i) a person whose actions are important to others or as (ii) a person whose actions are consistent. Extract (10) exemplifies this type of strategy showing the Students diminishing the importance of the encounter. This is achieved not only by refusing the Professor's invitation to sit down but also by means of the particle "no" anteposed to the expression of the goal, suggesting something like "what we have to say is not really decisive").

(10)

P **Podeu seure** Els qui pugueu

S1 **No cal.**

S2 **Es igual.**

[brief exchange among the students to decide who will take a seat]

P **Digueu**

S1 **No. Es que venim a parlar de lo del treball'** (889-896)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

In (11) the Researcher anticipates a potential negative presentation of self by stating the lack of consistency in his academic and professional background.

(11)

- P = Ah sí. Eh: exactament tú de quina especialitat ets?
R Bueno. Això és una mica borrascós. Es a dir. Teòricament sóc de filosofia, però a l'institut dono classe de matemàtiques també. Me dedico a la informàtica professionalment. Es una barreja de moltes coses. No?
(1207-1211)

E. Depersonalizing

The tendency to detach oneself from the actual actions being commented seems to be very much in accordance with the need to avoid the impression of presenting an excessively self-centred image of oneself. In Catalan this can be done by avoiding the use of the first person singular and using instead the impersonal *es/se* or the first and second person in an impersonal sense. Extract (12) exemplifies the fluctuation between using this strategy or not. The Student personalizes the Professor's action ("*vostè*) ho donava") and the Professor answers with an impersonal action ("*es* donava") followed by a personal one ("he donat").

(12)

- S Això ho donava a la classe. No?
P Sí. Això es donava a la classe, però a la classe he donat més material. (315-317)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

In (13) we can clearly see the efforts of the Professor towards generalizing and depersonalizing a question which the Student posed in a very specific and personal way, using the first person plural ("entre els del grup hem d'explicar la nostra recensió als altres"): "s'està treballant (vs. "esteu treballant"); "un", "l'altre" (vs. "tu", "ell"); "no podem" (vs. "no podeu")

(13)

- S Després de: per la recensió eh: posava que s'havia de posar en comú eh el llibre. Em sembla que entre els del grup hem d'explicar la nostra recensió als altres.
- P Sí. Eh això és un dels passos útils perquè, és clar, quan s'està treballant en grup això vol dir que un llegeix uns llibres, l'altre en llegeix uns altres. L'un fitxa uns llibres, l'altre en fitxa uns altres. Aleshores, si el treball és de grup convé que el que llegeix un ho sàpiga l'altre també O sigui. Que l'altre estigui assabentat de què és el que està (....) ha estat llegint l'altre company o els altres companys del grup. Es a dir. No podem anar treballant individualment i després doncs cada un escriu un capítol (1127-1140)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

PRESENTATION OF SELF

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Avoiding assertiveness	A.1. Subjectivity	A.1.1. Parenthetical verb (<i>semblar, suposar</i>)
	A.2. Non-factual meaning	A.2.1. Question tag (<i>no?</i>)
		A.2.2. Verbal periphrasis (<i>intentar + verb, mirar de + verb</i>)
		A.2.3. Parenthetical phrase (<i>no ho sé, si és possible, potser</i>)
	A.2. Indirection	
B. Explaining and justifying	B.1. Explanation	B.1.1. <i>vull dir</i>
	B.2. Justification	B.2.1. Connective (<i>perquè</i>)
C. Displaying a positive self	C.1. Statement of personality	C.1.1. Verb in 1st pers. sing.
	C.2. Emphasis on positive aspects	
D. Emphasizing modesty	D.1. Minimization of self	
	D.2. Dispraise of self	
E. Depersonalizing		E.0.1. Impersonal <i>es/se</i>
		E.0.2. Impersonal 1st and 2nd pers.

7.1.2. Social Distance

A. Appealing to the individual

In this kind of transactional (vs. interactional) encounters, where the participants are to behave very much according to their institutional role, the fact that one of them introduces a personal topic, considering the addressee as an equal individual rather than a representative of an institutional role, may be considered as an effort towards reducing social distance.

(14)

- P | No.: Suposo que després de mirar tot això i >
S | Em preocuparé de >
> P començar a fer el treball, te'n sortiran. Mm?
> S l'altre llibre - clar
S Sí. Sí. Suposo que sí. -- Molt bé
P Molt bé. Doncs bones festes, bon any.
S Igualment. A mi no m'han començat molt bé però bueno.
P I perquè no t'han començat bé?
S Amb (h) una (h) grip
P Ah bé No. Això passa. Dona. (861-871)

In (14) we have an example in which the Professor and the Student, after agreeing to close the encounter (notice the exchange of "molt bé"), become involved in a personal topic (i.e. the Student's flu) initiated quite involuntarily by the Professor's leave-taking expression "bones festes":

B. Breaking formality

The introduction of words, expressions and meanings typical of a more informal situation can be considered another strategy to reduce the social distance between the participants in the interaction. In our data this strategy appears in the form of vocatives (*noia, home*), humorous remarks (*llevat que t'enviis per correu a tu mateixa*), or the uttering of a leave-taking expression typical of speech among equals (*venga*).

(15)

- S *Amb (h)una (h) grip'*
P **Ah bé. No això passa. Dona**
S | *Desastroses.*
P **Això és un refredat d'estar per casa. No. (870-873)**

Sample (15) is the continuation of (14). We can see the use of a vocative (in italics) and a deliberate breaking of Leech's Maxim of Sympathy (1983: 138) to produce a humorous effect (in bold face). The Professor seems to be discreetly laughing at the Student's claim that she has just come down with a bad flu.

Analysis of the Catalan encounters.

C. Sympathizing

This is another strategy intended to reduce the social distance and which is also found as one of the maxims of Leech's Politeness Principle: the Sympathy Maxim (i.e. (a) minimize antipathy between self and other, (b) maximize sympathy between self and other) (Leech 1983: 138-139). It consists mainly in showing concern about the addressee's feelings, and this may take the form of either positive feedback, in which the speaker expresses positive impressions caused by the addressee, or expressions in which the speaker takes the addressee's feelings and needs into account thereby showing his solidarity with the Student.

(16)

(P) **Si, home. Doncs és bo que - que tinguem: - un primer contacte. (1530-1)**

(17)

P Clar. Si fos la Universitat a Distància això, doncs tindries més possibilitats, més facilitats de. de consulta >

S |Ob clar - Per supost (794-797)

>P telefònica (...)

In (16) the Professor expresses his positive feelings towards the encounter which is about to finish. Extract (17) is also taken from the last stages of another encounter in which the Professor has informed the Student about the work involved in the course

for those students like her, who cannot attend classes regularly.

D. Denying social distance

One way of reducing the social distance between two people can be to produce an impression of the existence of a shared background or communion between the speaker and the addressee. This strategy is described in Leech (1983: 138) as the product of the Agreement Maxim in the Politeness Principle ((a) minimize disagreement between self and other, (b) maximize agreement between self and other). This agreement is something other than the provision of backchannel, and therefore it does not take the typical backchannel form *mm*. Instead we find *sí, clar, ja*. Sometimes the student anticipates what the teacher is about to say. It is also possible to find an agreement which does not take any of those typical forms but which nevertheless shows the degree of synchrony between the participants.

(18)

- P Sí Sí, sí. Es el problema que tenim en aquesta casa. Que hi ha molt de bidells molt personal de de serveis, però en >
S |ja
> P canvi ens falta personal docent.
S Sí, sí.
P I així van les coses.
S Com a tot arreu Hm. - Mm l'extensió del treball? (732-738)

Extract (18) contains three turns by the Student, in which she expresses her agreement on a lateral topic (i.e. lack of teaching staff and the excess of service staff) which the Professor has introduced.

The Professor can also deny the existence of social distance between himself and the Student by suggesting that both speaker and addressee belong to the same group. This is done by using the first person plural when commenting actions for which the Students are wholly responsible.

(19)

P Això al juny --- I després, eh. -- Bé. **Hauriem** de fer la representació - (...) **Ho hauriem** de fer en (plan) per la prova final. - Tot i que *em poden* donar un cassette amb l'assaig amb guio preparat No? (495-498)

In (19) we can see how this strategy works because in spite of referring to certain actions with the first person plural it is clear that there are two different sides in the social situation: on the one hand the Professor identifies himself with the Students ("**hauriem** de fer la representació) but, on the other hand, he presents himself as the *gatekeeper*² (" [ells] **em poden** donar un cassette").

2 See Erickson 1976

E. Prompting interactivity

One very subtle way of reducing social distance in a social interaction in which, in principle, one of the participants has all the power and important information and the other is there mainly to listen and obtain information, is to make the conversation more interactive. This strategy involves the insertion of short clues indicating that the construction of the discourse is a cooperative enterprise, and that even though the Professor has most of the information, he depends on the student's contribution (even if this contribution is limited to providing backchannel) for the progress in his/her task. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the interactive particles included in this variable are typical of speech among equals, because this is precisely the impression that the Professor wants to produce on the student.

The most representative particles with this specific function take the form of brief questions demanding backchannel. These clues usually appear after completed statements and their briefness is justified by the fact that they are intended only to produce the impression of interactivity, giving the student a chance to contribute to the interaction. However, it is clear that the professor does not expect a real interruption of the discourse but rather the simple provision of verbal or visual backchannel. The instances observed in the

interaction involve the following particles: *eh?*, *no?*, *mm?*, *hm?* and *mhm?*.

(20)

(P) Es simplement una qüestió de comoditat vostra.

S Ja.

P |*Eh?* No és que no pugueu fer la recensió d'un >

S | *mhm*

> P altre. Naturalment que s'hi pot fer. *No?* Però és que les
recensions, en principi les haurieu de fer igualment pel
treball de grup. *Eh?* (172-179)

In (20) the Professor explains the function of making a series of book reviews in a group project. Two aspects of the extract are worth pointing out: (i) the synchrony between the action of demanding and supplying backchannel after the first turn; (ii) the variety of tokens used in order to produce the impression of interactivity.