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

**Volume I**

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Analysis of the Catalan encounters

**SOCIAL DISTANCE**

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Appealing to the individual	A.1. Personal matters	
B. Breaking formality	B.1. Humour	
	B.2. Different register	B.2.1. Vocative ( <i>home, dona, noià</i> )
		B.2.2. Leave-taking ( <i>venga</i> )
C. Sympathizing	C.1. Positive reaction	
	C.2. Solidarity	
D. Diminishing social distance	D.1. Agreement	D.1.1. One-word turn ( <i>sí, clar, ja</i> )
		D.1.2. Anticipating turn
	D.2. Inclusive subject	D.2.1. 1st pers. plural
E. Prompting interactivity		E.0.1. Vocalization ( <i>eh?, mhmm?, mm?, hm?</i> ); question tag <i>no?</i>

### **7.1.3. Power**

#### ***A. Acknowledging authority***

Since the Professor has complete power over this type of social activity, the Student must make sure that the actions he/she intends to undertake have the Professor's consent. However, the power the Professor enjoys is in principle not based on the arbitrariness of the institution but on his higher intellectual capacity and greater knowledge about the matter. Therefore the Student is not simply demanding consent but also advice. The linguistic consequence of this situation is that the Student's discourse incorporates most of the questions, phrased either as full yes/no and wh-questions or as statements followed by the question tag *no?*.

(21)

- P Mm - a baix a la biblioteca el podràs trobar  
S D'acord - - I llavors, jo si faig aquest treball no he de fer la representació ? (441-443)

(22)

- S Venim per parlar amb vostè.  
P Hola.  
S El tema d'ensenyament i aprenentatge?  
P Si'  
S A quins autors en podem usar per fer?: (1004-1008)

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Samples (21) and (22) exemplify two typical verbal actions by the Student in this type of encounters. In the former extract one Student demands consent and in the latter there is a demand for advice.

The way participants in the conversation address one another is a clear sign of the power difference between them. Although in the present interactions there is no use of honorific titles like *Senyor, Doctor*, we find the presence of Power in the different use of the second person pronoun. This can be seen in (23), where the Professor addresses the Students with the "tu/vosaltres" form and the Student uses the "vostè" form.

(23)

- S Venim per parlar amb vostè.  
P Hola.  
S El tema d'ensenyament i aprenentatge?  
P Sí.  
S A quins autors en podem anar per fer '  
P Autors.  
S Autors  
P Amb això  
S (.....) llibres  
P Els heu de buscar vosaltres. La bibliografia és una part del treball. Es la primera part del treball = (1004-1014)

### *B. Assuming authority*

Since any organized activity abides by a series of norms and the Professor is responsible for organizing this activity, his speech contains utterances in which he makes these norms

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explicit. The most relevant linguistic feature is the use of modal verbs referring to the presence or absence of obligation (**haver de, poder**). In giving more personal directions, the Professor can make use of the volitional verb **voler** as well as the imperative mood.

(24)

- ? **Vés de tant en tant a l'Alcover Moll, també. - Sobretot >**  
S | **Mhm hm**  
> P **per preparar el text. - Convé que quan tris el text pel comentari filològic eh: sigui del que es presti a comentar. Eh: és a dir que - que no sigui molt senzill. El primer pas a fer és el trasllat al català actual, >**  
S | **Ja.**  
> P **perquè serà un fragment català medieval. El primer pas a fer és el trasllat al català actual. - I després - línia a línia vas comentant - els fenòmens que es presenten. - Perquè en aquells moments tu estaràs davant - d'un text - text - d'un català a mig evolucionar. el català dels segles (depèn però) - de l'època que el tries, no? Segles tretze, catorze o quinze'. Hauràs de procurar trobar l'ètim al llatí vulgar.(604-619)**

In (24) the Professor is advising the Student on how to go about preparing a course project. Apart from the the imperative from "vés" and the modal verb "hauràs de", it is interesting to point out the presence of the indicative form "vas comentant" with an imperative meaning.

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**POWER**

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Acknowledging authority	A.1. Request for permission	A.1.1. Question
		A.1.2. Question tag ( <i>no?</i> )
	A.2. Request for direction	(see A.1.1. and A.1.2.)
	A.3. Honorifics	A.3.1. <i>vosté</i>
B. Assuming authority	B.1. Requirements/obligations	B.1.1. Modal verbs in present or future tense ( <i>haver de, poder</i> )
	B.2. Personal direction	B.2.1. Verb <i>voler</i> in 1st person
		B.2.2. Imperative mood

#### **7.1.4. Imposition**

##### ***A. Mitigating imposition in directions***

Although the Professor has been granted by the institution the right to impose a course of action on the Student, it is interesting to see how he tries to avoid causing an excessively impositive impression by hedging his utterances with non-assertive expressions. The use of the conditional instead of the future tense is one possibility (especially with modal verbs referring to the presence/absence of obligation like **haver de** and **poder**, and also with a verb expressing volition like **voler**) but the data show other ways of facing this 'risk': the expression **vull dir** preceding an impositive action<sup>3</sup> (one possible interpretation would be to say that 'wanting to say something is not the same as saying it'), verbal periphrases like **mirar de** + infinitive, **convenir que** / **procurar que** + subjunctive, and parenthetical expressions like **a ser possible**, **tenir manera**.

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3 PT- (Oh no Es que en concret vull dir ho heu d'anar a buscar vosaltres  
(926-529))

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(25)

- P | Mhm. Em vas portar la: la fitxa ja?  
S No. No la tinc encara. No.  
P No.  
P Doncs l'hauries de de, no sé. Secretaria deu estar tancat ara.  
S Mm.  
P I no pots, no tens manera que algu et reculli un imprès de fitxa o així? (245-253)

In (25) the Professor requests the Student to give him her academic identification card. We can see three different types of non-impositive expressions: the first one avoids imposition by using the hypothetical mood ("hauries"); in the second case the modal verb is substituted by a verbal periphrasis intended to relieve the individual from responsibility ("tens manera"); the third strategy will be further exemplified in the next paragraph, and it involves the action of giving freedom of option to the addressee ("o així").

The last strategy mentioned in the previous paragraph is intended to avoid giving the impression that the speaker is imposing his/her wishes, and this is done by implying that the addressee is free to choose. One possibility consists of making suggestions including more than one option.

(26)

- P Aleshores, el que et podré mirar de fer -- és, a veure. -- Et podries arribar a l'IEI demà al matí o quan tinguis temps demà passat o aquesta setmana al més aviat (que puguis) i prendre nota del material informàtic que ja tenen a la guia de l'IEI. Perquè jo encara no sé exactament què hi ha. (1292-1297)

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In (26) the Professor asks the Researcher to go to the main building of the cultural institution financing his research. This is probably an extreme example of the need to supply possible options which can suit the addressee: (i) "demà"; (ii) "quantinguis temps"; (iii) "demà passat"; (iv) "aquesta setmana"; (v) "al més aviat que puguis".

It is also possible to leave the number of options open by simply finishing the utterance with the coordinator *o* and also by explicitly giving freedom of option to the addressee (*o com vulguis*). In both cases the coordinator *o* is present. The use of the modal verb *poder* (as opposed to *haver de*) in suggesting possible courses of actions implies that the addressee may opt not to take it.

It is significant, though, that in the Catalan encounters the most explicit instances in which the speaker gives options to the addressee are not found in exchanges between Professor and Student but between Professor and Professor, where there is a balance of power.

(27)

- P2    *Hola*  
P1    *Hola. - Si vols m'esperes al teu despatx i vinc, vinc d'aquí a una estona. - Cinc minuts o deu.*  
P2    *Vale doncs.*  
P1    *[què et sembla?*  
P2    *Saps on és? (Si vols vinc) jo*  
P1    *[sí*  
P2    *O com vulguis. (563-570)*

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

Extract (27) is part of an exchange between two Professors, in which they try to agree on a place and time to meet. It is interesting to consider the number and explicitness of the non-impositive expressions ("si vois", "què et sembla", "o com vulguis"), especially if we compare them to the low frequency and the implicit nature of non-impositive expressions addressed by the Professor to the Student.

#### ***B. Acknowledging the addressee's negative face***

Under this heading we could classify all those segments the content of which has to do with the action of imposing oneself. By means of certain expressions the speaker acknowledges the fact that his/her demands may question the addressee's "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distractions and, in general, to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown and Levinson 1978). Extract (28) consists of the Student's action of thanking the Professor for having attended her.

(28)

P	Té molt mèrit això té molt mèrit (.. ..)
S	Veiga.Gràcies. Eh?
	Bones festes (881-883)

The Professor may also resort to this type of strategy if he considers that he is giving an impression of arbitrary imposition. In (29) the Student and the Professor are discussing two of the assignments for the course: an individual assignment involving a review of a book and a group project. The Student inquires about the possibility of doing a review of a book which is not directly related to the topic of group project.

(29)

S1 Las recensiones, se puede coger por ejemplo, ¿no? Podría tocarnos el primer tema este. ¿No? Pues ¿podría hacerse una recensión de cualquier otro tema? O tiene que ser necesariamente del del ( ... )

P Eh, jo recomano que sigui del mateix centre d'interès. Però una qüestió vostra. No? per

[18 lines below in the transcription]

P |Eh? No és que no que no puguen fer la recensió d'un altre.>

S

|Mhm.

> P Naturalment que s'hi pot fer. No? (152-157)

## IMPOSITION

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Mitigating imposition in directions	A.1. Possibility vs. obligation	A.1.1. Conditional form of verbs referring to obligation ( <i>poder, haver de</i> ) and volition ( <i>voler</i> )
	A.2. Hedges	A.2.1. <i>vull dir</i>
		A.2.2. Verbal periphrasis ( <i>mirar de, procurar que</i> )
A.2.3. Parenthetical expression ( <i>a ser possible, tenir manera</i> )		
A.3. Options	A.3.1. Clausal coordinator: <i>o</i>	A.3.2. <i>poder vs. haver de</i>
B. Acknowledging the addressee's negative face	B.1. Thanking	
	B.2 Clarifying potential arbitrariness.	

## **7.2. Discourse competence**

### **7.2.1. Topic**

#### *A. Signalling topic coherence*

Because of the transactional nature of the interactions analyzed, the range of topic shift and topic variation may not be as great as in the case of informal conversations. However, we must not forget that the Student often approaches the interaction with more than one goal, and in order to move from one to the other some means of shifting the topic may be required. Extract (30) may be a good example of the attempts by the Student to shift the topic of the conversation by means of cohesive particles like "i", "llavors" and "perquè", resulting in the introduction of a new goal in the conversation. In this case the Student is interested for the conversation to shift to the topic of the review of a book all the students must do. After two unsuccessful attempts to get a turn he is finally able to effect the intended transition.

(30)

- S Llavors, això ; ... amb tota la llengua en general,  
(.....) estrangera.
- P | Naturalment no cal que sigui
- S No cal que sigui una llengua estrangera concreta.
- S I llavors, per fer lo de la recensió,
- P | Igual que l'aprenentatge  
(.....) aprenentatge d'una llengua tampoc
- S Estrangeres en general (... ..)
- P | Cal, tampoc cal que sigui aprenentatge d'una  
llengua estrangera. Pot ser aprenentatge, doncs de la >
- S | Aha.
- > P primera llengua (A veure.) Això entra més dintre de la  
psicologia infantil. No? Del de com un nen aprèn a  
parlar la seva llengua
- S I llavors,
- P | Això és també aprenentatge
- S Perquè lo de les recensions que s'ha de fer, que ha de ser ?  
Un llibre en concret o d'una part d'un llibre ? (965-982)

In order to construct a unified meaning the speaker is responsible for the distribution of cues intended to convey some coherence between utterances. These cues consist of connectives (adverbs: **doncs, llavors, aleshores, després, sí, no**; conjunctions: **i, però, perquè**) which are regularly used to establish cohesion between sentences, with the difference that in this case the connectors are not meant to point at a clear logical relationship between the content of the utterances but rather at the continuity of topic. It is necessary at this point to bring up the concept of *internal conjunction* suggested in Halliday and Hasan (1976: 241) with which they refer to those connectives which make use of the relations "that are inherent in the

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communication process, in the forms of interaction between speaker and hearer" rather than the relations "that are inherent in the phenomena that language is used to talk about".

(31)

- S1 El tema ja - l'haurem de tenir - escollit apart.  
P No. No. No. No. El tema concret de treball el >  
S1 | O potser  
> P podeu escollir a posteriori. El podeu escollir després =  
S1 = O sigui. Ara agafem una recensió sobre un llibre (.....)  
S2 | (.....)  
P | Sobre un  
llibre que tracti més o menys algun tema relacionat amb el  
vostre centre d'interès.  
S2 Aha. Perquè -- lo que vèiem difícil era de trobar el tema  
perquè no sabem' (1052-1062)

(32)

- P | I a vegades la placa val tant o més que el programa. Però,  
vaja.  
- - Sí, home. Doncs és bo que - que tinguem: - un primer  
contacte (.....)  
S | A veure si es pot fer alguna cosa. Si  
P | A veure  
S D'acord. Doncs jo el que faré ara és parlar amb el amb el  
Gasset i ja ja mirarem tot això. (1529-1536)

The connectors "perquè" in (31) and "doncs" in (32) cannot be said to link two specific utterances. In the first case "perquè" succeeds in linking the utterance it precedes to the rest of the discourse because it is a justification not for the content of a previous utterance but rather for the Student's action of inquiring about the election of the topic of the course project.

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In (32) the particle "doncs" expresses a consequence of the way in which the whole encounter has developed rather than of the content of a specific utterance.

The particles *bé* and *molt bé* are used with the function of marking the boundary between one aspect of a topic and another rather than pointing at the relationship between the old topic and the new one. It seems as if the speaker were saying that he/she is happy with what has been said so far about one specific topic and that, therefore, he/she finds it appropriate to move on to a different one. It is interesting to point out that because of his powerful position it is usually the Professor who is in charge of saying when to close a topic and begin a new one.

(33)

- P | Amb qui la vas fer? Amb quin professor o professora?  
S Hab ho hauria de mirar. Es deia Montse no me'n recordo ara del - Montserrat Montse es >  
P | Montse  
> S deia, però del cognom no me'n recordo ara  
P *Bé.* - Mira. Jo en aquests moments, a veure. Em sembla >  
S | N'hi havia tants. Hi >  
> P que tinc això Alfabet fonètic - Aquí tens exemples de >  
> S ^ via nou assignatures per curs  
> P mbols fonètics amb - (unes) paraules catalanes  
(301-311)

In (33) it is the Professor who decides to shift the topic (i.e. from the topic about the Student's background in phonetics to the specific information about the course) and he announces the transition by means of the particle "bé"



*B. Unfolding topic*

The interactional requirement of Topic is also related to that of Information Management because in introducing a new topic the speaker needs to draw the attention of the addressee so that it is recognized as a new topic. Thus, we can always find some kind of topicalization in topic transition segments.

(36)

- P Mhm -- Eh: -- Aquests fenòmens, bé. Tu mateixa ho veuràs. No: ( . ) nom que estan exemplificats cadascun d'ells -- I ja veuràs de què van. - El que sí que és més complicat i això / Sí Evidentment. Sí Per això és un >
- S | Això ( . ) No?
- >P esquema ( . ) El que passa que al parlar de les >
- S | Ja ja
- >P evolucions s'ha de fer servir aquesta terminologia.  
(581-588)

In (36) we see how a different subtopic (i.e. to use a specific terminology) is introduced by means of topicalized clauses (i.e. "el que sí que és més complicat"; "el que passa que") which will be described in detail in the section dealing with Information Management.

As was said before, introducing a topic usually involves some kind of signalling, calling the addressee's attention that a shift to a new topic is about to take place. It is for this reason that apart from topicalized sentences like those emphasized in (36), the speakers can also use metastatements announcing a shift

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in topic (e.g. "una altra cosa"; "una pregunta").

(37)

P Això sí que, això us puc dir que ho he fet nou perquè ho he fet avui mateix . Aquest matí. I sé que l'any passat no. Vaig parar amb Jakobson. I la crítica de Coseriu no la vaig - no no la vaig no la vaig fer.

S Una altra cosa, lo sap aquell llibret que vam comprar >

P | Sí?

> S l'any passat? (137-143)

In (37) the Student shifts the topic of the encounter from the subjects covered in the course to a required textbook.

Whenever the topic has appeared before, the speaker also has some means available to reintroduce it. Most of the expressions that appear in the data involve a metastatement with the verb *dir* and/or the anaphoric pronoun *això* (*ja (et) dic; això de ...*). The way in which the topic is reintroduced depends on the time elapsed between the first time it was mentioned and the point at which it is brought up in the conversation again: the further apart in the discourse the naming of the topic is the more explicit the reintroduction must be. In (38), for example, we can see how the reintroduction of the topic (i.e. number of pages for a course project) requires (i) the use of a metastatement ("*i t'ho dic*") and (ii) an anaphoric particle ("*això*") accompanied by the naming of the topic ("*de les dotze pàgines*").

(38)

(P) I pel que fa al comentari i l'extensió, doncs procurar (al) passat a màquina que no: no sobrepassi: no sobrepassi les: dotze pàgines o una cosa així. Eh?

S | Les dotze pàgines.

{15 lines below}

P | Eh? - I t'ho dic això de les dotze pàgines perquè / Bé, dic que no sobrepassi. Eh? (742-761)

The exposition of the different aspects of a topic requires some kind of markers which indicate how one aspect stands in relation to the others. The examples from the data are the adverb *ara*, which, like its English translation, indicates a shift in the orientation of the speaker towards the topic (Schiffrin 1987) and the expression *això d'una banda* (1307).

(39)

(P) I amb el material que aniré donant, i consultant una mica aquestes gramàtiques i diccionaris te'n pots sortir fent els treballs.

S Ja.

P Ara. Si es vol tenir nota evidentment s'haurà de treballar una mica més. (700-706)

We can see in (39) how the Professor introduces in his second turn a reorientation of the topic of his first turn (i.e. passing the course → passing the course with a good grade).

**TOPIC**

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Signalling topic coherence	A.1. Topic continuation	A.1.1. Adverbial particles ( <i>doncs llavors, aleshores, si, no</i> )
		A.1.2. Conjunctions ( <i>i, però, perquè</i> )
	A.2. Topic boundary	A.2.1. <i>bé, molt bé</i>
B. Unfolding topic	B.1. Topic indication	B.1.1. <i>una altra cosa, una pregunta</i>
	B.2. Topic introduction	B.2.1. Pseudo-cleft sentences ( <i>el que (passa) (és) que</i> )
	B.3. Topic reintroduction	B.3.1. Metacommunicative comment
	B.4. Topic orientation	B.4.1. <i>ara</i>

## 7.2.2. Turn Taking

### A. Supplying feedback

According to Schegloff (1982), vocalizations such as *uh*, *huh*, *mm*, *hmm*, *yeah*, and others can be taken as signaling agreement and also as claiming attention and/or understanding. However, Schegloff himself says a few lines below that these vocalisations do not claim "understanding in general", but display "a particular understanding through production of an action fitted to that understanding" (1982: 81).

The concept of backchannel used in the present analysis involves four groups of tokens. The first group is restricted to those signals which act merely as *continuers* (*mhm*, *sí*, *ja*, *i'*, *sí'*, *hm*, *mhm'*, repetition of all or part of the previous speaker's turn), which signal attention but do not contribute to the topic of the interaction.

(40)

- P    Digues-me.  
S    Somos de segundo con Lingüística de primero  
P    De segon amb Lingüística de primer.  
S    |Sí.  
P    Melt bé 1?  
S    Hemos venido a entregar la ficha i aquello del trabajo  
P    Sí.  
S    Pues para formar el grupo ya y (26-34)

Extract (40) is an example of the first group. It is clear that the backchannel signals supplied by the Professor do not convey any other meaning apart from demanding continuation by the addressee.

In the second group we include signals through which the speaker can display some kind of agreement or sharing of knowledge with the addressee (*clar, exacte*). The third group of backchannel signals includes one-word turns like *d'acord, vale*, and turns anticipating all or part of the previous speaker's turn. With this third group of items the speaker displays understanding rather than agreement.

(41)

- S Serà molt curt No?
- P Sí. Un monolog Bé Sí No No. Diguem unes cinc o sis línies No importa Però procurant pronunciar-ho eh >
- S
- > P com es feia a l'època En català medieval Mm?
- S | En català medieval. | Ja.
- P I hauries d'enregistrar-ho Pots fer anar una cassette. Portes una cassette dius mira Aquí, perquè clar En el moment de... tu m'ho dius - pot sortir no tan bé com ho hagis assajat ho tenies preparat No?
- S Clar. (452-462)

Extract (41) includes one example of anticipation ("en català medieval") and two of backchannel displaying agreement ("ja", "clar")

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There is still a fourth group of backchannel tokens whose function is that of showing some attitudinal reaction towards what is being said. The examples that appear in our data are **si?** (incredulity), **ha** (surprize), **ah** (information needed to make sense of reality), **aha** (confirmation of hypothesis).

(42)

- S El problema el veig amb el: amb lo dels grups de treball.  
P Bé. No. Això ho pots fer els treballs individualment. No >  
S |Sí?  
>P hi ha cap mena de problema.  
S D'acord. (376-381)

(43)

- P Sí. Sí. Sí. Pero el Miquel és el cap del departament.  
Diguem. No? Es el cap de seminari.  
S |No. Això ho fan rotatiu perquè no hi ha  
catedratic. (Eh?)  
P Ah ja. (1550-1554)

In (42) "sí?" serves to express the degree of unexpectedness of the Student towards the message received from the Professor (i.e. in her case the group project becomes an individual project). In (43) the token "ah" indicates that the reason for the Student's negative answer ("això ho fan rotatiu perquè no hi ha catedràtic") is one which was not originally contemplated by the Professor.

*B. Requesting feedback*

We can also consider as part of the 'interactional requirement' Turn Taking all those tokens which are aimed at requesting a contribution from the addressee, which in some cases is limited to the provision of backchannel. The kind of tokens included here make the discourse more interactive and less monological by suggesting the need for some kind of cooperation on the part of the addressee. Most examples consist of short vocalizations uttered with a rising intonation inserted at the end of information units (*eh?*, *no?*, *mm?*), or simply a rising of intonation at the end of the utterance.

(44)

- P La recensió, sobretot no és cap resum - Eh? Un resum té unes finalitats molt concretes. Que és - eh: saber què és el que diu un llibre sense llegir aquell llibre. - Mm? I en canvi, la recensió té una finalitat diferent. La recensió té la finalitat d'informar al lector - si - és convenient pel que està fent ell. Pel que està investigant ell, si li és interessant de llegir-se aquell llibre - Vull dir no ha de ser - substituït del, sinó que ha de >
- S | Mhm
- > P donar una informació - eh: a partir de la qual la persona sapiga si li és convenient o necessari llegir-se aquell llibre o no llegir-se'l. - - Eh?
- S Vale vale. D'acord. (1075-1087)

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

The interest of the Professor's long turn in (44) explaining the objectives of book reviews is that he seems to require a series of periodical verbal or non-verbal feedback from the addressee (i.e. "mhm"; "vaie vaie d'acord"), which, if not supplied, may be requested by the speaker himself (i.e. "eh?"; "mm?"). Notice how in front of the absence of feedback the Professor decides to repeat the message in different words (i.e. "vull dir..."). Immediately, the Student realizes the misunderstanding caused by her not having supplied the feedback at the right moment and she utters the backchannel token "mhm". Finally, notice too how at the end of the Professor's turn there is a clear pause before the interactive token "eh?". This may be interpreted as a period in which the Student was expected to supply feedback but she didn't. Consequently, the Professor is forced to request it.

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**TURN TAKING**

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Supplying feedback	A.1. Continuers	A.1.1. Vocalizations ( <i>mhm, hm, mhm'</i> ), monosyllabic tokens ( <i>sí, ja, i', sí'</i> )
		A.1.2. Repetition of part of previous speaker's turn
	A.2. Agreement	A.2.1. One-word tokens ( <i>clar, ja</i> )
	A.3. Reception/acceptance	A.3.1. One-word tokens ( <i>d'acord, exacte, bala</i> )
		A.3.2. Anticipation of part of previous speaker's turn
	A.4. Attitudinal reaction	A.4.1. Vocalizations ( <i>ha, ah, aho</i> ) One-word tokens ( <i>sí?</i> )
B. Requesting feedback		B.0.1. Interrogative vocalizations ( <i>eh?, no?, mm?</i> )
		B.0.2. Rising intonation at the end of tone unit

### **7.2.3. Information Management**

#### *A. Focusing of information*

One of the main procedures for bringing a certain part of an information unit to focus is the use of a particular sentence structure where the relevant information is moved to the end of the sentence. The subject becomes a non-specified generic entity (*el que, l'única cosa*), usually followed by a verb referring to the interactive situation (*el que fa falta; el que hauries de mirar de fer; el que passa*). The verb *ser* and the conjunction *que* (with the possibility of one or the other being absent on some occasions) follow immediately and introduce the relevant information. Sample (45) includes this type of construction used in order to give primacy to certain information (i.e. get in contact with somebody).

(45)

- P Sí. Això es donava a la classe, però a la classe he donat més material  
S Ja.  
P Això, el que hauries de mirar de fer és posar-te en contacte amb algu (316-320)

In order to explain the presence of the demonstrative "això" in the last turn of (45) it is necessary to talk about another procedure to topicalize an information unit. It consists

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of the possibility of anteposing a verbal complement to the beginning of the utterance or simply including an 'unnecessary' deictic subject. Extracts (46) and (47) are clear examples of anteposition of verbal complement and inclusion of deictic subject respectively (the rest of of the elements of the clause are in italics).

(46)

P Això sí que, això us puc dir que *ho he fet nou*, perquè ho he fet avui mateix. (137-138)

(47)

(P) Doucs ella tot això ho tindrà - Noia, ja et dic. *Jo ara només et puc donar aquests* (357-359)

Extract (46), above, provides us with an example of the next topicalization procedure to be commented. This is the use of the particle *sí* preceding the relevant information. It usually emphasizes an opposition of meaning between what is being said and the implied or explicit negation in what was said immediately before.

(48)

(P) I els companys eh, la prova segurament la farem conjuntament

S A

P | La prova d'aquestes cinc o sis línies que jo et dic. (Per mi, doncs) clar. M'interessa, doncs que em comentin els fenòmens fonètics' - Els companys us demanaran fenòmens lèxics o morfosintàctics.

S Hmh. - - Ja

P Mm però el treball la part del treball sí que es independent. (515-525)

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In (48) the contrast is due to the fact that the course is divided into three clear parts, each taught by a different professor. At the beginning of the extract the Professor is saying that there will be just one final examination including the three different parts. However, in contrast to this, the course project is independent for each part.

#### **B. Assessing information**

The set of expressions classified as part of this substrategy all have in common the function of framing the information they precede or follow. The different segments selected as representatives of this substrategy can be classified into two main groups: those indicating the degree of certainty of the information conveyed (at least from the point of view of the speaker), and those that assess the degree of universality in the application of the piece of information. The morphosyntactic realization of the expressions is as follows:

- Group 1: degree of certainty:

(i) Parenthetical verbs; e.g. *em sembla que, sé que, (és) segur que, m'imagino que, suposo que, espero que, etc.*

(ii) Adverbs (subjuncts); e.g. *probablement, potser, segurament, evidentment, naturalment.*

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(iii) Lexicalized expressions; e.g. **vés a saber, a veure, vaja, (és) clar.**

(iv) Question tags; e.g. **oi?, no?.**

(v) Verbal tenses (conditional).

(49)

P I em dius, mira Hi ha aquest ordinador aquest altre i aquest altre. Aleshores, només aquell està disponible Perquè **vés a saber. Potser** hi ha material informàtic però que ho fan servir les secretàries (1299-1302)

In extract (49) the uncertainty of the information "hi ha material informàtic però que el fan servir les secretàries" is indicated by two contiguous expressions: "vés a saber" and "potser".

- Group 2: degree of universality:

(i) Prepositional phrases; e.g. **en principi en general, d'entrada**

(ii) Lexicalized expressions; e.g. **diguem-hi, posem-hi.**

(iii) Adverbs; e.g. **bàsicament, sobretot.**

(50)

P Eh. No El que passa que hauràs d'escollir no tot. No tot el text No tota la pàgina - Però si, eh: un fragment

S | Ja

S Si

P [Un s una tercera part Posem-hi - I a partir d'aquell fragment ca tens una doble opció (444-449)

In extract (50) the expression "posem-hi" has to do with the illocutionary intent of the utterance "una tercera part": the Professor does not intend the statement as a piece of advice to be taken literally but as an approximation.

As with the other aspects which have been analyzed, the classifications presented here do not exhaust the possibilities that can be found if the corpus of data is enlarged both in quantity and type. Thus, there appear in the data some examples of what could be a third group of expressions indicating the speaker's point of view or attitude towards that information: *malauradament, jo sempre dic, va*<sup>4</sup>

### *C. Signalling logical relationships*

The function of the items studied as part of this substrategy is to point at the kind of logical relationship that exists between the different realities or speech acts that the utterances represent. Although they behave both at the level of intra-turn and at the level of inter-turn connectivity, from the point of view of discourse competence the most interesting aspect is the latter, i.e. the means for connecting a turn (uttered by the same or a different speaker) with a previous one. The difference

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4 See Appendix II line 86.

### **Analysis of the Catalan connectors**

between this type of connectors and those mentioned in the section on topic coherence, is that those connectors link utterances without any clear logical relationship, they act as reinforcers of a relationship which is purely based on the sequential organization of discourse.

In this substrategy it is also possible to provide a tentative classification of the items which appear in the data analyzed:

(i) Consequence: **doncs, aleshores, així que, llavors.**

(ii) Reason: **és que, perquè, com que.**

(iii) Addition: **també, aïmés.**

(iv) Contrast: **no obstant, però, en canvi.**

(v) Temporality: **després.**

(vi) Concession: **en tot cas, si més no, almenys.**

(vii) Condition:  **llevat que.**

(viii) Replacement: **vu'l dir, més ben dit, o sigui, és a dir.**

(51)

- S    Bueno A mi me parece que la entregara mañana  
P    Bé. Doncs no hi haurà cap problema (67-68)

In (51) the particle "doncs" establishes a relationship of consequence between the Professor's and the Student's turn: the consequence of handing in the personal information card tomorrow is that there will be no problem.

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**(52)**

- (P) Els altres companys, - doncs un comença ara al gener. -  
Fa un trimestre. Tres hores a la setmana
- S Mhm.
- P Farà mm - - lexicologia. Eh: i el tercer trimestre farà  
morfosintaxi.
- S Amb el Sistac. No? Amb el Ramon Sistac.
- P Eh: no. Lexicologia amb el Ramon Sistac i sintaxi amb  
l'Amadeu Viana
- S Ah.
- P Mm?
- S Com que lexicologia la vaig fer amb l'Amadeu Viana?
- P Ah. - Ah si? (474-48")

The difference between (51) and (52) is that in the latter extract the relationship is established between two turns by the same speaker, and the segment "com que" does not point at a logical relationship of causality between the content of the two turns but the two speech acts. With the utterance "Com que lexicologia la vaig fer amb l'Amadeu Viana" the Student is supplying a reason for her verbalization of a hypothesis about which professor will be teaching a part of the course in which she is enrolled (i.e. "Amb el Sistac. No? Amb el Ramon Sistac.").

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Focusing of information		A.01. Pseudo-cleft sentences ( <i>el que (passa) (és) que</i> )
		A.0.2. Anteposition of verbal complement
		A.0.3. <i>si</i>
B. Assessing information	B.1. Epistemic relationship	B.1.1. Parenthetical verbs ( <i>em sembla</i> )
		B.1.2. Subjuncts ( <i>segurament</i> )
		B.1.3. Lexicalized expressions ( <i>(és) clar</i> )
		B.1.4. Question tags ( <i>no?</i> )
		B.1.5. Conditional mood
	B.2. Applicability	B.2.1. Prepositional phrases ( <i>en principi</i> )
		B.2.2. Lexicalized expressions ( <i>diguessim</i> )
		B.2.3. Subjuncts ( <i>secretat</i> )
	B.3. Attitude	B.3.1. Disjuncts ( <i>malauradament</i> )
C. Signalling logical relationships	C.1. Consequence	C.1.1. <i>doncs, aleshores, així que, llavors</i>
	C.2. Reason	C.2.1. <i>és que, perquè, com que</i>
	C.3. Addition	C.3.1. <i>també, ademés</i>
	C.4. Contrast	C.4.1. <i>no obstant, però, en canvi</i>
	C.5. Temporality	C.5.1. <i>després</i>
	C.6. Concession	C.6.1. <i>en tot cas, si més no, almenys</i>
	C.7. Condition	C.7.1. <i>llevat que</i>
	C.8. Replacement	C.8.1. <i>vull dir, més ben dit, o sigui, és a dir</i>

## **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

### **7.2.4. Goal.**

#### ***A. Attending to the ritual***

As in the case of the American encounters, ritual expressions tend to be concentrated at the beginning and at the end of the interaction. Apart from the exchange of greetings and leave-takings, we find other verbal cues like *ja està* and *molt bé*, which mark the near closing of the interaction or, at least, the speaker's perception of the interaction as being about to be completed. Other ritualized expressions are the self-identification of the student at the beginning of the encounter, the Professor's 'consent' to come into the office or to sit down, the Student's presentation of his/her goal(s) and the thanking of the Student to the Professor for having attended him/her.

(53)

- P **Podeu seure, els qui pugueu**  
S1 No cal  
S2 Es igual (889-891)

(54)

- S3 **Em sembla que ja està. No?**  
S1 **Sí. Sí. Ja està.**  
P **Ja està?**  
S1 **Sí.**  
S2 **Sí**  
P **Doncs molt bé. Si teniu alguna consulta a fer a qualsevol hora, doncs ja ho sabeu.**

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

S1 Vale.  
S3 Val.  
P Eh?  
S3 (...des.)  
P Molt bé.  
S2 Adéu. (220-232)

Sample (53) belongs to the opening phase of an encounter and (54) to the closing phase of a different encounter. Notice in (54) the different steps involved: (i) the Student's announcement of his readiness to close the encounter ("em sembla que ja està"); (ii) the Professor's acceptance ("molt bé"); (iii) leave-taking ("adéu").

#### ***B. Focusing on the transaction***

This group includes all those expressions which refer to some future action based on the outcome of the present interaction. With expressions like *d'acord* and *vale* the speaker agrees to or approves the undertaking of an action. Expressions like *digueu-me, si volieu alguna altra cosa?*, *hi ha alguna altra que pugui fer?*, are used by the Professor to request the Student to put forward his/her intended goal(s) for the interaction. These last three expressions together with the Student's presentation of his/her goal(s) (*si mira jo venia perquè el bueno el Gasset m'ha dit que: que vingúes a contactar amb tu*) tend to appear regularly either at the beginning or at the end of the interaction

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

and could therefore be considered as ritualized expressions as well.

Other segments directly related to the transactional character of the encounter take the form of more or less direct questions the Student asks from the Professor and answers by the latter involving specific details on how to proceed in the future (usually including statements of advice and obligation).

(55)

- S El problema el veig amb el: amb lo dels grups de treball.  
P Bé. No. Això ho pots fer els treballs individualment. No >  
S |Sí?  
>P hi ha cap mena de problema (376-380)

In (55) the Student's goal is to obtain a solution for her problem of not being able to attend classes regularly and, consequently, not being able to work with a group of people. We can see how the goal of the Student is immediately interpreted by the Professor, who provides the solution in his next turn.

Another group of expressions has to do with the future arrangements made through the encounter. They are usually utterances which include a verb in the future tense. These expressions are particularly characteristic of the closing phases of an encounter. This is the case of (56) in which the Researcher after becoming aware of the Professor's wish to close the encounter (notice the evaluation of the encounter: "si home doncs és bo que tinguem un primer contacte") introduces

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**a future arrangement as the immediate outcome of the conversation.**

**(56)**

**P** | I a vegades la placa val tant o més que el programa. Però vaje. - - - Sí home. Doncs és bo que - que tinguem. - un primer contacte (.....)

**R** | A veure si es pot fer: alguna cosa. Sí.

**P** | A veure.

**R** D'acord Doncs jo el que faré ara és parlar amb el amb el Gasset i ja ja mirarem tot això. (1529-1536)

Analysis of the Catalan encounters

GOAL

STRATEGY	SUBSTRATEGY	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Attending to the ritual	A.1. Self-introduction (opening phase)	A.1.1. First pers. subject
	A.2. Professor's consent for the development of the encounter (opening phase)	A.2.1.. <i>endavani, podeu seure</i>
	A.3. Presentation of goal (opening phase)	
	A.4. Closing	A.4.1. <i>molt bé, ja està, d'acord, vale</i>
	A.5. Future arrangements (closing phase)	A.5.1. Imperative mood; future tense
	A.6. Acknowledgement of imposition (closing phase)	A.6.1 <i>gràcies</i>
B. Focusing on the transaction	B.1. Acceptance of goal	B.1.1. <i>d'acord, vale</i>
	B.2. Presentation of goal	
	B.3. Request for goal	B.3.1. <i>digueu-me, si voleu alguna altra cosa</i>
	B.4. Directions	B.4.1. Imperative mood
		B.4.2. Non-imposing expressions (see Imposition, strategy A)
	B.5. Requests for direction	B.5.1. Questions
B.6. Future arrangements	B.6.1. (See A.6.1.)	

## Analysis of the Catalan encounters

### 7.3. Strategic competence

#### 7.3.1. Human constraint

##### A. *Compensating for problems in information transfer*

The noun *cosa* is used in circumstances in which the speaker faces a problem by not being able to produce the adequate word or expression which would convey the message in a precise way, or simply his/her inability to find a word which could be general and precise enough to include a range of meanings while giving an impression of precision.

(57)

- P |Eh? - I t'ho dit això del les dotze pàgines perquè, bé Dic  
que no sobrepassi. Eh? (1-3 words) si el fas bé el pots >
- S |S i S i S i
- > P fer en quatre o cinc (Vull dir,) una cosa resumida.  
Esquemàtica
- S S i S i
- P Eh? Si està bé? (760 765)

In (57) the word "cosa" covers a wide range of possible meanings: paper, analysis, exercise, product, etc.

Another type of breakdown in communication in face-to-face verbal interaction is that caused by the speaker's momentary lack of accurate information. The options available

to the speaker to cope with this problem are, on the one hand, to acknowledge this problem and make it clear to the addressee by means of expressions like *em sembla, no ho recordo, no sé, jo que sé*, etc.

Another type of breakdown is caused by the speaker's sudden loss of the line of thought that he/she was following in constructing his/her discourse. The strategy in this case consists basically of earning a few tenths of a second necessary to try to remember the topic discussed. The expressions available (e.g. *què anava a dir, no sé de què estava parlant ja*) serve both to fill out a potential period of silence and to let the addressee know about the reason for the breakdown in communication.

(58)

- S (.....)  
P [O sigui. Es, o sigui. Es, sí. Sí. Sí. Es simplement {*phone starts ringing*} donar la impressió donar la impressió que tu has entès (.....) el llibre - {*P answers phone*} Sí. - >  
S { (.....)  
> P Sí, digues. - Sí. - Ah va! Ja baixo (.....) Seràs aquí una estona encara? - Vés! Doncs ja baixaré ara (.....) Ara tinc una visita. - Eh? Molt bé. (....) - - Doncs, no sé de què estava parlant ja. - Eh: mm. sobre això de la recensió. (1108-1116)

We see in (58) how after the brief interruption caused by the phone call, the Professor tries to resume the subject of the conversation by means of *doncs*, a marker of topical coherence. However, the content or the length of the interruption, have

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

been enough of an obstacle for him to be unable to recover immediately the topic of the conversation.

(59)

P Eh: podeu anar al catàleg de matèries, no sé si ho heu fet, nom de baix a la biblioteca. Hi ha un catàleg per ordre alfabètic i un altre per matèries. - Per matèries podeu buscar, no ho sé, el que faci referència a la llengua lingüística eh: llenguatge. No sé ara com està ordenat. I dintre d'aquí doncs buscar (...) això (1020-1025)

In (59) the Professor expresses three successive acknowledgements of his lack of the necessary knowledge to perform an effective communicative task: (i) "no sé si ho heu fet" recognizes the possibility that the information "podeu anar al catàleg de matèries" might not be effective because the Students have already done so; (ii) "no ho sé" is a recognition of the momentary inability to supply names of subjects to; (iii) "no sé ara com està ordenat" acknowledges the Professor's inability while providing an excuse/reason for it.

The speaker may also decide to use a modifying expression suggesting that despite lacking the precise information, he/she is well acquainted with the topic. Expressions representative of this second option are *o/i així, tot això, més o menys, tal, etcètera, potser*.

(60)

- 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 (646-650)

In (60) the Student, by means of the expression "tot això", is able to make relevant the whole set of potential activities which are typical of a tutoring session without having to mention them one by one.

It is possible to find self-corrections inserted in the discourse without an introductory marker. However, it is much more common to find cases in which a self-correction is prefaced by a short expression indicating that what is about to be said is simply a re-evaluation of the form or the content of the information just given. The expressions that appear in these interactions are: **no**, **vull dir**, **bueno**, **be**, and **més ben dit**.

(61)

- S Lo treball que és (...) ho que nosaltres vinguem? o  
P No. Donc me n'heu posat tres aquí. Ja està bé. I després jo ja us assignare (eh) un d'aquests centres d'interès. Eh. Un d'aquests tres. Clar. He de compaginar que no hi hagi massa grups que fagin el mateix tema perquè aleshores no hi hauria prou material per tothom. Però, **vull dir**, ja us el diré jo. Ja sortirà aquí a la cartellera. **Més ben dit**. - El que fa falta és que algu de vosaltres és faci carrec de la coordinació un que sigui coordinador (73-82)

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

The expressions "vull dir" and "més ben dit" in (61) introduce consecutive self-corrections ((i) "ja us el diré jo"; (ii) "ja sortirà aquí a la cartellera") of the statement "jo ja us assignaré un d'aquests centres d'interès".

#### *α. Maintaining the verbal activity*

In taking part in a conversation in a Western cultural context, where activity and eloquence are essential parameters to measure a person's worth, it is very important that none of the participants in the conversation falls into a period of silence when it is his/her responsibility to speak. In order to avoid potential periods of silence caused by the speaker's momentary inability to articulate the idea he/she is trying to express, the speaker usually resorts to vocalisations like *eh:* or *mm:* and repetitions or lengthening of a sound, but it is also possible to find fully articulate expressions referring to the activity in which the speaker is engaged and which is causing the interruption.

(62)

- (P) Això és una part del treball. Eh? Buscar la bibliografia –  
Eh: el que passa que per l'ensenyament i l'aprenentatge  
de: una llengua, doncs podeu buscar no se quins  
apartats de la: del: llistat de matèries eh: en en els  
arxius de matèries i tal. No? (929-933)

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The cluster of vocalisations ("eh:") and lengthened word-final sounds ("de:", "del:") that we see in (62) is an indication of the speaker's efforts to continue speaking while trying to think of possible subjects to look into in order for the Student to find the necessary information.

In (63) the parallel activity threatening the continuity of speech is of a physical type (the Professor stands up and moves away from his desk). The solution adopted in this case is to interrupt the topic of the conversation by mentioning the activity causing the interruption.

(63)

- S Jo la tinc a casa, però encara no tinc les fotos i encara, és que he agafat la grip. Ara l'anava a portar però tot ha set un - una mica de caos
- P Mm d'acord. [*P stands up and goes to the shelf*] Ara miraré si em queda algun exemplar del programa
- S Mhm (254-260)

## HUMAN CONSTRAINT

STRATEGY	SUBSTRATEGY	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Compensating for problems in information transfer	A 1. Substituting item	A.1.1. <i>cosa</i>
	A.2. Explicit acknowledgement of problem	A.2.1. Parenthetical verb/clause: <i>em sembla, no ho recordo, no ho sé, jo que sé, què anava a dir, ... sé de què estava parlant</i>
	A.3. Approximation	A.3.1. <i>ijo així, tot això, més o menys, tal, etcètera, potser</i>
	A.4. Repair	A.4.1. <i>no, vull dir, bueno, bé, més ben dit</i>
B. Maintaining the verbal activity	B.1. Filler	B.1.1. Vocalisation ( <i>eh, mm</i> ), repetition, lengthening of sounds
	B.2. Reference to the activity causing the breakdown	B.2.1. Dynamic verb conjugated in the present or immediate future tenses ( <i>Ara miraré si em queix...</i> )

### 7.3.2. Language constraint

#### A. Adjusting the literal meaning

The first group of expressions included under this heading function as a special type of modifiers, i.e. they do not modify the meaning but restore or maintain the original literal meaning, eroded because of its frequency of use. One option, exemplified in (64), is the repetition of backchannel tokens like *sí*, *ja*, *no*. In this extract, the repetition of the token *ja* is intended to produce a stronger impression of understanding or agreement.

(64)

- P El treball sí. El treball (O sigui) Són els treballs perquè >  
S                                    |[[laughter]]  
>P estic acostumat a assignatures que duren tot l'any, >  
S            |Ja ja ja ja  
>P i se solen fer tres treballs per curs (711-715)

It is also possible to find adverbs like **exactament**, **concretament**, **absolutament**, as devices reinforcing or focusing on the literal meaning of the expression modified. In (65), for example, "concretament" focuses the Student's attention on the word "didactica", implying that what interests the Professor is whether the Student has looked up the word not the concept, because this can be expressed by means of different synonymous

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words.

(65)

- S Vam mirar per llengua. I llavors, hi ha molts, vull dir, varis apartats. I els vam estar mirant. No?  
P Mhm. Didàctica ho heu trobat concretament ? (937-939)

Other means of calling the addressee's attention to the literal meaning of the word or expression used are adjectival expressions like **mateix/a**, **propiament dit/a**, the directive **escolta**, the particle **pas** for negative utterances and the vocalisation **eh** uttered with a fall-rise intonation.

(66)

- (P) Es a dir. Per la nostra dedicació alla, no treurem **pas** ni un duro. Perquè això no: no es paga. (1236-1238)

(67)

- P No. Si fos més greu ja: t'hauria costat de venir. Hauries >  
S |Sí sí.  
> P trucat dient ho sento però no puc venir haig de fer llit.  
No: Si has pogut arribar aquí?  
S |Estava (b) all (b) llit (b) Eh? (h) I (b) he vingut [laughter] Es que dic sino' (. . . )  
P |Té molt merit això. Té molt merit (. . . . .)  
S |Venga. Gràcies. Eh? Bones festes. (875-883)

In (66), "pas" reinforces the semantic force of the negative prediction "no treurem". In doing this the Professor expresses his certainty that the prediction will be accomplished. The vocalisation "eh?" in (67) focuses the attention of the listener on

### Analysis of the Catalan encounters

the implications of the literal meaning of the statement "estava al llit". The Student emphasizes the seriousness of her unhealthy condition.

Instead of a reinforcement of the literal meaning the speaker may need a reduction, in which case he/she may use a word/expression which comes close to the intended meaning, while modifying it with an expression which stresses that it is only an approximation to a potential more precise lexical item.

(68)

P    ¡Unes una tercera part. Posem-hi - I a partir d'aquell fragment eh tens una doble opció. O bé montar-te una **mena de diàleg**. Tu mateixa imites als personatges - O fas un monolog. (448-451)

In (68) the approximative word is **diàleg** and the modifying expression is **una mena de**.

(69)

R    ( ) Basicament, a veure. El pla, la proposta era intentar aprofitar la informàtica per fer un programa de **diem-lo** de **jo que se** de d'estimulació precoç. (1214-1216)

Extract (69) is an example of how two strategies (i.e. acknowledging the breakdown, "jo que se", and use of a modifying expression: "diem-lo") can complement each other. It is also interesting to point out the degree of lexicalization (Pawley and Syder 1983: 208-215) achieved by these same expressions, having a conventionalized and to some extent

### **Analysis of the Catalan encounters**

arbitrary conversational use, different from its literal meaning. In this case the danger of breakdown is caused by the Researcher's inability to find a name for the type of research he is interested in doing.

#### ***B. Appealing to non-literal meaning***

An important series of items incorporated by this 'interactional requirement' are all those colloquial expressions which deliberately break certain conversational rules like the Cooperative Principle, and which speakers use in order to convey their intended meaning in a more efficient way.

(70)

- P Sí. Sí. Sí. A Saragossa Saragossa i Alacant molt,  
molts centres reballen amb Macintosh però, >  
S |Sí. Sí  
> P aquí, això és Lleida. Això és Lleida. Què hi farem?  
S |Sí. Sí  
S Molt bé. D'acord doncs (1510-1515)

In (70) the first emphasized segment ("això és Lleida", "això és Lleida") breaks the Maxim of Informativity, and the second one ("què hi farem?") does not follow the Maxim of Relevance. Nevertheless, the Professor succeeds in expressing his intended meaning. (i) Lleida is behind the times, (ii) there is nothing that can be done to remedy this situation.

**Analysis of 11. Catalan encounters**

We also consider as part of this group all those expressions of an interjectional nature, in many cases reduced to simple vocalisations (**hah, ah:, hm', caram**) or one-word expressions (**vaja, home**).

(71)

- S Com que lexicologia la vaig fer amb l'Amadeu Viana'  
P Ah. Ah sí ?  
S Mhm.  
P **Caram!** Sí que ha canviat la cosa! (486-489)

In (71) "caram" reinforces the Professor's expression of surprise towards the information conveyed by the Student.

**LANGUAGE CONSTRAINT**

STRATEGIES	SUBSTRATEGIES	REGULAR LINGUISTIC FEATURES
A. Adjusting the literal meaning	A.1. Emphasis	A.1.1. Successive repetition of backchannel tokens ( <i>sí, ja, no</i> )
		A.1.2. Adverbs: <i>exactament, concretament</i> ; adjectives: <i>mateix/a, propiament dit/a</i> ; other particles: <i>escolta, pas, eh?</i>
	A.2. Reduction	A.2.1. <i>una mena de</i>
B. Appealing to non-literal meaning	B.1. Flouting of the Cooperative Principle	
	B.2. Interjectional expressions	B.2.1 <i>ah; caram, home</i>

## **CHAPTER VIII. A SAMPLE ANALYSIS**

### **8.0. Introduction**

This chapter is intended to illustrate how the different strategies and substrategies that have been defined for each 'interactional requirement' are displayed in the course of a complete American speech event selected from the corpus of twenty on which the analysis has been based. This analysis will also serve to demonstrate how meaning is progressively constructed and also how different strategies of the same or of a different component of communicative competence are integrated. The ultimate intention is to suggest that in order to give a full account of how people use language it is necessary to study it taking the speech event as largest unit of analysis.

An analysis of a speech event begins with an ethnographic description of the event in terms of length, physical setting, participants, number of turns, etc. This type of description will provide the contextual information necessary to interpret certain phenomena which cannot be explained by looking at the

## **A sample analysis**

speaker's utterance in isolation. After the ethnographic description, the analysis must show how the speakers meet each of the 'interactional requirements' by means of certain strategic verbal actions. Finally, the analysis of a complete speech event will allow the possibility of drawing certain conclusions about the dynamics as well as the outcomes of the speech event.

### **8.1. Ethnographic description**

In order to fully understand interactional speech, it is necessary for the analyst to be familiar with the context in which the interaction is taking place. This is precisely what ethnographic descriptions do; that is, provide information about the situational and social circumstances around the communicative event. In this subsection the descriptive model of the components of communication will be used is based on the model suggested by Hymes (1972b), Friedrich (1972) and Saville-Troike (1982). The ethnographic components of the sample speech event to be analyzed are the following:

**TOPIC:** University teaching position in Southwestern Louisiana

**Sub-topics:**

- S's academic background (lines 23-32)
- Anthropology department at that university (lines 32-37)
- Cajun country (lines 42-50)

### **A sample analysis**

- Application process (lines 54-64)
- Writing letter of recommendation (lines 2-11, 18-22, 65-66)
- Position (lines 12-18, 37-44)

**GOAL.** S describes his goal as "to obtain a letter of recommendation for a position"

**SETTING:** Weekday. Mid-morning (during P's office hours, 10:00-12:00). P's office. P was sitting behind his desk. S was standing up all the time at a distance of about 1 or 2 metres. The Observer sat on a sofa on the left-hand side of P's desk at a distance of 2 metres

**PARTICIPANTS:** University professor (P) = male, age: 40+

University doctoral student (S) = male, age 30+

Observer (O) = male, age 25.

S describes his relationship with P as "cordial, comfortable, academic relationship". O is acquainted with both P and S on a relationship of friendship, P is O's thesis adviser

**MESSAGE FORM:** In this specific event there was very little non-verbal communication. Spoken General American was the basic means of communication. There were no salient features in terms of loudness, intonation, rhythm, or speed of verbalization.

**MESSAGE CONTENT:** P and S had already talked about the subject. P knew S's intention of asking him a letter of recommendation.

#### **ACT SEQUENCE:**

P - Greet S (2 words\*)

S - Apologizes for taking P's time (7 words)

P - Asks about subject F and S had talked before (3 words)

S - Answers. Introduces subject again. (12 words)

P - Backchannel. (1 word)

## A sample analysis

- S** - Suggests about using previous letter. Provides >  
**P** - Rejects suggestion. (6 words)  
> **S** information about subject. (32 words)  
**P** - Backchannel. (1 word)  
**S** - Continues with information. Request. (35 words)  
**P** - Accepts request. (1 word)  
**P** - Backchannel. (1 word)  
**S** - Provides S's background information to legitimize request (34 words)  
**P** - Backchannel (1 word)  
**P** - Accepts information (1 word)  
**S** - Continues legitimizing request Provides further information about subject. (51 words)  
**P** - Backchannel. (1 word)  
**S** - Shows willingness to legitimize request (14 words)  
**P** - Expresses opinion about subject Makes lateral comment (9 words)  
**S** - Agrees. Shows willingness to legitimize request (15 words)  
**P** - Continues lateral comment. (13 words)  
**S** - Follows up by showing interest in one of the details. (2 words)  
**P** - Confirms detail. (1 word)  
**S** - Shows willingness to legitimize request. (8 words)  
**P** - Backchannel. (2 words)  
**S** - Thanks for accepting request. Information on further requirement for the accomplishment of the request (51 words)  
**P** - Accepts requirement. (1 word)  
**S** - Clarifies requirement. (9 words)  
**P** - Accept requirement. (6 words)  
**S** - Thanks for accepting request (7 words)  
**P** - Accept thanks (3 words)

\* By 'word' I refer to independent morphemes that can be found in a dictionary, and also to particles which in spite of not appearing in one have a clear meaning to the language user (e.g. *mmm*, *oh*). Compounded hyphenated words count as one

### **A sample analysis**

**Total number of turns and words:** P: 17 turns; 52 words  
S: 13 turns; 287 words

**Length of the speech event:** 1 minute 42 seconds

**RULES FOR INTERACTION:** It is understood that professors are obliged to write letters but the personal nature of a letter of recommendation makes the transaction one of 'asking a favour', and so it is considered to be a special effort made on their own initiative. Because of this, the student must be careful to avoid seeming to impose on the professor and is expected to show gratefulness. In P and S's culture, and especially in the domain of academia, letters of recommendation play an important role in that they are one of the basic requirements when applying for a position. Thus, this is not an uncommon event for P. For S, due to his professional inexperience, it is not so common. This might explain the relative low interest of P throughout the event, observable in the short length and scant content of his contributions.

**NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:** A letter of recommendation must support the suitability of the person for the position. Suitability is understood in terms of (i) skills, (ii) willingness, and (iii) collegial qualities. Since this is a teaching position, the content of the letter must account for the teaching ability of the person and his willingness to do the job. It is understood that one cannot include things that are not true in a letter of recommendation. Both of these points account for S's suggestion about the contents of letter, followed by provision of information about his background and insistence on showing willingness.

## TEXT

- P- Hi Dan.
- S- Sorry to uh take up your time but - uh
- P- Got that thing ?
- S- | It looks like it,<sup>1</sup> Right. This  
is the - position in Southwestern  
Louisiana'.<sup>2</sup> 5
- P- Mhm'.
- S- John Gibson'. - And this was the -  
letter you've written to Santa F .  
Community College. I don't know if you > 10
- P- | Oh I don't need that
- > S - But / - And they called yesterday.  
Apparently, it's a teaching job.
- P- Mhm. =
- S- = It's uh calls for a bio-archeologist,  
but someone who's able to teach I  
guess a four-field uh introduction  
anthropology. And uh if you could, I  
guess just mention my teaching  
abilities, what I've done here. 20
- P- | Sure.
- P- .Ahm
- S- And uh I was a teaching assistant

- 
- 1 A slash, /, indicates that the utterance has been left unfinished.
- 2 An apostrophe, ', following a word indicates that it is the last word of a statement ending with rising intonation as if it were a yes/no question.

A sample analysis

- for Nuñez, in cultural. And I believe >
- P- | Mhm mhm 25
- >S I could do a good job teaching cultural anthropology, I have a lot of it as a masters student at F.S.U. =
- P- Yeah.
- S- So I believe I could do a pretty good job in a four-field introductory course. And - apparently, uh it's a small department, they don't have a graduate program, there are only thirty-five majors, anthropology majors. 30
- he department. So the emphasis is on undergraduate teaching, which is I'm really
- P- Mhm
- S enthusiastic about so I believe I could do a good job there in teaching 40
- P Sounds good -- It sounds like a >
- S- | | I hope so, >
- >P nice job Lafayette
- >S I'm I'm encouraged Lafayette I've never been there but / 45
- P- | It's good Cajun country You've got to learn to speak ts French
- S- Cajun, really? =
- P- Mhm/ 50
- S- That's I'm willing to do that. [laughter] >
- P- | Mhm mhm
- >S So I'd really appreciate it. And he / - There's a little bit of urgency. 55
- they're narrowing the list down to the three people they wanna bring and interview. So he was hoping to be able to get the references by the, you

## A sample analysis

- know, the earliest first of next week. 60
- P- Yeah.
- S- ! Or, well, the latest first of next week, so /
- P- Ok. I'll send it off.
- S- Ok. Thank a lot, I appreciate it. 65
- P- You're welcome.

## 8.2. Sociolinguistic competence

### 8.2.1. Presentation of Self:

The idea of 'cautiousness' is an important one in any event where the individual's social worthiness (or, as Goffman calls it, 'face') is at stake. When talking about presentation of self in this context, where the power relationship is so relevant, we need to emphasize this idea since both Professor and Student run the risk of presenting themselves as tyrannical or rebellious respectively.

In the type of context we are dealing with, more than in other contexts, individuals seem to be particularly sensitive in terms of the 'dangers' mentioned above. Cautiousness has to do with the degree of certainty with which someone makes an intellectual assertion about a subject. The empirical way of thinking forces individuals to abstain from making very categorical statements unless they have factual proof for them.

**A sample analysis**

The idea of relativity is present in most of the issues that the members of this academic subculture talk about.

This attitude can be clearly seen in the speech event analyzed. The Student seems to be making a special effort to present facts with a slight degree of uncertainty. Phrases like *it looks like*, *apparently*, and *I guess* contribute to the conveying of this feeling.

- |    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| a) | P- Got that thing?<br>S- <i>It looks like it / Right. This</i>                     | 4  |
| b) | - But / - And they called yesterday<br><i>Apparently</i> , it's a teaching job     | 12 |
| c) | but someone who's able to teach /<br><i>guess</i> a four-field uh introduction     | 16 |
| d) | course. And - <i>apparently</i> , uh it's a<br>small department, they don't have a | 32 |

This uncertainty is not only present in the Student's speech when conveying factual information but also when justifying his own actions.

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| a) | John (Wilson). - And this was the -<br>letter you've written to Santa Fe<br>Community College. <i>I don't know if you</i><br>- But / - And they called yesterday | 8 |
|----|--|---|

**A sample analysis**

- b) - anthropology. And uh if you could, I 18  
*guess just mention my teaching*
- c) P- Sounds good. -- It sounds like a > 42  
S- | ... | *I hope so, >*  
>P nice job. Lafayette.

One last feature observable in the Student's behavior from the point of view of this 'interactional requirement' is his constant effort (present at different stages of the event) to show his good disposition toward the job for which he is applying. However, it is interesting to see how, even in these cases where presenting a positive, unquestionable attitude is so important, he still prefaces some of his statements with a parenthetical verb suggesting that what he is saying is only his but not everybody's personal truth, thereby diminishing the impression of assertiveness he may produce on the addressee.

- a) for Nuñez, in cultural And *I believe* > 24  
P- Hm mhm  
>S *I could do a good job teaching cultural*
- b) S- *So I believe I could do a pretty good* 30  
*job in a four-field introductory*

[We could consider *pretty* a less assertive verb than *very*]

### A sample analysis

- c)            *undergraduate teaching, which is / I'm*            37  
                 *really*  
P-            *Mhz.*  
S-            *enthusiastic about, so I believe I*
- d)            S-    *I'm / I'm encouraged. Lafayette I've*            45
- e)            S-    *That's / I'm willing to do that. [laughter] >*            51

In this last example, the fact that the Student chuckles after his last effort to present a positive image of himself may be a recognition of the intensive 'work' he has been putting into that aspect. It might well be that laughter functions in this case as another softening device, in the same way as the parenthetical verbs *I believe* or *I guess*.

#### 8.2.2. Social Distance

It is significant to see that in the speech event 'work' on increasing or diminishing social distance between the two participants is absent. This may be because of the ambiguous situation that the participants find themselves in. In the first place P is a Professor and S a Student; it seems that their contact has always been within the academic context and having to do exclusively with academic issues. Furthermore, through my relationship with the Student I have been able to notice some

### A sample analysis

degree of timidity. Secondly, the Professor is relatively young with a very easy-going personality and the Student is an 'ABD' student (All But Dissertation; this is how it is known in the academic argot) in the department, in his thirties. We could say that the Student's formality is in itself a distance-increasing signal, but then we would have to be able to track this formality down to his verbal behaviour. There is very little formality in the use of expressions such as **I guess, do a pretty good job, you know**, and the way the specific requests are made.

anthropology And uh if you could, I 18  
guess just mention my teaching  
abilities, what I've done here

The Student's insistence on showing his feelings about the position (lines 30, 37, 43, 51) is not a sign of formality in speech, either. These characteristics in the Student's speech and the fact that he does most of the 'talking' lead us to define the style in which the event develops as neutral, characterized by its cautiousness and informality at the same time. This is a common style in academia; depending on the individuals, more or less elements are used specifically to diminish or increase (although less often) distance.

There are only two occasions on which the Professor seems to make some effort to reduce the social distance between

### A sample analysis

himself and the Student. The first one consists of an acceptance to a request:

anthropology. And uh if you could, I 18  
guess just mention my teaching  
abilities, what I've done here.  
F- | Sure.

By means of the particle *sure*, the Professor is able to emphasize his willingness to fulfill the Student's wishes, thereby diminishing the social distance between them.

The second occasion on which the variable appears takes place the moment the Professor decides for the first and only time to give the Student some positive feedback concerning the position he is applying for (lines 42, 44). Up to this point, the Professor's only task has been to keep the channel open by means of backchannel tokens (i.e. *uhm*, *yeah*). He now switches to a more expressive response, one which can reinforce the Student's excitement about the job.

P- *Sounds good -- It sounds like a >* 42  
S- | ... | I hope so, >  
> P *nice job. Lafayette.*  
> S *I'm I'm encouraged. Lafayette. I've  
never been there but /*  
P- *It's good Cajun country. You've got to  
learn to speak :: French.*

## **A sample analysis**

### **8.2.3. Power**

The absence of specific strategic moves directed at confronting the 'interactional requirement' of Power can be explained by the fact that the student approaches the encounter with a goal (i.e. getting someone to write a letter or recommendation) which is impositive in itself and not just because it is addressed to a Professor.

On the part of the Student there is no explicit acknowledgement of the Professor's authority through requests for permission or direction. The Professor, on the other hand, does not introduce requirements/obligations or directions addressed to the Student because the immediate outcome of the encounter that is being negotiated (the action of writing a letter) attracts him more directly than the Student.

We could say, therefore, that the presence of a difference in power between the participants is seen in this encounter not through explicit acknowledgements of the authority of the Professor but through the accumulation of moves by the Student intended to acknowledge the impositive nature of his goal.

## A sample analysis

### 2.2.4. Imposition

The first occasion on which imposition is acknowledged appears at the very beginning of the speech event. The strategy the Student develops to confront it is the expression of an apology for taking up the Professor's time.

S- Sorry to uh take up your time but / - uh

2

The strategy is double-effective because through it the Student makes an explicit acknowledgement of the imposition, and by doing so predisposes the Professor to react positively.

The next instance in which this 'interactional requirement' appears is lines 18-20. The Student does not only need to impose time dedication (in order to listen to what he has to say and afterwards write the letter), he also needs to impose some of the content in the letter. The way he does this without violating the rules of politeness is by transforming it into a hedged request (I guess, just).

anthropology And uh if you could, I  
guess just mention my teaching  
abilities, what I've done here

18

### **A sample analysis**

**The inclusion of I guess in the middle of the suggestion further reinforces the attitude of 'insecurity' inherent in the uttering of any suggestion.**

The third instance in which Imposition becomes a relevant 'interactional requirement' for the speaker appears towards the end of the speech event. This specific position might respond to the strategy of introducing another imposing action as something casual, of little importance, that even the Student himself almost forgets. Another reason for its appearance at such an advanced stage of the event could be (i) the different degree of relevance to the Student of each of the items he needs to impose (write the letter > content of the letter > time to send the letter), and (ii) the fact that rules of politeness force him to follow up on the Professor's opinion about the subject and lateral comments (lines 42-52). The item imposed in this case is the time to send the letter (lines 54-64). The strategy now is neither to apologize nor to suggest (objective facts such as deadlines cannot be suggested, nor can one apologize for the existence of a deadline somebody else has fixed!), but rather to put the 'blame' on other people or on some external decision which necessitates imposition on the part of the Student.

### A sample analysis

- S- *There's a little bit of urgency.* 55  
*They're narrowing the list down to  
the three people they wanna bring  
and interview. So he was hoping to be  
able to get the references by the, you  
know, the earliest first of next week.*
- P- *Yeah*
- S- *| Or, well, the latest first of next  
week, so*

We can also see that besides blaming the existence of imposition on other people's decisions, there is also quite a bit of 'softening' work in the Student's utterance. The 'softening' expressions are "a little bit of urgency", "he was hoping to be able", "you know".

We saw that the very first thing the Student did in the speech event was to recognize the imposition. In his last utterance in the interaction he also recognized the presence of Imposition by reinforcing his expression of gratefulness.

- S- *Ok Thanks a lot, I appreciate it* 65

### **8.3. Discourse competence**

#### **8.3.1. Topic**

As has already been said, it is almost impossible to deal with Topic without mentioning Goal. In fact, many people would argue that since there is always a purpose in what people say (e.g. to obtain a letter of recommendation or simply to avoid silence), it is impossible to deal with one without talking about the other. However, since this is not the concept of goal we are working with (see section 4.5.4), it is contended for our purposes here that sometimes people talk about something (a topic) with no specific goal in mind. An example of this was suggested by one of the participants in the encounter, who commented, "when we go to the cafeteria, we have coffee and talk about several things but there is no precise goal in that situation."

Managing Topic involves first of all being able to effect smooth transitions from one topic to another. By definition, a smooth transition is one which does not cause the speaker to be perceived as incoherent and which, at the same time, serves in the attainment of the speaker's goals. From a study of those points of the sample conversation in which a topic boundary marker appears (lines 8, 12, 18, 23, 32, 54), it is evident that in many cases smooth transition is achieved by using the particle

### A sample analysis

and, and in some cases this is accompanied by the vocalization *uh*.

- a) S- John Gibson'. - *And this was the-* 8  
letter you've written to Santa Fe  
Community College. I don't know if you ' >  
P- | Oh I don't need that.  
> S- - But / - *And they called yesterday*
- b) S- So I'd really appreciate it *And he :-* 54  
There's a little bit of urgency,

Another object for study under the 'interactional requirement' of Topic is connected with the appropriateness of certain topics or aspects of them which must be mentioned or avoided depending on the context. This feature of the Topic requirement is very much culture-specific. To give an example, it is said that British people talk about the weather when there is no other topic to talk about and, as members of other cultures know, this is by no means a universal strategy. In the present speech event, we see that the Student considers the topic of the anthropology department and the position offered as worth investing a certain amount of time in (lines 12-18, 32-37). If we look at it in terms of economy of speech, we realize that those contributions are not really necessary either for the Student's goal (i.e. to get the Professor to write a letter) or for the Professor's task (i.e. to write the letter). However, the interaction must be perceived in terms of a process of

### A sample analysis

**give-and-take.** In fact, this was brought up by the interviewees (section 3.2.6): the Professor is 'giving' a favour and the Student reciprocates this action by 'giving' extra information'.

When a new topic is introduced, the addressee can choose between (i) adopting a rather passive attitude by just keeping the channel open with *mbm* or *yeah* (unless he is asked a direct question) or (ii) contributing to the topic just started. The first attitude is usually associated with an encounter where there is a clear gap between the participants in terms of Social Distance or Power. In that case the speakers are more reluctant to contribute to the conversation with ideas of their own since it is precisely this kind of information which gives the idea of comfort and familiarity people tend to avoid in formal situations.

In the speech event analyzed here, the Professor is seen to adopt a passive role throughout, except for lines 47–48 where he decides to take up the topic of Cajun country.

S- I'm I'm encouraged Lafayette I've  
never been there but /

P- *[It's good Cajun country You've got to*  
*learn to speak ts French.*

47

S- Cajun, really ?

P- Mbm

### A sample analysis

Again, in this case it is only through the macro-analysis of discourse, that is, through the analysis of the whole speech event, that we can explain the impression of formality present in the speech event.

A third issue to be considered with reference to this 'requirement' is that of coherence. What the speaker says/does does not only have to have a clear link or semantic overlap with what he/she said/did previously in the same interaction, but must also relate explicitly to any previous interaction(s) with the same person. This explains the appearance of the deictic *this* and the definite article *the* in lines 4-5. These two particles have in this instance the anaphoric function of connecting this event with the Professor and the Student's previous encounter in which the latter introduced the subject for the first time

S-                    It looks like it / Right *This*                    4  
                         is *the* - position in Southwestern  
                         Louisiana

Cohesion has been dealt with extensively at the sentence and discourse levels<sup>3</sup> but it is interesting to see how it works in conversation.

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3 Halliday and Hasan (1976) is probably the most systematic study of textual cohesion in English.



### **A sample analysis**

(b) **Reintroducing move:** It reintroduces referents found in locutions prior to, but not in, the immediately-preceding locution.

(c) **Progressive-holding move:** it shares some of the same referents as the preceding move while expanding or adding new referents not contained therein.

(d) **Holding move:** it is backchannel or its discourse referents are drawn from those of the preceding turn.

In the present speech event most of the moves by the Professor are holding moves because they are restricted to backchannel signals like **mhm** and **yeah**. On the other hand, since the Student is interested in achieving the different aspects of his goal he needs to resort in many cases to progressive-holding moves, which allow the speaker to progress in the conversation without appearing incoherent. Examples of this type of move are lines 15-20 and 30-38. There is one example of a reintroducing move (lines 54-60) in which the Student, after a short digression, reintroduces the topic of the request to write the letter (**So I'd really appreciate it.**) in order to request the Professor to send it before a certain date.

## **A sample analysis**

### **8.3.2. Turn Taking**

By looking at the amount of speech uttered by each participant in the encounter we can easily appreciate that the 'interactional requirement' of Goal not only determines the content but also the number, length and distribution of turns that the speakers take. The encounter analyzed here has a completely different texture in terms of turn structure from those in which, for example, the goal of the student is to obtain some advice on a paper. Whereas in the latter case it is the professor who carries most of the weight of the conversation (he/she is the 'giver' of information, and this is reflected in the use of longer and more informative turns), in the present speech event it is the student who provides most of the information, introducing all the subtopics except the "Cajun country" one. How much an individual needs to contribute to a speech event is part of the cultural expectations social members have about language use and social interaction. It is therefore considered here as a skill to be learned and perceived as part of the 'interactional requirement' of Turn Taking.

Just as one must know how to contribute to a conversation, one must also know how 'not to contribute while contributing'. Frequently the turn system in which a conversation is organized forces the participant to respond simply by showing understanding and attention, with no contribution of 'fresh'

### A sample analysis

information. This is the function of signals like *mhm*, *hm* and *yeah*.

- a) S- | It looks like it / Right. This is the - position in Southwestern Louisiana'. 4  
P- *Mhm*!  
S- John Gibson'. - And this was the -

- b) | for Nuñez, in cultural. And I believe > 24  
P- | *Hm mhm*.  
>S I could do a good job teaching cultural anthropology. I have a lot of it as a masters student at F.S U. =  
P- *Yeah*.

Backchannel signals can have another function: whenever the purpose of the speaker is not simply to pass over the opportunity to take the floor<sup>4</sup> but to convey some other meaning, the turn consists of a different signal (not necessarily longer). The following example shows two of these signals, with slightly different meanings (the first responds to the request, whereas the second only provides backchannel):

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4 See Schegloff (1982).

**A sample analysis**

anthropology. And uh if you could, I  
guess just mention my teaching  
abilities, what I've done here.

18

P- | *Sure.*

P- *Mhm.*

The problem in using tokens like *mhm*, *yeah* and *sure* is that they do not succeed in conveying an 'interested' attitude, that is to say, they do not signal empathy with the previous speaker. This may explain why in some cases the speaker resorts to other types of contributions which, although carrying little 'new' or 'useful' information, are more effective in conveying empathy.

S- enthusiastic about, so I believe I  
could do a good job there in teaching.

40

P- *Sounds good. -- It sounds like a >*

S- | | I hope so >

> P *nice job Lafayette.*

> S- *I'm I'm encouraged. Lafayette. I've*

The fact that conversation is organized in turns is not just a constraint that forces participants to contribute; it sometimes relieves the speaker from making a contribution. This means that on certain occasions contributions can be left unfinished or ambiguous, and yet the conversation continues without any major obstacles. It is as if the speakers rely on the fact that the

**A sample analysis**

other participants are bound to contribute if they want to keep up with the exchange ritual on which dialogue is based.

S- *Sorry to take up your time but , - uh*

2

P- *Got that thing?*

In this case, the strategic "uh" following the pause at the end of the Student's turn shows that he is expecting the Professor to say something, and he is taken aback when this does not happen immediately.

Another way of explaining the phenomenon would be to say that, apart from relying on the turn-organization of conversation, the speaker relies on the other participants' previous experience of similar situations and similar use of language in grasping the meaning of the unsaid words:

a) *letter you've written to Santa Fe*

9

*Community College. I don't know if you >*

P- *| Oh I don't need that.*

> S - *But , - And they called yesterday.*

b) *undergraduate teaching, which is /'m*

37

*really*

P- *Mhm*

S- *enthusiastic about, so I believe I*

### **A sample analysis**

- c) >S I'm I'm encouraged. Lafayette. I've  
never been there but /  
P- | It's good Cajun country. You've got to  
learn to speak to French

44

The last point to be made about Turn Taking as an 'interactional requirement' is connected with the degree to which it is affected by other 'interactional requirements'. The parts of the interaction where this can be seen are lines 42-44 and 47-48. The 'interactional requirements' which become relevant are Presentation of Self and Social Distance. In order to fully appreciate this, we must look at the Professor's behaviour up to this point as a whole. One could interpret that he did not have much to say and so insisted on passing over the opportunity to take the floor. All of his turns consist of one word with contributions which contain very little information. If the Professor were to persist in this attitude throughout the whole event, the Student may have concluded that the Professor is not interested in the subject (he might even think the Professor is not listening to what he is saying!). To avoid this danger the Professor is almost forced to alter the size and quality of his contributions.

### A sample analysis

- S- enthusiastic about, so I believe I could do a good job there in teaching. 40
- P- Sound good -- *it sounds like a* >
- S- |..... | I hope so >
- >P nice job. Lafayette.
- >S I'm I'm encouraged. Lafayette. I've never been there but
- P- |*It's good Cajun country. You've got to learn to speak French.* 47

The third example involves the 'interactional requirement' of Topic. Grice's Relational Maxim 'Be relevant' could very well account for this example if we understand the concept of relevance as defined by Leech (1983: 99):

"An utterance U is relevant to a speech situation *to the extent that U can be interpreted as contributing to the conversational goal(s) of s [speaker] or h [hearer]*" (the author's emphasis)

In this case, the Professor's goal is to talk about 'Cajun country'. Even though the Student's goal is a different one (this can be seen in his next turn, line 54) and even though he has very little to say about that topic, he still makes his contribution coherent, that is, he follows up on the 'Cajun country' topic.

- P- | It's good Cajun country. You've got to learn to speak French. 47
- S- *Cajun, really?*