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

Volume I

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PART B

CHAPTER V. THE DATA ANALYZED

5.0. Introduction

In selecting a specific set of linguistic data to analyze, the researcher must take into account three main factors besides that of the specific aim of the research:

- (i) accessibility to data collection,
- (ii) need to assess the data, and
- (iii) analytical approach.

Although it may seem that the specific aim of the research should have complete preference in terms of choosing the data to work from, it is difficult to say which of the three points has prevalence upon the others when it comes to the real situation in which the research is going to be developed. The degree in which each of them affected the selection and analysis of the data presented in this research will be the subject of this chapter.

5.1. The selection of data

5.1.1. Accessibility to data collection

Doing sociolinguistic research is not always an easy job, in many cases owing to theoretical problems (as has been shown above), but in many others because of practical (Labov 1984) and sometimes ethical problems (Chaika 1982). Making people talk through interviews does not show them 'acting socially', but rather it shows them 'altruistically' providing information, which is not a very common situation in real life. We could say that a researcher-informant interview is socially meaningless in the sense that the role and status of the participants are temporarily suspended, there is no definite goal of the interaction (apart from that of getting as much information as possible on the part of the researcher), and the outcome of the interaction has no consequences on the future behaviour of the participants or their relationship.

If we are to focus on realistic speech behaviour we need to be able to intrude into the everyday life of the language user, but this may be seen as an attempt to dispossess someone of his/her rights to privacy. One way of avoiding this problem is for the researcher to concentrate on that part of the individual's social life which is located between the private and public domains. The professor-student office appointment, I assume, fits very well into this intermediate area. The other way out of

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the ethical problem is to get acquainted as much as possible with the subjects whose linguistic output is to be analyzed, so that an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality is built up prior to the collection of data.

As a participant in a research programme in an American university, both possibilities appeared naturally available to me through my relationship with professors and students.

5.1.2. Collection of data

The idea of analyzing naturally-occurring interaction in the form of speech events is probably as old as ethnography and ethnomethodology. The perspective applied to the analysis of speech sees a conversational encounter "as a microcosm in which social and cultural constructs are created by means of communicative interaction" (Tusón 1986: 30). The specific aim of the researcher is to discover the mechanisms through which the participants convey their own intentions and interpret the intentions of others while, at the same time, attending to the social and structural requirements of the basic unit of talk, which is the speech event.

Speech events constitute the basic unit for the study of speech behaviour when related to context (both immediate and socio-cultural context). The other reason for choosing the speech event as a unit of analysis is the possibility it offers for

analyzing units of talk larger than the turn or exchange (Wald 1976, Polanyi and Scha 1983, Houtkoop and Mazeland 1985). There is still a third reason for studying speech events, that is, the discovery of rules of conversational management such as turn allocation, topic/section transition, entrances, exits, etc.

The speech events which will be analyzed were collected through fieldwork during the first half of 1987 in the Anthropology Department of the University of Florida and during the 1989-90 academic year in the Department of Philology of the University of Barcelona at Lleida. The object of study was student-professor interactions during office hours. A total of 20 conversational events in English and 5 in Catalan were taperecorded and analyzed. These related to situations as different as consultation on thesis proposal, asking for a letter of recommendation, financial assistance for a conference trip, term projects, etc. Most of the students were between the ages of 18 and 30. Conversations were recorded in the offices of three American and two Catalan professors.

Previous to my actual collection of data I decided to spend some time making myself familiar with the structure of the department of the American university. To do that I had frequent conversations with the professors I had selected for my fieldwork. I also sat for a few periods in two graduate classes. By the time I started collecting data most of the graduate students in the department knew who I was or, at least, had seen my face

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often enough to consider me as part of the department. In the case of the Catalan university, at the time I did my fieldwork I had been a member of the staff for two years and, therefore, I was very well acquainted with the structure and dynamics of the department.

The method I used for the collection of data was that of *participant observation*. I sat in the professors' offices and when a student came to have an appointment with them, I always introduced myself to the students and requested their consent to let me observe and taperecord their conversation with the teacher. Although I never took the initiative to participate in the encounter, I was sometimes addressed by the participants. I also took notes on certain features which could not be reflected on the tape and that, I thought, might be helpful for my interpretation of the encounter.

5.1.3. Assessment of the data

Tannen (1984: 34) rightly points out one of the basic problems in analysing speech behavior:

"It is a problem, not only for participants but also for the analysts and for the readers who wish to put the present study in perspective, that the process of microanalysis leads to distortion as well as insight"

One way of salvaging part of the problem is to have the data assessed by means of the analyst's familiarity with the

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participants, the institution and the community. The other possibility is to have the participants listen and react to the taperecording and the analyst's interpretation. This process of assessment can only be done in an environment where the researcher is sufficiently at ease to be able to contact the participants after the interaction. The university environment provided the ideal situation for me to be able to do this. As I have said above, by the time I started my recordings of conversations I had become familiar enough with the institution and its members to be able to start on my own assessing and interpreting the data I was obtaining. I was also able to contact the students whose conversations I had previously taperecorded and observed. They were of great help not only with transcription problems but also in providing the background information necessary for a full understanding of the encounter.

The problem of the arbitrariness of the investigator in interpreting the data according to his/her values, presupposition and ideology is another factor which must be taken into account in the analysis of data. The solution adopted in the present research is that suggested in Schegloff (1988), which involves limiting the description and interpretation to those phenomena which can be corroborated by the orientations that the participants themselves show in the course of the conversation.

The possible alternative, then, to the arbitrariness noted earlier is to ground description in the orientations of the participants. Social science descriptions which submit to this discipline can, perhaps, be "mere descriptions", for the selection made among the indefinitely many aspects available to description will reflect not

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so much the orientation of the inquirer or the context of inquiry as those of the participants in the events being described, that is, selection principles indigenous to the events being described. (Schegloff 1988: 21)

5.2. Analytical approach

The process of identifying specific conversational exchanges as representative of socio-culturally familiar activities sets some very specific constraints on the units of speech behaviour to be analyzed. An activity becomes familiar when the expectations of the participants in terms of the purpose, development, and outcome are accomplished. According to Gumperz (1982a: 162), these expectations "are learned in the course of previous interactive experience and form part of our habitual and instinctive linguistic knowledge. Co-occurrence expectations enable us to associate styles of speaking with contextual presuppositions". By confronting these expectations with the data available we can also resolve possible ambiguities at the perceptual or sequential levels (Gumperz 1989: 4). The concept that has been proposed in the literature to denote this "organised background knowledge which leads us to *expect* or predict certain aspects in our interpretation of discourse" is that of *schemata* (Brown and Yule 1983: 24).

Speakers' intuitions about rules of language use are almost always related to the idea of context. One only needs to ask people about the use of an expression or check in a conversation

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manual to find out that most of the times the explanation is based on the context, e.g.

You would use 'Pardon me' when, for example, two people are talking in a doorway and you need to pass between them.

All this leads to the conclusion that in order to explain language through context one needs to start from a very specific situation, that is, the speech event, where the analyst has access to as much contextual information as possible. But at the same time the speech event has to be a common enough activity to develop according to a characteristic set of organizational and behavioural 'rules'. It is out of these rules that the participants derive their expectations.

The professor-student office appointment has become as much a part of the academic life in American universities as the classroom event. And, because of this, its development is as strongly subject to interactional patterns as the classroom session (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Stubbs and Robinson 1979, Iusón 1985, Nussbaum 1990) or other speech events such as psychiatrist-patient (Labov and Fanshel 1977), courtroom discourse (Atkinson and Drew 1979) or casual conversation (Burton 1978). Another source of interest in analysing speech in an educational setting is the role education plays in the creation, maintenance and transmission of a culture.

5.2.1. Quantitative vs. qualitative analyses

Descriptions of natural discourse are usually divided between quantitative analyses, i.e. those which focus on a large amount of talk and aim to explain why a particular feature is distributed in texts in general, and qualitative analyses, i.e. those which focus on a few sequences of talk with the aim of accounting for the way in which each utterance fits into a specific text. According to Schiffrin (1987: 67-68) the former approach responds to a scientific, objective approach intending to establish generalizations based on the accumulation of instances. The second approach is the product of a more humanistic, subjective approach, which considers that the process of interpretation of two instances of the same structure is so strongly dependent on textual and contextual particularities that it becomes impossible to make universal statements

It seems to me, however, that the two approaches are not incompatible but complementary. In the first place, we need to apply a qualitative analysis to discover the relevant units or segments of talk as well as their relationship with the type of task and the physical and socio-cultural context in which they appear. In the second place, the quantitative analysis allows us to relate the established units or segments of talk to the linguistic units of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon.

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The present research combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches in the way exposed in the previous paragraph. The first part involves an ethnographic analysis of twenty speech events in English and five in Catalan, which will result in the labelling of certain segments of talk according to their pragmatic function in the specific text. The second part of the analysis involves entering both the conversational data and the respective labellings into a database programme which would allow us to have ready access to all the instances of the same segment or the same labelling. In this way, we were able to account not only for the way in which the segment is interactionally interpreted but also for the relationships between specific interpretations and syntagmatic context.

5.2.2. Critical and descriptive goals

Describing such a limited speech event (that is, limited in terms of its relevance to the social life of the speaking community) with the hope of pointing out certain facts about conversational competence in general would be a useless task if we were not able to induce some further consequences from the immediate analysis. My main goal is not to come up with some prescriptive model of how to talk (in this specific case how to talk to a professor), but rather to point to some discovery procedures for the understanding of situated talk. A second plea for the use of an empirical-conceptual approach versus a more

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abstract one is the meaningfulness of social action because it is seen against a full set of possible meanings.

Social action is by definition meaningful in the sense that the participants in the action perceive it in terms of background of shared meanings. (Verschuere 1985: 16)

At this point, in order to justify the selection of an institutionally well-defined situation for the obtainment of data we need to introduce the distinction between critical and descriptive goals in the analysis of discourse established by Fairclough (1985). He defines a descriptive goal for discourse analysis as the one "whose goals are either non-explanatory, or explanatory within 'local' limits" (1985: 753). By 'local limits' he refers to factors such as the physical setting where the interaction is taking place, the relationship between the participants and the goal of the interaction. On the other hand a critical goal supposes "investigating verbal interaction with an eye to their determination by and their effects on social structures" (1985: 747)

Fairclough constructs his hypothesis from two main assumptions:

(i) (...) verbal interaction is a mode of social action and like other modes of social action it presupposes a range of what I shall loosely call 'structures' - which are reflected in the 'knowledge base' - including social structures, situational types, language codes, norms of language use.

(ii) (...) these structures are not only presupposed by, and necessary conditions for, action, but are also the products of action; or in a different terminology, action reproduces structures. (1985: 746)

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The latent question is now what kind of events will provide us with the possibility of integrating micro- with macro-linguistic research. According to Fairclough, the best source of data is the institutionalized speech behaviour where individuals have clearly acknowledged roles and at the same time the institution has a role in the general structure of the society.

We may regard an institution as a sort of 'speech community' with its own particular repertoire of speech events, describable in terms of the sorts of 'components' which ethnographic work on speaking has differentiated. (1935: 749)

Being part of an institution such as an anthropology department in an American university does not only mean acquiring knowledge, it also means seeking acceptance and a position in a social world which is defined by a series of standards set up ultimately by the scientific community in its effort to produce something relevant to society. It is because of this that my study of an area of the everyday life of this institution may shed some light upon the socio-cultural structures of the society of which it is a part.

5.3. Two issues in analyzing recorded conversation

The first problem with which the analyst of natural speech is confronted is the degree of naturalness of the data collected since the informed consent of the participants is needed before

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the tape-recording session. Blom and Gumperz (1972) and Labov (1973), among others, argue that if there is a relatively large number of participants who have ongoing social relationships, they soon forget the tape-recorder. This is an issue that needs to be debated, but in any case it is not applicable to the present research because most of the recordings were based on dyadic interactions.

At risk of sounding pessimistic, I would say that there is very little the researcher can do to avoid this problem. One possibility, already mentioned, is to create an atmosphere of trust among the participants and the researcher. Nevertheless, through the assessment questionnaires and interviews I had with the participants after the conversations, I came to the conclusion that whether the subjects are aware or not of the tape-recording depends very much on the individual concerned and the subject of the conversation.

The second issue to be raised is the question of how faithful a reflection of the real event a tape-recorded conversation is. I think, along with Tannen (1984), that, in the same way as a literary work of art becomes independent from the author once it is in the hands of the reader, a piece of transcribed conversation is also subject to the reader's interpretation, which does not necessarily have to coincide with that of the participant. Moreover, talk is only one part of an integrated complex in the communication phenomenon, which

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includes facial expression, body movements, spatial situation, etc. There is also the question that, in some cases, either because the participants were speaking softly or moving around the room, recording was very deficient. Cases of overlapping also contributed to the same problem.

The panorama presented above may seem almost hopeless. However, the other side of the coin is this:

(i) In real interactions there is much communication based on what was said before and on the expectations of the participants rather than on the understanding of the actual words uttered. In trying to make up for a lack of accuracy in tape-recording, we are simply paralleling the workings of the mind.

(ii) Redundancy in communication allows us to retrieve at a later stage a great deal of what was not understood previously in the conversation.

The fact that in order to present data and results we need to include the further distortion of transcripts may be another source of misinterpretation. To this I must add that I used the transcripts only as a support, and that most of the analysis was done based on repeated listenings. Yet each reader will necessarily have their own interpretation as he/she reads the transcribed segments of the talk.

To the question of accuracy in the interpretation of data, one may answer in two different ways:

(i) In any research task, and especially in social sciences, the investigator is not aiming at offering THE explanation, but one possible explanation (Tanzen 1984).

(ii) Most of the conclusions arrived at in the present research have been reached through (a) the appearance of recurrent patterns, (b) the native speakers' intuitions, and (c) the assessment of the tape-recording with the participants themselves.

5.4. Transcription system

In order to transcribe the data I have basically followed Schenkein (1978: xi-xvi). For the transcriptions of words or verbalizations for which there is not an established written version, the basic orthographic rules of the language have been followed.

- | Overlapping turns: The point at which an ongoing utterance is joined by another is marked with a single vertical line.**
- = Contiguous turns: When there is no noticeable pause between two contiguous turns by different speakers an equal sign appears at the end of a turn and at the beginning of the next one.**
- > Unbroken turn: In order to increase the readability of the transcription, it is necessary sometimes to accommodate a short intervention by another participant which does not interrupt the flow of speech of the previous speaker. In this**

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case a pointed bracket is used at the end of the line below which the interruption has been inserted and at the beginning of the line belonging to the same turn.

- **Pauses:** Although pauses have not been timed, dashes have been used in order to give an idea of the different length. A single dash corresponds to a short but noticeable pause which breaks the flow of speech. Two dashes are used for longer pauses. Intervals of silence between turns are indicated by square brackets.
- . **Intonation:** A period indicates sentence final falling intonation, not necessarily followed by a pause.
- , **Intonation:** A comma is used to signal clause-final falling intonation, with an indication that there is more to come.
- ? **Intonation:** A question mark indicates the rising intonation typical of questions.
- ' **Intonation:** An apostrophe at the end of an utterance indicates a terminal rising pitch in an utterance pronounced with a general lower pitch than that of standard questions; utterances following this kind of intonation pattern seem to convey a sense of already mentioned and, at the same time, a disposition to continue speaking.
- : **Pronunciation:** A colon has been used to indicate a lengthening of the sound or syllable it follows.
- h **Pronunciation:** When an utterance is delivered while laughing the letter 'h' in parenthesis has been inserted between the different words.

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- [] **Pronunciation and contextual information:** Comments on the quality of speech as well as the context have been inserted in italics and between square brackets.
- ^ **Loudness:** Utterances pronounced in a soft tone of voice, as if the speaker were talking to himself/herself, are indicated by means of a circumflex accent, ^, at the beginning and at the end.
- (...) **Transcription problems:** When an utterance, or part of it, has not been understood a series of dots between single parentheses are used, (...). The number of dots can be increased whenever it is necessary to indicate the exact length of the inaudible segment. Words within parentheses, (), indicate uncertain transcription.

5.5. Ethnographic summary of the encounters analyzed

5.5.1. American encounters

SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T7-8	- To make a phone call from P's office.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intraamerican (language proficiency test). 2. Right-wing newspaper. 	<p>S: female graduate student P: male professor (A) O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 10 P: 16 O: 1</p>	715"
T9	- To obtain explanation for a bad grade in a paper.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Paper. 3. Future paper. 4. Questionnaire. 	<p>S: male undergraduate student. P: male professor (B). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 43 P: 41 O: 4</p>	923"
T1	-- To obtain financial aid to attend a conference.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Present situation about ethnic obtention of financial aid. 3. Dr. Margolis. 4. Documentation required to obtain financial aid. 5. Accommodation in Mexico (Stefano Varese) 	<p>S1: female graduate student. S2: male graduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer</p>	<p>S1: 61. S2: 39. P: 309.</p>	137"
T10	To obtain orientation for a paper.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bibliographic sources. 	<p>S: male undergraduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 15 P: 14 O: 1</p>	621"

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SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To comment on a topic started in class some days ago. - Offer help to correct papers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student's experience with Indochinese refugees. 2. Alphabetization of refugees. 3. Subject of a final paper. 4. Correction of papers. 5. A recent trip by the professor (living in Washington D.C.) 6. Providence.. 	<p>S: female undergraduate student (in her 30s) P: male professor (B) O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 139 P: 143 O: 2</p>	29:28
T13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To obtain advice/help to develop a video project as one of the assignments for the course 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Video project. 2. Wendy Thomson 3. S2's baby. 	<p>S1: male undergraduate student (in his 30s). S2: male undergraduate student. P: male professor (B). O: observer.</p>	<p>S1: 52 S2: 50 P: 70</p>	10:20

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SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T15	- To drop the honors program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress with paper for the Honors program. 2. Dropping the honors program. 3. Possible options (more restricted topic; redo an old paper; university regulations). 4. P2's present from Los Angeles. 5. Is unknown. 6. Possible solutions. 7. Mexican teacher in the University. 	<p>S: female undergraduate student.</p> <p>F: male professor (B).</p> <p>F2: female professor.</p> <p>O: observer</p>	<p>S: 92</p> <p>F: 92</p> <p>F2: 6</p>	2:01
T3	- Comment topic for dissertation and the possibility of beginning his treatment in a course paper (S2 is not involved in the goal)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Wall pointer. 3. Topic of research. 4. Specific subject of paper. 5. Wait for S2. 	<p>S: male under-graduate student.</p> <p>F: male professor (B).</p> <p>O: observer.</p>	<p>S1: 33</p> <p>S2: 26</p> <p>F: 56</p> <p>O: 8</p>	8:45
T24	- Obtain a letter of recommendation for a university teaching position.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teaching position. 2. Recommendation letter. 3. Anthropology Department. 4. Cajon country. 5. S's background. 6. Application process. 	<p>S: male graduate student.</p> <p>F: male professor (B).</p>	<p>S: 13</p> <p>F: 17</p>	1:05

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SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T1	- To obtain permission to go into P's office (outside office hours) to consult documentation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objects left in the office. 2. Documentation for research (Peruvian Times; land and mines in Perù; Cajone and Toquepala; movie on Toquepala) 	<p>S1: female graduate student (same as in T2) S2: male graduate student (same as in T2) P: male professor (A) O: observer.</p>	<p>S1: 65 S2: 1 P: 56 O: 1</p>	12'12"
T33	- To learn about date of orientation session for summer programme in Yucatan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Examination for the programme. 3. Fees. 4. Diana Mortenson. 5. T-shirts sale 	<p>S: male undergraduate student P: male professor (B) O: observer</p>	<p>S: 62 P: 34</p>	7'22"
T4	- To obtain (i) a syllabus of the course and (ii) permission to switch the period for the lab sessions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Class information documents. 2. Schedule problems. 3. Progress in the class. 4 Teaching essant. 5. Class assignment 	<p>S: female undergraduate student P: female professor. O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 52 P: 52</p>	5'31"
T5	- To set up an appointment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment. 2. Student interested in a co-project. 3. An accident of V's grandmother. 	<p>S: female undergraduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 23 P: 26</p>	2'19"

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SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T6	- To confirm authorization from the University to do a research project.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorization. 2. Number of credits to register for. 3. Co-participant in research project. 4. Appointment. 5. Research. 	<p>S: male undergraduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 24. P: 19</p>	2:11
T7	- To select topic for a paper.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topic 2. Monographs. 3. Next assignment. 4. Bibliographic sources. 	<p>S: male undergraduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 18 P: 16</p>	5:30
T8	- To set up an appointment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment. 2. P's Jury Duty. 3. S's papers. 4. Family names. 	<p>S: female graduate student. P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 59. P: 64. O: 20.</p>	9:10
T9	<p>- To hand in revised page of a paper.</p> <p>- To obtain information about an examination exercise.</p> <p>- Inform P about subject chosen for thesis.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendation letter (P, S2). 2. Revise page of a paper. 3. Procedures for taking examination. 4. Bibliographic sources. 5. Election of subject for thesis 6. American politics (Reagan, Irangate, Carter:). 	<p>S: female graduate student. S2: female graduate student (same as in T2 and T3). P: male professor (A). O: observer.</p>	<p>S1: 274. S2: 7 P: 195</p>	34:40

The data analyzed

SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T11	- To revise research proposal for a grant to Perú.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work. 2. Vacation. 3. Hand signals. 4. Document (P, P2). 5. Examination (P, P2). 6. P's Peruvian friend (P, P2). 7. Research proposal. 8. Appointment (P, S3) 9. Examination (P, S3). 	<p>S1: female graduate student (same as in T2, T3, and T4).</p> <p>S2: female graduate student (same as in T1).</p> <p>S3: female graduate student (same as in T9).</p> <p>P: male professor (A)</p> <p>P2: S9</p> <p>O: 4.</p>	<p>S1: 245.</p> <p>S2: 4.</p> <p>S3: 7.</p> <p>P: 293.</p> <p>P2: 59.</p> <p>O: 4.</p>	43'30"
T16	- To obtain advice about a research project.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study-life problems. 2. Changing office-structure. 3. Research subject. 	<p>S: female graduate student (same as in T8)</p> <p>P: female professor (same as in T15).</p> <p>O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 162.</p> <p>P: 218.</p>	27'27"
T32	- To enroll in a summer programme in Yucatan.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Enrollment process. 3. Transportation. 4. Programme in Mexico. 	<p>S: female undergraduate student.</p> <p>P: male professor (B).</p> <p>O: observer.</p>	<p>S: 81.</p> <p>P: 64.</p> <p>O: 4.</p>	8' 46"

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5.5.2. Catalan encounters

SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
TC1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To hand in the names of the students working on a group project. - To obtain orientation about the project. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recording. 2. Enrollment card. 3. Project. 4. First examination (date, contents). 5. Textbook. 6. Reviews. 	<p>PT: male professor (A). S1: female undergraduate student. S2: female undergraduate student. S3: male undergraduate student. R: observer.</p>	<p>PT: 48 S1: 43. S2: 6. S3: 17 Sⁿ: 3. R: 2.</p>	10'35"
TC2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To obtain information about the course 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student's introduction. 2. Enrollment card. 3. Course matters. 4. Student's academic background. 5. Appointments (P1, P2) 6. Open University. 7. Future arrangements. 8. Student's health problems. 	<p>PJ: male professor (B) S: female undergraduate student. P2: female professor.</p>	<p>PJ: 15L S: 179. P2: 5.</p>	23'35"
TC3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To obtain information on bibliographic sources for a group project 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bibliographic sources. 2. Bibliographic reviews. 	<p>PT: male professor (B). S1: female undergraduate student. S2: female undergraduate student. S3: female undergraduate student.</p>	<p>PT: 23. S1: 24. S2: 10. S3: 3.</p>	45"

The data analyzed

SPEECH EVENT	GOALS	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	TURNS	DURATION
T4	- To obtain advice to select the subject of a group project.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group project. 2. Bibliographic sources. 3. Steps to follow in the elaboration of the project. 4. Bibliographic reviews. 	<p>P1: male professor (B). S1: male undergraduate student. S2: male undergraduate student.</p>	<p>P1: 35 S1: 29. S2: 21</p>	9:20
T5	- To obtain access to research equipment and facilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research project. 2. Researcher's background. 3. Computer equipment (Apple). 4. Cultural institution supporting the research. 5. S's work place 	<p>P1: male professor (A). R: young researcher (not ascribed to the University but to a cultural institution of which P is a member of the research committee. S2: female graduate student (working apart in the same room).</p>	<p>P1: 79. S: 90. S2: 2.</p>	17:30

CHAPTER VI. ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS

6.9. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is basically to provide an inventory of the different ways in which sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic 'interactional requirements' are realized in the actual events. The analysis is also intended to show that it is possible to attempt a functional description in conversation analysis by integrating different systems of meaning (Schiffrin 1988: 271):

(...) one very general need in conversation analysis is the formulation of specific and empirically testable propositions about conversation. For example, many conversation analysts assume that particular ways of saying something, e.g. certain expressions, ways of ending or beginning a turn, are used in conversation because of the function that they serve. Yet, functionalist perspectives in general require specification of an overall system within which functions are defined (Halliday 1973). The specification of such systems might not only help conversation analysts formulate testable hypotheses about the functions of particular items, but might also allow a precise description of how *different systems* are integrated in conversation and why particular items and constructions therefore have *multiple functions* in talk.

The analysis will be based on the specific strategies adopted by the participants in the encounter to fulfill each of the *interactional requirements*. These strategies will be specified in functional terms, that is to say, in connection with the kind of speech action they are intended to carry out. Formal characteristics will also be used to further describe the ways in which conversationalists transform their knowledge of the linguistic code into strategic actions with specific goals.

The analysis of twenty different examples of the same kind of speech event should allow for, in the first place, an analysis based on the *sequential accountability* of utterances (i.e. the interpretation of all the utterances in a text and their coherent sequencing). Secondly, a large corpus of data such as the one analyzed in this research should provide us with the possibility of looking for *distributional accountability*, that is, an analysis based on the full range of environments in which a particular item occurs (Schiffri, 1987: 69).

From a pedagogical point of view, it is also interesting to approach conversation not as a ready-made inventory of possible recipes that the conversationalist can choose from. Apart from a few conversational routines, the specific circumstances of every encounter make it impossible to attempt any 'safe' generalization. A detailed analysis of a number of examples of one type of speech event should allow the language learner to become sensitive not only to certain parts of the interactive

ritual but also to the very subtle forces that bring the encounter to one outcome or another. The language learner should not be expected to imitate this type of encounter but to apply his/her sensitivity to other types of speech event, and from his/her observation and analysis be able to discover by himself/herself appropriate patterns of interactional behaviour.

6.1. The multifunctionality of linguistic items

One of the first things that an analysis of verbal interactions brings to relevance is the multiplicity of functions of certain segments in the three components of what has been defined as pragmatic competence. This is the case, for example, of parenthetical verbs (e.g. I believe I could do a good job), modals (e.g. it's very complicated it must be an Aztec - thing), backchannel tokens (e.g. yeah), and topicalized expressions (e.g. what I need from you then is a budget), among others. Let us explain in what way these segments can be considered as developing more than one function in the sociolinguistic, discourse or strategic components of communicative competence.

In the case of the parenthetical verb I believe we could say that if we pay attention to the literal meaning of the expression, it indicates a certain state of information, specifically a lack of absolute certainty. Therefore, we should classify it under the

label Information Management. But a parenthetical verb such as this one, preceding a statement, also contributes to diminish the impression of assertiveness of the individual, resulting in a positive Presentation of Self. Furthermore, by means of the same parenthetical verb, the speaker can face a Human Constraint due to the lack of certainty of knowledge.

The same happens with the three other segments suggested as examples of multifunctionality. The modal verb *must* points to the state of information (Information Management), which is different from that indicated by *may*, for instance, but at the same time it suggests a certain limitation in the possession of knowledge (Human Constraint). The backchannel token *yeah* is a marker through which the speaker claims attention to what is being said and passes on his/her opportunity to take the floor (Turn Taking), but it also indicates a state of agreement, which may be interpreted as either Social Distance (a possible paraphrase would be "I am close to you because we have certain ideas in common") or Information Management (in this case the paraphrase would be "I was already familiar with that information"). Finally, the pseudo-cleft sentence *what I need (...) is a budget*, serves the double function of introducing a different aspect of the topic (Topic) and, at the same time, focus the attention of the addressee (Information Management).

This aspect of the multifunctionality of linguistic items at different levels of meaning is already pointed out by Halliday (1978: 112-113). This author introduces the idea that a text is the product of three functional components: (i) the ideational component ("language as 'about something'"), (ii) the interpersonal component ("language as doing something"), and the textual component (what makes language "operational in a context of situation"). In trying to describe how the three functional components work in the production of a text he uses the following words:

What are these functional components of the semantic system? They are the modes of meaning that are present in every use of language in every social context. A text is a product of all three; it is a polyphonic composition in which different semantic melodies are interwoven, to be realized as integrated lexicogrammatical structures. Each functional component contributes a band of structure to the whole.

From the point of view of practical analysis of linguistic data one of the best examples of an attempt to cope with the multifunctionality of language is the work of Schiffrin (1987). In her study of discourse markers she distinguishes among four different structures or planes:

(i) *Exchange structure*, based on the alternation of roles of the participants in an interaction between speaker and hearer; the unit of analysis in this plane is the turn of speech.

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(ii) *Action structure*, which accounts for the sequential organization of actions; the unit of analysis in this case is the speech act.

(iii) *Ideational structure*, consisting of semantic units (propositions).

(iv) *Participation framework*, which takes into account the different roles which speaker and hearer can adopt in an interaction and the different relationships established between them (e.g. doctor, patient, addressee, overherrer, etc.)

The analyst's need to consider specific linguistic segments as fulfilling more than one interactional function can be seen in the list below, which includes all the different clusters of functions that appear in the coding list of the 20 American encounters and the 5 Catalan encounters. The labels used for each 'interactional requirement' have been abbreviated in the following way:

- PS** Presentation of Self
- SD** Social Distance
- P** Power
- I** Imposition
- T** Topic
- TT** Turn Taking
- IM** Information Management
- G** Goal
- HC** Human Constraint
- LC** Language Constraint

AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS		CATALAN ENCOUNTERS	
TT/IM	T/G	TT/IM	T/G
G/TT	G/I	TT/SD	G/I
PS/IM	HC/TT	TT/LC	PS/P
P/I	PS/I	IM/HC	I/TT
I/IM	HC/I	IM/TT/LC	IM/LC/PS
IM/T	PS/P	G/TT	PS/T
PS/LC	LC/I	PS/TT	SD/LC
IM/HC	IM/TT/PS	P/IM	HC/I
TT/SD	G/SD:	IM/T	T/SD
P/IM	PS/P/I	IM/TT/PS	T/HC
IM/SD	P/I/IM	IM/LC	PS/TT/LC
PS/T	I/TT	PS/IM	
P/G	TT/T	I/IM	
PS/TT	T/SD	P/I	
SD/IM/TT	T/HC	SD/IM/TT	
IM/LC	PS/TT/LC	PS/I	
G/IM	P/IM.T	IM/P/TT	
HC/PS	P/I/TT	PS/LC	
G/P/I	IM/P/PS	G/IM	
SD/LC	HC/SD	PS/SD	
PS/G	G/T/IM	SD/PV	
G/P/I		HC/PS	

Without attempting any exhaustive analysis of the data presented above, it might be interesting to see the linguistic realizations of the most frequent clusters.

The most frequent cluster (TT/IM) in the case of the American encounters involves all those one-word tokens which while providing the necessary backchannel for the previous

speaker to continue developing his/her intended message, succeed in indicating some kind of reaction to (or understanding of) the information received. Items that appear in the data with this multiple function are: *yeah, right, that's right, I know, that's very interesting*, anticipation of the previous speaker's turn. The tokens *ok* and *alright* appear with a similar degree of frequency to those mentioned above. Their presence, however, is connected with the negotiation of the outcomes or goals of the interaction. This is the reason why they have been labelled G/TT.

The next cluster with the highest frequency (PS/IM) consists mainly of parenthetical verbs whose function is to reduce the impression of assertiveness given by the speaker. This is done by presenting the message as subjective rather than objective information. Examples found in the data are *It seemed like, I think, I don't know, I guess*.

Parenthetical verbs and modal verbs are the main linguistic features of expressions classified under the cluster I/IM. They all involve directive actions by the powerful participant, the Professor, who tries to diminish the impositive load by means of transforming the directive into an expression of a subjective opinion or by making it a hypothetical fact. The following are examples found in the data: *I think/thought, I would suggest, you could/may*.

The cluster P/I includes a series of expressions through which the speaker makes explicit the difference in Power existing between the participants by appealing to his/her rights upon the negative face of the other. Thus, in the case of the Professor, he may utter expressions like *you don't have to do it now* relieving the addressee from an action he could perfectly impose. Other expressions by the Professor making Power relevant by means of an act of Imposition are: *that's what I want you to do, I'd kind of like you to, etc.* All the expressions used by the Student with this double function are addressed to question his/her rights to impose his/her wishes on the Professor. Two main groups can be found. On the one hand, there are those segments which address the requirement directly: *do you have a minute, sorry to take up your time, I appreciate that, thanks, etc.* On the other hand, the Student can resort to a group of non-imposing items like parenthetical verbs, modals, coordinating clauses and questions; e.g. *I was thinking; could I do that maybe; do you want the door shut? or open? or...; how about Monday?*

Pseudo-cleft sentences are the most obvious example of the functional cluster IM/T. This type of sentences can be described as *subject-predicator-subject attribute* sentences, in which the subject is realized by a *what*-clause, the predicator by a form of *be* and the subject attribute by a noun phrase or an infinitive; e.g. *what you wanna do is ...*

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The expressions labelled as PS/LC accomplish the double function of increasing or diminishing the communicative effectiveness of language (LC), and in doing this saving the speaker's face (PS). An example of this double function is the prosodically and lexically distinct group of expressions of joy which are not typical of the formal context in which they take place, and which were uttered by one of the professors to another professor who had brought a present: *oh boy, you made my day, ooooh*. Another example is utterances like *she's not real skilled, she's kind of* or *she didn't make very much sense*, etc. Here the presence of emphasizers (*real, very much*) or downtoners (*kind of*) allows the speaker to save the face-damaging effect of the expression without having to look for an alternative.

In the Catalan encounters, the most frequent cases of multifunctionality are TT/IM, TT/SD, and TT/LC. TT/IM involves one-word backchannel tokens like *ja, sí* or vocalizations like *mm, hm*. The higher frequency of TT/SD in the Catalan than in American encounters is due to the presence of the tokens *eh?, no?, and mm?*, which seem to accomplish the double function of promoting interactivity by demanding some kind of response on the listener (TT), and conveying a message of solidarity by suggesting that the listener's reaction to what is being said is essential for the development of discourse. This device is used mainly by the Professor; e.g.

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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? (1075-1076)

We can distinguish two types of expressions labelled as TT/LC. On the one hand, there is the repetition of backchannel tokens like *ja* and *sí* to reinforce the impression of understanding conveyed by those two items. On the other hand, we have a specific use of the question tag *eh?*, intended to draw the attention of the listener to the exceptional nature of the information, while demanding some kind of reaction; e.g. *estava al lit eh? i he visgut.*

6.2. Sociolinguistic competence

6.2.1. Presentation of Self

The strategies used by the participants confronting the need to show their personality are all aimed at constructing a self socially acceptable in an academic context. In the first place there is a need to avoid a degree of assertiveness which may cause the individual to be rejected because of his/her negative qualities (e.g. proud, selfish, impertinent, etc.). The second strategy consists of explaining and justifying previous or future behaviour (verbal or non-verbal). This strategy is particularly relevant in an academic-scientific context where reasoning is constantly promoted as a basic need for human development. In

the third place, the speaker may explicitly display a positive self by emphasizing those positive characteristics of the self and avoiding the negative ones. A fourth strategy apparently consists of precisely the opposite action to the previous one, that is denying a positive self. The ultimate aim of this strategy is, however, to present a positive self by emphasizing the modesty of the speaker. Finally, the speaker can introduce personal attitudes and feelings intended to 'humanize' what in theory is a purely transactional encounter, with its participants representing not individuals but institutions.

A. Avoiding assertiveness

The image one gives of himself/herself depends greatly on the models a social group defines as ideals. Assertiveness and directness are necessary features of that model for certain social groups in American society. However, this does not seem to be the case in an intellectual context like a university. The prevalent rationalist ideology, according to which nothing can be said to be certain until it has been proved to be so, is perhaps the main reason for the lack of assertiveness. Danger of being understood as 'imposing one's views' is another possibility, and it will be dealt with more in depth in the corresponding section. In this group we generally find utterances hedged with parenthetical verbs (Jucker: 1986) like *think, believe, guess,*

know, remember, etc., or expressions functioning syntactically as disjuncts¹ (e.g. as I remember; as far as I can tell; from what I understand). The function of all of them is to introduce some cues acknowledging the subjectivity of the statement and, therefore, the possibility for it not to be an accurate reflection of past, present or future state of affairs.

(1)

- S Well I got / Dr Gimenez did one but I can't I don't know what I'm supposed to do with it now, if I should just carry it with me [dialling] This thing they run, they seem so I don't know I guess because this uh foundation is being reorganized or it just seems to me like I keep getting different things in the mail It's not not sure what's going on. (15-20)

In (1) we have a Student who is suggesting a possible explanation for the apparent malfunctioning of the organization to which she is applying for a fellowship (it is being reorganized). We can notice the insertion of three hedges: two preceding the explanation ("I don't know"; "I guess") and one following it ("it just seems to me").

1 According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 612-631) *disjuncts* are "syntactically more detached" from the rest of the elements in the sentence and express an evaluation of what is being said either in respect to the form of communication or to its content.

Another possibility is the use of modal verbs or adverbs indicating hypothetical rather than factual meaning.

(2)

(P) It's very awkward so much people don't do it, but if you're trying to impress

**S Maybe I should just go ahead and string them along.
(3200-3202)**

In (2) the Professor and the Student are discussing in a very relaxed way the advantages and disadvantages of the hispanic tradition of keeping both paternal and maternal names. The Student seems to be convinced about the advantages and she is considering the possibility of applying this to herself.

There is still a third option to carry out this strategy, and that is the insertion of adjectival/adverbial expressions functioning as downtoners (sort of, not really, pretty much, kind of, like) which in a sense dilute the semantic strength of the word/phrase they accompany.

(3)

P And uh see some, whatever you get, some, you know, clever ways of getting some new information on this, and what >

S | Mhm

> P could make it sort of a really anthropological kind of study, (3493-3496)

The interest of (3) stems from the apparently contradictory presence of two downtoners ("sort of", "kind of") and one emphasizer ("really"). The explanation involves the

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consideration that the two downtoners modify the noun "study", which refers to the task being discussed, and that the emphaser modifies the adjective "anthropological", referring to the type of task and not the task itself.

B. Explaining and justifying

People sometimes do things which can be interpreted in a different way from the intended one. Therefore, if they want to maintain a positive public image some clarification is needed. It is also necessary sometimes to justify a certain action. Otherwise it would be interpreted as an act of arbitrariness and this also affects negatively one's face. The expiation may be required in the case of either a verbal action or a non-verbal one.

Although there exists a great disparity in terms of formal features among the utterances realizing this function, there are certain regularities involving mainly the connectors used to introduce these utterances in the discourse.

(4)

P Mhm - uh - well it seems to me that - you know I I - if if we could salvage - and I don't mean in a negative sense, I mean it in a positive sense, maybe an expansion of that paper (1735-1738)

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As we can see in (4), when introducing an explanation for a suggestion he has made (i.e. to salvage the problem of creating a whole new research for an honours degree) there is no progression or switch of topic. In this example the subject has chosen to indicate this by means of the expression "I don't mean".

In the case of justification the relationship of coherence between the utterances is one of reason and, thus, whenever an explicit marker is needed the connective **because** can fulfill this function

(5)

- P Uhu uhu. Ok. You the only uh is you'll kind of have to move quickly with your application and the fees, and things >
S |Mhm
>P like that
S Right
P ~~Because we have to have the money in the account so we can a draw a check to pay the university down there.~~
(5931-5936)

(6)

- S And uh I was a - teaching assistant for Nuñez. cultural. And I believe I could do a good job teaching >
P |Hm mhm >
>S cultural anthropology. I have a lot of it as a masters student at F.S.U. (2124-2127)

Extracts (5) and (6) exemplify the need to introduce justifications immediately after statements which, if not justified, may sound excessively arbitrary (i.e. "you'll have to move quickly"; "I can do a good job teaching cultural anthropology"). Whereas in (5) the presence of the logical connector seems to be due to the fact that the content of the turn must be clearly linked to the previous one by the same speaker, P, the contiguity of statement and justification in (6) dispenses with the connector "because".

C. Displaying a positive self

In order to present a positive face the speaker can choose between trying to avoid negative impressions or emphasizing those positive aspects of the self. The first kind of situation usually takes place whenever the subject is confronted with the dilemma of, on the one hand, following Grice's Maxim of Quality (i.e. do not say what you believe to be false) and, on the other hand, maintaining their positive face. From the expressions mentioned below we can see that a positive face includes all those features that make somebody a good student or a good professor (certainty of knowledge, willingness for intellectual improvement, and capacity for playing the role assumed). Most of the expressions included as part of this strategy involve the modification of negative utterances which

would damage the speaker's face. This modification can be done by using a verb carrying fewer negative connotations (e.g. I'm not sure for I don't know, I'd rather not for I don't want to) or by modifying the verbal complements with emphasizees increasing their positive meaning (e.g. it's not very good instead of it's not good; other modifiers are really, exactly, clearly, wildly, quite, etc.). The result of this last substrategy is that the negative impression is smaller because the standard has been increased and, therefore, one can expect some failures to reach that standard.

(7)

P What have you done in your paper so far?

S I've I've done some reading uhm - and started putting a few ideas down, but it's it's just not going as well as uhm - I was thinking it would - And - uhm - to tell you the truth, what I'd really like to do is just - forget about the paper and (1518-1523)

Extract (7) shows how even in a 'desperate' situation where the Student must face the face-damaging effects of having to drop the honours programme, she still makes an attempt to disguise the reality by making it a relative rather than an absolute issue (i.e. "it's just not going as well as - uhm I was thinking it would" instead of "it's not going well").

A second strategy consists of emphasizing positive characteristics of the self like intellectual competence, academic interest and responsibility, coherent thinking, etc. A common formal feature of the segments used to carry out this strategy is

the inclusion of verbs of internal state conjugated in the first person.

(8)

- S I guess the I guess the first thing is I just feel real
dissatisfied, not with what I'm doing necessarily,
because I'm real interested in what I'm doing, but I
feel like it's not really necessarily what you want.
- P Uhu
- S I mean you're looking for - sparks. *(laughter)*
- P Yeah, ok.
- S *(And and I don't really know - uh - w h the more I looked
at my paper and the more I read,*
- P Mhm
- S the more I began to realize that what I could do was a lot
less than what I wanted to do. (5214-5225)

Extract (8) involves examples of the two substrategies mentioned in this section: presenting positive aspects of the self ("I'm real interested in what I'm doing") and hedging the negative aspects ("really"; "necessarily"). The Professor and the Student here are discussing the subject of a paper and the way to deal with it.

D. Emphasizing modesty

A feature of positive face which has not been mentioned so far relates to the Modesty Maxim in Leech's (1983: 136-138) Politeness Principle:

1) Minimize praise of self.

2) Maximize dispraise of self.

All of the examples related to this strategy belong to students' utterances. The reason for this fact is that through their modesty the students are implicitly reaffirming their role of learners, willing to receive and accept the professor's knowledge and ideas. Thus, the display of negative features of the self results also in the presentation of a positive public image, one that is ready to acknowledge and accept its imperfections.

(9)

- S ^ Well. ^ - it's gonna be so - neat living with a family.
It's gonna be strange.
- P | mhm
- P The families are - are very very friendly.
- S They know that we're - we're just dumb Americans, right?
[laughter] What (h) I'll (h) go (h) through. [laughter]
(5101-6106)

In (9) the Student wants to enroll in a Spanish summer course to be held in Mexico, under the direction of the Professor. In this case the Student resorts to 'maximizing dispraise of self' by presenting herself (and the rest of Americans!) as not ready to have an experience abroad.

E. Showing attitudes and feelings

The expressions included in this group could be mentioned as perfect examples of Halliday's expressive function of language. The kind of information they convey is not facts or experiences the speaker has internalized. It is information that reflects the internal state of the speaker. It is very common to find here expressions which are not part of formal repertoires (e.g. damn, oh boy), ready-made expressions (e.g. good days these days, thank you one and all), but it is mainly verbs indicating likes, dislikes, preferences, states, hopes, etc. conjugated in the first person.

(10)

- S1 Uh did you put the pictures up two weeks ago ?
P ! Yeah.
S1 [laughter] {S1 is surprised because when she was in the office two weeks ago she had not noticed them}
P [laughter]
S2 Oh my goodness ! I love that picture. Isn't that something? (1959-1963)

In (10) the Student expresses a personal taste (i.e. "I love that picture") and he does so by including two colloquial expressions (i.e. "oh my goodness"; "isn't that something"). In (11) we can see the Student trying to convey to the teacher his positive feelings towards the job.

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(11)

(S) 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

P Sounds good

S {(...) }

[pause]

P It sounds like a nice job.

S I hope so. I'm I'm encouraged. I've never been there, but
(2:33-2146)