The Discourse of Academic Seminars: Structures and Strategies of Interaction

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## Summary

Seminar discussion is an important mode of instruction in Higher Education. However, the discourse of discussion in academic seminars has been little investigated. Until now, there has existed only a limited amount of empirically based language description which could be used to inform those working in the field of English for Academic Purposes.

The present study investigates discussion in seminars on a MBA programme and offers frameworks to account for central aspects of the verbal interaction: exchange patterns; acts and moves initiating exchanges and strategies. Three subgenres of seminar discussion are examined: the discussion following the presentation by an outside speaker; the discussion following the presentation by students and non-presentation tutorial discussion.

Exchanges are found to be basically two-part structures of initiation and response. Some extended patterns are brought to light and it is argued that the major impetus prolonging exchanges in discussion is a third-part move registering dissatisfaction with the initial responses given. Exchanges are observed to be driven by moves functioning as elicitations although acts at initiation both ask for information and ideas and propose them. Initiation may be complex and involves a mixture of the acts. Textual signalling and attitudinal strategies used in seminars are explicated. The latter are accounted for in terms of the face concerns of the speakers.

The features are examined across the three subgenres. Some quantitative variations were observed. These variations are discussed in the light of situational variables such as levels of participant status and knowledge.

Theoretical implications are drawn and applications for syllabus and methodology in English for Academic Purposes are suggested.

Key words: discussion discourse   exchange structure   strategic interaction

**For Solen**

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# Chapter One
## Introduction

In this the first chapter of the thesis, the background and objectives of the study are described. The need for the study is explained and finally, a brief outline is given of the content the thesis.

### 1.0 Situation and Problem

Two major modes of instruction in Higher Education are lectures and seminar/discussion type classes. These forms of instruction are widely practised in universities both in English-speaking countries and in developing countries, many of which use English as the medium of instruction and base their instructional practices on Western models. Although lectures often predominate at lower levels of instruction, as students progress up the university ladder, classes often become smaller and discussion in them more widespread.

In education generally the view of students as receivers of knowledge from instructors is being replaced by a view of learners needing to be actively involved in the learning process (Wilson 1989: 49). This perception is reflected in the emergence of alternative forms of instruction often using discussion and requiring students to take an active role. A number of these alternatives are discussed by Brown and Alkins (1988: 62-68). Lectures themselves are often followed by a question and answer period similar to discussion in seminars if shorter in length. All in all, classes based on discussion and demanding developed speaking skills from students are prevalent and increasing. The ability to effectively communicate in and follow academic discussion is critical for students in Higher Education.

There are ever-increasing numbers of overseas students attending university courses in English speaking countries (Evans 1995). Overseas students both in UK and students studying in English-medium institutions in developing countries often do not have a very high level of proficiency in English and participating in seminar discussion can appear daunting. Mauranen

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(1994: 22) reports on research showing that Finnish exchange students in UK considered their greatest study difficulty to be participating in seminar discussions. Jordan (1989: 153) reports on research in the Middle East showing that students perceived speaking as their most pressing need and research in UK has shown that non-native speaker (NNS) students are particularly anxious about their performance in seminars and discussion classes (Furneaux et al. 1991: 82). In view of this, there is clearly a need in English for Academic Purposes (E.A.P.) courses to focus on discussion skills to help non-native speaker students who will take part in seminars and discussions in their target academic environments.

Empirical investigation into the language of academic discussion has not been extensive. Baseline descriptive information such as the patterns of exchange or the kinds of questions and responses that typically occur is needed. There is a limited amount of published pedagogic material in the field of E.A.P. on academic speaking. Lynch & Anderson (1991) point to the fact that often the materials available offer an unrealistic description of the language. English & Ohta (1995) find that some materials may give students a false impression of the reality of the target situation. Classes involving discussion, such as seminars make specific demands on students in terms of making contributions and following the debate and yet, the characteristic discourse has not been widely researched and pedagogic materials are limited. As a result, the teaching of English for academic speaking is restricted in its capacity to prepare learners specifically to participate in seminars and formal academic discussions.

The programme of study reported in this thesis began with an exploratory investigation into seminar events in the context of an English-medium university in a developing country. This involved a number of non-participant observations and interviews with students and faculty at Bilkent University, Turkey. This initial investigation revealed two important findings. Firstly, students and staff were found to be dissatisfied with the practice of seminar in their own context in which English was used as a foreign language and felt that language was an obstacle to the realisation of more dynamic and useful discussions. Secondly, seminar was

found to be a term applied to a range of event types such as student presentation, research report seminar, group tutorials, etc.

## 1.1 Research Objectives and Approach

In light of our assessment of the situation, it was felt that the study of seminar discussion discourse should a) offer a description of seminar discussion based on practice in an English speaking country, b) the description of language and interaction in seminar discussion should be derived from and be able to account for interaction in a range of seminar events and not be limited to one type alone and c) some attempt should be made to show both the similarities and differences between the types of seminar event. In addition, in view of the limited amount of empirical knowledge on the subject, it was clear that the study needed to be descriptive and should explicate basic patterns and categories of language.

The overall aim of the research is to offer descriptions of discourse in the discussion section of academic seminars. The investigation focuses particularly on the discourse of student-driven interaction which is argued to be a defining characteristic of seminars. The major objective is to provide descriptive frameworks to account for central aspects of seminar discourse: the exchange patterns, the moves and acts that initiate exchanges and components within turns. A further objective is to compare types of seminars to see what similarities or differences there may be. To provide background information about the context in which the events take place, participant perceptions, e.g. their views of the rationales of seminars, are considered.

Spoken interactive discourse is a complex phenomenon even in semi-formal and constrained events such as seminars and academic discussions. What becomes apparent when examining seminar data is that, on the one hand, there are predictable and limited patterns and commodities of exchange and yet, on the other hand, turns are often lengthy and complex, involving participants in strategic work to facilitate and enhance their contributions. To reveal these features, complementary yet diverse approaches to the analysis of spoken language are

employed. The formulation of the frameworks is approached by a methodology in which there is an interplay of moving between data and existing theoretical constructs from the area of spoken interaction. The approach to analysis of spoken discourse initiated by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) and developed since that time at Birmingham University and, from the field of pragmatics, concepts of co-operative strategies and face concerns (Brown and Levinson 1987, Edmondson 1981a, Goffman 1967, 1981) are brought to bear and adapted.

The description and modelling of interactional features are based on data from three subgenres of seminars on a MBA (Masters in Business Administration) programme. These three subgenres reflect major strands of seminar activity. They are: the discussion following the presentation by an expert speaker from outside the university; discussion following the presentation by students and the non-presentation, tutorial type discussion class. Although the data source has been limited to this one academic discipline, it is believed that the frameworks and description of discourse are applicable to those looking at discussion in other branches of academic study and in comparable situations outside Higher Education.

The description and modelling of seminar discussion may lead to practical applications in E.A.P. From a wider perspective, it is anticipated that the study may also have relevance for the analysis and understanding of general spoken interactive discourse, especially that occurring in institutional settings. In applied language studies, there has been considerable interest in language use in institutional settings. It has been recognised that such settings are characterised by particular language uses and participation structures. Often the interaction is asymmetrical reflecting influences in the context, such as knowledge and participant status (Markova & Foppa 1991). Research has focused on spoken discourse in settings as diverse as the courtroom (Drew 1985) and the doctor-patient interview (Cicourel 1985). The present study is part of this current research interest into discourse in specific institutional settings.

To sum up: the study is focused on interaction occurring in seminar discussion in Higher Education. The primary purpose of the research is the construction of frameworks to account

for central aspects of the discourse, the core of exchange patterns and the strategic options by which speakers variously enhance their contributions. The secondary purpose is to investigate variation in seminar subgenres.

## 1.2 Need for the Study

There has been a limited amount of research into discourse and participation in group or discussion events in Higher Education - in lectures (Tapper 1992), in laboratory classes (Tapper 1992, Mead 1980) in small group tutorials (Baumgart 1974, Mead 1980) and in one to one conferences (Tapper 1992).

Investigation into the general nature of discourse of larger group discussion in instruction in higher education has not been the subject of extensive descriptive research. In recent years research interest in seminars has mainly been focused on social aspects or the language of particular groups of participants. Mauranen (1994) explored the expectations of staff and students and general practice of academic genres (including seminars) on undergraduate courses at a British and a Finnish university. Tracy and Naughton (1994) investigated questioning practices in relation to academic identity needs, such as originality and intellectual sophistication in Ph.D. seminars in US. Bashiruddin et al. (1990) investigated seminars on an MA course to see which groups tended to dominate the events. Lynch & Anderson (1991), Westerfield (1989), Micheau & Billmyer (1987), Furneaux et al. (1991) studied differences in native and non-native speakers' production in discussion.

General description of the discourse of seminar discussion, i.e. the structures and strategies of interaction typically used, is needed both in E.A.P. and the wider context of Higher Education. The present lack of empirical information on the general nature of discourse in seminar type discussions negatively affects those working in the field of E.A.P. who need to prepare and support NNS speaker students studying in English. The lack of basic language description is noticeable. Jordan, reviewing the state of E.A.P. in 1989 pointed out:

Coupled with the need for .... materials (specific material for discussion skills), is the need for data on the content of seminars, both in procedures followed and language used".

(pp. 155)

There is a need to base the pedagogic presentations of language on analysis of texts. The dangers of not doing so have been pointed out by Williams (1988). McCarthy and Carter (1994) argue the need for syllabus and materials designers to base their work on findings from discourse analysis.

Discourse-based descriptions have been made of a number of written academic genres, such as dissertation, thesis and prospectus (Swales 1990) and lectures (Flowerdew 1992, Baka 1989). Research presentations have been investigated (Dubois 1980, Weissberg 1993). Findings from the study of discourse and genre features of written academic texts have fed into E.A.P. pedagogy in recent years (Swales op cit., Bhatia 1993). However, there is a gap in the research - description of spoken interactive discourse, such as that occurring in seminar type discussions which can feed into pedagogy.

From the field of Higher Education, Barnet draws attention to the need to "get at and illuminate" the processes involved in tertiary level education (1992: 94). The instruction of students is a key process in universities. For centuries formal instruction has been carried out under the auspices of events such as the lecture, the seminar or the tutorial. These are events that are enacted through language and yet that language has rarely been a source of investigation in itself. Far more attention has been given to the nature of spoken discourse in school classrooms (see review by Cazden 1986) than in higher education. The present study aims to 'get at' the processes of seminar discussion by study of its patterns and features of discourse.

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## 1.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study seeks to answer the following questions concerning seminar discussion and to establish whether the hypotheses stated are supported by findings from the study:

*What are the typical patterns of exchange?*

What is the basic unit of exchange? What extended exchange patterns typically occur and do they differ in varying subgenres?

*How and why are exchanges initiated?*

What are the functions of 'questions' or 'contributions' in initiation in student-driven exchanges. How do 'questions' and 'contributions' differ in seminar discussion subgenres?

*What strategies do speakers typically use?*

How and why are turns extended rather than short? What strategies do participants employ to achieve interactional aims indirectly?

Hypotheses

1. Structures and strategies of seminar interaction are highly constrained and predictable.

2. Subgenres of seminar vary in respect to occurrences of interactional features.

Goffman has compared man's behaviour to games with sets of finite and explicable rules:

> A game such as chess generates a habitable universe for those who can follow it, a plane of being, a cast of characters with a seemingly unlimited number of situations and acts through which to realise their natures and destinies. Yet much of this is reducible to a small set of interdependent rules and practices. If the meaningfulness of everyday activity is similarly dependent on a closed, infinite set of rules, then explication of them would give one a powerful means of analysing social life.
>
> (1974: 5)

Seminars, like Goffman's chess game, involve a limited set of moves that participants may make and specific means, both direct and indirect to make them. By proposing frameworks to

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account for interaction in seminar discussion, it is hoped that categories and concepts with the generative capacity to explain much of the discourse will be provided. Subgenres of seminar are variations on the game and lead, it is expected, to some variation in the occurrences of basic moves and practices.

## 1.4 Contribution of the Research

### Empirical description

The present study aims to substantiate empirical description and understanding of the discourse in this significant but largely unexplored area of tertiary education. The analysis of discussion discourse in the study is carried out by intensive study of transcriptions of authentic events and a fairly comprehensive representation of the verbal interaction is offered. The patterns of exchange, the reasons and ways students initiate interaction and the use of strategies in this specific context are brought to light. Some indications are offered of the variation across *seminar* classes.

### Theoretical construct building

The study focuses on one genre of spoken interaction. However, the study contributes to theory in the area of general spoken interaction by developing theoretical constructs.

To some extent the frameworks proposed in the study represent modifications and extensions of existing theoretical constructs developed at Birmingham University, e.g. Coulthard and Brazil's model of exchange structure (1992) and Tsui's classification of elicits (1992, 1994). Nevertheless, the frameworks proposed by the study represent attempts to modify these constructs to accommodate the kind of complexity of talk found in formal and public interaction often characterised by long exchanges and turns, and to fine-tune aspects that are particularly crucial in discussion, such as moves which initiate exchanges. By juxtapositioning existing theoretical constructs with the data, further insights are revealed and theoretical inroads made, for example, by collapsing categories and proposing new ones.

Seminar discussion is modelled in the thesis. Similarly to the models of Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), Coulthard & Brazil (1992) and Edmondson (1981), the present study identifies macro structures in interaction beyond two-part adjacency pairs. Generally, classroom interaction has been represented as an essentially three-part structure (Sinclair & Coulthard op cit., Griffen & Mehan 1981). The model proposed in the thesis shows a basic, two-part initiation and response structure and a major extension of this pattern. This extension is an optional, third-part follow up move which has the potential to re-initiate and extend the exchange. This modelling of re-initiation through a third-part slot in exchange structure builds upon the argument of Hoey (1992) but differs from it in that only one extended pattern and explanation is suggested. A limited range of acts is proposed to largely account for the main business of academic discussion. This contrasts with the wider range of acts proposed in other constructs, such as the models of Sinclair & Coulthard (op cit.) and Tsui (1992, 1994).

The research aims to describe interaction in terms of interactional structures, components and strategies. The latter are explained in reference to interactants' concerns for face and clarity of text. This involves the study in merging two approaches - the approach to spoken discourse analysis developed at Birmingham University and aspects from the field of pragmatics, namely indirect language use. Therefore, the study demonstrates an attempt to integrate approaches to spoken text analysis.

The focus of the study is on the explication of patterns of language and explanations of them in seminar discussion. The area of seminar discussion has attracted research interest into variations in participation between subgroups of participants, for example, male and female participants (Holmes 1988) and native and non-native speakers (Micheau & Billmyer 1987, Lynch & Anderson 1991). The decision was taken not to address the issues of inequality or variation in participation in the present study but to aim to account for the general features of the discourse. The study is focused on analysis and explanation of language features and patterns in British English.

## 1.5 Outline of Contents

The thesis is presented in two volumes. The first comprises the chapters of the thesis and the second comprises transcriptions of the texts on which the description and analysis were based. Video cassettes are attached to the second volume. The contents of the chapters in volume one are now briefly described.

In Chapter Two, literature, research and theories related to the study are reviewed. The review includes literature related to the topic of seminar and also the topics of spoken and classroom interaction. Chapter Three presents the research methodology. Background information is provided in Chapter Four concerning the types of seminar events practised and the expectations and experiences of participants in the university programme selected for the study.

Three chapters are given over to the analysis and description of language: Chapter Five shows examination of exchange patterns, Chapter Six investigates moves and acts at exchange initiation and, in Chapter Seven, textual signalling and seminar strategies are explored. In these three chapters the format is as follows:
- the language feature under investigation is defined
- the approach to analysis of the feature is presented
- discussion of the feature is accompanied by examples from the texts
- a framework is proposed to account for the feature
- a comparison is made of the feature across subgenres

In Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, the major findings of the chapters of analysis are summarised. Theoretical implications are drawn and pedagogic applications are indicated. The limitations of the study are outlined and recommendations are made for further research.

# Chapter Two
## Related Literature, Research and Theory

"Well then", proposed Socrates, "if you should ever be charged in actual fact with the upbringing and education of these imaginary children of yours,... so you will make a law that they must devote themselves especially to the techniques of asking and answering questions."

(Republic VII: 534)

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter literature, research and theories which are related to subjects in the study are discussed.

In Chapter One the focus of the research was stated as the investigation of the discourse of seminar discussion. The language focus was then more explicitly stated as the investigation of exchange patterns, acts and moves at initiation and the components within turns including conversational strategies. In this the second chapter, literature concerning these features is examined to bring to light how they have been conceptualised and studied. Research findings relevant to the present study are described. Investigations into the features outlined above have taken place within theoretical frameworks, namely approaches to the study of spoken language and situation-based studies of interaction, in particular, studies into classroom interaction. These theoretical frameworks are described.

In addition, the literature relating to the broader, non-linguistic context of seminar and discussion in Higher Education is examined. Discourse is the study of language in use and events such as the seminar are practised to obtain certain outcomes. The expectations and experiences of those involved in Higher Education and reflected in literature from Educational Studies is the point of departure from which seminars are examined.

## 2.1 Seminar and Discussion Classes in Higher Education

### 2.1.1 Expectations and Definitions

Research and examination of the role and use of seminars and discussion classes as modes of instruction in themselves have not greatly concerned those involved in Educational Studies. A noticeable recent exception is the study of Mitchell (1994) who investigated how written and spoken argument is learnt and taught in sixth forms and Higher Education. Mitchell (op cit.) found that little explicit attention was given to the role, purpose and method of argument in the range of institutions and disciplines she surveyed. What has been of concern to those involved in studies of Higher Education are the relative merits of lecturing and discussion methods. The research in this area has been surveyed by Barnes & Dunkin (1986) and Brown & Alkins (1988). From these sources it is found that the goals held for lecture and seminar discussions are often distinct. The transmission of a body of information is generally held as the primary aim of lectures, whereas getting students to discuss, think and thus internalise concepts, are goals usually associated with seminars or discussion classes. When the goal is the learning of factual information, discussion has been found to be as effective as the lecture but when the goal is the development of higher level cognitive processes, the changing of attitudes and the development of discussion skills, then discussion is more effective than teaching by lecture. Curzon (1990: 299) reports that seminar discussion classes rather than lectures have the social goal of fostering co-operative learning. Through co-operative learning experiences students become aware of their dependency on each other and develop mutual tolerance and understanding.

However, two shortcomings have been identified as marring this type of research. Barnes & Dunkin (op cit.: 756) point out that research into teaching methods has not provided "evidence of the actual processes in terms of which the prescriptively defined methods were implemented." Indeed, there has been very little observation of the university classroom compared to the wealth of observation-based research into primary and secondary classrooms. Herdsa (1984: 60) relates this lack of observational studies to the "essentially private nature"

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of university teaching compared to teaching in other sectors. Secondly, Brown & Alkins (op cit.) question the usefulness of comparisons of "small group teaching" with other methods due to the variety of event types that go under the umbrella terms of small group or discussion classes. They point to the need to "study small group teaching per se to identify the goals and strategies of tutors and students." Brown (1993: 223) indicates the need for research into "..the structures and methods of small group teaching." The present research aims to provide information in these areas.

One major difficulty in the study of seminars is identifying what a seminar is. In higher education the term *seminar* covers a number of differing events which are variously defined in the literature. Some writers have differentiated between a seminar and a tutorial according to the number of participants, e.g. Brown & Alkins (op cit.) suggest that tutorials contain up to five participants whereas seminars have up to twenty.

Maddox (1988: 192), however, views the difference as a matter of purpose. Tutorials, he explains, aim to solve students' difficulties and tasks are set that will bring such difficulties into the open. Seminars are topic oriented and usually involve a student presentation or report reading. This view is partially shared by Jacques who states,

> "Seminar is generally taken to mean a group discussion with fairly intellectual aims, led formally or informally by a tutor and focused on issues arising from the subject matter rather than on student difficulties (tutorials)."

(1984: 95)

Hoover (1980) traces the historical development of the seminar mode of instruction, which he claims originated in the early German universities, and defines the seminar in terms of purpose and role. The aim was not to teach but to 'create knowledge.' This role has developed to include, he asserts, the following elements: students being responsible for their own learning, for supplying input and evaluating others' contributions; group interaction and the tutor's role as facilitator. Brown & Alkins (op cit.). trace this idea of 'creating knowledge' by small group teaching and discussion back to Socrates' method of instruction. This method,

based on a dialogue of subtle questioning of students by the teacher, aimed to foster intellectual and oral skills in addition to developing attitudes

Curzon discusses the role of seminars and discussion classes:

> " The lesson and the lecture ...... differ radically from the discussion group, the seminar, the tutorial and the case study....... The former are largely teacher-centred ("autocratic") modes of instruction; the latter are based on student centred strategies of instruction, directed at facilitating learning in an environment in which the teacher plays a mediating role and interactive class participation is the norm. The former depend on their success, in large measure, on the teacher's solo performance; the latter achieve success only from the continuing collective activity of teacher and class".

(1990: 286)

Berril (1991: 143) defines seminar by the processes involved but she acknowledges the somewhat vague nature of educators' expectations of discussion classes. Tutors often lack, she claims, a clear idea of what they expect to occur when students are engaged in "talking for learning situations." It is often vaguely hoped that differing viewpoints will emerge, the group evaluate the viewpoints and reach agreement about a 'best' answer. Curzon (op cit.) describes the processes at work in discussion groups. There is a free flow of argument and students learning from each other in the attempt to understand a problem. There is a co-operative task and participants 'pool knowledge' and thus supplement their own knowledge. Information is exchanged, conjectures, criticism and refutations made and opinions adjusted .

A British government report in the 1960's on university teaching methods (Hale: 1964) stated unequivocally that what distinguishes a *discussion period* from a lecture is the increased amount of *active participation* demanded of the students and that both students and staff may initiate discussion on any issue. An important benefit of the active participation is that tutors can assess how well students have understood subject matter.

The case study is a relative newcomer to the discussion class front. In the case method students analyse and diagnose either a real or simulated problem from business, law, social work, etc. in order that the general principles involved in the discipline can be applied to 'real life' situations. In these ways students practise making decisions among alternative courses of action. The method is much associated with the Harvard Business School in which the

lecturer leads the discussion and students answer lecturer questions basing their answers on prepared case analyses. However, there are alternatives. A student or group of students may be asked to present their analysis and this is followed by class discussion. Lecturers may play a directive or a non-directive role in this discussion. As well as cognitive goals, the improvement of communication skills such as supporting, arguing, persuading, presenting findings orally and participating in discussion are objectives of this method (Eastern 1992, Curzon op cit.).

In short: the general view of seminars and discussion classes is that they make demands on the students to play an active role in discussion and the discussion involves a critical response to information and ideas. The class is expected to interact, with peers, tutors and presenters to exchange information and ideas. Seminars and discussions stand in contrast to the information-gathering function of lectures and aim to promote critical thinking and discussion skills. Students are expected to be actively involved and initiate as well as respond in interaction.

## 2.1.2 The Problems Experienced

The literature in educational studies reports what seminars and discussions in Higher Education aim to achieve. Much has also been said about the difficulties that tutors encounter in these events. Entwistle (1988: 99) may tell us that, "Seminars are the only way we can expect students to learn; lectures are useless" but practice in this area has a tendency to fall short of expectations.

The failure of students to participate is one source of disappointment. Discussions are inclined to degenerate into a forum in which 'star speakers' dominate and most students become increasingly reluctant to speak. The outcome may be less an interchange of ideas than a "forum for prejudices" (Curzon op cit.: 289). Another disappointing tendency reported by Ramsden (1992: 158) is seen in presentation type seminars. After the presentation there is a dialogue between tutor and presenter which often turns into a mini-lecture by the tutor when it becomes embarrassingly clear that nothing is forthcoming from the other students. The Hale

Committee on University teaching methods reported that, "It is the essence of a discussion period that the student is expected to participate in discussion" (op cit: 60) but reality often reveals "silent faces, no discussion, no opinions, no nothing" (Beattie 1982: 147).

One 'star speaker' may be the tutor. Brown & Alkins (op cit.) report on research showing tutor talk made up 86% of talking time in the highest instances and student-student interaction was as low as 8% in seminar discussions. The inhibiting effect of tutor presence has been identified by Evans (1983: 30-33) who compared a 15 student-group tutor-led seminar discussion with student-led seminars of 7 participants. Evans found that in the tutor-led group a number of students did not participate, and that it was virtually only the tutor who practised the functions of summarising, rephrasing and making procedural suggestions. In the groups without a tutor, more of these behaviours were practised by students and the ideas expressed were more varied and divergent. Moreover, the presence of the tutor discouraged students from expressing half-formed ideas. The 'star' may also be the presenter of the paper or case. Curzon (op cit.) comments on the disparity in levels of knowledge between the presenter and the other students and the resulting inability of the audience to comment or evaluate the presentation.

The level of discussion has been reported as a further source of disappointment. Whereas expectations are generally held for interchanges revealing higher level cognitive processes at work, studies have found that the thinking level tends to stay around recall rather than higher level activities such as synthesising or generalising. The nature of interaction may disappointingly incline toward the transmission of information with questions seeking the simple recall of further information (Brown & Alkins op cit., Brown op. cit.).

*Summary*

This section of the literature review has been concerned with identifying how seminar and discussion classes have been defined in the literature of Educational Science. The expectations held for such events and the general problems that can be engendered by them have been

reviewed. The literature suggests a number of lofty reasons why seminars and discussion classes are convened, but also reports that the reality does not always meet expectations.

## 2.2 Language Studies of Seminar Discussions

### 2.2.1 The Discourse of Non-Native speakers

The dominant theme of the literature on NNSs in speaking events in education is that they have linguistic or sociopragmatic deficiencies which prevent them from participating fully or appropriately in discussions. That NNSs tend to contribute less to university spoken discourse than their NS (native-speaker) peers is well documented. For example, Shaw (cited in Shaw & Bailey 1990) found in observations of undergraduate engineering classrooms that NNS students asked only 2 out of the 176 questions asked in total although they made up over 40% of the classes. Tapper (1992: 505) found that "international students" contributed "relatively small amounts of talk" to the four modes of instruction that she surveyed.

Research by Woken & Swales (1989) aimed to see if postgraduate NNS students necessarily spoke less and less authoritatively than NSs. NNS students were given the task of explaining an application for computers to their NS classmates. Before starting the task the NNSs were given all the essential information. From this situational position of 'expertise', the NNSs easily took the kind of strong conversational control that it has been assumed in the literature that linguistic or sociopragmatic inadequacy or cultural predisposition would deny them.

Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence in the literature showing that NNSs may be 'unable' to participate fully in interactive speaking in higher education. Lynes & Woods (1984) report on a range of comprehension and speaking difficulties that they observed overseas students to have in this area and note that these students tend to lack the "fluency, subtlety and confidence in English" that is needed to be actively involved in seminars. Westerfield (1989: 75) reports that MBA professors, although generally happy with the standard of NNS students' written work on case studies, were dissatisfied with their participation in small group and class discussions of cases. Boyd (1991: 731) states that NNS

MBA students tend to "lack sociolinguistic and discourse competencies in English" and asserts that it is such gaps that specialised English courses need to address. Shaw & Bailey (1990) studied the initial meetings of college classes in US and found that the ISCs (international students) tended to be left out of the negotiating process to establish classroom norms of interaction in these early encounters.

Another study focusing on NS and NNS differences in language behaviours in MBA discussion classes and undertaken along conversation analysis lines was conducted by Micheau & Billmyer (1987). The study aimed to gather empirical evidence about NS rules of speaking. Language data, on NNS was gathered from a pre-sessional E.S.P. course. NS data comprised an audio-recording of a case discussion in the business school. The researcher focused on interaction skills, particularly aspects of turn taking. It was found that turns were exchanged rapidly and smoothly in NS discourse and the factors contributing to this were identified, e.g. latched utterances were prevalent and the majority of student contributions were co-operative in that they either built on the previous speaker's point or gave credit to the previous speaker before refuting his/her point. Contrasts found in the NNS data were: NNS made *violative* attempts (interruptions) to take the floor and tended to insert the attention getting signal, *excuse me*. They were also observed to be reluctant to self-select and there were noticeable pauses between being nominated and starting to speak. NNSs also misinterpreted some indirect questions and made excessively long turns. Micheau & Billmyer's results generally indicate that NNSs have difficulty in turn taking in discussions. This finding, however, seems to conflict with the findings of Furneaux et al. (1991: 84) who reported from their questionnaire findings that, "Only 7% of the NNS students who expressed dissatisfaction with what they had done in the seminars indicated that lack of opportunity to speak was a factor in this."

From Lynch & Anderson's (1991) investigation of native and non-native speaking in academic seminars three differences were identified. Firstly, NNSs rarely dissented from the views of previous speakers. Secondly, they tended to ask more 'new' questions than questions

looping back to previous content and thirdly, NNSs did not interrupt. These findings appear to conflict with those of Micheau & Billmyer (op cit.)

In oral presentations NNSs have also been noted to fail to meet commonly held expectations of style and presentation skills.

> "The foreign students ........... greatly restricted the extemporaneous elements in their speeches. Instead they accompanied slides with rapid delivery in the depersonalised, objective style of written scientific text ...... cast their utterances in passive/stative constructions.......... used little or no audience-oriented metadiscourse......"
>
> (Weissberg 1993: 28)

The view that NNSs may lack sociopragmatic competence to manage in interactive events is supported by the findings of James (1983). James found that overseas students reported themselves to be unable to respond 'appropriately' to tutor questions and that they felt uncertainty about how to behave, such as when to criticise or make a suggestion. Weir (1982: 93) defines the problem as less of a language deficiency problem per se but more of a 'sociolinguistic' one. He points to the frequency with which overseas students approach tutors after class to ask their questions which is he asserts, "... indicative of a gap in their communicative competence, namely ignorance of the socio-linguistic convention associated with asking questions in public."

Interlanguage studies based on data from a variety of contexts, have produced a number of findings differentiating the speech of highly proficient second language users from NSs. Apology prefaces are a feature of discussion, e.g. apology for interrupting. Trosberg (1989) looked at apology strategies of NSs and NNSs and found that the NNSs did not add an explanation or account to their apologies. Thomas (1984) identifies the tendency for NNSs to unknowingly use pragmatic acts and the overly-direct speech associated with dominance in encounters with equals or those of higher status. Likewise, Preston contends that advanced NNSs may use language comparatively directly.

but that they may more often choose directness ............ Indirect speech acts, although universal, appear to be under-utilised in even advanced interlanguage varieties...."

(1989: 163)

The link between low levels of participation and the specific cultural background of the students has been made by Sato (1990). In a study of the distribution of talk in discussion activities in E.S.L. university classrooms, Sato found differences between Asian and non-Asian students. Fewer speaking turns were taken by the Asians and they self-selected less often but were more dependent on solicits from teachers. Sato concluded that, ".... Asians tend to abide by a stricter interpretation of the student-teacher relationship in the context of the classroom." Adamson (1990) reports that students may themselves cite the value systems of their cultural background as a deterrent to active participation in speaking events as certain cultures do not hold students' asking of questions or engaging in displays of knowledge in high regard.

## 2.2.2 Participant Variables

Seminars and discussions have also been studied to pin-point gender differences or other participant variables and social concerns in public behaviour.

An early study of interaction in conferences (Bales 1972) looked at some of the social and psychological aspects of people interacting in conferences. From simulated discussions in laboratory settings a coding system of speech acts was drawn up. This categorisation, like a number of systematic observation schemes of the time, consists of both conversational and psychological/social acts, e.g. *shows solidarity, shows tension release, asks for information and gives suggestion.* The categories are assumed to be self-evident and examples of the acts are not shown nor is textual data presented. Findings concern individual characteristics of individuals, e.g. the participant who emerges as the *task specialist* (the one who puts forward a lot of the suggestions necessary for completing the task) becomes less popular over time.

The differences in male and female interaction in university conferences and seminars have been investigated (Holmes 1988a, Holmes & Stubbs 1992). Holmes (op cit.) found that following presentations at UK conference, contributions from the floor by males dominated the question answer sessions with men on average making three times as many contributions as women despite the fact that the numbers of women and men were roughly equal. Further research by the same writer on faculty seminars and conferences in New Zealand confirmed this male tendency to dominate and ask more "aggressively critical questions" than women. Other observations made of discussion events by Holmes (1992: 9) include the following: 78% of all elicitations from the floor were *facilitative*, i.e. non-confrontational invitations to the speaker to elaborate on the presentation or on a point that the questioner was interested in, other questions were *badly disagreeing* or *explicitly negative*. Only *facilitative* questions and modified criticisms led to good quality open-ended discussion, the other types led to defensiveness, entrenched positions and little progress in the discussion.

Bashiruddin et al. (1990) were concerned to identify participant variables of status, culture (familiarity with British culture and educational background) and gender in order to find out who was dominating the proceedings at post-graduate linguistics seminars in a UK university. The researchers noted the frequency of contributions from the floor and found that women made on average approximately half as many contributions as men. The lecturer (high status) spoke more than three times as often as course members and insiders made more than twice as many contributions as outsiders.

An interest in the differing qualities of tutors and styles of tutoring in an Australian university led Baumgart (1976) to study the roles that tutors take up in tutorials and the effects of these roles on student participation and verbal behaviour. Tutorial groups of 10-12 students and a tutor were observed in naturally occurring settings and a coding scheme was developed from these observations. This is to the best of my knowledge the only coding scheme developed specifically from and for university discussion classes. It is, however, a complex scheme comprising of a number of levels, task and group building functions and developed in part

from the categorisations of Bales (1950), Bloom (1956) and the pedagogic move categories of Bellack et al. (1966).

In terms of participation, it was found that tutors made more than a third of all moves. As regards pedagogic moves, Baumgart (op cit.) found that tutors made more than two-thirds of *structuring* and *soliciting* moves (67.3% and 68.5% respectively), whereas students made 86.8% of responding moves and 72.4% of reacting moves. From scores on the coding schemes, Baumgart identified six distinct 'behaviourally differentiated tutor roles': *reflexive judge; data input; stage setter; elaborator; probe* and *cognitive engineer.*

### 2.2.3 Needs Analysis and Materials in E.A.P.

**Needs Analyses**

Johns (1981) investigated the importance of different skills for success in US university education and from questionnaire data found that listening was rated first, followed by reading and writing. Similarly, a questionnaire-based study by Christian and Krahke (1986) of non-native speakers at US colleges, found that 50% of students rated listening the most used skill, followed by reading at 35% and writing and speaking at 10%. However, in contrast to these findings, a study at Yarmouk University in Jordan found that students perceived speaking at their greatest need (cited in Jordan 1989:153).

Whereas some research has indicated that speaking is perceived as relatively unimportant compared to other skills for success at university, other research has shown that NNSs rank speaking skills high in terms of difficulty. Christian and Krahke (op cit.) discovered that speaking was ranked highest in difficulty at 35% with reading second at 32%. This high perception of difficulty was also found on UK postgraduate courses by Johns and Johns (1977) with four-fifths of the respondents questioned feeling that participation in seminars was the most difficult aspect of their academic studies. Johns and Johns also found that almost all overseas students believed that special help should be provided to enable them to join in

seminar discussions. McKenna (1987: 188) reports that NNSs "fear" asking questions in university classes in US. A study at Reading University, UK (Furneaux et al.1991), found that seminars were rated higher in difficulty than were other modes of instruction, although a greater number of students rated lectures difficult as such.

It is established practice in needs analysis in E.A.P. to collect language specimens or observe events in the target discourse communities. The need to supplement this language data with ethnographic data is now also becoming recognised as useful. Ramani et al. (1988) have argued for an "ethnographic reorientation" to needs analysis and syllabus design which includes a motivation to tap the insider-member's knowledge of how they perceive their communicative patterns, genres and the objectives of their communicative events. This emphasis is reflected in the methodology of the research into case study discussions by Micheau & Billmyer (1987). In the study the researchers complemented their investigation of language data with participant interviews. Likewise, an ethnographic approach was adopted by Furneaux et al. (1991) who ran a series of questionnaires to participants to gather their perceptions of the importance and problems of seminars.

**Pedagogic Materials**

Academic speaking, in comparison to other academic skills, has been relatively unexplored in E.A.P. This is reflected in the limited amount of published materials currently on the market either focused or partially concerned with academic speaking compared to the abundance of materials for other skills, e.g. academic writing. Some exceptions on the UK market are Jordan (1989), Lynch & Anderson (1992), Montgomery (1982) and Wallace (1980). This relative lack of instructional materials for discussions and interactions with peers and tutors has been noted by Lynch & Anderson (1991). A 'state of the art article' on E.A.P. (Jordan 1989) does not refer to any research done on the language or interaction in seminars although it does refer to some research done on student perceptions of difficulties in such events.

To date, language descriptions of seminar discourse have been limited. Earlier work focused on identifying *strategies* that would allow NNS to participate in seminars. Cawood proposed formulas for making interruptions and requests (1978) but for the functional exponents "intuition was relied on." Johns & Johns (1977) identified categories of discussion strategies for university studies. They identified essential moves as *turn-taking* or *turn-nominating*. *metacommenting, mitigation, repair, handling discontinuity* and *entry* and gave some language realisations for these. However, they based their description on analysis of a radio discussion program rather than events from higher education itself. Lynch & Anderson (1991) comment that some materials writers have considered but been unimpressed by the realities of actual university seminars and the limited forms of interaction found and preferred to prepare materials of the "ideal" but non authentic situation. Teaching materials of the latter type and from the former *strategy* type tend towards a strong focus on the politeness formulas, especially formulas for starting turns.

Reviewing two textbooks concerned with spoken academic English (James 1984, Lynch & Anderson 1992), it was found that they offered considerable guidance to students for structuring and signposting oral presentations. The description of the language of discussion was more limited. The latter consists in the main of a number of useful areas/functions and exponents in list form. In James (1984) some examples are: 'recognising a breakdown in communication' (e.g. *I think we may be at cross purposes here*) and 'emphasising a particular point' (e.g. *The crux of the matter is*). In Lynch & Anderson (1992) some examples are: 'avoiding an answer' (e.g. *It's too early to say whether*) and 'following-up a question' (e.g. *Perhaps I didn't make my question clear*). In the latter text, students are also encouraged to reflect on their experiences and suggest other language exponents. The texts do not, however, focus attention on chunks of discourse either by looking at whole turns in discussion or by looking at stretches of interaction.

Outside E.A.P. there are a number of works that include sections on giving presentations, discussion and meeting skills in business and professional contexts, e.g. Mathews & Marino

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(1990) and Brieger & Comfort (1992). These texts are more concerned with presentation skills but offer some 'useful language' for discussion. As in the E.A.P. texts, the language for discussion or meetings is largely in the form of functional categories and entry type formulas. Interest in training presentation skills has also led to research in other fields, e.g. psychology (Taylor 1994).

Johns (1988: 56) expresses concern that the contents of present day E.A.P. course books may be "inappropriately preparing students." There has long been recognition of the need to base the language components of course materials on language which has been empirically derived from observation of authentic situations (Williams 1988, Johns & Dudley-Evans 1991, Swales 1990). McKenna (1987:187) stresses the difficulty at this point in time of devising E.A.P. courses for advanced learners due to "the lack of instructional materials that are based on empirical descriptions of the discourse communities that students will enter." Bygate, from a study of small group interaction of NNS argues that it is through group work discussion that NNS learners develop the strategies and language with which to deal with interactive, non teacher-led discussion (1988). Yet what form should these communicative activities take and what kind of language would be expected to develop is still fairly unknown in the preparation of students for seminar and tutorials. At present, E.A.P. does not have a substantial description of the discourse of seminar discussion.

*Summary*

The studies surveyed in this section have offered interesting insights into the variety of situational variables at play in seminar interaction. The question of participation and who does the talking has attracted much interest and it is clear that there is almost inevitably a lack of equality in the distribution of participation. Most research indicates that NNSs find this a problematic area. The language studies reviewed in this section have not offered an overview of the general nature of discourse in seminars and class discussions. It has been shown that this has been a relatively neglected area.

## 2.3 Analyses of Classroom Interaction

The study of interaction in classrooms has been approached in various ways. The approaches to the study of classroom interaction are briefly reviewed in this section and the choice of approach used in the present study is explained.

### 2.3.1 Types of Research

A very large body of research into classroom discourse has been carried out by educators, psychologists and those interested in language itself. Mitchell (1985: 331-335) identifies two main tendencies: *systematic observational* research and *ethnographic* research. Cazdon (1986: 432-433) uses alternative terms, the *process-product* and *sociolinguistic* research traditions.

The *process-product* tradition is a quantitative approach which has aimed to identify the teaching processes leading to outcomes such as student achievement. A number of coding systems for classroom verbal behaviour have been developed by scholars such as Flanders (1960) and Moskowitz (1967). A review of coding systems is given by Allwright (1988). The codes are a means to atomise interaction and then measure the range and frequency of variables, such as teacher talk or behaviours like *rewards* or *praises* in relation to learning outcomes. For instance, Flanders (op cit.) established ten categories of classroom behaviours. The categories of teacher behaviour are: *accepts feelings of students; praises or encourages; accepts idea of students; asks questions; gives information; gives directions* and *criticises or justifies authority.* Pupil behaviour codes are: *student response predictable, student response unpredictable* and the final category is for silence or confusion. These categories are a mix of verbal and non-verbal constructs. Some of the latter day coding systems have borrowed concepts developed from mainstream discourse analysis and are thus more constrained to verbal concepts. Mitchell (1985: 333) reports a number of coding schemes which have taken concepts taken from Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) model.

A number of criticisms have been made of this research tradition and its tool the coding scheme. One criticism is that coding takes place on the spot and that it is not possible to verify

the results afterwards (Love 1991: 32). Another problem is that the categories may operate on different levels such as linguistic and psychological levels. Sinclair & Coulthard (1975: 15) point out that Flander's categories include both linguistic categories, e.g. *asking questions* and also categories of a very different nature, e.g. *encouraging* or *accepting feeling*.

In the *sociolinguistic,* or *ethnographic* approach to classroom interaction Cazden (op cit.) identifies four strands of research activity. The issue of how school children "talk to learn" in school in relation to experiences of language use at home has been studied, e.g. Barnes (1971). Secondly, there has been ethnomethodological research which has often focused on inequalities in the classroom, e.g. Reynolds (1990). The third strand is linguistics-based research which uses classroom data in order to produce a comprehensive descriptive apparatus for spoken interaction. Prominent researchers in this strand have been Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) and Sinclair & Brazil (1982). Lastly, there have ethnographic studies in which language use has been investigated as a means of exploring the culture of the classroom, e.g. Mehan (1985), Cazden, John & Hymes (1972).

The present study is primarily in line with the third strand identified in the sociolinguistic research tradition, i.e. a linguistics-based approach. However, it overlaps also with the ethnographic strand. These approaches are discussed in the following section.

### 2.3.2 Approaches to Analysis

### Birmingham Approach

The approach to discourse analysis developed at Birmingham University, will be referred to in the thesis as B(DA), is an attempt to account for the overall structuring and patterning in a spoken text. The model of spoken interaction first developed by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) aims to provide the means to account for how successive utterances are related. The perspective of the classroom offered is of a classroom characterised by predictable rounds of exchanges made up of clear sequences of acts and moves. The focus is firmly on the language and the only departures from this are into the introspection of the scholars themselves as to the

*rules* and *tactics* of classroom life which help to interpret some aspects of the language data. The model was derived from a data driven analysis of data from teacher-fronted school classrooms, a situation in which one person directs the interaction and in which, therefore, there are clear and easily discernible patterns.

The original model presents a hierarchical structure of discourse composed of acts, moves, exchanges, transactions and the top of the hierarchy, the category of lesson. The exchange is seen as the key interactive unit. An exchange comprises one or more moves which are made-up from acts. The original model proposed that the basic pattern in the classroom is I (initiation) R (response) E (evaluation). It also proposed 22 act types with some distinct sequences of acts for teachers and pupils. Exchange patterns were differentiated as either teacher or student-initiated. The exchange model has been revised by Coulthard & Brazil (1992).

The context from which the description was drawn was clearly defined. The writers were keen to point out that the system for analysis had been derived from teacher-fronted classrooms and that they were careful to control as many of the potential variables as possible such as class size, age, teacher-pupil familiarity etc. It was recognised that the system might not be able to handle discourse from other school contexts such as discussion groups or playground language (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975: 6).

There are two major advantages of this approach for the present research. Firstly, it's an approach for description of whole texts or chunks of texts rather than specific points of interest. Secondly, it looks to uncover underlying patterns and categories and relate them to language realisations which may be used for pedagogy.

A number of criticisms of this approach have been made. Firstly, although the descriptive system was expected to be applicable to situations other than teacher-fronted classrooms, this has sometimes proved to be troublesome. For example, Coulthard and Brazil (1981) report

problems in trying to analyse doctor/patient interviews using this system. However, the system has proved useful, albeit with modifications, for a variety of situation types, such as conversation (Francis & Hunston 1992) and lectures (Montgomery 1977). Classroom research using the approach has been done in school settings outside UK, e.g. Love (1991) applied this approach in analysis of Australian classroom discourse. The approach has also been applied to situations in higher education (Mead 1980, Cheung 1984 & Tapper 1992).

Secondly. the original model accounts for interaction in teacher-fronted school classrooms and shows the teacher as the controller of the discourse. Yet, as Griffen and Mehan (1981) point out, this classroom situation is becoming less common. Theories of student-centred learning have influenced teachers' perceptions of their roles and the image of the teacher as discourse controller emerging from the original model may well be less pertinent to today's classrooms.

Thirdly, a number of scholars have criticised speech act approaches to the analysis of language (Levinson 1983, Robinson 1985). Others have countered such arguments (e.g. van Rees 1992). Stubbs (1983: 134-135), in line with many critics of speech act theories, has criticised Sinclair & Coulthard's system and model on the grounds of the difficulty of categorising utterances. "Categorisation is always problematic, and it is never possible to say in so many words exactly what is meant." Graddol & Cheshire critically ask of a speech act based model of discourse:

> 1 Can it be said of any particular utterance that it has one and only one function?
> 2 Can it be said of any utterance that it relates to another utterance in virtue of its illocutionary force, or can it be the case that it relates to that other utterance in virtue, say, of its perlocutionary force?
> 3 Can utterances be identified independently of the functions they have?
> 4 Can there be some conventional procedure whereby utterance units can be assigned to specific functions?
> 5 Can it be said that sequences of utterances are in fact regulated by conventional sequencing rules. specifying what utterances, described in terms of their speech act status can follow one another?
>
> (1987: 23)

It is indeed the case that language analysts are involved, to an extent, in interpreting intentions and reading meaning into the discourse. It is probable also that there are sequences that have

no particular patterning but are random and unique. However, Taylor & Cameron (1987) state that the B(DA) approach is not a speech act approach in the sense that the acts are defined by the intentions of the speakers, rather the acts are defined by 'their function in the discourse' which are thus more open to scrutiny.

Our primary interest in the B(DA) model and approach is in the selective use of certain elements from the approach in the following list:

- the aim to account for chunks of text

- presentation of a hierarchical structure of exchnages, moves and acts

- definition of language elements by their function in the discourse

- interest in establishing predictable exchange patterns

- a focus on how categories are realised in language

## Ethnography

In ethnography, an important focus of investigation is to define a speaker's 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1972). Hymes (op cit.) describes the aspects of communicative competence as follows:

> "competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when where and in what manner..."
>
> (pp. 277-278).

In terms of research methods, those working in the ethnography of classroom interaction work from a data-driven development of theory and a contextualised description of classroom life including involvement of teachers and learners in the research (Mitchell & Brumfit 1989: 145). However, an ethnographic approach can be used as a supplement to other approaches to analysis of language. Duranti talks of the role of ethnography less as an alternative but more as a supplement to other forms of discourse analysis (1988: 222).

The aim of the present research is to explicate the discourse competence involved in participating in seminar discussion. Discourse competence is part of the social knowledge

interactants have. For students to be successful they need this knowledge as well as academic knowledge. Mehan argues:

> "Successful participation also involves social considerations. In addition to accumulating a stock of academic knowledge, students need to acquire a stock of social knowledge. Learning that there are appropriate ways to cast academic knowledge, that certain ways of talking and acting are appropriate on some occasions and not on others ........ the intertwining of the two (social and academic knowledge) is relevant for effective participation in the classroom community"

(Mehan, 1985: 119-120)

To understand the social rules of speaking ethnographers of speaking employ a range of methods including observation, analysis of texts and interviewing of interactants in order that a *thick description* be built up. Duranti (op cit.) states the need to explore the values and beliefs of a community in order to reach an understanding of their events.

*Summary*

This section has reviewed the main approach to the analysis of classroom interaction that influences the present research: B(DA). The tenets of the B(DA) have been presented and the facets of it which are used in this research have been stated. The present study is concerned to find the nature of discourse competence in seminar discussion and the values participants ascribe to seminar type discussion and in these ways the research is related also to ethnographic interests in classroom discourse.

The following two sections of the chapter survey literature concerned with the aspects of language that are central to the study. These aspects are also briefly reviewed at the beginning of the three chapters of language description.

## 2.4 Inter-Turn Structure

Two important constructs which have been proposed to account for local coherence between turns in spoken interaction are the exchange and the adjacency pair. The exchange has been variously defined. It has been defined as the minimal unit of interaction (Stubbs 1983, Edmondson 1981a), the basic unit of interaction (Coulthard & Brazil 1992), the minimal unit

of conversation (Wells et al. 1981), the unit concerned with negotiating information (Coulthard & Brazil 1981) and the unit which produces an outcome (Edmondson 1981a). Definitions of the adjacency pair are not dissimilar and deal with comparable units (Stubbs 1983: 132). For example, Goffman (1976) has referred to adjacency pairs as minimal dialogic units. What is common to these definitions is that the exchange or pair involves two or more turns by alternating speakers, is sequenced in some predictable ways and that what happens in the second part is a reaction to the first part.

In this section of the chapter, the construct of the adjacency pair in conversational analysis is examined along with some of the criticisms that have been made of it. The construct of the exchange is explained, and the section will go on to look at the various exchange patterns identified and contested in the literature. Findings from observational studies on the types and frequencies of exchange patterns found in educational settings and small group interaction are then reviewed.

### 2.4.1 The Adjacency Pair

The adjacency pair is a construct central to Conversational Analysis (Schiffren 1994: 16). It is a construct concerning the sequential organisation of discourse and conversational analysts view interactive discourse as fundamentally made of pairs or couplets. Schegloff defines an adjacency pair as a sequence which has the following characteristics:

> (i) Two utterance length
> (ii) Adjacent positioning of component utterances
> (iii) Different speaker producing each utterance
> (iv) Relative ordering of parts i.e. first pair parts precede second pair parts
> (v) Discrimination relations i.e. the pair type of a first pair part is relevant to the selection among second pair parts

> (1977: 84-5)

For Conversation Analysts, these recurrent patterns reflect the order that characterises conversation. Some examples of adjacency pairs are: summons-answer; question-answer; greeting-greeting, challenge-response and offer-acceptance/refusal. The first part of an adjacency pair is seen as selecting the next speaker and speech act and what follows the first pair part is interpreted as the response to it (Gramely & Patzold 1992: 230). If the second part is missing, it is 'noticeably absent' and the conversation is recognised as deviant. This leads in turn to the need for the re-issuing of the first part or an explanation needs to be given for the absence of the second part. According to Conversation Analysts, conversation progresses in a fundamentally pairwise manner. These pairs can be expanded. Expansion can occur before initiation via *pre-sequences*, e.g. pre-request sequence (Brown & Levinson 1987: 40) .

There have been a number of criticisms of the adjacency pair construct. Gramley and Patzold (op cit: 231) point out certain qualifications to the basic adjacency pair construct definition. The two parts do not necessarily follow each other immediately because other conversational matter may be inserted. The predictive capability of the first pair part is thus reduced and "with it the importance of adjacency pairs for the organisation of conversation if there are a number of second pair alternatives."

Edmondson (1981 (a)) draws attention to the case where one speaker asks a question and then goes on to answer it himself. This contradicts the requirement of the adjacency pair construct that different speakers produce the first and second parts. More generally, however, Edmondson criticises the fact that the definitional criteria are not specific enough to allow us to determine if adjacent utterances do in fact constitute a pair. Edmondson objects also to the easy categorisation of turns in conversational analysis where,

> "the recognition of an utterance as a token of a particular discourse unit is largely a matter of intuition ......... the central issue is not on what is said but on what is done in interactional terms. What is said is assumed to be transparent, and intuitively interpretable as a means of interaction".

(pp. 50)

Many analyses based on the Conversation Analysis approach have, moreover, been based on a highly selective approach to data with the presentation of isolated sequences which exemplify the proposed structures.

A further criticism of the adjacency pair construct has focused on the fact that only some parts of a text can be seen as comprising adjacency pairs and that the framework is not, therefore, adequate to account for a complete text. "Discourse, " points out Hoey, " is more than adjacent pairs of utterances" (1992: 79). McLaughlin (1984: 72) reports on a study by Benois on interaction between parents and children which found that 57.07% of the interactional exchanges could be classified as adjacency pairs. What then is the rest of the text if these couplets are the basic units of conversation? Levinson too has argued that the adjacency pair concept has been overemphasised and he says, "the bulk of conversation is not constructed from adjacency pairs (Levinson 1981). McLaughlin reports on the mixed evidence for adjacency pair organisation in studies in which subjects have been asked to reconstruct conversations (op cit: 73). Wells et al. (1981) critique the construct for failing to discriminate between acts which come under the framework and those that do not. Such arguments are supported by Tsui (1989) who states, "... there are certain utterances in conversation that are not component utterances of an adjacency pair and yet they form a bounded unit." Dissatisfaction with the adjacency pair framework leads Tsui among others to consider, the exchange as the basic unit of local coherence in talk, "A potential three-part exchange allows us to encompass an adjacency pair...... but takes us beyond this limited perspective."

## 2.4.2 The Exchange

**Exchange Structure**

A number of discourse analysts have proposed that the basic unit of talk is the exchange, a unit which comprises minimally an *initiating move* and a *responding move*. Scholars working within this framework are concerned with producing models of discourse and accounting for whole sections of text rather than specific instances of adjacency pairs. To account for such large segments of discourse, hierarchical models are suggested: a conversation or speech

event is seen as being made up of encounters; encounters in turn are made up of phases; phases consist of two or more exchanges; exchanges are comprised of at least two moves and moves in turn are comprised of one or more acts (Edmondson 1981a). Terminology may vary. For example Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) proposed that classroom discourse is made up of transactions which are comprised of exchanges (teaching and boundary), exchanges are made up of moves and moves of acts.

Prospectiveness, or predictive capacity, is a tenet of B(DA) and interpretations of text are made in terms of what (if anything) is to be expected sequentially. An expectation is set up by the initiating move and the subsequent move is classified according to this expectation. Wells et al. (op cit: 74) propose two basic exchange types: *solicit-give* and *give-acknowledge*. *Solicits* are seen as strongly prospective or implicative for the next turn whereas *gives* are less implicative. Sinclair & Coulthard (op cit.) and Coulthard & Brazil (1992) propose a three-part structure for classroom exchanges: I (initiation) R (response) F (follow-up):

| Predicting | Predicted | Move type |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Initiation |
| No | Yes | Response |
| No | No | Follow-up |

(Coulthard & Brazil pp. 71)

An initiation is not expected or predicted but is up to the free will of the participants. However, once an initiation is made it sets up an expectation of a response. A follow- up move is optional and if uttered does not set up the expectation of a further move.

In contrast, Edmondson's model of exchanges structures in spoken discourse works from categorisation from the perlocutionary effect, the principle of *hearer knows best*. It is the hearer who determines the meaning of the preceding utterance rather than the speaker,

"With particular regard to the notion of sequential relevance and the identification of interactional moves, I propose a 'hearer-knows-best' principle, such that H's interpretation of S's behaviour may be said to determine what S's behaviour counts as..."

(1981a: 50).

The illocutionary versus perlocutionary debate in speech act theory is well documented (Streek 1980: 136, Duranti 1988: 221, van Dijk 1985: 6). At the end of the day discourse analysts must opt for one or the other.

The original Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) model of spoken discourse, which was derived from teacher-fronted classroom interaction, proposed two types of exchanges, boundary and teaching exchanges. Boundary exchanges were defined as comprising framing and focusing moves, either of which were optional. Boundary exchanges were not interactional in the sense of involving two parties actively and will not be further discussed in this section. Five different types of teaching exchanges were proposed: teacher eliciting; teacher directing; teacher informing; pupil eliciting and pupil informing exchanges. These five types were seen as making up the bulk of two party interaction in the classroom. These exchanges were classified according to which act was uttered by whom in the *head* position of the initiating move. So, for example, if the teacher initiates an exchange and if a directing act is the head or main force behind the initiation, then the exchange type was classified as a teacher directing exchange.

A three-part exchange structure, I R F (initiation, response, follow-up), has been proposed for classroom discourse although some exchanges may also be two-part. To account for exchanges where the response also serves to initiate, the exchange pattern I R/I R was proposed. The following excerpt illustrates this structure.

I Where's the typewriter?

R/I Is it in the cupboard?

R No

(example taken from Coulthard & Brazil 1981: 101)

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The inter-turn exchange model which will be used for the analysis of exchange in this study is the model of exchange structure proposed by Coulthard & Brazil (1992) which is a refinement of the 1975 model outlined above.

A three-part exchange structure is proposed for classroom discourse by Griffin and Mehan (1981) and Mehan (1985) also. In what are termed *elicitation sequences,* Mehan (op cit: 121) presents the structure as an elicitation act, a reply act and an evaluation act. This is parallel to Sinclair & Coulthard's teacher eliciting exchanges. It is the three-part exchange starting with teacher elicitation which, argue Griffen and Mehan, is the most pervasive pattern identifiable in school classroom discourse (op cit: 193).

Cazden from a survey of the literature in this area finds agreement on the basic structure of classroom discourse as the three-part sequence of teacher initiation, student response and teacher evaluation (1986: 436-437). On a broader level, Fischer (1984) argues that three part exchanges generally characterise institutional situations of social asymmetry and proposes an exchange structure of I R C (initiation, response and comment) in medical interviews.

Tsui (1989) looks at the various functions of the follow-up move which she sees as fundamental to conversational structure. Follow-up functions, she asserts, to acknowledge the outcome of the exchange by evaluating the response, demonstrating either an understanding, or acceptance of a response, showing that there has been a change in the state of knowledge or information resulting from the exchange and, on a different level, signalling that a sequence has ended. Third part follow-up moves are normal in conversation and if they are absent, they are withheld for strategic or social reasons. Stubbs (1983: 146) investigated the pervasiveness of the three-part exchange structure. Looking at exchanges initiated by an eliciting move, he found that both two and three-part exchanges occurring between friends and family. However, between strangers only three-part exchanges occurred.

A number of challenges and modifications from within B(DA) have been made to the basic exchange structure proposed by Sinclair & Coulthard and are reviewed in Butler (1985). For example, Burton (1981) in an analysis of conversation rejects the follow-up move. She proposes a two part basic exchange structure: following an initiating move, the second speaker can opt for either a *supporting move* or a *challenging move. Supporting moves*, she explains, "function to facilitate the topic presented in a previous utterance, or to facilitate the contribution of a topic implied in a previous utterance, *challenging moves* function to hold up the progress of that topic or topic introduction in some way."

Berry (1981) is concerned with the follow-up move and proposes that the state of knowledge and authority between the interactants explains exchange patterning. When an eliciting exchange is initiated by a 'primary knower' (the one who already knows the information), a follow-up move is demanded. However, when initiated by a 'secondary knower' (the one who doesn't already know), follow-up is optional.

Sinclair and Coulthard's model (1975) was derived from naturally occurring classroom data. Edmondson's model (1981a) of spoken discourse was drawn from analysis of simulated data of 'business-like' transactions. Edmondson does not propose a two or three part exchange structure but rather a variety of possible patterns. In his model an exchange is defined as the structure which produces an *outcome*. An exchange is initiated by a *proffer* and can only be terminated by a *satisfy* to that *proffer*. A *proffer* can be responded to by a *satisfy*, a *reject*, a *contra* or a *counter*. Within this general framework, Edmondson argues that a number of possible exchange patterns may occur made up of moves. Patterns identified are: *proffer, contra, satisfy; proffer, counter, contra satisfy; proffer, reject, contra, satisfy*, etc.

## Extended Exchanges

In addition to identification of the basic exchange structure, patterns by which the basic pattern or exchange can be extended have been proposed. Extended patterns, or *bound exchanges*, were identified which account for re-initiation, listing, re-inforcing and repeating

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classroom scenarios (Sinclair & Coulthard op cit: 53-56). Edmondson identified complex exchanges involving *pre-exchanges, post exchanges* and *chained exchanges* (1981: 100-122). Brazil & Coulthard propose a *maximal* exchange pattern of four parts I (R/I) R (F) (1992: 72).

Hoey (1992) defines the construct of the *bound* exchange as, "exchanges where the initiation of one exchange is dependent on that of an earlier exchange for its intelligibility." However, Hoey questions whether it is best to view such exchanges as *bound* or rather to see them as *complex*, the result of combining two or more simple exchanges. Some of the ways exchanges may be combined, he tells us, are: follow-up treated as initiation; a negative follow-up which requires a response from the listener; responses which also serve to initiate and challenges in the slots of either response or follow-up which act to re-initiate.

Tsui (1989: 561-562) considers the case when a follow-up is followed by a further follow-up and identifies a number of four part sequences, e.g. when a speaker is 'minimalising' the previous utterance such as when the first speaker says "thanks" after an exchange, the second speaker may say. "not at all" and when a speaker wishes to indicate he has nothing more to say and wants to give up the floor.

**Exchanges in Academic Discussion**

Very few studies have been conducted into exchange patterns characterising discussion in Higher Education. Studies focusing on student-initiated exchanges are likewise few and far between. The little which is known of the amount or the nature of such exchanges is reviewed below. If students are to take an active role in the learning process as most educators would wish, it is important to see why and how they take the initiative as well as the patterns of exchange are set up by such initiations.

In a quantitative study of student speaking in social science lectures (Karp & Yoels 1976), it was found that an average of 9.83% students made a verbal contribution. Of the exchanges involving students, 46.3% were initiated by teacher questioning, 31.7% by teacher comment,

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2.9% by student questioning and 7.2% by teacher comment. Using questionnaires, the same study investigated the reasons for non-participation. Students reported that these were: not having done the reading; not knowing much about the topic; feeling that the tutor is the expert and feeling that any contributions they make needed to be well formulated.

A study by Tapper (1992) into four different types of university class (laboratory, Freshman English classes, lectures and conference sessions) found variation in the amount and nature of participation across the four class types. Except for laboratory classes, student talk was always less than teacher talk. Student talking time was found to be highest in conference sessions (one to one tutorials) where it totalled an average of 19.9%. The incidence of student-initiated exchanges was highest in lectures (65.8%), followed by laboratory classes (54.4%), freshman English classes (34.2%) and, surprisingly, lowest in conference sessions (26.7%). The study found that most student-initiated exchanges were initiated by *questions* in lecture, laboratory and freshman English classes but by *offers* in laboratory classes. In terms of the length of student-initiated exchanges, diversity was found across the modes of instruction. In general, the two-part exchange was generally the most prevalent type of exchange. In lectures 54.4% of student-initiated exchanges were two part, 17.10% were three part and 27.8% were four part. For freshman English classes, the figures were 30.38%, 43,54% and 10.57% respectively and a further 15.47% were five part exchanges .

Figures of the diversity shown above, indicating both qualitative and quantitative variation, clearly point to the need to study interaction in carefully defined contexts in education. Exchange patterns and situational factors may well co-relate and it may not be sufficient to talk about spoken discourse in higher education as if it were a homogeneous phenomenon.

Only a couple of studies have been concerned with investigating exchange sequences in classes in higher education. In terms of exchange sequence, Tapper (1992: 502) found the three-part exchange a suitable construct for the discourse of the differing modes of instruction she studied. However, she found the third part move optional and that it serves various

"An elicitation is an act the function of which is to request a linguistic response - linguistic, although the response may be a non-verbal surrogate such as a nod or a raised hand".

(Sinclair & Coulthard 1975: 28)

The functional classification of elicits devised by Tsui is used in a modified form in this study. Tsui classifies elicits according to what kinds of responses are prospected and the categories are given as:

elicit-inform       prospects the respondent to supply unknown information
elicit-confirm      requests the respondent to confirm the speaker's assumption
elicit-agree        the speaker asks the hearer to agree that his assumption is
                    self-evidently true
elicit- commit      goes beyond an invitation to a verbal response by asking the
                    addressee to commit him/herself to further action
elicit-repeat       has a meta-discoursal function of prospecting a repetition
elicit-clarify      has a meta-discousal function of prospecting a clarification
                    of preceding utterance(s)

(1992: 109)

There are some problems in this categorisation, although it is a useful one and applicable in a limited and modified form to seminar discussion. These problems are explored in more depth in Chapter Six of the thesis. One problem is how Tsui distinguishes the categories of elicit-confirm and elicit: inform. Let's say a speaker makes the elicit *Do you think X is the answer?* Tsui sees this as an elicit: inform. However, we can argue that the speaker is offering the proposition that X is the potential answer and therefore, we can propose that this is an elicitation of confirmation.

Discourse analysts working outside the B(DA) approach have considered categories of questions. In pragmatics, Blakemore (1992) contrasts wh-questions with yes-no questions. Unlike wh-questions, yes-no questions involve the questioner with the expression of 'full propositions'. Yes-no questions are 'truncated' versions of alternate questions, such as *Is it this or that?* Not all questions are designed to elicit information. Blakemore argues, in the example *Do you remember the man who bought the car. Well, he's doing a first year philosophy course?*, the 'question' functions not to elicit but to ensure that certain information is available to help the hearer process subsequent utterances (op cit: 99).

Some discourse analysts have looked at the social aspects of questions. The correlation between questioning and power has been described by Goody:

> "... questioning binds two people in immediate reciprocity. Whether the reciprocity is equal or unequal is marked by the mode of questioning used, and is also a function of the relative statuses of questioner and respondent"

(Goody 1978: 23)

An example of such a questioning mode is direct questions. The use of direct questions often reveals an asymmetric power relationship between the interactants, e.g. interviewer to interviewee (Milroy 1987) and doctor to patient (West 1984). Pomerantz (1988) identifies questions in which a 'candidate answer' is offered when "a speaker has a reason to guide a co-participant to respond in a particular way."

Dillon (1990: 131-136) considers the *presuppositions* and *presumptions* behind a question, "The first is a logical property of the question-sentence and the second is the pragmatic property of the act of uttering the sentence". The frequently given example to illustrate the presuppositions behind a question is, *Is the King of France Bald?* The presuppositions are: 1. there is a present king of France and 2. the king is either bald or not-bald. For a question's presumptions to be true, the act of questioning must be genuine, e.g. the asker desires to know, believes in the presuppositions in the question, is in a state of not-knowing, etc.

Researchers in education have had particular interests in questions. Typologies of student questioning have been developed. For example, West & Pearson (1994) identify 5 types of questions used in university classrooms: questions concerning classroom procedures, general inquiry on content, clarification, confirmation and general inquiry/prompting to teacher. One major interest has been to classify the cognitive demands made on the person questioned by the type of question used. This has led to the distinction between *higher* and *lower* cognitive questions (Redfield & Rousseau 1981). *Higher* cognitive questions or *divergent* questions are those that require the student to, "manipulate bits of information previously learned to create

or support an answer with logically reasoned evidence." Such questions require the respondent to make operations at the four higher cognitive levels defined by Bloom et al. (1956) of *application, analysis, synthesis* and *evaluation. Lower* cognitive level questions or *convergent* questions, require the respondent to engage in *recall* or *recognition* of factual information. Considerable research in the field of educational science has focused on the correlation between higher cognitive level questioning by teachers and improved learning.

Other dichotomies used in the field of Education are: *interpretative* or *open* questions (where there are several possible answers) versus *factual* or *closed* questions (where there is only one correct answer) (Hargreaves 1984). A further distinction has been made between *display* (known information questions) versus *referential* questions where the person who asks the question is genuinely seeking the information rather than checking or testing (van Lier 1988: 222).

*Summary*

The preceding section reviewed approaches to the analysis of inter-turn structure in interaction. The adjacency pair construct was argued to be limited in that it deals with isolated instances of couplets. Two exchange systems, those of Edmondson and B(DA) were surveyed. The limited amount of research conducted into inter-turn exchange patterns and student-initiated exchanges in discussion classes in higher education was reviewed. It was pointed out that there is a gap in the literature concerning exchange patterns in seminar discussion classes. The beginning of an exchange in seminar discussion is often a question. Some perspectives on questions in linguistics were outlined and the interests of educators in questions were briefly reviewed.

## 2.5 Components within Turns

The following section reviews categories and concepts with which components within turns at talk have been accounted for in the literature.

## 2.5.1. Informing elements

A number of researchers have been interested in the internal structure of turns in talk. The key part of a turn in interaction is the part of the turn that shapes or is shaped by the key element in another speaker's turn. These key elements have been variously termed. For example, they have been termed *head acts* (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Coulthard & Brazil 1992, Francis & Hunston 1992), *head moves* Edmondson (1981a) and *main speech acts* (Ferrara 1985). The pattern of these key elements constitutes the inter turn structure discussed in the previous section. However, a turn in talk may be far more complex than a one head act and discourse analysts have sought to identify other elements within turns.

For many of those working within the DA(B) tradition, a turn in talk is viewed as having a potential three part structure: pre head, head and post head. Which act(s) fulfil these parts is seen as predictable and sequences of acts are proposed. For example:

| Class of move | example | structure of move | class of act |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opening | A group of people used symbols to do writing. They used pictures instead of as we write in words. Do you know who those people were? | pre-h | starter |
| | | h | elicitation |
| | I'm sure you do. | post-h | prompt |

(Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 23)

A second means by which those working in this tradition have explained non-core elements in a turn at talk is by *clue, starter* and *comment* acts. *Clues* provide additional information which helps the respondent answer the elicitation or comply with the directive. *Starters* provide information about or direct attention towards an area in order to make a correct response more likely. *Comments* function to exemplify, justify, provide additional information. In classroom discourse it is seen that speakers frequently make one potential informative or elicit followed by another. Each 'pushes down' the preceding one and the hearer realises that it is the last one to which he or she is expected to respond. The others acts were merely 'starters'. So, for

example in the following exchange the pupil responds to the final elicit rather than the first one or the intervening informative:

Teacher: What about this one? This I think is a super one. Isobel, can you think what it means?

Pupil: Does it mean there's been an accident further along the road?

(Sinclair & Coulthard 1975)

Edmondson (op cit:) accounts for the complexity within a turn at talk through three constructs. The first is fairly similar to the concepts established by Sinclair & Coulthard. It is the idea of three potential parts in turns, *(uptake), head* and *(appealer)*. Uptake, we are told is, an "optional pre head element in the structure of the move". For example:

Y: yeah well it's gonna be pretty hard to remove isn't it

X: well most I can do is offer to get it dry cleaned

Y: yeah but I mean it's not gonna come out with dry-cleaning wine spots don't I mean....

In this extract Y uptakes at the beginning of her two turns with *yeah* and produces an appealer, *isn't it*, at the end of her first.

Edmondson proposes a second means to account for complexity within turns, the notion of *supportive moves*. These moves are described as not having a place in the underlying interactional structure of discourse but are surface level anticipatory strategies (op cit: 122). Three types of *supportive moves* are proposed and are defined below.

- **Grounders** which function to pre-empt potential questions by stating the reasons for a request or suggestion.
e.g. X suggests sharing a taxi and supplements the suggestion with the grounder "*it doesn't seem too far really*" and thereby forestalls Y's asking "What for?"

- **Expanders** which function to provide more information than is strictly needed e.g.
Y: hello
X: oh hello did you have a good day at the university?
Y: *eh fairly tiring lectures were long and tedious but eh apart from that* it was okay...

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We see in this example that Y gives extra information than was directly called for by X's question.

- **Disarmers** by which speakers apologise in advance or self criticise before another speaker can criticise e.g. "*I know it's sort of bothering you again but...*"

A third way in which Edmondson accounts for intra turn phenomena is via the notion of *multiple heads* in move structure. A number of acts of the same type may realise the head and it is often not possible to distinguish their relative status argues Edmondson and talks of the possibility of "two communicative acts together realising the head of the interactional move" (op cit: 130). Edmondson acknowledges that the distinction between these 'additive' acts and expanding supportive moves is "fuzzy edged". An example of a multiple head is as follows:

( Y is complaining to X that X has let her down about baby-sitting arrangements and in one turn X says)

X: without an - 1) it's just I I just feel terrible about it I really do 2) you know to think I'm letting you down right on this first instance .......

Ferrara (1985) views the relationship between speech acts within a text or turn as hierarchic and proposes the idea that there are main and subordinate speech acts in the hierarchy. To identify speech acts as distinct we need to identify speakers' goals. In producing a turn, speakers implement a plan or a 'mental hierarchy of goals'. To ascertain what is going on in text we need to look at the goal structure of this plan, to determine how many goals and subgoals are present. Subordinate acts (and goals) are related to the main act by any of a limited number of relations. Types of relations, or *subordination*, are justification, explanation, elaboration, repetition, correction, preparing the ground, etc. For example, in the following extract from the Watergate tapes recording Richard Nixon, the main speech act is 'elaborated' by giving more and more specific information:

Nixon: Another way to do it then........... is to continue to try to cut our losses.   Now we have to take a look at that course of action. First it is going to require approximately a million dollars to take care of the jackasses who are in jail. That can be arranged. That could be arranged But you realise that after we are gone, and assuming we can expend that money, then they are going to crack and it would be an unseemly story.

(pp. 147)

However, the difficulty is, of course, to identify the main goal. In the extract above the main goal could be to announce the proposal to cut their losses, or it could be to suggest that they consider that course of action. If it is the former, then we could say that the announcement is followed by elaboration. if it is the latter, then we could say "continue to cut our losses" is 'preparing the ground'. Ferrara's purely hierarchical construct stands in contrast to the model of Edmondson which allows for the possibility of multiple and equal head acts.

In lectures there are long series of informs. Montgomery (1977) distinguishes between *main* and *secondary* discourse. In main discourse, informs are often related to one another by additive, casual and adversative relationships and thus may be marked by *and, by* and *but*. Subsidiary discourse comprises two subcategories, *glosses* and *asides*. Montgomery proposes three categories of *glosses*: restate, qualify, and comment. *Glosses* are anaphoric. *Asides* are exophoric and direct hearers' attention outside the text. They may be procedural, e.g. ".... and we'll make a table" or they may function to aid recall, e.g. "as you remember ..." A pedagogic application of signalling and structuring in oral presentations based on the work by . Montgomery can be found in Nesi & Skelton (1987).

The difficulty of the long turn has been studied by Burton (1981), who building on the act category of *comment* of Sinclair & Coulthard (op cit.) and also Montgomery's analysis of lectures (1977), proposes the categories of *additive, adverbial, causal, repeat, restate* and *qualifying* as sub-categories of informs or comments. If there is an initial inform as the head of an opening move, following informing acts within the turn can be classified according to these six categories.

### 2.5.2 Textual and Interpersonal Devices

In seminars and discussions speakers are involved in exchanging information. Redeker (1990: 367) draws attention to the fact that "language use always involves both the representation of propositional content and the expression of attitudes and intentions." The literature has

attempted to account for the ways speakers express their intentions and attitudes and this is now reviewed.

### 2.5.2.1. Textual Signalling

Flowerdew (1992) in a study into the language of definitions in science lectures, discusses some of the signals or markers for text organisation. Definitions, he informs us, are sometimes introduced by *peripheral utterances*. These utterances may precede the definition and play an important signalling role, e.g. *let me show you the different types* or *now there is a rule*. Alternatively, the *peripheral utterance* may follow the definition, and are, therefore, retrospective, e.g. (definition of Markinoff's rule) *that's Markinoff's rule* or (definition of an alkaline) *that's an alkaline*. Two other devices that Flowerdew identifies in lectures which seem relevant to turns in discussion are: rhetorical questions, e.g. *what are protista?* which function, he claims, to signal an impending definition and left dislocation, e.g. *the emblem/that's the outer part of the cortex,* which functions to focus hearers' attention on the term. Hatch (1992: 238-239) also discusses the feature of marked left dislocation in spontaneous spoken discourse and sees it as a means to introduce a new topic, shift the focus or blend into a new topic.

In student turns in discussion following lectures, McKenna (1987) noted the *reduction* of information given in the lecture and *thematisation* or focusing of such information as referencing devices, e.g. (student turn) *Lamino - ...* Theme is, according to McKenna, the first element in student questions and it can be a single word, as in the example given, or a phrase or clause. Its function is both "to connect back to the previous discourse and as a point of departure for the further development of the discourse.".

Redeker distinguishes between textual markers which announce main ideas and those marking intentions, e.g. *The main point here is,* and *I will outline in this section* (1990: 192-3). Coulthard & Montgomery (1981) in a study of lectures found that lectures are designed interactively. One prominent feature of this interactive aspect is signalling which is used to

express forthcoming structure and content with markers, such as *Now the second big area* or *Two fundamental principles are*. These markers serve not only as 'topic delimiters' but also as 'floor holders' in that they forestall interruption. Coulthard & Montgomery (op cit.) identified 'major signposts', e.g. retrospective signposts, e.g. *Right, I'm now going to go right away from this rather abstract* and prospective signposts, e.g. *Right so let's turn to mathematics for the next....* Smaller scale topics, they claim, are introduced phonologically.

### 2.5.2.2. Strategies

In the literature there is little consensus over terminology in this area. Aspects of the strategic use of language are found under a wide variety of terms such as: *conventionalised routines, conversational strategies, gambits, social lubricators, face concerns* and *politeness formulas*. There is often considerable overlap between the language items these various terms refer to. Three aspects of strategic language use are employed in particular in this study and the review focuses on them after an initial discussion of the concept of conversational strategy. These aspects are: hedging; ways to enter discussion and the notion of *face concerns* (Goffman 1967).

### Definitions of Strategy

A conversational strategy has been defined as a means of reaching a goal in some optimal way often in an effective way (van Dijk & Kintsch 1983). The question of the extent to which strategies are consciously used has interested those working in this field. Goody argues against those who think conversational strategies are necessarily rational, means-ends phenomena:

> "Such de facto rational strategies need not be arrived at rationally in the sense of being products of conscious deliberation...... it seems likely that the selection of verbal forms is goal-oriented, but it is only partially the result of conscious calculation. For much of the kind of learning that shapes these choices goes on at a subliminal level...... There is a process of feedback between the initial effective use of a given device, its standardisation in a culturally selected form, and its assimilation into the society's repertoire of strategic forms available...."

> (1978: 8-9)

Heritage (1990) sees a divide between conscious means-ends type strategies and the many conventionalised conversation strategies that have become "embodied in conduct." Conventionalised conversational strategies, he argues, are at best only vaguely understood by interactants. Similarly, Brown & Levinson (1987: 85) view conversational strategies as either automatic, ready formulated routines which operate on an unconscious level or plans for repairing interactional mistakes and manipulating others and which may be used consciously.

Edmondson & House (1981: 45) recognise the automatic nature of many strategies. "*Conventionalisation* is so strong in conversational behaviour that strategies may be routinely employed." Coulmas views many strategies as *conversational routines,* the acting out of well-known and generally accepted pre-fabricated linguistic units.

> "The recurrence of communicative goals in everyday life has led to the evolution of standardised strategies for their accomplishment ..... Successful co-ordination of social intercourse heavily depends on standardised ways of organising interpersonal encounters."
>
> (Coulmas 1981: 3)

For many of these linguistic units the literal meaning has become eroded, e.g. "I'm afraid I must..." no longer has to do with fear. Coulmas (op cit.) points out that according to information theory, frequency of occurrence and meaningfulness are inversely related. The relationship between function and meaning may have become obscure in many of these *standardised strategies.* They may have important functions in allowing a speaker time to gather his thoughts and acting as fillers.

## Hedging

One common strategy is *hedging,* the use of devices by which speakers indicate their belief or commitment to the ideas they put forward. Following Lakoff's (1973) seminal work on 'words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness- words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy (op cit: 471), hedging has been the subject of considerable research interest. The section below gives a brief survey of the field. A more detailed coverage with reference to the investigation used in this thesis is given in Chapter Seven.

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A number of dichotomies have been identified within the area of hedging. One dichotomy is the divide between devices showing partial as opposed to strong belief or commitment to ideas. These devices have been variously termed: *deintensifiers* and *intentisifiers, weakeners* and *strengtheners,* and *downgraders* and *upgraders* (Lakoff op cit., Brown & Levinson 1987, Holmes 1983 respectively). A further dichotomy has been drawn between *approximators* and *shields* (Prince et al. 1982). The former denote devices indicating vagueness of the speaker/writer to part of a proposition and the latter denote devices indicating the speaker's/writer's degree of belief in a whole proposition. Researchers have tended to focus on one or the other, e.g. Channel (1994) is concerned with *approximators* in her study of vague language whereas Bloor and Bloor (1993) are concerned with *shields* in their study of the modification of claims by economists. Another dichotomy is the use of hedging to demonstrate belief in the truth of the idea and to demonstrate stance for strategic purposes. Lakoff, was concerned with hedges as means to indicate degrees of truth (op. cit.), whereas Brown & Levinson look at the strategic vantages that hedging offers (op. cit.).

**Entering the talk**

A number of strategies used to enter talk or discussion have been identified. *Gambits* (Coulmas 1981) are sentence starters which introduce what a speaker is about to say, e.g. *One question I would like to ask is...,* and which may function strategically to signal the taking, keeping or desire to pass a turn. Edmondson (1981b) finds that gambits are more likely to be used when a speaker is making a disagreeing or imposing move, e.g. a request to the previous speaker.

A *preface* (Stubbs 1983: 181-185) has been defined as an utterance which precedes another utterance and displays an analysis of it, e.g. *just one other comment.* The terms *gambits* and *prefaces,* therefore, appear to be used interchangeably in the literature for much the same kind of markers. The term 'preface' has been used for devices used in more formal discussions. Stubbs (op cit.) identifies types of prefaces in seminars and committee meetings, e.g.

*misplacement* and *interruption prefaces*. The former functions to indicate "lack of connectedness to the immediately preceding talk" and its potential elements are:

1 term of address / 2 mitigation / 3 account/ 4 placement marker/ 5 self-referential marker/ 6 metareference to another speaker's talk

e.g. (1) John   (2) eh I think perhaps  (3) it would be useful  (4) before we go any further

(5) if I sum up  (6) some of the things Harry was saying

Examples of *interruption prefaces* are given as *Could I just come in there* or *Can I ask organisation-wise why?*

Stubbs (op cit.) also identifies *alignment* prefaces, devices by which speakers show their personal point of view, e.g. *I don't think it really is* or *The way I look at it is*. An alternative view of such utterances is taken by Gotz (1989) who terms such devices *starters*. Gotz sees these devices as a way out of planning difficulties and that they function to avoid pauses, to indicate take-over of the speaker's role and give time for planning. For Gotz this category includes one word phrases such as *well* and longer utterances such as *In my opinion*. Some of the devices that these writers term as *alignment prefaces* or *starters* have been discussed by other under the term hedging.

*Metalinguistic phrases*, devices which forewarn the listener of the purpose of entries, e.g. *I just wanted to clarify*, are identified by McKenna (1987). Burton (1981) terms such metalinguistic phrases as *metastatements for the speaker's rights*. They often include, she points out, questions or statements containing the words *tell* or *ask*.

Turn taking devices and the structure of students' turns following lectures were investigated by McKenna (op cit.). Turn taking was very much reliant on recognition by the lecturer and involved a 'signal to open communication' and a 'wait for go-ahead signal. McKenna views

turns as standardised four-part routines of clarification, interpretation check, digression and challenge.

e.g. 1 I just wanted to clarify that sequences are different from co-articulation
2 you've just moved the tongue back, right?
3 I was just curious, we haven't run across the ch sound yet
4 wasn't the p aspirated?

(McKenna 1987: 197)

## Face & politeness rules

The strategic use of language in conversation has also been discussed under the headings of *face concerns* and *politeness principles* in conversation. *Face* is a notion introduced by the American sociologist, Goffman (1967), who sees *face maintenance* as a condition of interaction. Two rules underlie face maintenance: the rule of self respect (an interactant's defensive work to avoid losing face) and the rule of considerateness (the protective work to safeguard the face of others). Generally, the two perspectives are taken at the same time although some practices (events) may be primarily defensive or protective. In regard to spoken interactions, Goffman maintains that when "a person volunteers a statement or message, however, trivial and commonplace, he commits himself and those he addresses, and in a sense, places everyone present in jeopardy." Thus face-work concerns underlie interactive talk.

Brown & Levinson (1987) have developed a theory of politeness based on Goffman's notion of face concerns. They present a number of verbal strategies and account for them in terms of face concerns. Politeness is presented as stemming from the nature of man as a rational creature and one who has face wants. Man has both *positive* and *negative* face wants - the desire to be appreciated and approved of and the desire not to be imposed on respectively. Brown & Levinson's main attention is on identifying acts that are face-threatening to others and the conversational strategies by which speakers mitigate these acts. Also identified are a number of strategies to 'anoint the speaker's face', positive politeness strategies, such as avoiding disagreement.

Two rule-based approaches to politeness are given by Lakoff (1977) and Leech (1983). Lakoff suggests three rules of politeness: *formality* (don't impose), *hesitancy* (give the addressee his options) and *equality* (act as though you and the addressee were equal/make him feel good). Leech proposes four politeness maxims: *tact* (minimise cost to other, maximise benefit to other), *generosity* (minimise benefit to self, maximise cost to self), *approbation* (minimise dispraise of other, maximise praise of other) and the maxim of *modesty* (minimise praise of self, maximise dispraise of self).

Edmondson (1981a) accounts for conversational strategies in two ways. Firstly, by the identification of three categories of supportive moves (*disarmers, grounders and expanders*) described in section 2.5.1. Edmondson accounts for them in his model of interaction, but he states that supportive moves occur only at the surface level of interaction and are not part of the underlying interactional structure. Elsewhere Edmonsdon proposes a number of *co-operative* or politeness maxims:

1. Don't stress your own importance, stress the hearer's.
2. Say a bit more.
3. Giving reasons and explanations.
4. Apologise first
5. Prepare the ground.

(Edmondson 1989: 817-824)

## 2.6. Summary

Seminar and discussion classes in higher education have been studied and discussed by scholars working in the fields of Educational Science and Applied Linguistics, in particular, E.A.P. This chapter surveyed some of the relevant findings of those working in these disciplines.

In Educational Science, major areas of inquiry have been the explication of the aims of seminar and discussion classes, the benefits of them vis a vis the lecture and the identification of problems typically encountered. What emerged from the writings of Educational Science is

an 'idealised view' - active student participation and interaction fuelled by higher level cognitive thinking. The major problem identified by the writings concerned participation, namely, paucity of contributions, unequal distribution of participation and a low cognitive level of discussion. There was little consensus about what a seminar is and a variety of event types featured in the accounts given. Very importantly, it was reported that there has been little observation of the actual processes of such classes.

The review of literature in E.A.P. indicated that academic speaking has been relatively neglected compared to other academic skills and that this has resulted in few published pedagogic materials currently available on the market. Although some language descriptions of seminar interaction have been made, the review concluded that they were largely piecemeal and focused on some 'interesting', very often easily discernible features such as prefaces. Differences between NS and NNS speaker behaviours and other participant variables have very much preoccupied researchers. However, the more basic issues, such as the general nature, structure and components of seminar interaction were found to have been only minimally addressed. Some of the few E.A.P. oriented descriptions of seminar language were found to have relied on conjecture or data from different contexts.

The review of literature then looked at how the analysis of classroom interaction has been approached. Classroom interaction has been studied under a range of research approaches and major approaches were outlined. The main approach used in the study is that developed at Birmingham University, B(DA), and this approach was explained more fully.

Frameworks for the analysis of inter-turn structure were surveyed. It was argued that the adjacency pair construct was inappropriate for a study aiming to investigate large segments of text which may contain elements other than adjacency couplets. The alternative framework of exchange structure analysis was discussed and the few samples of studies of seminar interaction carried out within this framework were described. It was stated that there is at

present a gap in the literature concerning patterns of exchange in seminar and discussion classes.

Much of our present knowledge about what goes on inside a turn has been derived from studies of conversation where turns are typically short. However, seminar and formal discussions often include long turns. One or two studies have attempted to identify elements in turns in seminar but, the picture is as yet far from complete. Features such as textual signalling devices and an understanding of what is going on in a series of informs could help provide a more complete picture of inside a turn.

Within discussion interactants are involved in the strategic use of language and the literature suggests rules and principles that guide conversationalists. It also suggests that interactants follow standardised routines, e.g. on entering a discussion and hedging their claims. But what are the conventionalised routines in seminar? When and why do participants hedge? What are their face concerns and how are they manifested in this specific type of event? The discussion of the strategic use of language in the literature has by and large concerned conversational one-to-one encounters. Seminar is a public event and in it interaction may occur between two interactants but it occurs before a group. The study into the strategic language use in seminar should contribute to this area by its focus on an often unconsidered but common type of interaction, debate in the public arena.

## Chapter Three
## Research Methodology

### 3.0 General Research Design

The study is an investigation into interaction in university seminars. Its primary aim is to establish frameworks for the modelling of interactive discourse for such events. Secondly, it aims to explicate similarities and differences between three subgenres of seminar (subgenre A, discussion following presentation by an outside speaker, subgenre B, discussion following presentation by student presenters and subgenre C, non presentation discussion). Linde (1983) distinguishes between models of discourse for pure, scientific purposes and for practical applications, e.g. to improve specific problem areas. It is the latter which is the primary intent of the study. It is envisaged that the frameworks may lend themselves to pedagogic applications by providing a baseline description of the patternings and features of the discourse of seminar discussion to help those working in E.A.P.

Selected samples of seminars are examined in order to ascertain their characteristics in terms of exchange patternings, moves at initiation and intra-turn aspects of strategic language use. The samples are taken from one particular postgraduate programme and in this sense the study constitutes a *critical case*. A critical case study has been defined as one which assesses the evidence for a conclusion or explanation by looking at a favourable illustration of it (Hakim 1987). The practice of seminar is examined on a well-established postgraduate course in UK.

The research is descriptive, primarily qualitative, yet with a quantitative aspect. Seliger & Shohamy define qualitative language research as research having the ultimate goal of discovering phenomena such as patterns of language behaviour not previously discovered (1989: 120). Bryman (1988) reports that in qualitative research the researcher often rejects the formulation of theory and concepts in advance of basic field-work, tending to prefer an approach in which the formulation of theories and concepts 'proceeds in tandem' with data collection. This interplay between data and conceptualisation in qualitative research is also propounded by Bulmer (1984) and Wiseman (1979). In line with this view of research

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strategy, the present research involved an initial period of field-work to focus the direction of the research, and the constructs for the analysis of data were selected in response to the data collected and initial impressions drawn from observations and interviews rather than prior to it. The study is qualitative also in the sense that the modelling of the discourse presents new categories and constructs.

A quantitative element is involved in the research design in that the frequency of some of the features identified are compared across the subgenres. It has been suggested that quantitative and qualitative research are mutually exclusive since they reflect different epistemological positions (Guba & Lincoln 1982). Others, however, view the relationship as compatible (Oberle 1991, Bryman op cit.). Seliger & Shohamy (op cit: 117) offer exemplification of language research combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. Schegloff (1993) notes that qualitative study is the precondition for quantitative analysis, but argues that quantification is often premature as our knowledge of 'talk-in interaction' is still relatively undeveloped. However, Schegloff recognises the potential for 'quantitatively grounded observation' for comparative questions such as differing contexts. In this thesis, seminar subgenres are compared for quantitative variation in occurrence of the features extrapolated by text analysis.

**Validity and Reliability**

The language data comprises existing recordings of naturally occurring seminars. Thus the language data is authentic and was recorded without the presence of the researcher as observer. The programme from which the texts are taken regularly records its lessons in rooms fitted for this purpose and thus participants are used to being recorded by fairly unobtrusive means.

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The question to what extent the frameworks established by the study are applicable to other settings, we turn to Guba and Lincoln who say on the subject of naturalistic research:

> "The naturalist discounting generalizability and the assumption o f context free laws which have enduring truth value...... nevertheless believes that some degree of transferability is possible under certain circumstances. Those circumstances exist if enough "thick description" is available...."

(1982: 247)

In line with the above principle, descriptions are given in Chapter Four of the background from which data was collected. Context is provided in the study in terms of description of the situations in which the events take place and the purposes and interpretations held for them by the participants.

In order to ensure the reliability of the interpretation of the data, the procedure of *regrounding* (Seliger & Shohamy op cit: 186) was used, i.e. going back to the data one or more times to compare the patterns obtained with the results obtained the first time.

Kirk & Miller (1990) have argued that reliability in qualitative research is fostered by recording the decision-making that underpinned the research. In line with this principle, the following section includes a brief account of an initial investigation, its findings and the decisions they incurred for the shaping of the research.

## 3.1 Initial Procedures

### 3.1.1. Initial Study

As stated in Chapter One, the initial impetus for the study was the lack of materials and information for seminar skills and strategies coupled with the finding that the literature had relatively little to offer on the nature of seminar discourse. However, before starting any research, it was important to find out the answers to some basic questions: Are seminars and discussion classes a reality or myth? If a reality, what type of events are they, i.e. what are meant by the terms *seminar* and *discussion class?* Are such classes an important area for E.A.P?

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To answer these questions, an initial and informal investigation was conducted at Bilkent University, Turkey, which can be tentatively argued to be broadly representative of a number of English medium universities in Turkey, and possibly in other developing countries. This university, like a number of others in Turkey, bases its instruction on Western practices. Most staff have followed higher degree courses in English speaking countries and at any one time there are a number of visiting staff from abroad. In addition, a number of students from this and other universities in Turkey go on higher degree courses in UK and USA.

Staff and students were informally questioned and asked if they had classes involving discussion and which classes they would name as seminars or discussion-based events. They were asked for their general experiences of them. In addition to these informal conversations, a number of seminars and discussion classes were observed.

It was found that the terms *seminar*, *tutorial*, and *discussion classes* were used fairly interchangeably and that seminars were found to be held in all but one faculty (Fine Arts). It was found also that seminars and discussion classes were more prevalent at post-graduate levels than undergraduate levels. All post-graduate programmes (other than in the Fine Arts Faculty) included this mode of instruction quite regularly. Third and fourth year undergraduate classes in certain departments had such events also. Staff and students felt that although these classes often involved interesting presentations, discussion following these presentations and discussion in classes that did not involve presentations was often disappointing and that language was a barrier to more dynamic interaction.

From this initial investigation it was seen that seminars and discussion classes are clearly a central part of the instructional process in the university but that "language difficulties' were felt to hinder students from benefiting fully. It was found that seminars and discussion were seen as particularly important at post-graduate levels and that there were a range of event types involving discussion and that they were variously termed.

These findings led to the decision to focus on the discussion section of seminar classes. It was decided to focus on classes at post-graduate levels where this genre appears to be critically important. Observations led to awareness of the range of subgenres covered by the term 'seminar.' Clearly, the study of seminar discussion discourse needed to consider the subgenre issue and not conceptualise seminars as a singular entity.

### 3.1.2. Selection of Site of Research

The texts for the language analysis for this study were selected from recorded seminars on the MBA programme at the Aston University Business School, UK and constitute the major focus of the study.

There were a number of reasons for the choice of this site. Firstly, although the research had started from a problem in an environment where English was being used as a second language, the practice of seminars had been reported there as unsatisfactory. A UK setting can be argued to represent a model in terms of target language and instructional practice for those in developing countries and, of course, is appropriate as a model for those concerned with E.A.P. within UK. Secondly, a master's programme was selected on the grounds that seminars and the more discursive instruction modes are more prevalent at post-graduate than at undergraduate levels.

A Business Administration programme was seen as appropriate. It is a discipline that is becoming increasingly popular world-wide and its methods of instruction may be of intrinsic interest to many. It cannot be claimed that the characteristics of the seminars of this population are identical to seminars in other disciplines or MBA seminars in different settings. However, it is argued that the modelling of aspects of interaction from this one academic discipline has relevance to other disciplines since the patterns and features of interaction that are focused on are of sufficient generality to be potentially applicable to other settings.

and practical considerations. Firstly, the programme is well known and is among the leading Business Management programs in the UK. Therefore, as a data source it represents a critical case. Secondly, due to the distance learning element in the programme, the Aston Business School regularly video-records its instructional events. These recordings are made by highly professional and non-obtrusive means. Therefore, the Aston programme provides technically high quality data and, in addition, has video recording as a natural event on the course. In addition to the above factors, the selection of this site meets the recommendations of Bogdan & Taylor (1975: 28) that "... researchers choose settings in which the subjects are strangers and in which they have no particular professional knowledge and expertise." Finally, the practical consideration of ease of access was a factor in the choice of research site and population. As a consequence of this, the evidence and analysis is confined to discourse in British English.

Two video texts were collected from the MBA programme at Bilkent University, Turkey. The texts from the Turkish university record events parallel to one of the subgenres identified in the UK context (discussion following the presentation by an outside speaker). Similarly to the UK texts, these two texts constituted an existing data source as they had been made by the MBA lecturers of presentations and discussions by visiting speakers in the natural course of their work. The objective was to ascertain whether the frameworks produced in the main research into seminar interaction in the UK setting could account for features of interaction in the Turkish setting. A further line of interest was to identify any possible differences in the spoken production of the Turkish students using English compared to students in UK.

### 3.1.3. Data Collection

Video recordings of classes involving discussion and presentations on the Aston MBA programme were viewed and selection made of texts for the corpus. The recordings had been made by non-participant observation and were recordings existing prior to the study (recordings of in-house lessons made for students on a distant learning program or for use

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with future courses). Therefore, the data was naturally occurring and obtained by unobtrusive means.

A number of video recordings were available and a corpus for analysis was selected on the basis of the following criteria.

**Criteria & Constraints of Selection of Texts for Analysis**

A large number of videoed texts were previewed and texts were arranged into the three widely practised types of seminar events differentiated by general situational features such as participants, roles and setting. Texts from among the three general types, or subgenres, were then selected.

From among the three groups of texts, texts of good visual and sound quality throughout and which had not been cut before the natural end of the seminar were preferred.

A further consideration was that the corpus should cover the three subgenres (student-presentation, outside-expert presentation and non-presentation group discussion) and for each subgenre approximately 10,000 words of recording of the discussion phrase was used for the analysis. Due to the differing lengths of the discussion period in the three subgenres, this led to the selection of varying numbers of texts selected from each type, e.g. 4 for subgenre A and 10 subgenre B.

The texts were derived as far as possible from a range of classes and instructors. Texts were selected, therefore, to reflect this diversity. There were some limitations to the fulfilment of this criterion due to constraints on the availability of recordings. For example, non-presentation seminars are generally considered to be of limited interest to distance learners on the MBA programme and therefore, fewer texts were available.

It was felt that in as many cases as possible the whole discussion stage of the seminar should be analysed rather than parts. This was possible in the cases of student presentations and in three of the discussions following presentations by outside experts. In these cases the discussion was limited in duration. However, in the other instances this was not possible as sessions lasted two or more hours. Therefore the initial section of the text was selected. A cut off point was made when an exchange was completed and on the beginning of a new exchange (according to the criteria proposed in Chapter Five).

The following tables record the texts used for the analysis of language are given. The texts were from classes held in the period 1990-93. The number of words refers to the number of words in the discussion period (not including the presentation) which were transcribed and used for the analysis.

Table 1a: Texts of discussion following presentations by outside speakers

| Text | Course | Approx. no. words |
|------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | international marketing | 2030 |
| 2 | environment of business | 2940 |
| 3 | strategic management | 2560 |
| 4 | strategic management | 2730 |
| | | 10260 |

Table 1b: Data from Turkish University. Texts of discussion following presentations by outside speakers

| | Course | Approx no words |
|------|--------|-----------------|
| 1 | strategic management | 3210 |
| 2 | strategic management | 3940 |
| | | 7150 |

Table 2: Texts of discussion following presentations by students

| Text | Course | Approx.No. Words |
|------|--------|------------------|
| 1 | consumer behaviour | 1000 |
| 2 | consumer behaviour | 1050 |
| 3 | consumer behaviour | 1370 |
| 4 | consumer behaviour | 800 |
| 5 | consumer behaviour | 1000 |
| 6 | international business | 1610 |
| 7 | strategic managament | 1040 |
| 8 | consumer behaviour | 1330 |
| 9 | consumer behaviour | 400 |
| 10 | strategic management | 500 |
| | | 10000 |

Table 3: Texts of non-presentation discussion sessions

| Text | Course | Approx. no. words |
|------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | econ. environ. business | 3740 |
| 2 | innovation | 2440 |
| 3 | innovation | 2170 |
| 4 | econ environ. business | 1740 |
| | | 9820 |

In the first instance, sample texts were roughly analysed for the foci of the research, i.e. exchange patterns and turn constructions. Once patterns began emerging from rough analysis of data, the literature was consulted to identify existing models or descriptions of relevance to the data and research aims. Existing models were then selected from the literature as a starting point for the analysis. Texts were transcribed and analysed in detail for specified features.

### 3.2.1. Transcription

Transcription of a spoken text presents not only practical problems but theoretical ones as well (Stubbs 1983: 227). The main theoretical issue concerns the amount of detail to be included. Van Lier has remarked that the potential for detail in a transcription is endless and that the transcriber must make theoretical decisions about relevance among a myriad of features:

> "The more detail, the less readable the transcript - it may become some abstract confusion of symbols, decipherable only by its creator - the less detail, the greater the likelihood that important information may be missed. There is no solution to this problem: the transcriber opts for some reasonable balance between accuracy and simplicity, and must be prepared to defend that balance."

(1988: 80)

The process of producing a transcription of a spoken text is, therefore, a theoretical issue with the transcriber constantly in the process of deciding what is relevant and what is not, e.g. Why is a word more important in terms of discourse function than a cough or a gaze? This section of the thesis will account for the decisions taken in the study concerning selection of features to be transcribed and will outline the selection of symbols and conventions used in the transcriptions that were chosen from among the array of transcription conventions and approaches in print, e.g. Schiffrin (1994: 422-433), van Lier (1988 243-244) and Roger & Bull (1989: 141-149).

Van Lier (op cit.) argues that the transcriber must opt for a balance of simplicity and accuracy. The position taken in the study was that this balance should be determined by consideration of the research questions, the amount of detail they call for and the nature of the spoken

discourse being dealt with. Tracy & Naughton (1994) assert that the appropriate level to transcribe is always dependent on a particular study's aim. Given that the research interest in the study was on identifying exchange patterns, moves and components within turns, transcription was made at an intermediate level of detail. This included the words that were said, partial formulations and overlaps but did not include pronunciation peculiarities or intonational stresses.

The scheme proposed by van Lier 1988 was partially adopted during transcription. The minimal requirement advocated by van Lier is that the transcribed text record "All that was said and by whom." This was seen as entirely appropriate to the research aims. The discussion text was transcribed until the end or cut-off point. Exceptions to this were fragments which were too acoustically poor for transcription and these are marked as (xxx). In most cases these parts were a few seconds. Speakers were recorded using the symbols S1, S2, etc. at the beginning of turns to indicate the different participants who contributed to the discussions. The actual words spoken were recorded, but not intonational features or paralinguistic features, such as gestures or gaze. These were clearly feature of interaction in seminars but due to the need to limit the research to feasible parameters and the fact that only some of the paralinguistic features had been recorded on the videos, these aspects were not transcribed.

It was not considered important to record the speakers' exact pronunciation of those words such as lengthening, e.g. *the:::.* . Words were recorded in standard English spelling, although certain phonological variations were, of course, present. However, due to the quantity of spoken text transcribed and the decision that the research should be limited to verbal but not paralinguistic features these variations were not recorded..

Overlaps were recorded by using the symbol \\ to indicate where a speaker takes a turn from another before completion or overlap begins. Overlapping parts are presented in the transcriptions as parallel to each other. Two examples illustrate this:

1.
S1 That's what we were trying to do \\
T                                              \\ Right and what was the reason for that?

.
S1 That's what we were trying \\ to do
T                                              \\ Right and what was the reason for that?

(fabricated examples)


Turns that started simultaneously are marked with the bracket symbol ({). It was decided not to mark *latched* utterances. The term *latched* is used in the literature to refer to a second turn occurring with no pause after the first (Hatch 1992: 7). The study was not concerned with turn taking and therefore, transcription of this feature was considered unnecessary. Noticeable pauses are marked with the symbol + . If this pause occurs between turns, the symbol is placed at the end of the speaker's turn preceding the pause.


One of the salient features of seminar interaction is the considerable length of many turns. As a result of this length during one turn there may be a number of back-channelling realisations such as *Yes, Hmm* etc. as well as attempts by other speakers to take the floor with verbal means. Non-verbal means of attempting to take the floor had only been partially recorded by the videos and non-verbal attempts were not recorded in the transcriptions. Back-channelling and unsuccessful verbal attempts to take the floor were recorded by inserting them in brackets into the transcription of the turn in progress. This is not to the best of my knowledge a recognised transcription convention. However, as turns in academic discussion are often long, this procedure allowed the turns to still appear as wholes and facilitated analysis of the exchanges.


Example from data:

S2 We were not interested in the profit made because of the low income generating practice of (T Right) and what they reported was (S3 What I ) that there were higher returns in the public sector than =====


Another symbol used in the transcriptions is, ====== which indicates that the spoken text continues but has not been transcribed. This was used in the transcriptions when the tape had

The same symbol is also used in the chapters of analysis (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) to indicate that the transcription continued but is not pertinent to the point of the discussion.

It has been said that transcriptions are never finished but they are abandoned (Hopper 1989: 55). Each time the transcriber returns to a text differences come to light. However, there must be an end to the process of transcription. In the study each video text was double checked with the transcriptions and the transcriptions modified. On page 347 of the appendix an example of analysis is given as illustration of transcription and analysis of categories assigned in accordance with the model suggested by the study.

### 3.2.2. Analysis and Model Building
### Theoretical and methodological precepts

In this section, the assumptions and theoretical precepts underlying the analysis of the language data will be described. This entails the stating of assumptions made and the description of the theoretical basis of the constructs which are used as the departure points for analysis and model building. The latter involves the explanation of the notions of exchange structure, discourse acts and conversational strategies.

A number of assumptions are made in the study. It is assumed that exchange structures, discourse acts and strategies are aspects of interaction that are relevant to pedagogic descriptions and syllabus design and that there are a restricted number of these features typically used in seminars. Structures are viewed as message-oriented and concerned with the *ends* of interaction, i.e. what can be done by those involved in this sort of event. Strategies, on the other hand, are conceptualised as essentially listener-oriented and concerned with the *means* of interactional work, i.e. ways to achieve the ends other than simply and directly. The position is taken that a central feature of seminar and discussion is the expectation and desire for student-initiated interaction. Therefore, the study focuses particularly on patterns and features in student-driven interaction, rather than tutor talk.

Structure is examined firstly by means of an exchange model of interaction developed at Birmingham University (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Coulthard & Brazil 1992). In the structure of interaction the exchange is seen as the basic unit and is the level of structure essentially concerned with the transmission of information. Exchanges are made up of two or more moves by alternate speakers, and interactants initiate exchanges to achieve some result concerned with the transmission of information. Interactional structure is viewed as hierarchical: exchanges are comprised of moves and moves of acts. The discussion section of a seminar is viewed in the study as a series of exchanges and no higher hierarchical levels are sought.

A central notion used in discussing structure is that of prospectiveness, i.e. identification of elements of structure in terms of what they augur for the following slot of exchange. In brief, the notion of prospectiveness means that utterances are classified according to the discourse act that they prospect. A further notion in this framework is that when a move is made up of more than one act, one of the acts is the main act or *head* and it is this act which carries the discourse function of the entire move. The other acts are optional elements and variously precede or follow the head act.

Structure is examined secondly by means of characterisation of discourse acts within moves that are interactionally significant, i.e. the acts that shape the following or respond to the preceding move by another interactant, the non-optional elements. As a point of departure, acts are investigated in line with the viewpoint of them held by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Tsui (1994: 9) compares their conceptualisation of act to that of Speech Act Theory. According to Sinclair & Coulthard *act* is a discourse unit and is characterised by its function in the discourse, what might be expected to precede or follow it and its location in a move. This view contrasts with the concept proposed by Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962) in which *act* denotes the action that is achieved in the making of an utterance and can be determined by consideration of the meaning of the words, structure of the utterance and psychological frame of mind of the speaker.

Strategies are viewed as being operated on conscious and also on unconscious levels and much strategic use of language is concerned with making message content less simple and direct. The theoretical underpinning of the analysis of the latter is the view that the primary motivation for such strategic language use is concern for *face*, both the concern of speaker for his or her own face and for that of the other interacting(s). The term *face* was coined by Goffman (1976) and has been widely used in the literature (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987, Edmondson 1981a) to refer to the notion that a major consideration in an interactant's choice of language and interactional activity is to maintain his or her own and others self-esteem and to avoid 'losing face'. Within this overview of strategic behaviour, a combination of two approaches is used to account for features and components within turns in discussion: notions from the field of pragmatics regarding discrete items, such as hedging (e.g. Lakoff 1973, Prince, Frader et al. 1982, Rounds 1982) and conventionalised routines (e.g. Coulmas 1981, Stubbs 1986) and, secondly, frameworks based on the Sinclair & Coulthard approach to spoken discourse analysis (op cit.) which account for the build up of informing acts (e.g. Montgomery 1977, Burton 1981).

A methodological principle in the study is that modelling should be derived from close examination of texts but guided by existing frameworks such as those mentioned above. This may seem somewhat self-contradicting. Theory building is often presented as either an inductive or deductive process. For example, Pedhazur & Schelkin (1991: 184) describe theorising as either theory testing or post hoc theorising. Seliger & Shohamy (1989: 29-32) separate research having heuristic, hypothesis generating objectives from research that is deductive and hypothesis testing. Babbie (1989: 44) points out, however, that in actual practice theory and research interact through a "never ending alternation of deduction, induction, deduction and so forth" and this methodological principle is adopted in the major framework building objective of the study.

In regard to the comparison of subgenres, the studies aims to see whether there is variation in the incidence of the discourse features focused on in the study between the subgenres.

### 3.3 Summary

The chapter has specified the nature of the research and given details of the methods, data and procedures used in analysis and modelling. The research has been described as descriptive and construct-building. The study has a mainly qualitative thrust which is to bring to light patterns and features of the discourse of seminar discussion. The research also incorporates a quantitative dimension in that the incidence of patterns and features are surveyed across three subgenres of seminar discussion.

The decision-making which shaped the research in the initial stages, such as delineation of events for investigation, was recorded to account for the direction that the research took and the sources of data used. The data source was described. Finally, the theoretical approaches underlying the analysis of the spoken data were described and the constructs which are used as the springboards for analysis outlined.

## Chapter Four
## Context of Seminar Discussion

"Discourse, taken .... as a phenomenon of cultural intercourse cannot
be understood independently of the social situation that engendered it."

(Volosinov 1926: 8)

## 4.0 Introduction

Seminar and discussion classes take place against a backdrop of expectations, experiences and practices. This chapter starts by briefly outlining the general practice of seminar and discussion classes on the MBA programme at Aston University. This programme is the major source of texts used for the analysis of language in the following three chapters of the thesis. Secondly, the values or outcomes ascribed to these events by both staff and course members is examined in the light of interviews. Swales (1985: 219) argues the need for thick descriptions of communication practices in their environments and says,

> " .. it is not only texts that we need to understand, but the roles texts have in their
> environments; the values, congruent and conflictive, placed upon them by occupational,
> professional and disciplinary memberships; and the expectations those memberships have
> of the patternings of the genres they participate in."

## 4.1 Overview of Seminar Discussion Classes on the MBA Programme

'Seminar' is a term commonly used term in Higher Education. It covers quite distinct events. From observations of classes in UK and in Turkey and from the literature on instructional practice in Higher Education (see Chapter Two), it was found that a number of different types of classes could be covered by this term. There are classes involving presentations and classes that do not. Among the former, there are classes such as the graduate research report, research reports by academicians targeted primarily at other academicians, student paper presentations, student case or project presentations and presentations by guest speakers from outside the university. Non-presentation discussion classes include tutorials, classes where students discuss articles or questions prepared prior to the class and classes based on general discussion.

In the MBA department at Aston university, three subgenres of seminar discussion were selected for intensive study in the thesis: presentation by an outside speaker followed by discussion, student case study presentations followed by discussion and lastly, tutorials. Modules vary in respect to the use of these modes of instruction.

Based on interviews and observations, a brief outline is given in the remainder of this section of the general practice of these three types of event on the MBA programme at Aston university.

Outside speakers, such as leading business people are invited to make a presentation to students. It is hoped that these events enable course members to link the theory of business management with practice in the field. The topics of the presentations generally concern applications of business theory, e.g. the application of 'worker empowerment' in the speaker's company. In terms of event structure, the speaker is formally introduced, the presentation is given (generally without interruptions) and this is followed by a 'question and answer' session directed by the outside speaker. Finally, the seminar is rounded off with the tutor thanking the speaker and clapping. The discussion section following on from four such presentations form part of the corpus of texts for the study of discourse in the thesis. Discussion sections following presentations by outside speakers are referred to as subgenre A texts.

Another common event on the MBA programme is the case study discussion class. The two main methods of dealing with case studies at Aston are: 1) groups prepare the case and the tutor questions the groups and 2) students present the case in class and this is followed by questions and answers from the floor. This study looks at the latter type of event. Ten texts showing discussion following student case study presentations form the second strand of the corpus. Generally the cases studies are presented by two or more members of the case study group. This varies, however. In two of the presentations preceding the discussion texts in the study's corpus, a spokesperson presented the case on behalf of the group. The discussions

following the presentations are conducted by the presenters themselves. Tutors on this MBA programme tend to stay on the outside of the discussion but there are points in some of the discussions when the tutors join in, e.g. to give some information or briefly to lead the discussion. In one of the events recorded and used in the corpus, the tutor takes control completely of the discussion following the presentation. The discussions generally finish when there are no further questions forthcoming from the audience. The session is declared over by either the presenters or the tutor, e.g. "That's it " or "Right would the other group like to....? Some, but not all the discussions are rounded off with clapping. Texts of the discussions following presentations by students are referred to as subgenre B texts in the study.

Thirdly, there are discussion classes which do not involve presentations. Often these are often called tutorials or group discussions and may be based on discussion of some material prepared by the course members prior or during the class. This may be articles or course notes that have been read or questions that are to be answered. In these classes, it is often the tutor who leads the discussion and has a rough agenda which is expressed through the sequence of topics through which the tutor guides the class. Texts of discussion in such classes are referred to as subgenre C texts in the study.

The numbers of students in presentation events by outside speakers and students vary widely. In some sessions there are a handful of students whilst in others numbers can be over forty. In the tutorials, the class size in generally smaller, e.g. three to twelve.

## 4.2 Staff and Course Members' Views

Interviews

A small number of tutors (Ts) and course members (CMs) involved with the Aston MBA programme were interviewed to gain insight into the values and perceptions they give to these events and to find out, as Neuman (1991: 328) says, "... how they define the situation, or what it means for them and what they think they do." The interviews were fairly informal. They involved a schedule of topics that the interviewer wished to cover with the aim of finding out how faculty and course members defined and experienced discussion in these classes. Also of interest was any information that interviewees gave concerning the use of language in such discussion.

Five tutors and nine students were interviewed. The ages of the students ranged between twenty-two and thirty-five reflecting the course's uptake among pre-experience and post experience participants. Three of the nine were overseas students, again reflecting the course's uptake among students from within and outside UK. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in an abridged form (see appendix). The interviews with staff lasted approximately 25 minutes. Those with students were shorter and varied in length according to the amount of ideas or interest the interviewees had on the subjects.

The topics on the interview schedule were:

- types of discussion classes the respondents were involved in
- purposes and values of discussions in classes
- nature of course members' contributions to discussion
- tutor's role (tutors asked only)
- participation

In addition, tutors, were asked about their perceptions of the non-native speakers on their courses.

Some difficulty was experienced in gathering respondents' ideas on what goes on in seminars and why they are held. It was felt that this difficulty stemmed from the fact that modes of instruction and verbal activities in them are subjects that participants are not very conscious of. This kind of problem was experienced by Cooper (1983) in interviewing a college professor about specific interactions and by Reed and Lemonier (1993) in their investigation into the nature of involvement in academic tasks. To compensate for the problem, Reed and Lemonier preceded the interviews with a definition of involvement to "ensure that each interviewee had a general idea of the construct as it pertained to the interview." This step was followed prior to the interviews at Aston University to focus respondents. I explained that I was looking at discussion in classes, especially discussion following presentations and in tutorials/group discussion classes. I explained that by discussion I meant students speaking to each other in interactive situations, etc.

The following section reports on findings from the interviews.

• *The types of discussion classes the interviewees were involved in*

Tutors

Four of the five tutors reported using student case study presentations followed by class discussions on their courses. On two of the courses, such sessions were held weekly with the exceptions of the first and final weeks. One tutor (T2) reported that the case study method is the "core teaching method" on a MBA programme. One tutor did not use this method and reported that his subject area was "very theoretical."

Three of the five tutors reported having presentations by outside speakers on their courses. No regularity was reported concerning the frequency of such events.

In regard to non-presentation discussion sessions, two of the tutors (T1 & T5) reported having tutorial sessions. Both described them as 'plenary tutorials' which tend to be held towards the end of course. One tutor had held three in the last course. The other said that such sessions were held before exams but added that in each lecture session "in principle we have a

discussion part." One other tutor, (T3), explained that in a three hour class, the first hour was given over to lecture, in the second hour the class breaks into groups for discussion and in the third hour there are case study presentations. A further tutor, (T2), reported that often classes include a spontaneous discussion section in which students start to ask questions and discuss issues arising from material and lectures.

## Course Members

All the course members reported attending student case study presentation sessions and presentations by outside speakers. None of the students interviewed had been involved in courses involving classes specifically named 'tutorials' although they talked about classes that involved discussion sessions.

- *The value of classes involving discussion*

The tutors were all of the opinion that classes based on or involving discussion were very important. Two compared discussion classes to lectures:

> T4 "(in discussions) students actively use their brains to process ideas and information, to get it to stay there. That's the problem with lectures. Active involvement through thinking and speech. People expressing things and then being contested by others is a more accurate process of learning."

> T5 "The more chance they have to talk the better. Lectures are very big groups so I try to have different patterns of organisation and smaller groups."

The primary value of discussion was seen by the tutors in terms of learning benefits. However, two tutors also stressed the psychological value that speaking in public offers students. For example:

> T2 "The benefit of doing that, they gain self-confidence, psychological aspect as well as gaining the knowledge they need"

There was a good deal of consensus among the faculty on the learning values of discussion in instruction. Discussion was commonly perceived as valuable in three ways: 1. in facilitating the application of theory to practice 2. in helping students gain better understanding through

their active use of ideas/material and 3. in helping students get an overview of different perspectives. Some examples of the terms the tutors used are given:

T1
"application of theory to problems", "only time when some of the aha effect takes place" "experience using ideas", "gaining insights"

T2
"seeking more than that (information) they are actually seeking understanding of how a decision is made," "students need to get an overview factor and see all alternatives"

T3
"It's all about the ability to interpret empirical evidence in relation to theoretical ideas," "active involvement through thinking and speech," "recognising alternative sets of choices"

T4
"meshing theory and reality," "using material and therefore internalising and thus learning the material," "different insights - I hadn't thought of it like that"

T5
"important for students to apply their knowledge to some problem," "way to improve understanding of concepts, issues"

In addition to these three central values, the tutors perceived some benefits related to specific types of discussion classes. With both outside speaker and student presentations the value of the event was seen as depending on the quality of the presentation itself. The value of the outside speaker event was seen as "exposing students to someone with a great deal of credibility... and real life events which they can then relate to other aspects of the course" (T2). They were seen as valuable because the talks address particular topics (T5).

The case study presentation was felt to be valuable in that it mirrors workplace experience in terms of making presentations and discussions, e.g. (T2) "... it's more in line with their work experience which is to discuss things with colleagues" and (T3) "helping students develop appropriate skills that will be useful to them after they graduate. Then you enter the business of communicating..." Three tutors pointed to the post-case study discussion's value in getting students to contribute input. For example: (T2) "course members can contribute and share their experiences", and (T4) "students bring inputs from reality (own work experiences )."

One tutor, T3, clearly saw the presentation section of the session as a means to discussion:

"Discussion needs a structure. (presentation) partially a ritual to get the thing (discussion) going."

Tutorials and discussion slots within long sessions were perceived to have remedial and clarifying values. They function as the means for students to air difficulties arising from lectures or materials and also for tutors to identify the problems course members may be experiencing. Consequently, the tutors reported that the tutorials/discussion slots do not involve new information. T5, for example, felt that tutorials were "extremely important to students....I imagine they clarify much of the stuff of the courses and they are revision sessions" and T3 said, "If you didn't have any discussion it would leave it (the session) in a rather a confused state. So the discussion actually clarifies the main lesson."

Course Members

Unsurprisingly, student opinions to the values of discussion classes were rather meagre compared to those of tutors.

Discussion in class was generally seen as useful by course members. In classes involving presentations, some students agreed with tutors that the usefulness hinged on the quality of the presentation itself, e.g. (CM9) "Yes (useful) if the speaker has got something relevant to tell you. Some are egos on wheels. I did. I am." Compared to the tutors, course members put more emphasis on gathering information in cases studies and discussion sessions, e.g. "I learn how to get information from someone" (CM 7), "to get knowledge from others" (CM2), and CM8 felt that you get twice as much information when you ask questions compared to when you just listen. This mismatch concerning student and staff views of the case study method had been pinpointed by one of the tutors who said, "(the course members) are mainly there to understand principles and processes not facts .... there is a mismatch - they don't understand that they need to improve their understanding" (T2).

Only one student, (CM6) recognised the use of presentations in stimulating discussion and reported that discussion is "to get away from hard written facts ..so that people knock around ideas."

• *The nature of course members' contributions to discussion*

Tutors

Tutor's defined course members' roles in discussion classes mainly in terms of their *asking questions* and *making contributions* and this was seen as proactive, e.g. (T4) "The ones more likely to contribute..", (T1) "...very participative, people prepared to produce an alternative..", (T2) " ... they choose to ask questions....."

There was again a good deal of consensus among the tutors about the nature of student questions or contributions. One dichotomy pointed out was between simple factual question and 'more useful' questions. Simple factual questions were seen as those that request basic information. 'More useful' questions were seen as questions seeking deeper understanding of processes or critical points. Specific terms used by tutors in the interviews to refer to students' verbal contributions were: *checking views, criticising, challenging, suggesting alternatives, simple requests for factual information, requests for clarification, seeking understanding, adding, raising critical issues, pointing out omissions* and *confronting*.

Tutors had mixed feelings on the subject of critical comments or questions by students. Although critical debate was appreciated by all the staff, four of them felt that there was concurrently a need for it to be handled carefully and a danger of it leading to destructive or valueless interchange. What is sought is "healthy criticism" (T1) or "constructive criticism" (T3) but not just simple contestation (T4):

> "It's very easy to sit there and say *Oh that was all rubbish*, which is very deflating for people who present but it doesn't actually move things forward. Constructive criticism would be something like - *While we agree* .... so that you are actually moving forward." (T3)

> "I'm not looking for sharp conflict ... it can very often just be a contestation... which doesn't get us anywhere" (T4)

A good discussion was seen as one involving students in challenging what had been said. However, tutors recognised the interpersonal concerns that affect such interaction:

> T5 ".. they are not such a disputatious lot ... say *Well it's going to be my turn next and I don't want anyone to be too tough on me.*"

> T3 "tend to be sympathetic because they know their turn will come and so they're not usually aggressive ... generally very supportive."

Two of the tutors gave examples of the kind of critical type questions/contributions they expect students to make. The examples show a use of language that is quite indirect:

> T1 *"Why I don't understand that... I think it seems to me that's it's perhaps rather over-complicated. We could do this in a simpler way."*

> T3 *"You say it proves this but actually isn't there some other evidence that might suggest this approach...?"*

## Course Members

Course members offered interpretations of what they saw as the functions of questions and contributions in discussion and these included recollections of the motivations behind the questions they had asked themselves. Similarly to tutors, some students mentioned factual questions and others that were more varied, such as raising critical points, indications of omissions and questions seeking a deeper understanding. Course members, proffered some additional motivations, such as 'testing questions.' Below are the terms they used to refer to questions and contributions.

> CM1 asking for more information, if they'd forgotten something (omissions), criticisms.

> CM2 would like more detail, clarification of a point, to understand why people say that... to see their consideration..

> CM3 raise the point, talking about own experiences.

> CM4 asking about comparison, to know about the books used, to make them (presenters) think, introducing something.

> CM5 getting back at you questions, factual questions, disagreeing.

CM6 testing you questions, to get specific details.

CM7 to bring out information, to try to understand better, tell their own story *But in real life* .., questions expecting a factual and a right answer.

CM8 asking for definitions and examples, asking for justification of points, asking about experiences

CM9 highlighting an area they (presenters) hadn't gone into, naf questions (with an obvious answer), intelligent questions ( without an obvious answer)

Although the students acknowledged the critical function behind a number of contributions, feelings were mixed as to whether the tone of criticism was too sharp.

CM1 Not nice questions. I wouldn't (ask) because I wouldn't like to be criticised... I think people are too aggressive"

CM 5 "Some of them are useful questions and some of them are getting back at you questions"

CM 9 "Very few students would attack another student doing a presentation - less aggressive disagreement"

The tutors did not talk about the development of interchanges once a question/comments had been made. However, three students expressed the idea that debate tended to be limited and doesn't develop far. CM3, for example, reported that if she disagreed, she would "raise the point" and listen to the answer but not go any further with it into confrontation or a "match." Two students felt that interchanges are necessarily short because one side has more knowledge: CM2 said, "the class haven't got enough knowledge to maintain a discussion" and CM4 stated, "The problem is it is often like introducing something. You don't have the basis or the knowledge to take your point any further."

The softened tone of dispute recognised by tutors was also identified by students and two proffered examples of indirect 'critical' comments or questions, e.g. CM3 "... not to disagree just say *Well perhaps you could have looked at it differently*" and CM9, "If they disagreed they would say *Have you considered this aspect or that aspect rather than say in my experience that doesn't work it isn't practical or whatever.*"

Only one tutor had commented on the difference between student contributions in discussions with outside presenters as opposed to student presenters. T5 had felt that questions to outside speakers were "more respectful." Course members, however, had more developed ideas on this subject. CM8 said that the interaction was "a lot different ... based on the presenter's experience *How did you? Give us your reasons.*" CM9 felt that the course members "made more of an effort" in discussion following a presentation by an outside speaker and CM7 said:

> "The difference when you are asking a question to a student is you're not expecting him to give you a very factual and right answer... But when a person from industry comes ..... we ask in a different way .... (and) he would answer the question more positively and precisely and we take his word for it."

- *Tutor's role*

In defining their roles in discussion classes a number of common key points were mentioned by the tutors. They were: standing back, stage managing, controlling and information giving.

The common perspective (4 out the five) was tutors preferred not be at the centre of discussion events but welcomed opportunities to stand back and let the students get on with the discussion. The events call for students to take the reins whenever possible:

> T1 Clearly I depend on them... ... I would be delighted to sit there and see them sorting out their own (debate)
>
> T2 I often sit at the back and refuse to say anything when they've finished to force someone else to say something
>
> T3 I try not to dominate ... I don't like to come in with statements until much later
>
> T4 I say *Over to you* ... I stand back

In non-presentation discussion, less of a standing back role was described and, although desirable, was less reality than the ideal: "I can certainly recall situations when they start to debate among themselves though I think it's quite unusual" (T1).

Tutors recognised that they needed to balance this 'standing back' role with the role of stage managing events. Two tutors defined one of their roles as *facilitator* and one as a *referee* and the one who sets up the *ground rules*. The facilitator role was seen in terms of encouraging students to give ideas and organising the proceedings.

Tutors talked of intervention. In regard to the discussion following student case study presentations, T3 said "..I do intervene ... I give it a stir." Generally in such events, the aim was to get as much interaction as possible among the class and then to come in at appropriate points. These points were seen as "..If I feel there's a drift" (T3) and T2 felt that the appropriate point to intervene was towards the end.

Despite the preference for standing back in discussion, four of the tutors expressed the need to sometimes take more of a controlling role: (T4) "I know some tutors don't like free-wheeling in the sense that some of them feel it can get out of control" and (T1)

".. you'd have to be careful not to let it go out of control." In particular, tutors felt they needed to be firm in matters of participation: (T5) "I have to be quite firm to let other people have a chance" and (T4) "It's a situation where you have to be able to shut up some individual."

The tutors defined their primary role as facilitating or stage managing discussion. Four tutors saw a secondary role of giving input at key points. For example, T1 spoke of his role in explaining ideas to make them more "tangible" and T3 said when "areas are not adequately expressed, I would then start to insert interpretations." Information giving in discussion was seen as very much a remedial strategy: one tutor reported making notes on mistakes and then "bringing it out later," another (T2) on intervening just before the end of the discussion following a presentation and T3 reported that, "I don't like to come in with a statement till much later because it's not an exploratory thing if you do that."

• *Participation*

All tutors identified inequality in the distribution of participation and felt that it was a cause of concern. The divide between those who tend to participate a lot and those that tend not to participate was commented on. Four tutors mentioned taking positive action to deal with it. The comments of two of the these tutors are given as:

> T1
> ". it is always the case that in large groups we get a very small percentage who are active participators."
> " So one of the things I do (with quiet students) which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't work is I positively ask people to come in and so I put a question and I say *What do you think?*"
>
> T5 ".. there is always a big difference (in distribution of participation). There are some who are very keen to participate .... There are always some who would rather be invisible."
> "I try to get as many people involved as possible so it's not just one person."
> "Well I somehow feel that everyone ought to say something right or wrong. So I try to get everyone to say at least something."

In identifying those who participate and those who do not, staff stressed the need for caution in generalising. However, they proffered tentative explanations of why they felt some students participated less based on their experiences. Three common perceptions of factors fostering or hindering participation were personality, cultural/non-native speaker and maturity/experience factors. The staff emphasised that this area is one in which it is necessary to talk in terms of tendencies, not absolutes and to talk of experiences not generalisations.

The tutors all recalled personality factors which in their experience had hindered more active participation. The personality factor was variously explained as diffidence, deferential character more or less confidence, etc.

The difficulty in isolating factors was, however, stressed by the staff with the concomitant need to avoid simplification of a complex issue. This view is reflected in the exchange in example 1 and the views of another tutor in example 2.

example 1
T2 ... instead of just relying on the vocal ones in class.

I: Who are the vocal ones?

T Well it obviously depends from year to year. I don't know whether they have any particular characteristics. Age and experience by themselves don't guarantee it. The course members from the Far East tend not to be because of their cultural background and their tendency to be receivers and acceptors of information. So they tend to be home students rather than overseas students. That's a bit of a generalisation and they tend to be of a certain extrovert character.

example 2
T1 ".. you don't know whether they are quiet because that is what they normally are and therefore, they might be understanding everything - just in class don't contribute. That's one case or they're quiet because they haven't understood a single thing and are getting totally out of depth."

In regard to the cultural/non-native speaker factor three tutors felt that cultural identity and three felt that language proficiency were obstacles to active participation. Again, tutors expressed concern about the dangers of making simplistic generalisations on this topic. T1 had noticed the reluctance of Chinese students to ask questions and that non-native speakers "sometimes students who have great difficulty in explaining themselves.... (and) in speaking they have tremendous difficulties and you have difficulties understanding their questions." However, he reported that such cases are exceptional.

T2 thought that different views of the role of students in Far Eastern cultures explained the reluctance of such students to participate actively. When asked about non-native speakers, the tutor felt that some of them experienced language problems particularly in "spoken delivery."

T3 spoke of variation among national groups. The French exchange students were reported as having good conversational skills. Some Asian students had been observed to have difficulties in discussions, others, however, were highly articulate. A lack of language proficiency in itself was not the over-riding barrier to communication. What was important in discussion was more to do with having good ideas and 'communication skills.'

(T3) "... one has got to be very cautious about generalising because some are highly articulate. So you can't generalise in terms of national types but there is variation in terms of their ability to participate and its not linked simply to how perfect their English is. It's also just as much about whether they are thinking clearly and whether they have

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communication skills and I think what I am saying is with interesting ideas and reasonable communication skills that can easily compensate for shortcomings in their spoken English."

The fourth staff interviewee felt that language or cultural factors may form a partial explanation of why some students participate less. The interviewee felt that the issue of low participation was a complex one of intertwined factors:

"In the past some people have said *Do you find that people for whom English is not their first language are less likely to contribute?* And that isn't necessarily true. There are some people who have excellent English in a one to one conversation who may still be reluctant to contribute. That might in part be a cultural thing .... It might be just the individual personality. It might also be their level of understanding. .... We certainly have students whose spoken English may not be excellent but who have been keen to try and make an appropriate contribution. It's obviously the other factors are pushing them to make the contribution rather than holding them back."

Maturity and work-related experience, such as addressing groups, were identified by three tutors as factors making for participation. The first interviewee reported, "Normally with mature students, with part-time students you tend to have more participation. With younger students you tend to have more constraints" (T1).

In addition to the above factors that were the perceptions of a number of the tutors, other factors mentioned by tutors as making for or hindering participation were: being prepared for class, level of understanding, group dynamics, feeling at ease, dismissive tutor comments, interest in topic and anxiety about tutor evaluation.

From the survey of staff perceptions on participation in discussion in classes, the overall picture of staff perceptions that emerges is:

1. There tends to be an active minority and quiet majority in seminar discussions.

2. Confident, outgoing personality and maturity/work experience are factors making for participation.

3. Culture/non-native speaker language factors may be barriers to participation if coinciding with other factors such as personality variables for certain cultural groups.

Course Members

There were similarities in the views of course members compared to tutors. Similarly to the tutors, a number of the students (x6) recognised that there were those who tend to participate a lot and those who hardly ever do so. Similarly to the tutors, work experience (x3) and personality factors (x6) were suggested as factors in this issue. However, an additional factor expressed by a number of the course members was that of evaluation by others, especially by the tutor.

Seven of the students related amount of participation to perceptions of being evaluated by others. For example CM5 reported that the reason for some contributions to class discussion as, "... it's about face, about being noticed and known." The view was expressed by a number of respondents that being evaluated by tutors leads to making contributions to get noticed. The following examples illustrate this.

> example 1
> CM5 "I think it may actually sway their (tutors') decisions on somethings. If they see that you participate and that you come up with the goods, for instance ... innovative ways then I do think they see you in a different light."
>
> example 2
> CM8 "... if I didn't it would count as a black mark against me..."
>
> CM8 "I feel it's an intangible grade. I mean towards the second term I was asking basically foolish questions."
>
> example 3
> I There's a grade for participation?
>
> CM9 Not to my knowledge but I think lecturers form an impression of people from the interaction. They remember people who ask questions and they remember those that ask sort of perceptive questions and I think that can influence anyone's perspective of you.."

On the other hand, two students (Cm3 and CM7) felt that tutor evaluation was a hindrance to participation. CM7 stated,

> CM7 " I think it's too stupid to ask in class. I should have known it sort of thing. or sometimes it's just going to waste a lot of time .... For example, if you ask a very basic question, the lecturer may say *Don't you understand that?*"

Only one student (CM1) expressed the opinion that it was not important for the tutor's who participated:

> I Is it important for the tutors who talks?
>
> S I don't think so. I don't think they keep a diary or you get better grades or anything."

Of the six home students interviewed, two recognised that language difficulties were a hindrance for the overseas students. CM7 had noticed that students from abroad "cannot ask a question immediately. That's why sometimes there's a rush of students when the lecture is finished."

Strong opinions were held by the three overseas students interviewed that language was a barrier to their participating fully in class discussions. Whereas tutors had felt that language was one among many factors and that this was only true for some or a minority of overseas students, all three overseas students felt that it was a fundamental issue. Two tutors had felt that overseas students from France were good at communicating in speaking. The interviewees were all French and felt they had problems. Not surprisingly, it was mainly the spoken production of overseas students which had drawn the attention of the tutors. Yet, in the interviews, one of the French students commented also on receptive difficulties. The following are the comments of the students offering their perspectives of language difficulties in seminar interaction.

> CM 2 "I'm more quiet, certainly it's because I'm foreign. It's not easy to talk in English ... you wanted to say something but you've got no time."
>
> CM 3 "I am quiet because I am the only foreign student in my class. So compared to the other students I don't participate a lot. I raise one point, ask one question that is all."
>
> " I would say sometimes, especially when you are a foreigner you are afraid they already answered the question but you didn't hear, didn't understand. If I ask the question, they are going just going to say *Well I already answered it*. It happened to me. I used to interact a lot in the discussions in the lectures. It happened once that he said *Well that's what I said before* OK I was listening and I missed the point."

CM4 "I used to ask some questions I mean comparing with the other French people because we are 12. I used to be the one who asked the most questions. Just because you know I felt at ease speaking in front of other people....... And sometimes it wasn't my questions. Sometimes Silvie was quite shy and was saying *could you ask that?* So I just asked."

What is clear form the above comments is that the overseas students feel that language is an obstacle to benefiting fully in discussion. It may take them too long to formulate a question and they miss their chance or they may fear that they have not been able to follow the discussion well enough to know whether a question has already been asked. The more interactive overseas students may be working on behalf of others.

Individual students mentioned two other reasons hindering participation. They were: being too busy making notes and someone else asking the question the student was going to ask.

Students views on participation converged with staff on two points:

1. There is an active minority and quieter majority.

2. Work experience and personality traits, such as confidence are factors that promote participation.

Two additional insights into the participation issue emerged from interviews with course members:

1. Students feel that tutors are evaluating them in discussion. This both makes for and hinders participation.

2. Overseas students consider themselves to have language difficulties in academic discussions.

### 4.3 Summary

In the first section of Chapter Four, it was seen that in Higher Education there are a number of event types that may go under the name of 'seminar discussion.' These events have some distinct features, such as participant composition, whether there is or is not a presentation, who gives the presentation and procedural variations. Seminar is not a singular entity. Rather

It can be used as an umbrella term for a range of subgenres which involve student discussion but that vary in format. Interviews revealed that these subgenres vary also in terms of some of the purposes held for them by their participants. The three subgenres selected for analysis in following chapters were specified and their typical event structures on the MBA programme were outlined.

The second concern of Chapter Four was to consider the values and experiences of participants in such events and to gain insights into their interpretations. Based on accounts of every day experiences, a picture has been formed of what tends to happen in these events in the specific context of a MBA programme as well as the ideals held for them.

Findings from examination of interviews revealed a number of important aspects of this environment. It was seen that discussions are seen as a valuable mode of instruction and that different subgenres are attributed some specific purposes. In seminar discussion classes there is an expectation for students to actively contribute to the discussion. These contributions are seen in terms of a dichotomy between factual and more 'valuable' questions or comments. Much of the discussion is driven by the active minority of students, the 'vocal ones.' Lastly, interviews revealed some of the interpersonal concerns which may affect interaction, such as worries of tutor evaluation.

# Chapter Five
## Inter-Turn Structure: Exchange Patterns

## 5.0 Introduction

In Chapter One of the thesis it was stated that the first major purpose of the research was to answer the question: *What are the typical patterns of exchange?* This the fifth chapter of the thesis, is concerned with this question and thus with the exposition of basic and extended exchange patterns in seminar discussion. In particular, it focuses on the patterns of exchange set up by student initiations. The following chapter is concerned with an area following on from the identification of moves and exchange patterns, namely, the acts making up student initiations.

The theoretical framework which is the point of departure for the analysis of exchange structure is the approach to spoken discourse analysis used by analysts working within the B(DA) tradition. From this approach the model of exchange structure of Coulthard & Brazil (1992) which was developed from the earlier model of Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) is used as the springboard for the exposition and analysis of discussion discourse. The aim is to establish a framework to account for exchange patternings in seminar discussions. Methodologically this involves a process of moving back and forth between data and the theoretical model of Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.).

The chapter is concerned in the first instance with the means of delineating exchanges. Secondly, moves and recurrent exchanges patternings evident in seminar texts are presented and discussed in juxtaposition to Coulthard and Brazil's model of exchange structure (op cit.). A data specific framework of exchange patterns is proposed for seminars. Thirdly, the incidence of these patterns in three types of seminar discussion and whether there is quantitative variation are investigated. Finally, some examples of tutor-driven and non-led discussion from the corpus are examined.

The identification of exchanges is fundamental to the analysis, and the chapter progresses firstly to discussion of this topic.

## 5.1 Identification of Exchange-Initial Moves

In order to analyse exchange patterns in academic discussion, firstly it is necessary to establish the means whereby exchanges can be identified among the bulk of the text. This section of the chapter explains the framework by which exchange-initial moves are identified in this study and the background to this issue as portrayed in the literature.

### The Concept of Exchange

The notion of the spoken exchange was reviewed in chapter 2.4.2. It will be recalled that in the B(DA) approach the whole text is seen as able to be segmented into exchanges. The exchange is viewed as the unit concerned with the negotiation and transmission of information (Coulthard & Brazil op cit.). Exchanges are made up of moves from different speakers and they are the basic units of interaction. Exchanges are minimally two-part structures: I (initiation) and R (response). The two parts in an exchange are seen as interdependent. The first move *prospects* or augurs the second move and the second move can be identified as what would be expected as following on from the first move. Exchanges are conceptualised as having a basic structure but extensions around this basic structure are possible.

Delineating the exchange and identifying whether a move is exchange-initial can be problematic. A number of means are proposed in the literature and also a number of exchange patternings have been suggested. In the following section these are reviewed and discussed in relation to data from the study.

## Means of Identifying Exchange-Initial Moves

There are a number of means whereby it is possible to identify the start of a new exchange. Although none of them on its own is sufficient, the start of a new exchange can be identified by combinations of these signifiers.

- *Move Type*

A new exchange begins with an initiation and the initiation slot in an exchange may be filled by either an eliciting move or an informing move (Coulthard & Brazil op cit.). However, not every eliciting and informing move heralds a new exchange: an informing move may signify response or an eliciting move may be given in response to an initiation as in the example below:

> X: What's that in the C drive?    (initiation: eliciting move)
> Y: In the what?    (response: eliciting move)
> (fabricated example)

- *Prediction*

Therefore, a new exchange cannot be identified by occurrence of a type of move alone. The start of a new exchange, can be identified by consideration of whether or not its occurrence has been predicted by the preceding element, "an initiation begins anew but sets up an expectation of a response."

| *Predicting* | *Predicted* | *Move Type* |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Initiation |
| No | Yes | Response |

(Coulthard & Brazil 1992: 71)

The extract below illustrates this point and P2's turn is prospected:

> Excerpt A
> S4 Do you think do you think that the going for achievers when they're trying to put across a value for money aspect surely the achievers will be looking for a little more up market [evokes response] ---->

P2 Well even achievers want to have to feel they've spent their money well value for money doesn't necessarily mean cheap it means money has been well spent so even if you're an achiever and you've got lots of money to spend you do want to feel it's being well spent and there's nothing worse than going into a restaurant and feel you're being cheated as I'm sure we all have at one stage or another so value for money doesn't mean like a quick save I get what I pay for
[is a response] <----
(Student presentation text 9)


- *Intelligibility*

A further factor in the identification of an exchange is that of intelligibility. One indication of exchange delineation is that the sequence of turns can be understood independently of any co-text. Stubbs argues that the beginning of an exchange needs to be intelligible (+ initial):

> "An utterance is - initial if its lexis or surface syntax requires to be expanded from preceding utterances, and could not otherwise be understood in isolation ....... (This is) a way of defining the exchange as an information unit, in which major information is introduced and then supported by elliptic syntax in the rest of the exchange"

> (1981: 116).


If the intelligibility of a sequence of turns is dependent on the preceding exchanges they have been termed *bound exchanges*, i.e. they are part of the preceding exchange and not to be identified as fresh interchanges. Hoey provides the following example:

> T What was the name of the boy who found Oliver and took him
>    to Fagin? Come on. (initiation)
>
> P Dodger (response)
>
> T  He was called? (bound initiation)
>
> P Dodger (response)
>
> T Dodger, yes. And Oliver ended up working for Fagin as a    pickpocket
> And that was a story of a little boy who lived in Victorian times.   (follow-up)
>
> (1992: 74)


- *Topic*

Nevertheless, to an extent most interchanges within a spoken text are dependent on the preceding co-text and derive some intelligibility from it. In the previous example, the second initiation is incomprehensible without the prior text, but other examples, especially in

extended discussion, may be less pronounced in this respect. A further means of distinguishing the start of an exchange which will be used in this thesis alongside the other means so far discussed is that of topic change.

Levinson draws attention to the neglect of considerations of topic in models of dialogue. "Consideration of topic raises a very basic issue. In modelling dialogue we are attempting to give an account of what gives cohesion to conversations" (1981: 109). Tapper uses topic in her analysis of exchanges in various classroom situations in tertiary education. She defines an exchange as a sequence of turns and moves by more than one speaker which form a topical unit and states, "on deciding on the boundary of an exchange often the type of move is an indicator, but it is also set by the tone and topic" (1992: 100).

For Burton (1981: 70) the move types indicative of new exchanges are *opening moves* which she defines as "essentially topic-carrying items which are recognisably 'new' in terms of the immediately preceding talk ..... no anaphoric referent in the preceding utterance." According to the means of identification proposed by Burton, S4's second turn in the text below would not constitute an opening move because it contains the anaphoric reference *it*.

> Excerpt B
> T Right value is simply the (S2 Turnover) sales revenue or turnover of cost supported materials and services and how about then the notion of gross domestic product at market prices would you like to
>
> S4 Is it the value of all goods and services produced for the domestic \\ market
>
> T                                                                    \\ Right domestic that's
> right yes
>
> S4 So it's consumers' expenditure and government consumption
>
> T Yes that is the expenditure on the =====
>
> S4 That's including taxes and things like that
> (Non-presentation discussion text 1)

The distinction drawn by Burton concerning anaphoric referents, although intuitively appealing, cannot be applied to seminar discussions. After a presentation first turns by audience members were often found to contain anaphoric references to aspects of the

presentation (as the following excerpt shows) or to some elements in the preceding discussion:

> Excerpt C
> S4 Hm how would it differ between a sort of public limited company a private authority of some sort when the management buy-out is a public authority or some function of a public authority I mean things like NHS (P Yeah) cleaning contracts are currently being bought out by management
>
> P Well the well publicised ones =====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)

Part of the presentation had concerned the process of management buy-outs. S4 uses an anaphoric reference back to this topic to start the turn although the topic is quite distinct from that raised in the previous exchange initiated by another student.)

Newness of topic seems a less problematic means of identification than absence of anaphoric reference or Stubbs' (op cit.) delineation by the criteria of the non-expandability of lexis or surface syntax. One way in which newness of topic is clearly identifiable is via the use of metastatements as shown in the example below. Nonetheless, it is only sporadically that speakers use such clear signposts to indicate a new subject coming up and they are mostly used to indicate a major topic change.

> Excerpt D
> S1 **In in terms to this approach to market sourcing that you were talking about and the longer term view that is being taken there** how do you rationalise that with the other side which is particularly in the company which Richard Fisher PLC in dealing with the short term approach to the financial aspect
>
> P Yeah um I think you have to ====
> (Outside-presenter text 4)

Newness, however, is a relative measure. In the above extract further follow-on questions might concern approaches to market sourcing but quite different aspects of it. In excerpt B, if we follow the means of new exchange identification so far suggested, we can say that the second turn of S4 is not the start of a fresh exchange. The topic has remained the same and if we took S4's second turn and the following turn in isolation, they would appear unintelligible. The sequence illustrated in excerpt B then shows an extended exchange not two exchanges.

*Speaker*

Yet another aspect of new exchange identification can be seen from the continuation the text illustrated in excerpt B:

> Excerpt B cont.
> T That's right yes because it's on the expenditure basis that the various items that actually include the taxes indirect taxes less subsidies whereas of course if you look at the output basis the value added initially starts out by being a de facto cost basis OK so I mean in that sense there is a question of saying value added is a term why is that and why is it used in economic national accounting because it is the actual basis of actually building up the GNP on a output basis and it makes sense to do it that way because in a sort of way of market based economy that provides you with the value of the output that's produced without double counting
>
> S2 So it is a value added on the expenditure basis
>
> T No value added will always be related to the output basis
> (Non-presentation discussion text 1)

Although the topic continues, there is a change in one of the interlocutors and it is S2 not S4 who is this time conversing with the tutor.

Change of one of the interlocutors, however, need not indicate that a new exchange has occurred. For example, the tutor might ask the same question of two students one after the other and this could be considered a case of multiple response. What distinguishes S2's turn as the start of a new exchange is that there is a change in the interlocutor who is proactive, i.e. not responding.

Figure 1 clarifies these two aspects, speaker and topic change, which contribute toward identification of exchange initial moves in this context and which are taken in the study.

Figure 1: speaker and topic change as exchange initial indicators

| proactive interlocutor same | topic same | continuing exchange |
|---|---|---|
| proactive interlocutor same | topic different | new exchange |
| proactive interlocutor different | topic same | new exchange |
| proactive interlocutor different | topic different | new exchange |

## Information Content

Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.: 74-75) assert that the exchange "only carries one (potentially complex) piece of information and its polarity, and that the information and the polarity can only be questioned and asserted once." According Coulthard & Brazil, the following moves may only occur once in a single exchange and must occur in the sequence e1 i1 e2 i2.

> e1 eliciting moves which seek major information
> e2 eliciting moves which seek polarity information
> i1 informing moves which assert major polarity information
> i2 informing moves which assert polarity information
>
> (pp. 74-75)

When the construct is applied to the data in the study the problem illustrated by the following extract emerges:

> S2 Did your employment strategies vary with the various sectors that you serviced
> and if they did are there any distinctive patterns that emerged
>
> P I was ===== (very long turn)
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

There appear to be in S2's turn two elements and S2 is seeking two pieces of polarity information. The first e1 would not appear to be way subservient to the second e1. They are simply requests for two pieces of information that S2 wants the presenter to respond to. Yet clearly S2's turn is not the start of two exchanges. Moves in seminar discussion are often complex and have diverse purposes that cannot necessarily be accounted for as a single element.

The exchange delineation formula proposed by Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.) even when applicable to the data in this study portrayed texts as numerous sequences of short exchanges, which counter-intuitively were not discrete but conjoined sequences.

## Summary

The means of identifying exchange-initial moves have been discussed in light of the data in order to explain how exchanges will be identified in the rest of the study and the rationale behind selection of these means. The following are proposed as exchange-initial indicators for

seminar discussion discourse: occurrence of certain move types (e.g. eliciting moves); the unprospected nature of the move; topic change or modification; intelligibility of the sequence in isolation (although this last criterion includes the possibility of anaphoric reference) and change in the interlocutor who is proactive, i.e. not responding. Except for the last indicator, these means have featured, although not in combination, in the literature.

## 5.2 Basic and Extended Exchanges Patterns

### 5.2.1 Moves in the Basic Pattern

Exchange structure consists of a minimum of two structural elements, I (initiation) and R (response). Exchanges function to transfer information, therefore, they must contain minimally one informing move (Coulthard & Brazil op cit.). Numerous occurrences of a basic two-part exchange pattern are evident in seminar data. For example:

> S4 Do you think do you think that the going for achievers when they're trying to put across a value for money aspect surely the achievers will be looking for a little more up market
>
> P2 Well even even achievers want to have to feel they've spent their money well value for money doesn't necessarily mean cheap it means my money has been well spent so even if you're an achiever and you've got lots of money to spend you do want to feel it's being well spent and there's nothing worse than going into a restaurant and feel you're being cheated as I'm sure we all have at one stage or another so value for money doesn't mean like a quick save it means I get what I pay for + Next
>
> (Clapping)
> (Student presentation text 9 )

**Multi-Response**

Much daily conversation is two-party and the simple exchange can be defined as X initiates and Y responds. In multi-party interaction, such as in seminars, there is the possibility that more than one speaker may respond to an initiation and, therefore, that response is distributed over a number of turns. This was also noted by Cheung (1984: 95).

One pattern of interaction that emerges from seminar discussion data is a pattern of I Rn. For example, the following extract shows one presenter after another responding to S1's initiation.

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Example
S1 What I was trying to get at was that there have been quite a number of surveys undertaken in terms of of the psycho graphics of cosmetics buyers and their actual values and the fact that there might be more higher achievers for instance than say other women in the community or they may be more sociable more outward going or they may have may be more appearance conscious for instance I just wondered whether um that kind of information may have completed complemented say the kind of demographic information you talked about earlier (I)

P1 Sure there was no clear evidence in the case that they had done it but they must have taken this into account in these instances or maybe these these Avon ladies essentially knew from experience which customers to target it also states that the company was very autonomous and therefore perhaps the the sort of headquarters in a particular country had a much greater consumer awareness than was a actually pervading the case but yes they could make a (R1)

P2 I think actually that all I was trying to say was that the way they segmented the market in different ways I didn't really it doesn't really matter how it is but it was very effective that's all I was trying to say and I apologise for not understanding what er psycho graphics are sorry next one (R2)
(Student-presentation text 2)

n the teacher-fronted classroom, the teacher may initiate and seek responses from a number of students and Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) identify a number of patterns of interaction showing multi-response. They identified five different patterns from the didactic kind of instruction data they used for their analysis. For Sinclair & Coulthard multi-response patterns are tied in with the notion of the *bound exchanges*. One type of bound exchange initiation occurs when the teacher receives no response to his/her first initiation and must try the initiation again and this gives the pattern I R Ib R F (Ib = bound initiation). Another type of bound exchange occurs when the teacher receives the wrong answer and attempts the initiation a second time. This gives the pattern I R F (Ib) R F. Other patterns identified were I R F (Ib) R F (Ib) R F for teacher listing, I R Ib R for teacher re-informing and I R Ib R F for teacher repeating.

These patterns were not evident in the data in this study. The difference between the patterns identified by Sinclair & Coulthard and the multiple-response pattern we identified in seminar discussion data centres on the role of the initiator. In the didactic discourse accounted for by Sinclair & Coulthard, the teacher's role is pivotal in multi-response sequences, i.e. it is he or

he who forces further responses. However, in the seminar discussion teaching situation, multi-response is a largely unprompted phenomenon as shown in the previous extract. This extract starkly demonstrates the more democratic nature of discussion and the proactive role of students who volunteer further responses compared to the teacher-fronted classroom. The pattern we identify is I Rn, i.e. I R1 R2 R3, etc.

## 5.2.2 Moves in Extended & Complex Patterns

There are numerous examples of simple exchanges of initiation followed by response in the data. However, a large number of exchanges in seminar discussion investigated in this study are longer and these will be termed 'extended exchanges.' A range of variations exist between the opening and the closing of exchanges in discussion and the aim of this section is to bring to light these patterns. Extended exchanges are defined as exchanges longer than the two-part structures of initiation and response. The maximal extended exchange pattern proposed by Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.) is I (R/I) R (F). The following discussion examines this structure in juxtaposition to seminar data.

### 5.2.2.1 Follow-up

In the data from seminar discussion there are instances when responses are followed by some kind of verbal reaction from the initiator of the exchange (example 1) and when they are not (example two):

> example 1
> S1 So you think there may be even a wider shift then than previously seen alongside decentralisation and divestment from the big groups trying to get rid of do you think that may well change (P I think it will) they might start taking on (F/I: this form of re-initiation is discussed later in this section)

> example 1 cont.
> P I think it will change yes yes because the other strategic issue is how do you develop enough critical mass in an organisation to fund the research and development the design capability the quality systems etc. etc. etc. if you are only employing 250 people and you don't have the wherewithal to do it and make a profit so these companies have got to form themselves into a unit which enables them to provide this infrastructure and still deliver the goods and that's going to be difficult (R)

> S1 Thank you
> (Outside-presenter text 4)

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example 2
   S1 On the practical practical point of view + (pause as students enter late) on the practical
   point of view you'll be getting a certain amount of marks for that kind of question would it be
   a difference whether if you just give the definition or whether you expanded it on the loss of
   marks (I)

   T Um I think that in nearly all cases it would be ===== (R)

   S2 If GDP can be ==== (I)
   (Non-presentation text 1)


n seminar discussion we identify extended exchanges as exchanges including some form of
ollow-up move(s). Sinclair & Coulthard (op cit.) and Mehan (1985) propose that classroom
liscourse is based on a three-part exchange structure: initiation, response and follow-up. For
hese analysts the third-part move is seen as a component of the basic teaching exchange. Tsui
1994: 35-43) argues that the third-part follow-up move is a basic element of conversational
xchanges and it has the function of "endorsing the felicitous outcome of the interaction."
should it not occur, Tsui asserts, it tends to be perceived by participants to have been withheld
or social or strategic reasons.

However, in this study we suggest that given the complexity of what a follow-up move may
ead to (and this will be shown in the following discussion) and given the fact that third part
xchange-final follow-up moves occur only sporadically, exchanges incorporating this
lement should be classified as extended rather than simple. This is in line with the more
ecent concept of the basic exchange of Coulthard and Brazil (op cit.) in which F or follow-up
; viewed as a possibility in spoken discourse but not a component of the basic structure
which is, therefore, shown as I R (F).

he issue of whether the basic exchange is a two-part or three-part structure has dogged
cholars working in B(DA) (see chapter 2 section 2.4.2.). Whether basic exchanges are
redominantly two or three-part structures may well be situational rather than fundamental to
ll spoken discourse and it was very much with the teacher-centred classroom in mind that the
slot was originally presented as part of the normal classroom exchange pattern (Sinclair &

Coulthard 1975). In this study exchange-final follow-up moves as a potential part of extended exchanges but not as an essential slot in the basic exchange.

As for realisations of follow-up moves, a number have been pointed out in the literature: the use of *yes* or *no* as response to prior response, repetitions and reformulations of the prior response (Coulthard & Brazil op cit: 66-68); the use of *yes* or *no* to realise acts of *termination*, *receiving*, *reacting* and acts of *endorsing*, *protesting* and *reformulating* (Francis & Hunston 1992: 127); acts of *accepting*, *evaluating* and *commenting* (Sinclair & Coulthard op cit.); acts of *commenting*, *accepting*, *demurring* and *acknowledging* (Hoey 1992: 73) and acts of *endorsement* or *acknowledgement* (following a positive response), *concession* or *acknowledgement* (following a negative response) (Tsui 1994). What is basic to acts at F slot, as Tsui points out, is the function of acknowledging the outcome of an exchange. This for Tsui, who sees F slots as exchange terminal only, means that they indicate the felicitous conclusion to an exchange. However, in this study the possibility of post response moves to initiate further development of the exchange when the first response has not been received in a felicitous way will be argued. In this study F is viewed as a post-response move which functions to register verbal reaction to response.

**Recursiveness**

One of the complexities of the follow-up slot in exchange structure is the possibility for recursiveness. This recursive capacity has been identified by Hoey (op cit: 73) and Tsui (op cit: 212-213). Tsui identifies the potential for two F slots: the first which has the general function of acknowledging the outcome of the interaction in an exchange and the second follow up move which is a *turn-passing act* indicating a wish to relinquish the floor.

The possibility of recursiveness of follow-up moves is exemplified in the following extract from our data:

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P3 ========= I'm in the group and we did look at the issue of men (laughter) and we decided that as most women purchased aftershave or whatever for their men there wasn't actually any place for it women would be selling to women who'd buy for their men (R)

P1 Thank you (F)

P3 I just wanted to do my bit (F)

S3 Um since to ======= (I)
(Student-presentation text 2)

## Non Verbal Realisations

Follow-up may be realised non-verbally. Some acts of follow-up such as evaluating or commenting imply verbal realisation. Yet for other acts such as accepting or agreeing, non-verbal means may realise this slot in exchange structure. In the data there are a number of examples of exchanges being terminated by nodding, gaze re-direction or speaker movement which support the findings of Gosling (1981) and Riley (1975) that kinetics may realise discourse function. It is not within the scope of the study to investigate kinetic behaviours. Although it is recognised that kinetics clearly do play a significant discourse function in spoken interaction of this type, only verbal tokens of discourse function and verbal realisations of follow-up are investigated.

## Exchanges involving F/I moves (F Treated as Re-Initiation)

Some exchanges involving more than three exchange slots were identified in the data. One such exchange patterning is triggered by a move that is termed F/I, that is, *follow-up treated as re-initiation* (Hoey: op cit.). In seminar discussion, follow-up or response to response does not necessarily show acceptance of the outcome or that the speaker is satisfied with the information received. When a speaker gives some indication of this dissatisfaction, this was observed to set into motion a development of the exchange sequence. In other words, the proponent of the first initiation in an exchange can provoke further interchange by these moves which give feedback to the respondent.

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Some of the specific functions of F/I moves observed in the data were: to express that the interlocutor hadn't provided the information sought or enough of it, showing an alternative view to that given, showing how much the speaker has or hasn't understood from the response or making a substantive comment on the response. The overall discourse function of the F/I moves is to stimulate further interchange on the same topic. This move functions to develop the exchange by indicating that a satisfactory outcome to the exchange has not been reached.

As can be seen from the above, our definition of the F/I move involves a number of aspects:

- who the speaker is, i.e. the interlocutor who made the initial initiation

- location in exchange, i.e. following an initiation response sequence

- function to stimulate further response by indicating a lack of satisfaction

In terms of the notion of prospectiveness, F/I moves are akin to moves of initiation and according they will be discussed as a form of initiation in the rest of the thesis:

**Figure 2 prospectiveness and the F/I move**

| Predicting | Predicted | Move Type |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Initiation |
| Yes | No | Follow-up as initiation |

Below is an example of an exchange involving a F/I move:

S2 Um obviously all this institutional support for the risk that they're taking is going to be rather expensive and that's going to have to be serviced out of increased efficiency in the years to come (P Yep) I mean I suppose we could all imagine various ways in which this matter could but I wondered if in your opinion you could point to any particular types of pattern (I)

P A pattern of

S2 Eh the motivation for it and the future development of the business in fact in other words a pattern of where the increased efficiency actually comes from

P Right um yes you must remember ======= (R)

S2 What I was actually looking for is some kind of comment not on the sort of capital value of what they've bought or anything like that but the way in which they've had to put together a future business plan I mean do these things fall into any kind of coherent (P Yes) plan at all ( F/I)

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P I mean they will be in the business plan === (R)
(Outside-speaker text 2)

Our conceptualisation of the F/I move stands in contrast to mainline B(DA) in which follow-up has generally been seen as exchange terminal and F is conceptualised as showing some sort of acceptance of the response given. For example, Tsui states categorically that a follow up move will not occur when the speaker is not happy with the response given (1994: 40). It can be implied from Tsui's definition of follow-up that a non-positive reception of a response would lead to a new exchange. However, due to the reoccurrence of patterns in the data which show that many post-response moves both acknowledge the outcome of the exchange so far and act as an impetus to push the topic and interchange on, we argue that some F moves are dual functional, both reacting backward to the response and prospecting also a further response. Hoey discusses this type of complex exchange saying,

> "What drives this pattern is that a negative evaluation of a response indicates that the original initiation has not been properly responded to; naturally this places pressure on the listeners to produce a better response. It can occur with any initiation but is most common with question initiations."

> (1992: 77)

A F/I move is followed in turn by a response move and the F/I R couplet is frequently seen in discussion to re-occur a number of times within the same exchange. This is exemplified in the extract below.

> S1 What sort of threat do you think they face from technology in sort of domestic cleaning market I mean washing machines you can but nowadays you can wash natural wool fibres it doesn't shrink I mean there's some garments like suede or leather you'd need specialist cleaning but more and more there's less requirement for dry cleaning (I)

> P1 Yes the principle thing that comes out of the study that was quoted was time that people go to the dry cleaners to save time so the people who go there are unlikely to want to wash their own garments (R)

> S1 (gesture)

> P1 Sorry

> S1 I don't know that I necessarily agree with that I mean the amount of time getting in the car driving somewhere and paying some money to wash things (F/I)

P1 Well it's not that people do it on the way to do something else go to work or whatever these people open from early to late and people drop in on the way to do other things going to work or whatever (R)

S1 I would disagree I would say I take things to the dry cleaner because I have no option I mean I take them there because on the label says dry clean only (P1 Well I) I can't wash it in a washing machine in fact sometimes I do I just take a flyer on it (F/I)

P2 I think our market would be slightly different from the American market I expect theirs is probably more advanced that ours with people prepared to take their various garments along even if they could clean them themselves and certainly that did seem to be the case (R)
(Student-presentation text 3)

In this text, S1 does not accept P1's response to her question. In her first initiation S1 seeks confirmation of her view that technology allows us to make more fabrics that can be laundered at home and which do not need dry cleaning. P1, however, does not confirm that this is a factor in the success or failure of the dry cleaning sector. He responds by stating that it is the time saving factor which ensures that dry cleaning remains popular and implies, therefore, that the issue of fabric types is irrelevant to the issue. S1 responds to P1's rejection of her bid for confirmation by giving feedback to his rejection *I disagree* and this F/I move in turn sets up the needs for a further responding move by P1. The excerpt illustrates the need in exchanges in discussion to arrive at a satisfying outcome even if it needs to be worked at.

**Signifiers of F/I**

F/I moves can be identified by their position and function is discourse. Some were observed to contain lexical markers either turn-initially or near the beginning of the turn, such as *well, so, but and though* (the occurrence of these discourse markers in itself does not imply that the move is an instance of F/I). Schiffrin (1987) has identified similar uses of *well* and *but* in turn-initial and turn-entry positions in her corpus of interview data. For example, she states, "*but* is used not only when speakers defend their points against challenges, but when they actually issue those challenges, that is, when they initially disagree" (op cit: 173-175). The extracts below show the use of such discourse markers near the beginning of turns with F/I moves:

Example 1
S3 These things are more or less like questions or recommendations ==== (I)

P4 Obviously these issues we must consider I mean we've thrown that in as something we must seriously consider now so that is as much depth as we've gone into I mean

obviously the management would have to consider franchising but I haven't gone into it so we're throwing it out as an option a recommendation (R)

S3 You've got to look at it seriously though because the Europeans will be coming up as well as (P2 It's not) these people from America (F/I)

P2 It's not true to say you won't have control over your franchises you never ever I doubt whether you'd say Benetton don't have control over their franchises (R)

S3 That depends on the structure though you've got to look at the structure it's the management ==== (F/I)
(Student-presentation text 4)

Example 2
S5 Well yes the point I'm firstly a point on what you've just said ===== (I)

P Well it will depend very much on the organisation itself ===== (R)

S5 So you see it but you see it it as a process being associated with the top of the organisation (F/I)

P Yes ======= (R)
(Outside-speaker text 4)

F/I moves may involve lexical signalling as shown above. Some F/I moves are realised as elicits, either what would grammatically be termed a question or a phrase with question like intonation (see move marked with asterisk below):

S5 What I'm interested in is when you actually first approach the vendor and you say effectively hadn't you better the business that I've been running on your behalf I could win (P Yeah) I'll go it alone when would the vendor or how many instances do you get the vendor actually turn round and say I'll increase your salary and I'll do this and that and the other you stay in the business and you reap the benefits for me \\ or (I)

P                                                                                              \\ How often do you get that

S5 Yeah that sort \\ of

P                      \\ You often get a letter saying you're fired (S5 Well) quite often (R)

S5 * A high percentage I mean (F/I)

P I would say that of approaches ===== (R)
(Outside-presenter text 2)

## The Structure of Academic Debate

It is proposed that the I R (F/I Rn) pattern is a major structure in academic discussion. Discussion is driven beyond question-answer routines into more depth and debate by a

dissatisfied post-response move that functions as a re-initiation. The F/I R sequence may be recursive. We suggest that this structure is the preferred pattern of academic discussion and that it distinguishes academic discussion from classroom interaction. It is argued that exchanges in academic discussion are basically a two-part structure, I R, but potentially a four part structure: initiation, response, follow-up as re-initiation and response.

### 5.2.2.2. Pre-Initiation

A structural variation evident in exchanges in seminars is the pre-initiation move. This minor move functions to invite elicits either by direct invitations or nominations for the next speaker or by simple responses to bids for the floor. Commonly they occur at the opening of the discussion phase or after a lengthy question and answer sequence when the speaker wishes to re-orient the audience to the discussion:

> example 1
> P Thank you that ends my formal presentation **I'm very happy to discuss any of the issues with you** (Pre-initiation move: invitation)
>
> T Actually you focused on the role of the company was actually the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for for the UK (I)
>
> P Erm I think it is fair to ====== (R)
> (Outside-speaker text 1)
>
> example 2
> P3 **A question** (indicating to bidding student) (Pre-initiation: response to bid)
>
> S3 Aren't those companies though just aberrations of the system ======= (I)
> (Student-presentation text 7)

It is clear from the videoed recordings of seminars that many pre-initiation moves are also realised by kinetic rather than verbal means, particularly moves that respond to bids for turns and the conferring of the right to speak. In example 2, S3 has claimed a turn non-verbally and speaking rights have been given both non-verbally via the tutor's pointing to the bidding student and verbally through the utterance *A question*. These observations confirm a number of Gosling's findings in this area, e.g. that *turn claims* are commonly non-verbal in seminars (1981: 173). Pre-initiation moves have been described because they account for moves

evident in the data. However, they are not of major interest to the study and are discussed no further.

### 5.2.2.3 Disruption

The intentional means used by seminar discussion participants to develop the topic and extending exchanges through feedback moves have been outlined above. However, sequences in the data were also observed which showed exchanges drawn out not for interest or development but due it would seem to difficulties between the participants in understanding or communicating, i.e. local conversational tangles. Exchanges may be disrupted for the benign purpose of clarification, but at other times by deliberate attempts to block the progress of the exchange. Both types of disruption are discussed in the following subsection.

### r/i moves

Coulthard & Brazil (1981) have proposed that a response move may function as an initiation when, for example, a question is responded to by another question. To account for this sequence, Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.) propose the element R/I in exchange structure and they present it's place and function in exchange structure as: I R/I R F. The place of R/I within exchanges has been shown in conjunction with display questions such as seen in school classrooms or quiz programs and Francis & Hunston (1992) identify it in conversation. A classroom example could be:

> T What is in the picture? (I)
>
> P Is it a kind of mouse? (R/I?)
>
> T Yes, it's a small rodent that lives in South America (R?) Good well guessed (F?)
> (fabricated example)

There are, however, some difficulties in categorising the elements in the above pattern. It would be possible to describe the sequence either as I R/I R or I R F. Taking away the teacher's information giving (small rodent, lives in South America), the sequence clearly becomes I R F. Is it the supplying of information which makes it possible to distinguish the

teacher's final turn as partially a response move? If it the case that it is the giving of information in the third-part slot that determines whether the sequence be identified as I R F or I R/I R F, then the analysis becomes retrogressive and we look backwards to categorise a prior element, i.e. because the teacher gave some additional information, the former move would be categorised as R/I. If the teacher just confirmed the pupil's guess with *Yes*, the former move can be categorised as a response. A further problem is that *Yes* or *No* are of course both are in themselves potentially evaluatives, i.e. follow-ups and information giving, i.e. responses.

Putting aside such difficulties, in the context of a school classroom discourse the R/I move cannot be conceived as interrupting or disturbing the flow of the exchange. Rather it is an integral part of it and the response in R/I is predicted by I. The occurrence of this move does not mark a discontinuity. Likewise, *Yes, it's a* .... functions as a response to P's move. There is flow in the sequence as each part can be argued to prospect the next or be prospected after the initial move. In contrast, the following exchange from seminar discussion shows a different type of sequence. It shares some common ground with the schoolroom sequence discussed previously, yet it demonstrates primarily disruption and discontinuity:

> example:
> S5 Was the Turkish customer aware of the products by this time
>
> P You mean had we done any marketing had we done any image advertising is that what
>
> S5 Did you have to show that you were in Turkey now
>
> P Word spreads we didn't have any major === (Turkish text 2)

This text illustrates a pattern which cannot be accounted for by existing B(DA) frameworks and the notion of R/I as an integral element of exchange structure. Let's consider how the above exchange differs from the prior fabricated example of the classroom. Firstly, in the sequence from seminar discussion, initiation is a real rather than a display question and it is fairly complex. Secondly, P's first turn cannot be said to constitute a response to the initiation, reaction possibly but not response to the initiation and it is not the move that S7's move prospected, although it is of course, given the situation, not entirely unpredictable. Thirdly, P's

final move answers S7's first initiation which was to ask about investigation by financial institutions. This final move cannot be conceived as a response to S7's *Yes*, the immediately prior move.

Thus in this extract from a seminar discussion, the elements do not follow in a sequence of direct prospectiveness. I would argue that P's first and S7's second moves are between the initiation and response (which constitute the basic elements of this exchange), and that they represent a discontinuity in the exchange and that they are not an integrated part of it. The move r/i was not prospected and the P's second turn is a response to the initiating move in S7's first turn. To conceptualise P's second turn as a response to S7's second turn would make for the notion that a response can respond to a response which is conceptually nonsensical. We have argued previously that two responses can follow an initiation if they are issued by interactants on the same side in a discussion. This is, however, not the case here.

In light of these observations, it is proposed that the pattern exemplified by P's first and S7's second turns in the excerpt constitutes a kind of inserted sequence, a sequence set up not as the main business of seminar discussion but as a means of getting out of difficulties in the exchange proper. Therefore, the non-integrated aspect of these moves is represented by using small letters r/i and r and these moves are not seen as the means of developing an exchange.

The notion of the inserted sequence is out of line with the frameworks proposed by those working within B(DA) paradigm, e.g. Sinclair & Coulthard (op cit.) and Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.). It does, however, fit in with observations and analysis by conversational analysts, e.g. Schegloff, Jefferson and van Lier who identify main and subordinate sequences. Jefferson (1972) explains that conversational drift can be unpredictably held up by a clarification request before the conversation returns to where it was halted. These *misapprehension sequences* start with a questioning element indicating a difficulty and function to remedy the difficulty and get the conversation back on track. Schegloff (1972) proposes two-turn *insertion sequences* between a question and an answer. van Lier (1988: 119) identifies *inter-*

*turn/repair initiation* sequences as short clarification requests, error replacements and attempts to prompt or help the speaker. van Lier views these episodes are subservient to the main business in progress and not as hindering the interaction already set up.

Coulthard & Brazil (1992: 55) make a critical attack on the conversation analytical construct of embedded sequences pinpointing the mixing of structural and semantic labels, the use of 'transparent categories', and the fact that "Conversational Analysts working with no overall descriptive framework run the risk of creating data-specific descriptive categories for each new piece of text" (1992: 55). Whatever the intrinsic validity of these criticisms, in this context-specific study of exchange patterns, the observations of Conversation Analysts are in tune with this particular pattern which is evident but for which, as has been shown, the DA(B) frameworks do not account.

Theoretically, the representation of r/i r pattern as an inserted sequence constitutes a dilemma for our investigation of exchanges structure within the B(DA) paradigm. Those working within B(DA) conceptualise sequencing rules as rules between adjacent or follow-on elements, i.e. the element following an initiation must be the response in order for the sequence to be well-formed. In this study the representation of the r/i r sequence as an embedded sequence stands in contrast to B(DA) because we are saying that I and R do not necessarily follow directly on from one another. The first part sets up the expectation for the second but it may be delayed. This delay does not negate the essential initiation response or question answer pattern that occurs.

Returning to an empirical level, data from seminars and discussions show that there may be some considerable difficulty experienced in establishing a question, that a clarification sequence may be lengthy and the (r/i r) pattern may recursive. The following extract illustrates this and also the possibility for r/i r sequences following on form an F/I move:

example
S1 So how long are these people locked in eh company if someone wants to make an
exit and he's part of the management team (P Yeah) after 2 years
(P Yeah) does he make a clause in the agreement or would it be (F/I)

P He can't (R)

S1 He can't (F/I)

P Do you mean a guy who's got a thousand pounds of shares says I want to sell this
company or do you mean he says he wants to sell his shares (r/i)

S1 No no one of the key members (r)

P Key members Yeah

S1 Key members For some reason he wants to make an exit after 2 years (r cont.)

P Right does he want to make his company to or does he want to (r/i)

S1 He wants to \\ go (r)

P            \\ He wants to go Right Then he would come and ===== (R)
(Outside speaker text 2)

Hoey talks of exchange disruption and describes it as a reaction to an initiation, a challenge

and as having the function of a counter-initiation (op cit.). This, however, is not the case in

interaction illustrated by the example shown here. Although it can be said that there the r/i

move functions as a counter-initiation, this counter-initiation is confined to the local co-text

and delays the progress of the exchange set up by the first initiation but does not challenge

and replace it.


It could be argued that in the I (r/i r) R sequence, R can be viewed as a response to r rather

than I and that the sequence could be portrayed as I r/i R/I R. For instance, in the following

stretch of text, P2's response can be seen as a response to S4's second turn. As the 'question'

hadn't been well established the first time, P2's response, it might be argued, is a response to

the second turn of S4. Alternatively, because of the lack of clarity concerning the first turn of

S4, P2's response can be seen as a response to the combination of S4's first and second turns.

S4 Um just one last thing (P3 Yeah go on) You mentioned franchising as one of the
alternatives But was there any other products he mentioned Products or services he
mentioned apart from that he's thinking he's thinking about they may go on to? (I)

P3 That he already does In the way of repairs \\ and so (r/i)

125

54
really (r)                                                    \\ Well no for the future In question 4

P2 Nothing came from the case that I picked up anyway ===== (R)
(Student presentation discussion text 3)


However, this is often not the case and it would, for example, be difficult to conceptualise see P's final response move as a response to *He wants to go* in the second from last extract. As often moves before the responses proper are fragments of meaning such as *He wants to go,* the pattern will be depicted in the study as I (r/i r) R. In terms of prospectiveness, we see the r/i and r moves as akin to initiation and response.

**Figure 3:  prospectiveness and r/i & r moves**

| Predicting | Predicted | Move Type |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Initiation (I) |
| Yes | No | Response as initiation (r/i) |
| No | Yes | Response (R) |
| No | Yes | Response to r/i (r) |


### d moves (displacement & display)

Sequences that show the seeking of clarification and a move termed *r/i* have been considered. In contrast, some exchange disruptions are blocking and intentionally disruptive. In our examples, such moves will be marked with the symbol *d.* Some exchanges are made incomplete by these moves. Sometimes, however, the exchange gets back on track and, for example, a response is given to the initiation. Observations did not lead me to see these moves as part of any predictable pattern, although, like r/i moves, they mostly follow an initiation. The following abstract illustrates the two types of conversational hold up we have observed:

P1 ==== Does anyone have any questions (Pre-I)

S1 Yes I have a question you talked earlier about how they segmented the market you said they'd actually segmented the market in a number of different ways that you said were relatively successful you said it wasn't they hadn't just done it demographically but in a number of ways do you think they could have made better use of psycho graphic profiles of their customers (I) +

(general laughter)

P1 In English please  (r/i)

P2 Someone else want to try a question I don't understand that one (d)

P1 Yes very good (d)

S1 What I was trying to get at was that there have been ==== (r)

P1 Sure there was no no clear evidence in the case that they had done it but they
must have taken this into account ===== (R)
(Student-presentation text 2)

In the extract S1's question has the presenters in a quandary as they don't know the meaning of
the term *psycho-graphic profiles*. Therefore, they register their consternation with d moves as
well as asking for clarification. S1 provides clarification, the sequence r/i r is set up and P1
responds to the initiation first made by S1.

Deliberate disruptions (d moves) were observed either between speaker turns or intra-turn. In
the following extract, S2 is hindered intra-turn from completing his exchange initiation and
the d move is far less benign than those seen in the previous extract.

S1 Seriously if anyone's got any questions that we can answer for you we'd be more than
happy to do so please don't be too restrained ask whatever you like well almost (pre-I)

S2 I'm interested to hear what you say about the Spanish and providing for the Spanish
Hispanic communities in America (I)

P1 Yes

S2 If one takes the view the perception that they're immigrants to the country \\
(I cont.)

P1                                                                      \\ That's an
assumption (d)

S2 It's an assumption but there's a large movement from Mexico Cuba Puerto Rica across
into America Perhaps there's a whisper behind me illegally perhaps they want to move
away from their own culture to join the great American dream do you think speaking to
them in their own language therefore insulting them that they're still from the third world
is perhaps the best way to sell (I cont.)

P1 I would think ==== (R)
(Student-presentation text 1)

## R/I moves

The possibility of the R/I move in exchange structure has been discussed in the literature
(Coulthard & Brazil op cit.) and the I (R/I) R pattern has been presented in the literature as a
feature typical of the school classroom where there is a very definite asymmetrical knowledge

relationship and teachers are in business of asking display questions. That the teachers' questions are not seeking unknown information is understood by the respondents and thus they may suggest the answer the teacher is looking for in the form of a confirmation check:

T: Where is he going? (I)

P: Is he going to the bank? (R/I)

T: Yes he is. Very good. (R & F)
(fabricated example)

A few instances of the use of the R/I move for this display question function were observed in the data from seminar discussion, mainly in tutor-initiated exchanges in tutor-led, non-presentation discussions (subgenre C). However, in subgenres A and B and in student-initiated exchanges in subgenre C, display questions are not common and the pattern for real questions emerges as I R with (r/i r) as a clarification sequence interjected into the main I R structure when difficulties arise in establishing the question. The R/I move was evident in a few cases following the discussion after a student presentations when a would-be respondent throws the question back at the questioner and this sets up the pattern of I R/I R. This is exemplified in the following extract:

S3 I think that the geographical thing holds true in America as well in Manhattan in Chicago in San Francisco or wherever you have a totally different kind of demand than you do in the sort of areas in which it is easier to travel around and people do have cars I have friends in Manhattan who wouldn't dream of eh washing anything it really is everything just goes to the dry cleaners whatever they do to it so they can pick it up whenever they need it whereas someone in the suburbs will get in the car and bring it to the same old shopping area (I)

P2 Would you suggest that laundering and dry cleaning are more a part of life out there (R/I)

S2 I'm saying it's much the case that demand will be different in == (R)
.(Student-presentation text 3)

## 5.3 Model of Student-Initiated Interaction

Commonly occurring patterns of exchange have been explicated from the data. The B(DA) approach was taken and, in particular, the model of exchange structure proposed by Coulthard & Brazil 1992, i.e. (I (R/I) R F ), was used as the starting point for analysis. Modifications have been suggested in order to account for exchange patternings specific to seminar

discussion discourse In considering the data of seminar discussion alongside the B(DA) approach and model, some problems presented themselves, namely, the means to identify exchange-initial moves and how the extended interchanges observed in the data could be accounted for and modelled. In addition, not all interchanges could be accounted for, especially those that were not dyadic or stopped being dyadic when a third party joined in the interchange. In our attempts to account for the patterns observed, some theoretical inroads have been made.

Our analysis supported the following aspects of the exchange model of Coulthard & Brazil (op. cit.):

- The basic exchange pattern is I R

- There may be a follow-up slot following on from the response when an exchange has been initiated by an eliciting move and which indicates successful outcome

- Follow-up may be recursive.

However, during our analysis some modifications have been proposed to the models established by Sinclair & Coulthard (op. cit.) and Coulthard & Brazil (op.cit.). They are:

- An initiation may be followed by responses by more than one respondent.

  The sequence I Rn is proposed.

- Follow up may not be exchange-terminal but the follow-up slot may be Janus-faced and act as an initiation whilst also acting as the means of feedback on the prior response.

  The structure I R (F/I Rn) is proposed and it is suggested to be the major sequence by which exchanges and topics are developed in academic discussions of this nature.

- An initiation can be followed by exchange disruption mostly due to difficulties understanding the initiation and thus responding to it. This leads to a sequence which is conceptualised as secondary to the main business of the initiation and the response and hence the structure I (r/i r) R is proposed. This case throws into question the notion that prospectiveness is confined to immediately adjacent elements in exchange structure.

The framework on the following page is proposed for student driven interaction in seminar discussion discourse.

**Figure 4: Framework for Exchange Patterns in Student-Initiated Discourse**

*Major elements in exchanges*: Initiation (I), Response (R), Follow-Up (F) and Follow-Up as Initiation (F/I).

*Minor elements*: response as initiation (r/i)and response to r/i (r).

These elements appear within exchanges but arise from difficulties in establishing the exchange. They do not constitute the exchange proper.

Further minor element are d moves (moves of disruption, unpredictable in exchange structure) and pre-initiation moves (those that precede initiation proper, most usually invitations by a presenter or tutor to ask questions or make comments).

**Basic Exchange Pattern: I Rn**

I - move by speaker 1

R - move by any number of speakers other than speaker 1

Any number of responses may be given to the initiation. For these responses to count as part of the same exchange they need to be made by those on the "same side", e.g. 2 student presenters or 3 students in a tutor-led discussion.

**Extended Exchange Sequences**

1. I R (Fn)

2. I R (F/I Rn) (Fn)

F = is a non-substantive move. It functions to make a non substantive positive comment or a neutral acknowledgement of the preceding response. This move is made by the speaker of the move initiating the exchange and indicates satisfaction with the preceding response or willingness for the exchange to end. These positive or neutral follow up moves may be followed by a further follow up move.

F/I = is a follow-up move which indicates a lack of satisfaction with the response given, it gives feedback and it acts as re-initiation. This move is made by the speaker of the move initiating the exchange.

**Exchanges involving Clarification Sequences**

Exchange sequences can be complicated by the sequence (r/i r) giving the possible patterns for exchanges involving clarification sequences:

1. I (r/i rn) R (Fn)

2. I (r/i rn) R (F/I (i/r rn)Rn) (Fn)

A sample of text analysed according to the model above and in line with additions to it as described in the following two chapters of analysis is given in the appendix on page 347.

## 5.4  Exchange Patterns in Student-Initiated Discourse in Three Subgenres

### 5.4.1 Relative Frequency of Patterns

The first sections of the chapter reported the attempt to extrapolate moves and patterns of interaction occurring in student-driven interaction. This section shows investigation into the incidence and relative frequency of these patterns in the data. Clear incidences of student-initiated exchanges in the data were identified and the patterns IR, IRF, IRF/IR and IRF/IRF were recorded.

Interaction as students were arriving or leaving the class was not considered nor were exchanges that were incomplete or broke down, e.g. due to a number of disruptions. In addition, most of the interaction was essentially dyadic and open to this form of analysis. However, at times three parties became involved, e.g. student, student presenter and tutor, and exchange boundaries became indistinct and it was not possible to identify exchanges in this way. Subgenre C, text 2 shows a discussion in which there was no tutor present. The interaction was multi-party the exchange patterns apparent in this text will be discussed at a later stage as it will be argued that they differ qualitatively.

The exchanges identified in the data showed the following interaction patterns:

**Figure 5: Interaction Patterns in three subgenres**

Subgenre A

UK

student ----> outside speaker 27 exchanges

tutor ----> outside presenter 1 exchange


Data from Turkey

student ----> presenter 12

tutor ----> presenter 5

Subgenre B

student ----> student presenters 37 exchanges

student ----> tutor 9 exchanges

tutor ----> student 4 exchanges


Subgenre C

student ----> tutor 22 exchanges

tutor ----> student 19 exchanges


The major interaction patterns from each subgenre were examined for the structures I R, I R F, I R F/I R and I R F/I R F and the findings are presented in the following tables:


**Table 4: Exchanges patterns subgenre A UK data**
student to outside presenter:

| Text | I R | I R F | I R F/I R | I R F/I R F | |
|------|-----|-------|-----------|-------------|---|
| 1 | 5 | - | 3 | - | 8 |
| 2 | 2 | - | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| 3 | 6 | - | - | - | 6 |
| 4 | 3 | - | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| | 16 (59.3%) | - | 9 (33.3%) | 2 (7.4%) | 27 |


**Table 5: Exchange patterns in subgenre A: data from Turkey**
student to outside speaker

| Text | I R | I R F | I R F/I R | I R F/I R Fn | |
|------|-----|-------|-----------|--------------|---|
| 1 | 5 | - | 1? | - | 6 |
| 2 | 5 | - | 1- | - | 6 |
| | 10 (83.3%) | - | 2 (16.7%) | - | 12 |

Table 6: Exchange patterns in subgenre B
student to student presenters

| Text | I R | I R F | I R F/I R | I R F/I R F | |
|------|-----|-------|-----------|-------------|---|
| 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | - | - | 4 |
| 3 | 5 | - | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | - | 6 |
| 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| 6 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 3 |
| 8 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| 9 | 3 | 1 | - | - | 4 |
| 10 | 1 | - | 1 | | 2 |
| | 19 (51.4%) | 6 (16.2%) | 10 (27%) | 2 (5.4%) | 37 |

Table 7: Exchange patterns in subgenre C
students to tutor

| Text | I R | I R F | I R F/I R | I R F/I R F | |
|------|-----|-------|-----------|-------------|---|
| 1 | 8 | - | 3 | 1 | 12 |
| 3 | 1 | - | 3 | - | 4 |
| 4 | 4 | - | 2 | - | 6 |
| | 13 (59.1%) | - | 8 (36.3%) | 1(4.6%) | 22 |

## 5.4.2 Discussion of Findings

With the exception of exchange-final follow up after I R patterns in subgenres A and C, the four move types were evident student-initiated exchanges in each subgenre. In all three subgenres, the I R pattern was seen to be the most common pattern, the second being I R F/I R and third and fourth were the two patterns involving exchange-final follow-up. There was, however, some variation in the incidence of these patterns.

## The I R Pattern & the Follow-Up Move

There was some variation in the incidence of the basic I R pattern. Approximately half of the student to student presenter interactions in subgenre B were I R exchanges. Marginally more student-initiated exchanges to outside speakers and to tutors were of the I R pattern and thus, the pattern seems to be more pervasive in more formal interaction between students and non-peers. In subgenre A text 3, it was noted that all exchanges were of the basic I R pattern. This discussion was the most formal of all those analysed in the study and involved a very well-known and distinguished outside speaker. Factors such as role, status, distance and inequality

of knowledge may account for this marginally higher proportion of the simple two part pattern.

The greatest variation concerned the occurrence of verbal exchange-final follow-up. It was observed most frequently in student to student interaction in subgenre B where it occurred in nearly one in four of the exchanges. It occurred minimally in the other two subgenres. The overall low incidence of this move type would indicate that it is not central to exchange structure in discussion discourse. Follow-up need not, of course, be realised verbally and this was briefly discussed in section 5.3.2.1. There were examples of nodding and smiles from the students after responses in subgenre A and it may be tentatively suggested that more non-verbal signals of wishing to terminate an exchange are used in interaction with those with whom there is a more assymetrical relationship. Acts realising follow-up moves have been stated as *accept*, *evaluation* and *comment* (Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 24). Out of these acts, *comment* implies verbal realisation and this was noticeably absent in student driven interaction with outside experts and tutors. The notion of comment implied a certain degree of equality. It is perhaps not surprising that in interaction with 'experts' this move might seem inappropriate as a discourse move for the student.

Discussion in subgenre A (with the exception of text 3) and subgenre C seemed fairly informal. However, the relative frequency of the IR pattern and lack of exchange-final follow-up suggest that discussion in these events may be more constrained than it seems. Gumperz (1982) said of events such as interviews and discussion, "Although on the surface an air of equality, mutuality and cordiality prevails, participant roles, i.e. the right to speak and the obligation to answer are predetermined or at least strictly constrained."

**Follow-Up as Initiation**

Approximately 40% of exchanges in subgenres A and C were found to involve F/I moves. Student-initiated exchanges in these subgenres are directed to interlocutors with higher status and expertise. It may be recalled that F/I moves are those that express dissatisfaction with the

outcome of the prior initiation response sequence in order to stimulate a further response from the interlocutor. In texts from these subgenres, the F/I moves showed students prolonging exchanges when they have not obtained or fully understood the response they wanted, or some form of dissent on that response.

F/I R sequences were observed less frequently in student-initiated exchanges to peers in subgenre B. It was surprising to see a higher incidence of this pattern in interaction with the 'experts' (outside speakers and tutors) than in peer interaction. It can be suggested that students are more inclined to feel it is worth pursuing an interaction with tutors and experts to get at the information that they want. In subgenre B, student presenters are in a 'pseudo expert' role. It is possible that the other students may not see the value of pursuing the exchange and topic with those who do not have more knowledge than themselves. In addition, student interviewees indicated that they did not want to give their peers a hard time in discussions and that they wish to be fairly restrained in their criticisms.

**Long Exchanges**

The exchange patterns identified above may give the impression that exchanges in seminar discourse are short and that four-part exchanges are generally the longest patterns. In fact, a great number of exchanges comprise more than four parts or speaker changes. Many include other elements, such as r/i r (clarification sequences), the rare I R/I R pattern, F/I Rn sequences, deliberate disruptions where one interactant endeavours to block the interaction that another has set up and multiple response to initiation.

In subgenre B texts (discussion between students and student presenters), one exchange was observed to comprise thirteen parts or recognised speaker changes including an initiation, a disruption (non co-operative) a six part r/i r r/i r r/i r clarification sequence, a response and two F/I R sequences. The longest exchange identified in subgenre A (discussion between students and outside-presenters) is a fourteen-part sequence including a high number of r/i r sequences. The high number of r/i r clarification sequences may be explained by the fact that

there is a gap in expertise and knowledge levels between the interactants and this asymmetry in knowledge leads to difficulties for the audience in putting across viable questions. It may be recalled that the (r/i r) sequence comes into play when a question has not been understood. There were far fewer occurrences of the r/i r patterns in the tutorials and almost no incidence of non-co-operative disruptions either. This absence of r/i r sequences may be explained by the fact that tutors have more experience in understanding students' questions.

Another reason for some prolonged exchanges in the data was the occurrence of two or more responses from different students. This pattern occurs in both tutorials and also in student-presentation discussions when a number of students or 2 or more presenters contribute in responding to a question or comment. Obviously there were no examples of this pattern in the outside-speaker presentation as the only potential respondent is the expert him or herself. A pattern of multiple respondents such as I R1 R2 R3 is still basically an I R structure and so in terms of speaking turns many more of the simple I R exchanges are shorter in the outside-speaker presentations than was the case in the other subgenres.

The excerpt below portrays two of the patterns which can draw out an exchange, i.e. multiple respondents and clarification sequences:

S1 Did you feel there's a segment of the market they're missing out on (I)

P2 Sorry what was that (r/i)

S1 Did you feel there's a segment of the market they're missing out on (r)

P2 Do we think there's a segment of the market they're missing out on
do we + (r/i)

P3 In own country or internationally (r/i)

S1 Internationally (r)

P1 Um don't know (R1)
  {
P2 Don't \\ know   (R2)

P3        \\ I don't think they're missing off market there's some growing market there's some opportunities and we have to go into these markets eh it's not a problem of actually missing out we we decided in the case study for some countries which

appears which appears to be interesting because of profitability and things like that
but ===== (R3)
(Student-presentation text 5)

## Some Limitations

Although the analysis indicated some variation in the relative frequency of occurrence of the patterns across the three subgenres, it also shows variation between texts from the same subgenre. For example, text three form subgenre A comprises entirely two-part initiation response sequences, whereas, less than half the exchanges identified in text four from this subgenre were of this pattern. Clearly, there is a need to be aware of the potential for variation in the frequency of exchange patterns within similar interaction patterns and event types.

Secondly, it was found that the framework accounted well for interaction that was essentially dyadic. However, it was not possible to apply to interaction when it became multi-party. There were a few instances of multi-party interaction in subgenre B texts and in one subgenre C text. In the former case, the tutors intervened and the interaction was then between the tutor, students and student presenters. Multi-party interaction is discussed in section 5.5.

## Findings in data from Turkey

The analysis of student-initiated exchanges with outside experts in the data from Turkey showed a predominance of the simple I R pattern. Only one or two exchanges could be seen otherwise. Similarly to UK data, the I R exchanges in the Turkish data were interlaced with r/i r sequences as the presenters experienced difficulty in understanding the initiation. The relative lack of F/I moves was striking. In the Turkish data there were one or two instances of these moves, although over 40% of the exchanges identified in UK data incorporated F/I R sequences.

Clearly the post-presentation discussion between students and outside speakers in the discussion in seminars with outside speakers in Turkey is very constrained: the student asking a question and *passively* receiving a response. In addition, it was noticed that a higher proportion of exchanges in the Turkish seminars were initiated by the tutor rather than the

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students. The amount of tutor-initiated exchanges in the UK outside speaker data was very low and only one such interaction had been observed in the corpus. In the Turkish case, 5 exchanges were recorded as tutor-initiated and 12 as student-initiated. However, the tutor was the same in both the Turkish seminars used in the analysis and therefore, it would be unwise to read much too into this. Nevertheless, the high number of tutor-initiated exchanges coupled with the very limited nature of the exchanges presents a picture of a less dynamic type of event in terms of student driven interaction compared to the UK situation.

## 5.5 Tutor-Led and Multi-Party Interaction
### Tutor-Led Interaction

The study of exchange structure was primarily focused on student-initiated exchanges. However, tutorials (the texts from subgenre C except text 2 recording the tutorless discussion group) obviously presented a number of tutor-initiated exchanges and these were investigated in order to identify possible qualitative differences in comparison to student-initiated exchanges.

One salient feature of the tutor-initiated exchange is the occurrence of a follow-up move followed by an initiation move within the same turn at talk.

> Example
> T So did you have a look at these questions did they seem terribly frightening or not
> (I)
>
> S1 Eh except for question 6 just 1 part of it we don't seem to have covered this terminology (R)
>
> T That's right yes I think that was the part where I referred to a particular section of eh Danet but we can go through it today and you might want to go back to Danet at that stage (F)
> well apart from looking through these exercises which provide a bit of revision for the exam I'm here also to hear any other problems you might have that you want me to go over again we'll be looking first at questions 1 to 6 first today (S2 Yeah good) and then 7 to 12 next week um so before we make a start on these do you have any other particular topics on the eh say the first half of the lectures that you would like me to deal with as well today (I)
> (Non- presentation discussion text 1)

The co-occurrence of F and I moves in a turn of teacher talk is not a new finding and it has been presented in the literature before (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). What is significant for this

study is that this tutor-initiated pattern contrasts with the common student-initiated pattern of I R F/I R. Due it would seem to the asymmetrical power relationships at play and the tutor having control over discourse topic and direction of the discussion, the tutor can in one turn follow-up and then pass directly into initiating a further exchange.

A second distinctive feature of tutor-initiated exchange patterns is the prevalence of exchange-final follow-up moves by the tutor. Many of these are lengthy and involve the tutor in expanding on the topic.

> Example
> T OK So when we talk about reducing demand what kind of policies would we pursue for that (I)
>
> S9 Raise taxes (R)
>
> T Sorry (F/I)
>
> S9 Either raise taxes (T Right) or even possibly raise interest rates one of the problems with raising taxes though is although there'll be less spending on domestic goods (T Right) that in turn could lead to an increase in unemployment (T Right) through the companies folding cause they're just not selling goods so it's a vic \\ ious circle (R)
>
> T                      \\ Right right and I think that brings in the question specifically as it is asked there of saying what policies could be used and what it's consequences would be So as you say on something we could do is actually reduce overall demand and that will mean the that the demand for imports will go down and of course this policy is more effective the more open the economy is the larger the proportion of imports are in the total market and the more sensitive imports are and the margin to reduction in demand and as you say the implications of that would be a slow down slowing down of growth in the economy ===== (F)
> (Non-presentation discussion text 4)

One of the functions of the follow-up move in tutor-initiated exchanges would seem to be for the tutor to input information to the group. Although the tutorial is not primarily a lecture, the tutor still wishes to impart information and the follow-up slot following from the elicit-response sequence provides the opportunity to do so. It could be suggested that the tutor's final turn in the above extract appears as the opening to a new exchange and thus the turn is both F and I. However, as the text unfolds we see that this is not the case. This turn constitutes the end of the exchange and the following turn is a new initiation on a fresh topic by a different student.

Another aspect of these interactions is the high incidence of back-channelling or positive follow-up by the tutor to students' responses. Back-channelling can be intra-turn and this is shown in S9's second turn in the previous extract. Various functions have been ascribed to back-channelling: it signals continued attention, agreement, acknowledgement or change in state of knowledge state of the listener (Heritage 1989: 30). Interestingly, there are incidences in the data of a student stopping in order to elicit this back-channelling. This is illustrated in the following excerpt with the student appearing to stop and start his response in order to evoke comment from the tutor. The excerpt raises the question whether back-channelling is a form of premature follow-up:

T ====== So what will we say about that would you like to make a start on that (I)

S4 What I was suggesting was that the the place where we seem to lose the most money was on the 2200 on the import of goods (R)

T Right

S4 So that be a place to start (R cont.)

T Right

S4 Looking at exactly what those goods might be because they may be goods which we couldn't produce anyway and that having to set up a completely new industry or whatever would not actually be a feasible proposition to actually to see if there were any alternatives within that (R cont.)

T Right OK that's very much a direct intervention approach you're === (F)
(Non-presentation discussion text 4)


The I R/I R is a pattern associated in the literature with the teacher-fronted classroom, (Sinclair & Coulthard op cit.) and it was suggested to be is a materialisation of teacher display questions. A few examples of this sequence were evident in the data and an example of this pattern is shown below:

T ===== And how about then the notion of gross domestic product at market prices would you (gesturing) like to (I)

S4 Is it the value of all goods and services produced for the domestic \\ market (R/I)

T                                                                    \\ Right domestic that's
right yes (R)
(Non presentation discussion text 1)

Given the leading role of the tutor in these discussion classes, the relative infrequence of this pattern is perhaps surprising. Although tutors are clearly involved in asking display questions in tutorials, students in these events did not respond to them as might be the case in the schoolroom. It could be argued that the kind of R/I move illustrated here is somewhat self-effacing and that although appropriate in school classrooms, it is not seen as appropriate in a university setting and that this is reflected by its low incidence in the data.

The F/I move in tutor-initiated exchanges seems to have an additional discourse function which is to push the student's thinking forward. In this case, the F/I Rn sequence presents the type of discourse that has been termed *Socratic Questioning*. One of the tutor's discourse functions then is to probe and the F/I move showing response but stimulating further response is a means to do this. In the extract below of classical Socratic questioning, the role of the tutor is in giving critical follow-up, showing dissatisfaction with the response given and pushing the student's thinking forward toward the conclusion or generalisation that the tutor has in mind. The following extract illustrates this kind of tutor questioning and it can be compared with the subsequent text extract which is taken from Plato:

> example 1:
> S2 \\ They were users they were current users (S1 Yes) one was a pilot and one was a musician and they both developed they both understood a need a personal need (T Right) and they developed that as commercial (R)
>
> T Right so you found a variable in terms of user dominated innovation (F/I)
>
> S2 Yeah (R)
>
> T So yes there's 2 instances of that (F/I)
>
> S2 Yeah (R)
>
> T OK so can you see the slight distinction between the two though within that within that (F/I)
>
> S2 Um + I think ==== (R)
> (Non-presentation discussion text 2)
>
> example 2
> Socrates: Now we have agreed that Love is in love with what he lacks and does not possess.
>
> Agathon: Yes.
>
> Socrates: So after all Love lacks and does not possess beauty?

Agathon: Inevitably.

Socrates: Well would you not call what he lacks and in no way possesses beauty beautiful?

Agathon: Certainly not.
Socrates: Do you still think then that Love is beautiful if this is so?

(Plato, The Symposium, from the translation by W. Hamilton (1951) Harmondsworth: Penguin quoted in Brown & Alkins 1988)

A further variation in tutor-initiated exchanges was the pattern of I  R1 F   R2 F   R3 F as two or more students proffer their response.

## Multi-Party Discussion

One non-presentation discussion in our data differed from the others in that it recorded a 15 minute session with three students having a case discussion without a tutor due to his absence. The tutor unexpectedly later turned up and a second 15 minute discussion was recorded.

The attempt to analyse this text tested the feasibility of using the approach developed with multi-party discourse. The other texts (with some exceptions in parts) in the study had been essentially dyadic in nature, i.e. audience to presenter(s) and tutor to class. They had been multiparty only in the sense that a number of people may have constituted one side. It has been suggested in the literature (Cheung 1984) that small group discussion can be analysed in the same way as dyadic discourse with a specified leader because one party will assume the leadership role. Cheung's finding was based on analysis of a simulated discussion activity.

However, in this study difficulty was experienced in applying the same approach and identifying the kind of patternings in one discussion text (subgenre C text 3) which showed students discussing some set questions on a case study and involving them in brainstorming and problem-solving without a tutor. Firstly, no-one was seen to tend to assume leadership of the conversation although at various times each of the three students tried to structure the discourse by eliciting the others' responses to the set questions. The following example illustrates this:

Example:
S1 So what do you think the source of inform of innovation is it more I think it is
more the need that exists in the company an any company in the UK because at eh
beginning of the case we just know \\ that it

S3                                                          \\ Yeah I thought that the need the latent need
was there in the airline companies for an information system =====
(Non-presentation discussion text 2)

It is noticeable that the same student (S1) starts responding to what appeared to be his own

elicit and it is not clear whether S1's move should be identified as an elicitation or not. To an

extent it appears as an initiation since S3 makes a response but that response is not to the elicit

or question but rather to S1's response to his own question. One of the difficulties in analysing

this kind of data is that the participants may appropriate each others' discourse functions. This

makes analysis into basic I R slots of dubious usefulness. In the previous example, S1 was

responding to his own question, in the example below, a student gives follow-up to the

response elicited by another student:

S2 The market didn't exist because there wasn't actually a need

S3 Do you think so

S1 Yeah
(Non-presentation discussion text 2)

A further feature of the non-led discussion was the prevalence of split turns which were

evident to a much lesser in other texts. To identify the boundaries of a turn in such cases,

therefore, is problematic. The extract below illustrates a split turn which may perhaps be

labelled as an initiation:

S3 As far as guitarists were concerned they did want a way of playing the synthesiser
without using the keyboards so as far as professional players were concerned they
were interested in a system like this \\ that's what I see (I?)

S1                                                  \\ Only the professionals

S3 Only the professional that's right so it was a very limited niche market (I? cont.)
(Non-presentation discussion text 2)


On the surface, this extract seems to be: S3 initiates, S1 responds and S3 follows up with an

evaluative *That's right* and some extra information. On the other hand because S3's first turn

is interrupted, only the first part of S3's second turn could be seen as follow-up and the final

part can be seen as the continuation of his initiation. This kind of *re-initiation* due to interruption was also identified by as being widespread in small-group discussion (Cheung 1984: 91).

In interaction which is essentially two-party, student/tutor, audience-member/presenter(s), tutor/class, and in which one party is in a more privileged speaking position, analysis could be made along the lines proposed so far in the study. Interaction in the other texts is largely a matter of initiation response sequences albeit with variations. There may be disruption sequences within the I R sequence, there may be feedback to the responses which lead the discussion on or there may be some form of lead in to the sequence via a pre-initiation move. However, when dealing with multiparty interaction in which there is less of a leader role, analysis in these terms embraces little of the interaction. What we see in multiparty, discussion without a specified leader are sequences of interaction in which participants add to the discussion. This adding to the topic is not necessarily achieved through statement/counter statement question/answer dialectic couplets but rather through throwing out ideas. So what emerges is a discourse of a piling-up of what seem to be initiations. For example:

> S2 It says here very clearly that the pilots were frustrated by the lack of development in the research and development department and asked if any of the flight crew knew anything about computer programming (S2 Right) so this was a problem that existed and the management didn't have the insight to enforce or pass to the research and development department something about it (I?)
>
> S1 What I can see here is like there is a lack of management (S2 Well management) in each company (S2 There's obviously) because no-one took care of the problems of the pilots (I?)
>
> S2 There's not a tech At Dan Air there's not a technical manager so to speak I mean there's someone on the ground crew there's someone who does the marketing and what not But Dan Air buys the planes from other organisations and there's not \\ (I?)
>
> S1                                                                                         \\ Yes
> but why don't they develop the program (I?)
> (Non-presentation discussion text 2)

To an extent this sort informing strings display a lack of co-ordination between speakers. It is not interaction in the sense of speakers in a chain reaction each affecting the next as in conversation or led discussion. Each speaker in these strings seems mostly concerned with

conversation or led discussion. Each speaker in these strings seems mostly concerned with dealing with the subject matter in hand, adding to its development and not with dealing with each other. In other words these strings characteristic of the non-led discussion group are heavily topic-focused and only marginally other-speaker focused and give the impression of interactants somewhat out of synchrony.

Thus it is argued here that not all multi-party spoken discourse can be seen as truly interactive. In this case the participants were concerned with adding their ideas to the discussion but these ideas were not necessarily taken up, responded to or commented on by the others and indeed perhaps they were not intended to evoke response or even acknowledgement. Applying the same descriptive system as used elsewhere in the study leads mainly to show a number of sequences which appear as a series of informing initiations which are of marginal structural and descriptive interest.

Burton (1980, 1981) reports finding that outside the 'chalk and talk' classroom spoken discourse was harder to categorise into exchanges and talks of "multiple openings." Burton developed the categories *supporting move* and *challenging move* to characterise the turns following on from an opening move (initiation) and the kind of build-up involved in what she termed a *round of talk*. *Supporting moves* she characterised as those agreeing, complying, supporting the opening move of speaker A whereas *challenging moves* were characterised as those that disagree, don't comply or support or counter-propose. However, in the preceding and following excerpts from discussion, it is difficult to identify moves as supporting or challenging, they simply function to add ideas.

Another noticeable feature of the leaderless group discussion is that speakers may reassert the topic of their previous turn at talk and seem oblivious to the propositional content of intervening turns. The turn-initial "yeahs" "yeses" or "buts" in such cases may have little significance. This feature is depicted in the excerpt below in which "yeah" and "but" are used

together even though S2's second turn cannot be seen to be either supporting or challenging S1 but appears as a new initiation as does S3's turn which follows.

> Example:
> S2                                          \\ Yeah but who buys the
> musical instruments I mean
>
> S1 The person who wants to play alone maybe at home (S2 Yeah) the guitar as well It's the fact that with the product you already have the guitar you can have an extension a synthesiser
>
> S2 Yeah but people tend to mimic especially in the music world they tend to mimic famous people already yeah then if no-one famous is using this product then everybody'll going to go ugh you know Dave Lee Rover doesn't use this system so I'm not going to buy it
>
> S3 But I would say that as far as the market for this particular product is concerned the majority of the market would be amateurs who are buying a product and this product is a very expensive product because of the technical

## 5.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter was on exchange patterns in seminar discussion, most specifically, on exchanges initiated by students. The chapter started with discussion of the means to identify exchange-initial moves and progressed to an exposition of move types and patterns of exchanges present in the data.

In dyadic student-initiated interaction, we found that the simple I R pattern predominated but that a second pervasive pattern was I R F/I R. Verbal exchange-final follow-up moves were little in evidence except in peer interaction. A substantial amount of interaction in the data showed interactants involved in complex interchanges over a number, in some cases a high number, of turns at talk. Tutor-initiated interaction was found to differ qualitatively from student-initiated interaction in some respects.

The approach to exchange structure that was used in the investigation was derived from B(DA) and it was found to account well for dyadic interchanges but not for multi-party interaction. I R was seen as the basic unit of interaction and it was proposed that clarification checks set up embedded sequences within the I R structure. This has implications for the notion of prospectiveness since it represents moves prospecting at a distance. The concept of

the F/I move, although not new (Hoey 1992), is not established in the B(DA) approach but it was found to account for a pervasive feature in the discourse of discussion. The major extended pattern of exchange proposed in this study is I R F/I R. In short, seminar discussion is based on two-part initiation response sequences and four-part extended structures. Within these patterns other variations such as clarification sequences and exchange-final follow-up moves are apparent.

The chapter has been concerned with identifying exchange patterns in the discourse of academic discussion, contributing to the discussion of means of identifying exchange-initial moves and in indicating relative quantitative variations in exchange patterning in subgenres of seminars. Theoretically, some questions have been raised concerning the structure of extended exchanges, the applicability of the B(DA) approach to problem-solving, multi-party discussion and in questioning the notion that prospectiveness be viewed only in relation to immediately adjacent elements in exchange patterns.

# Chapter 6

## Inter-Turn Structure: Moves at Initiation

"... That is the best questioning which best stimulates action on the part of the learner; which gives him a habit of thinking and inquiring for himself; which tends in great measure to render him independent of his teacher; which make him, in fact, rather a skilled finder than a patient receiver of truth."

(Fitch 1879, quoted in Ramsden 1992)

### 6.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 was concerned with exchange patterns in seminar discussion interaction and in particular, it looked at the patterns of exchange set up by student initiations. In this chapter, moves made by students at exchange initiation are investigated in detail. The main aim of the investigation is to formulate a framework to account for the moves and acts occurring and to explain them. The focus of this chapter of the thesis is related to the research question *How and why are exchanges initiated?* Within the functionalist view of language, structure in language is seen in terms of the language choices people consistently make (Halliday 1985). This chapter considers the language choices typically made at exchange initiation with the aim of explicating the motivations for student driven interaction in seminar discussion.

Moves starting exchanges in seminar discussion have not been the focus of extensive research. Three studies in the past few years have classified types of student moves in interaction in discussion in the university (Furneaux et al. 1991, Lynch and Anderson 1991, Tapper 1992). However, in these studies the subject of initiating moves itself was not the major concern and the categories suggested were given as matter of fact categories with a limited amount of discussion, exemplification or in-depth examination.

As in the previous chapter, existing constructs are used as a basis for examination of the data and there is a two-way process of moving from theoretical constructs to the data and from data to theoretical constructs with the objectives of making theoretical inroads and extrapolating a data-specific framework. The conceptual devices used are from discourse

analysis and pragmatics. Tsui (1992, 1994) presents a categorisation of eliciting acts in which acts are identified by the response types they predict. This approach and the construct of moves at exchange initiation of Coulthard & Brazil (1992) are used as the points of departure for the investigation.

A further aspect of the chapter is the comparison of seminar subgenres to see the extent to which the moves and acts occur and what variation there may be between the different subgenres, i.e. discussion following the presentation by an outside speaker (subgenre A), discussion following the presentation by student(s) (subgenre B) and non presentation discussion/tutorial (subgenre C). The chapter briefly examines moves at initiation made by tutors and finally, discusses the discourse based account of moves and acts presented in the chapter in comparison to ideas on questioning in Educational Studies.

For the investigation of initiations in this chapter, moves at initiation and follow-up treated as initiation are examined. Moves in F/I slots are considered for two reasons: firstly, these slots in interaction are both follow-up and initiation and thus their partial function of initiation cannot be ignored and secondly, it has been argued that it is through F/I slots that participants extend and develop exchanges.

## 6.1 Existing move and act categories and models

In this section, the terms 'turn' and 'move' are defined and findings from research into moves and acts in seminar interaction and move frameworks in general spoken interaction are presented and critically appraised.

The definition of turn used in this study is taken from Edmondson (1981a: 7). A turn is defined as the opportunity by an interactant to take the position of speaker at any one point in the talk and what is done during the time that the interactant continuously holds that position. Turns can be relatively short and may in such cases be basically one move. Turns opening exchanges in seminar are often lengthy and comprise a number of elements other than the

initiating move(s) such as metadiscoursal markings or supporting moves. It is also possible that a turn covers two slots in interaction. For example, in Chapter Five there was discussion of tutor turns in which the tutor gave follow-up to a response and also made a fresh initiation. A turn is not, therefore, necessarily one move or one slot in exchange structure although many are.

The move has been described as "The smallest significant element by means of which a conversation is developed" (Edmondson: ibid.: 6). Moves have been defined in terms of structure and level of discourse: "Moves are made up of acts, and moves themselves occupy places in the structure of exchanges" (Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 21). The definition of move used in this study is derived from these two sources. A move is here defined as the element within a turn that drives and shapes the interaction. It is oriented to conversational goals and is the most significant contribution to the on-going discourse made by one speaker. Structurally, moves from different speakers make up exchanges and moves are comprised of acts, the smallest discoursal elements.

Study of moves specific to seminar discussion has been limited. Writers have been concerned with identifying the general function of a turn at talk and this has been the basis for the categorisation of moves. Furneaux et al. (1991: 76-77) used six categories in their study: *contributory statement*; *structuring move* (a move through which a speaker organises a subsequent activity); *agreement*; *disagreement*; *seeking information* and *indicating lack of understanding*. There are some difficulties with this categorisation. All categories, except *seeking information*, could be subsumed by the category *contributory statement*. *Indicating lack of understanding* points to a psychological state whereas the other categories signal discourse moves. There are differing levels of generalisations, e.g. *seeking information* is a much more general category than *agreement* or *disagreement* which are highly explicit. Are *contributory statements* moves which open an exchange or are they response moves? Examples are not given for these categories.

Lynch and Anderson's (1991) description of moves is also problematic. Categorisation of "the overall communicative function of the turn" was made by noting down the words with which turns began in seminars and from this questionable method the categories of *statement of opinion, disagreement, questions, repair* and *interruption* were derived. Exemplification in this case was minimal and again we do not know whether these are moves starting an exchange or responding.

Tapper (1992) classified student moves into *offers, evaluations, questions* and *comments. Offers* and *questions* were proposed as the moves that initiate exchanges. Tapper (op cit.) found that student *questions* are most likely to initiate exchanges in lectures, 'one on one conferences' and Freshman English classes but student *offers* (unsolicited information supplying moves) were high in laboratory classes. Questions were not categorised further.

Turning away from situation-specific models and to a more general model and categorisation, we consider the construct proposed by Coulthard and Brazil (1992). This construct conceptualises initiation as realised by either an informing move or an eliciting move. If initiation is realised by an informing move (containing an inform act), this precipitates a response in the form of an acknowledging move. If initiation is realised by an eliciting move (containing an eliciting act), response is realised in the form of an informing move and this opens up the possibility of a third part follow-up move which is realised by an acknowledging move. This model thus allows for two possible move types at initiation: eliciting or informing moves.

The term *elicitation* was first introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard, who explain that it is an act which functions to request a verbal response although a non-verbal response may result (1975: 28). An inform act (which is the essential head act of an informing move) is defined as:

> "Realised by a statement. It differs from other uses of statements in that its sole function is to provide information. The only response is an acknowledgement of attention and understanding."
>
> (Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 19)

An acknowledging act is defined as:

> "Realised by 'yes', 'OK', 'cor', 'wow', and certain non-verbal gestures and expressions. Its function is simply to show that the initiation has been understood, and, if the head was a directive, that the pupil intends to react."

(Sinclair & Coulthard ibid.: 20)

Tsui (1992, 1994) working within the DA(B) framework proposes a six division categorisation of elicitations. The subcategories are classified according to the discourse function they prospect from the interlocutor. Thus the name of the elicitation "signifies the kind of response prospected by the elicitation."

The first subcategory in Tsui's classification is *elicit: inform* and this elicitation sets up the expectation that the addressee supplies some information which the speaker does not have. Tsui shows examples from this category of forms such as: wh questions and questions asking if X or if Y, questions which have been termed *neutral polarity questions* (Quirk & Greenbaum 1973), i.e. neutral in the sense that the question leaves open whether the answer is affirmative or negative. Within this category Tsui (1992: 102) also shows statements which function to elicit unknown information such as:

*A I don't know just where the -uh- this address is.

B Well, where do - which part of the town do you live.

(Schegloff 1972: 107),

and statements followed by a questioning participle which seek more information e.g.:

E: You have to get it from New York *huh?

F: Yeah, just write, just write them a letter, and they'll probably send it by airmail too, for free.

Rather surprisingly, Tsui (op cit: 102-103) includes display questions, which are characteristic of school classrooms, within the category of elicit: inform. Her argument is that, although the display question has a knowledge-checking function, the display question may not appear to the addressee as an information check. Also, she argues, the display function can be identified

in retrospect, when the speaker produces a follow-up. There appears to be a contradiction here. On the one hand, Tsui describes the display elicit as an elicit by "which the addressee is invited to supply a piece of information which the speaker already possesses", and yet it is put under the category of elicit: inform, a category which she defines by its function to gain information about which the asker does not have assumptions.

Tsui's second subcategory is *elicit: confirm* and this category functions to invite the interlocutor to confirm the speaker's assumption. Confirmation is expected but disconfirmation may be the response. In the case of disconfirmation, high key in the response signals the contrastive element. Tsui shows realisations of *elicit: confirm* to include grammatical features such as tag questions, declaratives with a question intonation and positive and negative polar interrogatives. The issue of realisations which are declaratives with question-like intonation is, as Tsui points out, a thorny one. Intonation is not the only indicator of an eliciting discourse function in this case. Also there is the need to consider who knows what and the situation. Tsui provides the example below to illustrate that ambiguity may sometimes only be resolved as the discourse unfolds:

> *A: So the meeting's on Friday
>
> B: Thanks
>
> A: No I'm asking you
>
> (Coulthard & Brazil 1981: 84)

In the above excerpt, A's first move aimed to ask B if the meeting was on or would be on Friday. However, the function was ambiguous and B read it as an information giving move by A and thus thanked A for the information. A then had to make explicit the function of his or her first move.

A further subcategory in Tsui's categorisation is *elicit: agree*. This category is defined as functioning to "invite the addressee to confirm that the speaker's assumption is self-evidently true" (ibid.: 107). In Chapter Two of the thesis attention was also drawn to the problematic nature of this category. The fourth subcategory is *elicit: commit*. These elicits request more

than a verbal response but commitment of some kind, most usually action. The final subcategories are termed *elicit: repeat* and *elicit: clarify*. An *elicit-repeat* prospects repetition of the preceding utterance and an *elicit-clarify* asks for clarification of the preceding utterance.

In this section, the classification of moves proposed in the literature on seminar/discussion were reviewed and found problematic and limited. Therefore, two general theoretical constructs were outlined as they will be used as the springboard for analysis of initiating moves and acts in this study. These are Coulthard & Brazil's (1992) model of initiation as realised by informing or eliciting moves and Tsui's approach, but not the actual categories, of categorisation eliciting acts according to the type of discourse move prospected for the interlocutor at the next slot in the exchange.

## 6.2 Identification of move and act categories at initiation in seminar

The data was examined partially in light of the theoretical constructs outlined and other concepts of questions from pragmatics and philosophy and partially by the search for new explanations. The objective was to arrive at a framework which can account for moves and acts in student driven interaction in seminar discussion and to offer an explanation of them based on in-depth examination of the interaction and consideration of the context.

### 6.2.1. Rejection of Category of Informing Moves

According to the construct of Coulthard & Brazil (op cit.), initiation may be realised by either an informing or eliciting move. Informing moves are, according to the model, followed by acknowledging moves as response whereas eliciting moves are followed by informing moves, i.e. reply as response. Firstly, the data was examined to see if it was possible to differentiate these two types of move by consideration of the interlocutor's following move: if the following move can be defined as an acknowledging move, the prior move can be seen as an informing move and if the following move is a response or reply, then the preceding move is an eliciting move. Acts of acknowledgement have been defined as functioning merely to show that an initiation has been understood. Response (or reply) has been defined as functioning to

provide a full linguistic response which is appropriate to the elicitation (Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 20).

It was possible as a preliminary step to identify some moves at initiation as possible informs. The first two following examples illustrate a short response move that could be read as an acknowledgement. They are among the few examples of short response moves following on from initiations in the data:

> example 1
> S2 Um obviously all this institutional support for the risk that they're taking is going to rather expensive and that's going to have to be serviced out of increased efficiency in the years to come (I)
>
> P Yep
> (Outside presenter text 2)
>
> example 2
> S2 I'm interested to hear what you say about the Spanish providing for the Spanish Hispanic community in America (I)
>
> P1 Yes
> (Student presentation text 1)
>
> example 3
> S2 Part of it yeah part of it I think although it was an interesting product it's a musical thing I don't actually think there was a market large enough to really support mass development
>
> T There could be many reasons for failure one way it could have been price it doesn't look like it did its market research properly (S2 No) I mean it may have been the market but
> (non-presentation discussion text 3)

Yet, on closer investigation difficulties emerged in identifying these initiations as informing moves. Firstly, what superficially might appear in some cases to be an inform by speaker A (speaker gives information with no perceptible question-like intonation) is then, however, taken up by speaker B who does much more than show understanding as acknowledgement. Example 3 above illustrates this. The tutor gives quite a full linguistic response to S2's move and this leads us to read S1's move as an elicit. So this takes us to the point that what could differentiate an informing from an eliciting move as initiation is uptake, minimal or maximal.

The second problem was the use of the words *yes* or *yeah*. Among other meanings they can mean in seminar context either *Yes, I understand* (acknowledging) or *Yes, that's right* (reply/response). Taking example 1 above, does P agree or indicate reception of the inform? If we look at the unfolding discourse we see:

example 1 cont.
P Yep

S2 I mean I suppose we could all imagine various types of ways in which this matter could but I wondered if in your experience you could point to any particular types of pattern (I cont.)

P A pattern of

S2 Eh the motivation for it and the future development of the business In fact in other words a pattern of where the increased efficiency actually comes from

P Right um yes you must remember the first thing that happens ======

S2 continues and reformulates his initiation. If P was just acknowledging S2's informing move, clearly this was unacceptable as a response in this kind of event. S2 was looking for more and he must give a fuller initiation to get what he wants. Therefore, I would argue that S2 would see his first entry as an eliciting not an informing move. The response to his opening move was not what he was hoping for, it was possibly an acknowledging move and S2 needs to extend his initiation. Had S2 viewed his own first entry as an inform why would S2 have needed to do this? Acknowledging moves are not generally acceptable as a response to initiation and participants in seminar expect a full linguistic response. This leads us to identify opening moves as elicits but not informs in discussion, regardless of their form or the fact that they may appear to have the purpose of informing.

Another problematic aspect concerns differentiating between what might be interpreted as acknowledgement and back-channelling. Back-channelling is not traditionally seen as a discourse move but rather as a kind of conversational lubricant. Turning back to example 2, we see the rather unusual situation of a student stopping mid-initiation to check that the initiation is being received and he continues:

example 2 cont.

* S2 I'm interested to hear what you say about the Spanish and providing for the Spanish Hispanic communities in America (I)

* P1 Yes

S2 If there if one took the perception that they're immigrants to the country \\(I cont.)

P1

\\ That's an

assumption

S2 It's an assumption but there's a large movement from Mexico Cuba Puerto Rico across into America perhaps there's a whisper behind me illegally perhaps they want to move away from their own culture and join the great American dream do you think that ====== (I cont.)

As the discourse unfolds we see that what may appear as the first *informing* move of S2 is in fact a kind of disjointed preface for his real initiation which occurs at the end of his third turn. S2 is not informing the presenters that he's interested in Spanish Hispanic communities and P1 is not acknowledging he understood that S2 is interested in that subject. What is happening is that S2 stops to seek reassurance of listener attention, and seen this way, P1's *Yes* is a back-channelling device. There are in the texts examples of back-channelling being given during an initiation. The extract above is unusual in that S2 stopped to get the reassurance of back-channelling. The excerpt below illustrates an initiation in which back-channelling is provided mid-turn.

S4 Hm how would it differ between a sort of eh public limited company a private company and a public authority of some sort when the management buyout is a public authority or some function of a public authority I mean things like NHS *(P Yeah) cleaning contracts are currently being bought out by management?
(Outside presenter text 2)

Tsui (1994: 135-55) investigates informatives in detail. She identifies these as acts which provide information, report events or states of affairs, recount personal experience and express beliefs, evaluative judgements, feelings or thoughts and which prospect an obligatory verbal response of acknowledgement. A further point Tsui makes is that the acknowledgement

prospected by these various subclasses of informative are distinct. In response to a *report*, acknowledgement may take the form of a *message-received signal* or a *supportive comment*. In response to an *assessment*, acknowledgement may be a *second evaluation* and in response to an *expressive*, response would be some kind of reciprocation of goodwill or minimisation, etc. The difficulty with this is that some of Tsui's 'acknowledgements,' e.g. supportive comment or second evaluations, seem to be quite full linguistic responses. This raises the question of how can informatives and elicitations be differentiated since both may lead to the same full linguistic response and both may be positioned at the same place in exchange structure, namely, post-initiation.

Tsui gives the example of an *assessment inform* followed by a second evaluation acknowledgement:

> *A and S have been discussing the interpretation of certain utterances in conversation.*
>
> S: That's very interesting. I don't think I have the guts to make it the subject of my thesis. It's very difficult.
>
> A: No you'll be able to once you get into it, the ah the nuances and all that.
>
> (ibid.: 148)

S's turn comprises a move that might be interpreted either as an elicit or an inform. S may make the move with the expectation of an acknowledgement (as Tsui proposes) or of some kind of full response. The latter, however, even though, we know little of the context in which the excerpt took place, seems the more probable: S is eliciting support rather than informing A of a decision. It is after all improbable that A could make a simple, short acknowledgement, such as "OK", without causing a conversational lapse to follow.

The concept that moves at initiation can be distinguished into two: elicits and informs and that elicits prospect replies and informs prospect acknowledgement was not readily applicable to seminar discussion data. In interaction in this context, initiations are set up to stimulate replies. Short responses of acknowledgement such as *yes, yeah* or *OK*, on the rare occasions

when they follow initiations, were not accepted as suitable responses by the makers of initiations. When such responses were issued other than as back-channelling, they almost invariably led to a continuation of initiation, a re-try for a full response. This finding leads us to the conclusion that the vast majority of initiations in seminar discussions are read and acted upon as elicits and the respondents take upon themselves the job of giving full linguistic responses. If by chance the respondent does not give a full reply, the initiator re-tries. In these formal academic speaking events, one of the rules of appropriate behaviour can be suggested as: *When a participant has gone to the bother and risk of contributing to the discourse through initiating an exchange, he or she expects a full response.* This means that contributions at initiation or follow-up treated as initiation, whether framed as questions or not, are elicitations and they anticipate an answer, not an acknowledgement.

One final example is given to illustrate that acknowledgement is inappropriate as a discourse move following an initiation in discussion. It is taken from a student presentation discussion:

> S1 I asked the question because one thing that wasn't in the case study was the male market and I would suggest that a lot more male fragrances are bought by females
> (F/I)
>
> P1 Yeah
>
> S1 As presents rather than by males personally (initiation cont. as re-try)
>
> P1 Yes but I'm not really sure internationally Maybe === (R)
> ( Student presentation text 5)

### 6.2.2 Elicits

The division of initiations into eliciting and informing moves has been found unsuitable and this leaves elicits as the only major category of moves at initiation. In this section of the chapter, the categories in Tsui's classification of eliciting acts (1992, 1994) are juxtaposed with examples from the texts and a reworking of the categories is proposed to account for moves at initiation in seminar discussion.

### 6.2.2.1 Elicit: inform

Elicits: informs are defined as discourse acts to ask the other speaker to supply missing information about which the speaker does not have assumptions (Tsui 1994: 81-82).

Taking this definition, we found that *wh* forms are easily discernible in the texts and identification of such forms as elicit: informs is straightforward. These elicits do not involve the speaker in making propositions. Some examples of *wh* forms of elicit: informs are given below.

> example 1
> S1 What was the competition doing in its advertising policy
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)
>
> example 2
> S3 How much of your output is tied in with these co-partnership arrangements where
> you're heavily engaged with your people you sell your products to
> (Outside speaker presentation text 4)

Elicits incorporating words such as *who, what, when, how, how long,* etc. were easily identifiable as elicit: informs. There were a number of elicitations involving *how,* e.g. *how much, how often, how long* in the data but few elicitations involving *why.* This is perhaps surprising for an academic context as a *why* type question would seem to indicate a cognitively more demanding question type than the more factual *who* or *how. often* type elicits.

Identification of elicit: informs is not always so straightforward. Some are indirectly realised as in the example below:

> S4 ===== And I just wondered about the contrast of that approach with your
> approach
> (outside speaker presentation text 3)

The above could be re-worded as *How does that approach contrast with your approach?*

### 6.2.2.2. Elicit: Confirms

Elicit: confirms are defined as elicits in which the speaker has assumptions concerning the answer. He or she expects confirmation of assumptions (op cit.). In the data two types of elicit: confirms were identified.

### Weak Elicit: Confirms

One set of initiating realisations are utterances incorporating forms such as *Did they...? Are there...? Has it been..?* These are items which have been termed *neutral polarity* questions in literature (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973) and the term *neutral* has been used to indicate that the speaker does not have assumptions whether the response will be affirmative or not. The term *positive polarity question* has been used for questions for which the speaker expects a positive answer, i.e. confirmation of an assumption.

Tsui (1992: 106) points out that intonation may be a key in deciding whether these polarity forms are elicit: informs or elicit: confirms. Intonational prominence is the clue to unravelling this ambiguity. Tsui provides the example "Did someone CALL last night?" as opposed to "Did SOMEONE call last night?". Both of these mean *Was there a caller?* In the second case, the prominence on SOMEONE indicates a positive orientation i.e. prospects confirmation as it means someone contrasted with no-one. However, contrastive stress or "prominence" was not noticeably apparent in the often lengthy elicits of the seminar participants.

The objection I see in the distinction between neutral and positive polarity questions or elicits is two-fold. Firstly, an idea is not far, if at all, removed conceptually from an assumption and is there a distinction between asking whether an idea is correct or not and asking for confirmation of an assumption? Are they not one and the same and is not the hearer going to confirm or disconfirm in either case? Through the *Do you ...? Is it because...?* forms, the speaker is putting across an idea, proffering a proposition and this is the case in both *neutral* and *positive polarity* questions. Therefore on a theoretical basis, I would argue against such a

distinction and for the idea that polarity forms prospect confirmation positively whilst at the same time allowing for the possibility of disconfirmation. Secondly, how feasible is the concept of neutral polarity for the context of academic discussion? In a seminar discussion, for example, if I ask the question: *So did the unrest come about because of unemployment?*, I am not really in this situation going to ask about a cause such as unemployment if I have absolutely no predisposition to thinking that this a) is a statement of relevance to the topic of causes of unrest that is being discussed and b) has a good possibility of being agreed to. There may or may not in daily conversations be *neutral polarity* questions and the speaker neither assumes nor cares whether the answer lies either way, yes or no. This is not, however, the situation in an academic seminar and what appear as yes/no questions are in fact suggestions more than inquiries. Blakemore points out, that yes-no forms differ from wh questions in that they express full propositions (1992: 117). Yes/no forms are elicits which Bennet states, get a hearer to commit himself to the truth of some assertion (1982: 101). As such they prospect a positive response, i.e. confirmation. For these reasons such forms are categorised as elicit: confirms in the study and Tsui's notion that some polarity forms function as elicit: informs and others as elicit: confirms is rejected.

Some examples are given which demonstrate the improbability of these kinds of questions having a neutral orientation in seminars and they show that the participants are in the business of putting forward ideas:

> example 1
> S4 Do you feel there's a segment of the market they're missing out
> (student presentation text 5)

> example 2
> S2 If GDP can be explained as it were an indicator of a country's economy would it
> be acceptable as an answer
> (non presentation discussion text 1)

> example 3
> S3 Is that because of the lack of quality perceived in firms smaller than yourselves
> (Outside speaker presentation text 4)

Tsui (op cit.) categorises X or Y questions as elicit: informs. However, it can be argued that the speaker is offering propositions and prospecting confirmation of one or other of the

alternatives. Therefore, I would argue that these elicit forms are more appropriately placed in the category of elicit: confirm. The idea that yes-no questions are truncated versions of alternative questions has also been indicated in the literature from pragmatics (Blakemore 1992: 117) and philosophy (Walton 1989: 27).

One interesting phenomenon in the data was the number of unfinished X or Y elicits. It is often the case that these elicits are incomplete, either with the speaker trailing off mid-flow or the other speaker interrupting and taking the floor. This suggests that in these discussion events, they are perceived as much of a sameness with 'positive polarity' elicits and that the second part has a potential for redundancy. The example below illustrates an incomplete X or Y form:

Example
S1 ====== If someone want to make an exit and he's part of the management team (P Yeah) after two years (P Yeah) does he make a clause in the agreement or would it \\ be

P                                                                                                          \\ He can't
(Outside speaker presentation text 2)

The examples given in this subsection, both the X or Y elicit and the yes/no forms can be argued to represent suggestions by the participants. They are a means of *contribution* through elicitation and this distinguishes them from the purely information seeking elicit: informs. This is similar to the line taken by Pomeratnz (1988) who differentiates between questions in which the speaker does not make any claims on knowing the answer and claims of being somewhat knowledgeable. To view such elicits as simply seeking information rather than contemporaneously suggesting and seeking confirmation would be to overlook their propositional content.

The elicits discussed in this section are fairly low risk. In the semblance of information request, participants put forward their own hypotheses. They tentatively suggest a proposition and seek confirmation. Thus they are termed in the study *weak elicit: confirms.*

## Strong Elicit: confirms

Three other recurrent forms are evident in the data: firstly there are forms which have been termed *negative polarity questions* (Quirk & Greenbaum 1973) in the literature, secondly, there are declarative utterances and thirdly, there are tag question forms. What unites these forms of elicits in initiations is again the function of prospecting corroboration for the speaker's view/assumption. However, in these instances the assumption is presented less tentatively than the weak elicit: confirm. I am terming these moves *strong elicit-confirms* to denote that the speaker is putting across his or her point strongly and less tentatively than in the former sub-category. It is not a strong confirmation which is prospected, although clearly disconfirmation may need to be made more forcibly.

Examples
Negative polarity realisations
1. S3 Aren't these companies just aberrations of the system that creates the =====
(Student presentation text 7)

2. S2 The individual you wouldn't say is a part of the market then
(Non presentation discussion  text 2)

3. S1 Were you not re-inventing the wheel if you'd looked at ===
(Outside expert presentation text 1)

Declarative Realisations
1. S4 I don't want to go off at a tangent or anything here but politically it's a very dodgy one to bring up at all especially in black America where there is a whole emphasis now in going away from that post-colonial attitude and you probably won't sell much stuff like this which is supposed to make your skin light
(Student presentation text 5)

2. S7 But they may have added value to it (T Yes) before they consumed it themselves
(Non presentation discussion text 1)

Tag realisation
1. S3 That would still produce the equation I have given you would still produce the GDP because it would include the value of the exports wouldn't it
(Non presentation discussion text 1)

Strong elicit: confirms are a higher risk act than weak elicit: confirms for two reasons. Firstly, the speaker appears to put forward his or her view rather than a tentative suggestion. Secondly, some of these elicits have a negative orientation and they emerge partially as a

reaction to something said or done by the other party and show disbelief or dislike of it. They appear to have a direct relationship with a previous point made by another, often functioning to critically evaluate a previous item of talk. As discourse acts they are more controversial in nature. Sometimes distinctively negative in tone, it seems to be part of the seminar discussion politeness game to clothe even disagreement and dissatisfaction in the appearance of questions, such as the negative polarity form. Teaching materials (e.g. James 1984) have tended to present disagreement moves as prefaced with tokens such as *I completely disagree with you* or *I couldn't disagree more*. Chapter Seven surveys prefaces and indeed there are occasions in the texts when argument is prefaced in this way. However, in the main it is through negative polarity questions, tags and mildly toned declaratives that more critical moves are realised.

Quirk & Greenbaum (op cit: 193) talk of two assumptions behind the negative polarity form: the old assumption which is positive and the new assumption which is negative. If we take the example below, the speaker's old assumption is that a company should follow its competitor carefully and the new assumption is that, from what he has heard in the talk, the presenter's company does not pay heed to its competition:

> S1 Were you not re-inventing the wheel if you'd looked at what they were doing .
> presumably you did look at what the opposition was doing ===
> (Outside speaker text 1)

We see this concept of the two assumptions, one prior and the other new, as a distinctive aspect of acts in this category of strong: elicit confirm.

Not all declaratives are noticeably negative in tone and some might appear as information-giving. Students sometimes offer information or ideas from their own experience and this is an important rationale for seminar discussion according to the students who were interviewed. However, a full linguistic response always follows on from them and it is these responses which show that these elicits function discoursally as elicitation not 'contributing statements'

or 'offers' which may simply be received. Within these elicits a substantial amount of supporting information may be given. The following example illustrates a personal experience declarative elicit: confirm.

> S5 I mean sometimes when you're doing door to door selling I mean if you have a couple of products I mean if you say straight-away I'm selling jewellery or something people turn you back you say right I've got toys as well and that's where you open your bag and
>
> S1 Avon doesn't sell they don't have the products there either they have samples they sell like Betterware they have catalogues that they leave =====
> (Student presentation text 8)

We have shown how disagreement or making critical points may be realised through elicit-confirms and, in particular, through negative polarity questions, such as *But don't you think ..?, Was there not ..?* Other realisations of negative polarity are the use of the words *surely and presumably* which can be interpreted as equivalent to *Is it not the case that ....?*:

> Examples
> S2 ===== I mean I don't know what the legislation is for CDs but I mean if they'd invented it surely surely they could have done something with it I mean they tried to sell them but
> (Non-presentation discussion text 3)
>
> S4 Do you think do you think that going for achievers when they are trying to put across a value for money aspect surely the achievers will be looking for a little more up market
> (Student presentation text 9)

In philosophy Walton (1992) differentiates between the concepts of supposition and assertion. Suppositions are speech acts putting forward a proposition for acceptance in a hypothetical manner. However, the making of an assertion is a direct statement of a proposition and carries with it the *burden of proof* for the speaker. I would argue that it is easier to make weak elicit: confirm 'questions' for the speaker than to risk the making of outright assertions or other forms of strong elicit: commits because the latter potentially set up confrontation and may demand evidence to be provided by the speaker. Walton points out "The burden of proof at any move depends on the kind of speech act that has been made by that move. For example,

an assertion carries with it a different burden of proof than a question" (ibid.: 105). It is the strong elicit: confirm that in seminar interaction potentially carries with it the *burden of proof.*

This section on elicit: confirms has put forward the notion that elicits realised in three forms: negative polarity forms, tag forms and declaratives form a sub-category of elicit: confirms, i.e. strong elicit: confirms. They are distinct from weak elicit: confirms in that the speaker more directly espouses the propositional content in them, they concern a reaction to previous discourse and that they carry with them the potential for the burden of proof. Negative polarity it has been shown often denotes a particularly controversial stance. Declaratives too can show disagreement or the need to add information that has been absent, even 'noticeably absent.' Strong elicit: confirms are more critical, the acts through which participants react and register the recent incoming information against their background assumptions. Through these realisations students either disagree, critically respond, ask the *difficult question* or put forward their own ideas and experiences on the topic for interlocutor confirmation.

### 6.2.2.3 Minor Categories

In the previous section, the main acts of elicitation in seminar discussion were proposed as being elicit: informs and elicit: confirms. Acts at exchange initiation in the central discussion in seminars can very largely be accounted by these acts. However, some other acts were are also found to be evident. This section illustrates them and argues that they occupy a secondary role.

### Elicit: Commit

Elicit: commits function to prospect an action or promise of an action rather than just a verbal response. It has been said that an elicit: commit "... not only invites a verbal response but also invites commitment on the part of the addressee to further interaction" (Tsui 1992: 108). Elicit: commits are not a major aspect of the discussion in seminar debate although they do occur. Some occur not as discourse acts as such but as prefaces to the main discourse. For example, in the following excerpt, the first phrase of the speaker would, if he hesitated (which

he didn't), constitute an elicit: commit as presumably the other speaker would response with *Yes, go ahead* or some such utterance. As the phrase does not appear to have any real influence on the next discourse step, such *ritual elicit: commits* are not be considered in this section of the thesis but are investigated in the next chapter which looks at textual and attitudinal features.

> S1 <u>Can I just come back in with another question</u> it's really just to turn all this on its head and ask your comments on the sceptics view of this partnership purchasing which is ....
> (Outside presenter text 4)

In the tutorials there are a few instances of non-ritual elicit: commits. For example:

> T ==== and how about the notion of gross domestic product at market prices <u>would you (gesturing) like to</u>
> (Non presentation discussion text 1)

## Elicit: repeat & elicit: clarify

Tsui (op cit.) defines these as metadiscoursal items which request repetition or clarification of a preceding utterance. Requests for clarification of propositional content do not fall within these categories. These elicits are not found in initiation in seminars. In post-presentation discussion, it is standard for nearly all questions to involve a measure of getting the presenter to expand and clarify on some point raised in the talk but they seek clarification of propositonal content, not just repetition or rephrasing. Elicit: clarify and elicit: repeat acts do occur, however, in (r/i r) sequences which, as was pointed out in Chapter Five, often occur when there is difficulty establishing the question.

> Example:
> S1 Well who would you identify as your competition who one competitor that you would identify in Europe (F/I)
>
> P * For Rover 200 (r/i)
>
> S1 Yes (r)
>
> P Well it would be cars like === (R)
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

*Summary*

The section showed the examination of acts in eliciting moves in texts of seminar discussion alongside Tsui's categorisation of elicits (1992, 1994). Categories which account for elicits in seminar have been proposed. The approach of Tsui of identifying elicits according to the discourse act that is prospected by the interlocutor has been adopted. However, points in which the categories proposed in this study differ are as follows:

- It is proposed that elicit: confirms are distinguished from elicit: informs by the fact that they consist of a proposition, i.e. they make suggestions.
- Within the category of elicit: confirms two subcategories were distinguished: the tentative weak elicit: confirm and more assertive strong elicit: confirm.
- Polarity forms in seminars function to elicit confirmation and not to variously elicit information or confirmation according to whether they are positive or neutral polarity forms.

In summary, it was observed that the main business of seminar interaction is initiated with eliciting moves and that two categories of elicits were found to account for the bulk of initiations. they are elicit: informs and elicit: confirms. The former category are basically information-seeking and prospect the supplying of propositional content by the interlocutor. On the whole, they are realised through *wh* forms. The latter category, elicit: confirm, has been further sub-divided into two: weak elicit: confirms and strong elicit: confirms. In both categories propositions are suggested by the speaker. The typical realisations for these subcategories have been given with reference to examples from the texts.

### 6.2.3 Multiple acts at Initiation

A striking aspect of initiations in seminar discussion, especially seminars in which discussion follows on from a presentation, is that a number of moves with which students initiate exchanges have a tendency to involve a number of acts piled up. When a participant makes a

contribution to the discourse he or she may be keen to get quite a lot done. This may reflect the fact that few students get turns during the typical event.

Turns in discussion tend to be long. It is perhaps surprising that previous studies of seminar interaction have not discussed this issue and have been able to assign single interactive label to turns such as contributory statement or disagreement. The excerpts below illustrate that initiations may be complex:

> Example 1
> S1 So do you see suppose then that as a financially controlled company that they would probably obviously retain themselves a financially controlled company through the difficult times do you see that they are likely to change to say a more strategically planned or more strategically controlled company
> (student presentation text 10)

> Example 2
> S4      \\ But the technology side he seems to keep up in terms of machines and chemicals I'm interested to know how much technology keeps up with in terms of the garments themselves and the materials who does that is it the suppliers who say well there's this new material Rayon X which you have to treat in such a fashion
> (student presentation text 3)

> Example 3
> S8 In Danet it says the balance of payments is equal to the balance of trade plus the balance on the capital account now is the are you saying that the current account balance that he implies is equal to balance of trade and secondly is the balance on the capital account what you're saying the capital outflow is
> (non presentation discussion text 4)

The examples given show that initiation or F/I slots can be complex and involve a number of acts. Our questions then are: *Is there one head initiating act that is more interactionally significant, i.e. one act that prospects the kind of response that will be given?* and *If so, can we distinguish it in this build-up?* In the examples it can be seen that each contains a number of distinctive elements. Excerpt 1 has two weak elicit: confirms (positive polarity forms). Excerpt 2 seems to have two elicit-informs, i.e. *how much* and *who* followed by a weak elicit: confirm (positive polarity form). Example 3 appears to have three eliciting acts: a strong elicit: confirm (i.e., this is what I know about this subject because I read about it in Danet) followed by two weak elicit: confirms.

The B(DA) (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) approach does not allow for the possibility of a run of 2+ elicit heads together or an eliciting and informing double head. If 2+ eliciting acts co-occur, the latter is seen as having interactional significance, i.e. it is the item that the next speaker will uptake and act upon. The former are automatically to be downgraded to the status of *starters* and *clues*.

> Thus in any succession of statements, questions and commands the pupil knows he has only to respond to the final one which alone has the initiating function ............ at the head of each initiating move by the teacher is one elicitation, directive or informative. That is to say a move constitutes a coherent contribution to the interaction which essentially serves one purpose.
>
> (Sinclair & Coulthard 1992: 15)

Some instances from the texts demonstrate that it is not necessarily or only the ultimate elicitation that the other speaker responds to and this is exemplified in the following extract. In this we see that the presenter responds to S5's first elicit of *Who...* rather than the second and last one on *How specialised ..:*

> S5 ====== My question was that who within the organisation do you see carrying out the strategic analysis how specialised are they in it really that's my I mean you've given a very detailed picture of the process but you haven't really mentioned who within the organisation you see doing it
>
> P Well it will depend very much on the organisation itself if you're a firm like GK. or or Lucas or Turner and Yule you will probably have a strategic team working full-time with a staff of 2 or 3 people looking at these issues ==
> (Outside speaker presentation text 4)

The question of such co-occurrences of multiple heads in move structure is addressed by Edmondson who says:

> " in such cases we shall refer to the two communicative acts as *together* realising the head of the interactional move. We thus allow for more than one illocutionary act filling one slot in interactional structure ...... and may refer to the MULTIPLE head of the discourse move. "
>
> (1981a: 130-31)

This kind of bulk initiation is according to Edmondson a form of *additive strategy*. Edmondson noted that this *additive* structure was evident in his data in situations when face concerns were very important.

In seminar discussion a turn can be long, stretching over several utterances and minutes in time. When it is not at all uncommon for a participant to have only one turn in an hour long event, a feasible explanation of the complex and multi-targeted nature of initiating moves is that the participant wants to get more than one thing done. He or she may want to register response to the presentation, elicit further information and even suggest the response to his or her own elicit. In a more casual environment these goals could be spread out into a multi-turn dialogue. A possible explanation for this phenomenon of the piling up of initiating acts is that an extensive move may be an elliptic, anticipatory strategy for a string of same person moves in a dialogue. In seminar discussion a maxim of *Get as much as possible done when you start an exchange* could be suggested. Not all that occurs is interactionally significant, some acts and moves may be supportive but a model for this type of interaction needs to allow for the possibility of more than one head and more than one purpose of the speaker in making a contribution.

In the field of philosophy the subjects of multiple or complex questions have attracted interest (Walton 1989 & 1992, Jacquette 1994). However, complex questions have been defined by these writers as questions that involve multiple presuppositions. Our concern, however, is that some exchange initiations comprise a number of propositions (either in the offering or the seeking). In this study complex questions are identified by the number of propositions involved. In the seminar discussion excerpts given in this section there are two or more propositions involved (and any number of presuppositions, but that is not our concern). If we look at the following example from a seminar we see the potential for multiple propositions within a questioning move and the fact that the reply may respond to more than one act in the initiation:

> S2 I want to ask something you said you are in the cosmetics salmon fish such kinds of things these things are targeted at the top of the market special persons special things don't you think to sell things that are sold in more quantity
>
> P Luxury as a luxury apartment what I want to come to is that if you go into business it's where you find the niche salmon doesn't only have to be eaten by the rich it is sold everywhere in Europe it depends on the country for us it is still a luxury a a a food it looks like but once it's produced in masses it won't be luxurious it will be less costly

than kalkan so it will not be luxurious anymore cosmetics the electrical things they are targeted at B+ or B level but in body care I believe the target level in B- that group which is environmentally concerned young group ladies especially who do not maybe have the means but who are very environmentally concerned and who like to but these goods so every product of course has a different target group but we are not in the detergent business we are not in such highly distributed manufacturing we sell air conditioning not everyone buys air conditioning ====
(Turkish data text 1)

For the analysis, the metadiscoursal markings are not included in the study of initiation. In the example above, therefore, the two phrases *I want to ask something* and *You said you are in the ......* are excluded. This leaves us with two propositions made at initiation: 1. These things are targeted at the top of the market and 2. You could consider targeting a more mass market. In fact, the other speaker responds to both propositions: firstly, she disconfirms that salmon will always necessarily be a luxury product and secondly, she confirms that the company does not target the mass market but targets each product at an appropriate market sector.

In this study the notion that the head of an initiating move is necessarily one slot to be filled by one act is rejected in light of the data. A model for seminar discourse needs to account for the frequent occurrence of a run of elicits in which there may occur 2+ differing head acts. Not all the elicits preceding the final one can be downgraded to the status of clues or starters. It cannot be argued that they inevitably lack interactional significance nor is the perlocutionary uptake necessarily exclusively addressed only to the latter elicits, although this may sometimes be the case.

There would appear to be various reasons for a run of acts. There may be simple restatements or examples and in such cases the second act can be seen as replacing or superseding the first. However, if we look at the following examples we see cases of multiple acts as initiation. In example 1 the speaker asks if they the company will remain financially controlled and then asks if there is a possibility that the company will become strategically controlled and the interlocutor will surely confirm or disconfirm that there will be a change and then say what that change will be. Tactically, this is a common action: to make a general elicit and then secondly to suggest quite a specific reply. In the second example the more general *who* elicit

is followed by the *Is it X?* elicit. There are other instances when the elicits are very distinct in prospective purpose from one another and in example 3 the speaker wants confirmation on the reliability of the information given in Danet, he wants confirmation that the current account balance is equal to the balance of trade and he wants confirmation that the balance on the capital account is the capital outflow.

Example 1
S1 So do you see suppose then that as a financially controlled company that they would probably obviously retain themselves a financially controlled company through the difficult times do you see that they are likely to change to say a more strategically planned or more strategically controlled company

Example 2
S4      \\ But the technology side he seems to keep up in terms of machines and chemicals I'm interested to know how much technology keeps up with in terms of the garments themselves and the materials who does that is it the suppliers who say well there's this new material Rayon X which you have to treat in such a fashion
(student presentation text 3)

Example 3
S8 In Danet it says the balance of payments is equal to the balance of trade plus the balance on the capital account now is the are you saying that the current account balance that he implies is equal to balance of trade and secondly is the balance on the capital account what you're saying the capital outflow is
  (non presentation discussion text 4)

## 6.3 Model of Initiating Acts and Moves of Students

The following framework is proposed for moves and acts at I and F/I slots in discussion.

**Figure 6 : Classification of Moves and Acts at Initiation**

1. Moves at initiation function to prospect full linguistic replies as response moves and these moves are therefore termed 'eliciting moves'.

2. Exchanges may be initiated by:

> eliciting moves with a singular head act
>
> eliciting moves with multiple head acts

Moves with multiple head acts may comprise acts of the same category or different categories of elicitation.

3. The central topic-focused elicitations in seminars may prospect

> the supplying of new information
>
> the confirmation of the speaker's assumption

The former do not involve speakers in proposition making whereas the latter do.

4. Elicit: confirms can be further subdivided into two subcategories:

> strong elicit: confirms
>
> weak elicit: confirms

Strong elicit: confirms are potentially high risk, face threatening acts in which the speaker commits him/herself directly to a proposition to which the other speaker must respond. Weak elicit: confirms are low risk, face maintaining acts in which the speaker tentatively suggests a proposition to which the other speaker must respond.

5. The typical realisations of

elicit: inform are:

> phrases beginning with: *who, what, how, why etc.*

weak elicits: confirms are:

> X or Y forms, incomplete X or Y forms, positive polarity forms

strong elicit: confirms are:

> declarative statements, tag forms,
>
> negative polarity forms

Negative polarity forms indicate the most potentially highest face threatening moves.

The framework proposed in this chapter differs from previously existing constructs of acts at initiation or question types in the following ways:

- The framework proposes a two-way classification and motivation for questions (elicits) in discussion: those that seek information, i.e. seek propositions and those that seek confirmation, i.e. questions which supply propositions for other party verification.

In the classification of elicits, the classifying concept of whether the proposition is given or sought is proposed. Theoretically, this implies that questions are differentiated not only by the demand they place on the other speaker, an idea propounded by Tsui (1992, 1994), but also in terms of who supplies the propositional content.

- The category of elicitation of confirmation is divided into two subcategories according to speaker commitment to the propositions within the acts, i.e. weak elicit: confirm (weak commitment to a proposition) and strong elicit: confirm (clear commitment to a proposition).

The concept of classification according to the degree with which the speaker espouses the proposition within the question may seem reminiscent of the idea of positive and neutral polarity questions. However, it differs in that the classification is not based on a one form, one function precept. In the data, a number of forms are suggested for weak and strong elicit: confirms.

- The view is presented that in this specific situation, initiation is realised by eliciting moves and that what may seem to be informs at initiations function as elicits since they prospect full responses.

The notion of initiation as realised by either elicits or informs (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Coulthard & Brazil 1992, Tsui 1994) was not found to be tenable for discussion. Our point is that in discussion, nearly all initiations function to prospect replies.

- The notion is proposed that questions may be simple or complex. Simple question involve asking for or supplying a single proposition and complex questions involve multiple propositions. The view that there is necessarily one major question within a string of utterances in an initiating move is rejected.

This idea of complex questions involving two or more requests for information or confirmation is at odds with the approach of B(DA) which views only the last of a string of elicits or informs as interactionally significant.

## 6.4 Initiating Moves in Three Subgenres

Student-initiated exchanges of the major interaction patterns in the texts from three subgenres of seminars were examined and the moves at initiation and follow-up treated as initiation slots were analysed in order to identify occurrences of the categories of elicits proposed in the framework. For example, in subgenre A, we considered student-initiated exchanges to the presenter but not the instance of the tutor-initiated exchange to the presenter.

- Acts in the initiating moves which proffered the student's own suggested answer to his or her own question were counted in the analysis (as strong elicit: confirms). Acts in which students gave metadiscoursal back-referencing to the presentation were not included in the analysis.

- The few elicit: commits and elicit: repeats occurring in initiation slots were excluded as they are not seen as major categories of discussion.

- Acts which simply restated or re-worded a prior act were not counted as separate acts

- Assertion type strong elicit: confirms often include reasons, background information, etc. Due to their complexity these acts were treated as a single elicitation of confirmation unless they were also used alongside other elicits such as elicit: informs.

Table 8: Single and Multiple Acts in Moves at Initiation

|            | single      | multiple    |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| subgenre A | 26 (65%)    | 14 (35%)    |
| subgenre B | 34 (76.6%)  | 11 (23.4%)  |
| subgenre C | 34 (87.2%)  | 5 (12.8%)   |

Table 9: Acts in Moves at Initiation

|            | elicit: inform | weak elicit: confirm | strong elicit: confirm |
|------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| subgenre A | 21 (37.5%)     | 18 (32.1%)           | 17 (30.4%)             |
| subgenre B | 7 (11.3%)      | 17 (27.4%)           | 38 (61.3%)             |
| subgenre C | 5 (11.1%)      | 17 (37.8%)           | 23 (51.1%)             |

Table 10: Data from Turkey: Single and Multiple Acts in moves at initiation

|            | single      | multiple    |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| subgenre A | 7 (63.6%)   | 4 (36.4%)   |

Table 11: Data from Turkey: Acts in Moves at Initiation

|            | elicit: inform | weak elicit: confirm | strong elicit: confirm |
|------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| subgenre A | 8 (44.4%)      | 6 (33.3%)            | 4 (22.2%)              |

All the features, elicit: informs: weak elicit: confirms; strong elicit: confirms; single and multiple acts in initiating moves, were seen in all three subgenres of seminar. The occurrence of these elicits varied. These variations are examined in the remainder of this section and further aspects of the moves, such as specific uses and co-occurrences of acts, which were found in the different subgenres are brought to light and discussed.

There was some variation between the subgenres. A marginal preponderance of elicit: informs and equal proportion of weak elicit: confirms and strong elicit: confirms were identified in texts from subgenre A. In this subgenre a high number of initiating moves were complex and comprised more than one eliciting act. In subgenre B a majority of strong elicit: confirms and only a small number of elicit informs were identified and single act initiating moves were considerably more common. In tutorials (non-presentation seminars) strong elicit: confirms predominated but less so than was the case in subgenre B. In addition there was a fairly high incidence of weak elicit: confirms but relatively few elicit: informs. Due to co-occurrences, the picture that emerged of initiating moves was one of considerable complexity, although only a limited number of categories was established.

Co-occurences of acts were observed to correspond to two aspects. Firstly, co-occurrences relate to strategic factors and, secondly, co-occurrences correspond to the formality of the situation. The presentations are very much a staged event compared to the tutorial and this lack of spontaneity and the fact that students plan turns and have relatively few opportunities for speaking, is argued to account for the pile up of the acts in initiating moves in subgenre B and especially subgenre A.

**Elicit: Informs**

The occurrence of elicit: informs was noticeably higher in subgenre A compared to subgenres B and C. The occurrence of this type of elicit in student initiations with outside speakers is not surprising. The outside speaker is called in as an expert, the voice of experience and, in Management Science, as the voice of success also. There is a gap in knowledge between the two parties in these discussions and the asking of information-seeking questions is an obvious corollary of this divide in expertise. It can also be argued that the high percentage of elicit: informs reflected the topical nature of the presentations which focused on the speaker's application of principles or innovations in management to show a practical assessment of the everyday situation in the business world. In subgenre A, the high proportion of elicit: informs indicates that requests for unknown information are a major impetus for opening exchanges and is much in line with the participants' views that these events are partially set up for them to get information from the experts in the field.

The potentially fact-seeking nature the elicit: inform in subgenre A is illustrated by the examples below:

> example 1
> How is your strategy been who would you identify as your competition
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

> example 2
> You say the management team often involved a number of employees how does it
> complicate things and eh
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)

example 3
How do the market value the shares though I mean I can
(Outside speaker presentation text 3)

Examples 2 and 3 indicate a further aspect of the elicit: inform: that it is often not the only act in the initiation turn. In example 3 we see the speaker on the verge of offering a suggested answer to his own question and in example 2 the speaker was also about to do more than pose the straightforward elicit. Speakers can trail off or have their turn taken when they pause but it is often the case that with the elicit: inform students seem aware of a need to look as if they are willing to do more after it.

The superficially fact-seeking nature of the elicit: inform may also belie a more complex general interactional move by the student. The excerpts below illustrate this with the students in these cases proffering answers to the elicits, in the first case after posing the elicit and in the second case before doing so:

example 1
S2 Can I ask um how much more successful the recent new range of 200 400 and 800's has been and have you got any indication of the sales it seems to a lay person such as myself to be ===
(Outside speaker presentation text 1)

example 2
S3 Um we're interested in how you approached the company because I'm sure the philosophy's been there from the start and therefore in a younger and a growth company in a growth market it's relatively easy to experiment to make mistakes and then recover particularly with an educated workforce who might be thinking in a like mind to yourself how do you suggest your thoughts on empowerment would say transfer across to a much more maturer industry say like the coop or health service
(Outside speaker presentation text 3)

In example 2, it might be argued that what is really happening here is that the speaker is asking the equivalent of a negative polarity question in a roundabout way. The gist of the above could be replaced with *Isn't it the case that this worker empowerment idea cannot be applied in older industries and those industries that have an uneducated workforce?* If this is so, this undermines the validity of categorising elicits in this way. What difference does it make if we frame the question this way or that? The fact of the matter is that the speaker did not set up an elicit: confirm, he asks an elicit framed in a factual information-seeking way.

Presumably he has his reasons for doing so which may be consideration of the appropriacy of act types to situation.

Another feature, albeit rare, of this type of elicit is multiple occurrences of the elicit: informs within the same initiation. For example:

> S1 Well who would you identify as your competition who one competitor that you
> would identify in Europe
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

It was observed that there was a relatively high proportion of elicit: informs in subgenre A. In addition, it was indicated that this does not mean that there are a large number of simple single head initiations which are no more than a *wh* form. In fact there were only a couple. However, information gathering would appear to be at least a partial stimulus for students opening and extending exchanges with outside speakers.

Lower proportions of elicit: informs were found in subgenres B and C. In subgenre B, peer interaction, one side has privileged access to knowledge and information only to the extent that they have presented the case study. However, the whole class have had the case notes to read through and are familiar with the information about the businesses concerned. On the whole the presenters have an edge on knowledge of the topic of the discussion but it is not a very real one. They do not in fact work for the businesses concerned although they often present the case as a simulation and as if they are involved in the decision making for the company. There is at best then only a slight gap in knowledge on the topic between the two sides in the discussion. It was not unexpected, therefore, that there should be a relatively low incidence of elicit: informs in these events. In subgenre C, few of these acts were observed and lead us to conclude that students are not so much in the business of eliciting unknown information from tutors as suggesting ideas for confirmation.

**Weak Elicit: Confirms**

Hypothesis Testing

The incidence of weak elicit: confirms was relatively similar in all three subgenres and was the second most common act type identified in initiating moves in each. It was argued previously that questions such as *would it ...?, was it ...? and have you ...?* are in this study of seminar discussion seen as elicitations of confirmation. This is because in these situations students are proposing an idea or information, putting it to the other party and expecting to hear verification that this is a correct proposition or assumption. Some examples are given below to demonstrate this subcategory and its typical grammatical realisations. The following examples demonstrate further that the speakers have made assumptions, are assumption testing and are not simply information gathering:

> Examples
> 1 So it is a value added on the expenditure basis
> (Non presentation text 4)
>
> 2 If GDP can be explained it were an indicator of a country's economy would it be acceptable as an answer
> (Non presentation text 1)
>
> 3 Actually you focused on the role of the company was actually the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for UK
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)
>
> 4 Does that mean to say that if you could perhaps do things again that you would not have sought equity finance but offered the share-holding to the workforce and perhaps taken on some kind of debt financing
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

The weak elicit: inform is marginally more predominant in discussion with outside speakers and tutors since students are interacting with those who have more knowledge in these situations. The other speaker in both events can be expected to know the validity of the propositions and it is not a test type or display elicit in these situations.

One salient aspect of the weak elicit: confirm is its co-occurrence with the more open-ended elicit: inform. In strategic terms the use of the two acts together can be read as a face

promoting tactic by the student. He or she seeks information, e.g. in the second abstract below about procedures for getting out of management buyouts, but then the student suggests the information him or herself via the weak elicit: confirm. This, to some degree, detracts from the image of the student in the role of the information seeker when asking *factual questions*. What he or she can add is another facet to the information request which is the supplying of a proposition.

What is the intention of the speaker in using this combination? Three possible explanations can be suggested. The second act (elicit: confirm) can be interpreted as a suggested answer to the question he or she is asking thus showing co-operation by helping out the other speaker by this proffering of a possible answer and thus is a strategy to support the other speaker. Or the use of the first elicit: inform act can be seen as a stratagem, a means of staging the speaker's own suggestion by raising anticipation. Finally, it is conceivable that neither act can be seen to support the other but that the speaker wants to know the answer to the 2 elicits, after all the propositional content prospected by the 2 elicits is not identical and the second elicit if answered in isolation would not supply the breath of the information prospected by the first more open ended question. The example below illustrates the co-occurrence of an elicit: inform and elicit: confirm.

> example
> S1 So how long are these people locked in the company if someone want to make an exit and he's part of the management team (P Yeah) after two years (P Yeah) does he make a clause in the agreement or would it \\ be
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)

Specifying Response Framework

It was also noted that the weak elicit: inform occurs also in the F/I slot and here it seemed to act as a means for directing the other speaker to respond more precisely in line with the speaker's original elicit. This type of elicit can, therefore, additionally function to orient the other speaker to exactly the framework of response that the speaker is looking for. In the following examples, it can be seen that the student elicited information, expected a specific response, when an off-target response was given, the student then specified the framework for

the response by use of the weak elicit: confirm. In the first example, a response in terms of a plan was expected and in the second, in terms of drawing a distinction:

> example 1
> S2 What I was looking for is some kind of comment not on the sort of capital value of what they've bought or anything like that but the way in which they've had to put together a future business plan I mean do these things fall into any kind of coherent plan (P Yes) at all (F/I)
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)
>
> example 2
> T OK So can you see the slight distinction between the two though within that (F/I)
> (Non presentation discussion text 3)

In the preceding excerpts, the orienting purpose is seen in the F/I slot after dissatisfaction with the response. One strategy to pre-empt this misreading of the elicit is for the speaker to specify the kind of response he is seeking in the initiating slot: *This is my question and this is the kind of response I'm looking for.* For example, in the extract below the student requests confirmation and specifies the orientation of the response i.e. tell me about distinctive patterns:

> S2 Did your employment strategies vary with the various sectors that you serviced and if they did are there any distinctive patterns that emerged
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

In subgenre C the weak elicit: confirms mostly, as do many initiating moves in this subgenre, stand alone. In interchanges with tutors, weak elicit: confirms were also used in a few instances for checking out business that is not central to the main topics of discussion, such as exam questions, course information etc. Two examples are given below:

> example 1
> S1 ===== Would it be a difference whether if you just give the definition or whether you expand it on the loss of marks
>
> example 2
> S7 Could we be asked to define the exam propensity questions like propensity to consume
> (Non presentation discussion text 1)

## Strong elicit: confirms

Strong elicit: confirms were most pervasive in student peer interaction in subgenre B and over two times as many were observed in this subgenre compared to subgenre A. It was argued previously that these are high risk moves to make in that the speaker directly states his or her

preposition as opposed to the tentative, assumption-making but yet noncommittal nature of the weak elicit: confirm. The strong elicit: confirm is an act that takes the other speaker to task on some aspect of a previous utterance or it is a direct information, idea or opinion statement of the present speaker given in reaction to some aspect of the previous discourse.

Contention

The potential for confrontation is set up by moves containing these items and this is illustrated in the following excerpt of student-student interaction from subgenre B. In the excerpt, the strong elicit: confirms are in the F/I slots and they are both in the form of declarative statements:

> example
> P4 Obviously these issues we must consider I mean we've thrown that in as something we must seriously consider now so that is as much depth as we've gone into it I mean obviously the management would have to consider franchising but I haven't gone into it so we're throwing it it out as an option a recommendation (R)
>
> S3* You've got to look at it seriously though because the Europeans will be coming up as well as (P2 It's not) these people from America (F/I)
>
> P2 It's not true to say you won't have control over your franchises you never ever I doubt whether you'd say Benetton don't have control over their franchises (R)
>
> S3 * That depends on the structure though \\ You've got to look at the structure It's the management's got to look at it (F/I)
>
> P2                                          \\ Yes that's right of course if you're going to do it you've got to do it properly

One sequence that was apparent in the data was the strategic pattern of blander, less directly confrontational acts occurring in the initiation slot and the more critical moves occurring in the F/I slot. Some examples of this lead us to question the intention behind some opening moves. How genuine are the these opening moves or are they a ploy, a staging for a critical move or sting that follows? Is what is operating here is a tactic of getting the interlocutor to make his or her position clear in order to then point out what wrong with what they say, a ploy which Bennet points out speakers project across chunks of discourse:

> "If A wants to make an argument why doesn't he just assert his beliefs and give his reasons for believing them? Why does he go to the trouble of asking B a question?

Furthermore, why does he ask him a question that, given A knows B's political position, A can probably predict the answer to?

(Bennet 1982: 99)

The extract below exemplifies this. It is somewhat doubtful whether S1 formulated his definite and developed views after the response of the presenter:

> S1 In in terms to this approach to market sourcing that you were talking about and the longer term view that is being taken there how do you rationalise that with the other side which is particularly in the company which Richard Fisher PLC in dealing with the short term approach to financial aspect + (I)
>
> P Yeah um I think ==== (R)
>
> S1 I think there's a bridge I agree with all the things you said and I've been involved in the industry myself and I know it can be applied and the benefits that can be obtained but I believe that there is this great chasm that British industry needs to somehow get across because the shareholders are going to say well OK what you're saying might be fine but you know I'm looking for my short term return I'm taking my money out of your company and shoving it into United Biscuits or something you know where I'm going to continue to get the growth that's anticipated so I believe that what you're saying is the way we have to go Getting there is going to be a slow and very rocky road (F/I)
> (Outside speaker text 4)

A further feature concerning the strong elicit: confirm is illustrated by S1's statement marked with an asterisk at the beginning in the following extract. This trait is the co-occurrence of the criticism and the reason for making it, i.e. If making a point which is critical, justify why you are making it.

> example
> S1 I don't know that I necessarily agree with that *I mean the amount of time getting
> in the car driving somewhere and paying some money \\ to wash things
> (Student presentation text 3)

The critical potential of this type of elicit realised in the negative polarity form can be unmistakable. In the following extracts, we see the negative polarity form used to criticise the other speakers' ideas or action. It thus sets up a challenge with the speaker proposing his or her analysis of what was wrong and prospects confirmation although given the fault-finding nature of the speaker's proposition, disconfirmation would seem more likely to follow.

> example 1
> S5 Don't you think you're falling into the danger of assuming that in the future similarities are going to be a lot more and differences are going to nullify themselves

example 2
S1 Weren't you re-inventing the wheel if you'd looked at what they were doing presumably you did look at what the opposition was you said so (P Hm) how they were operating on a European basis (P Hm) and if they were doing it on a European basis would that not have saved you some leg work said they were successful
(Outside speaker presentation text 1)

example 3
S3 Don't you think though that approach might affect its share performance that you related to which had obviously done so well on the 1980's
(Student presentation text 10)

## Omissions

A less overtly challenging, but nevertheless still critical, use of strong elicit: confirm moves is to redress an omission in the presentation or previous responses of the presenters in the discussion. Declarative forms are used:

S3 One other thing you hear quality of service you mentioned eh the convenience eh the convenience shops open form early morning to late a night one of the most important things is dry cleaning can be dried quickly one hour cleaning it's a very big thing

P2 Yes I was surprised =====
(student presentation text 3)

## Turkish Seminars

It is interesting to note that there was a similar incidence of multiple and single acts in initiating moves in texts from UK and Turkey. In these texts there was a relatively high proportion of multiple acts found in initiating moves (35% and 36.4% respectively).

In the texts from Turkey, a higher incidence of elicit: informs were observed and a correspondingly lower incidence of strong elicit: confirms. Student driven interaction in the Turkish events appeared to be motivated marginally more by information seeking than UK. The more critical or challenging moves realised in negative polarity and declarative statements were less frequent in the Turkish data and lead to the conjecture that less co-operative moves may be deemed less appropriate in these events in Turkish culture. The low regard of certain cultures for 'aggressive' classroom behaviours has been reported in the literature and was briefly reviewed in Chapter Two section 2.1.3. In other respects the data

from Turkey closely corresponded to that from UK and indicated the similarity of initiating moves in these events types in the two countries.

## 6.5 Initiating Moves of Tutors

Moves in initiating and F/I slots in tutor-initiated exchanges were surveyed to see if any different features emerged. Tutor-initiated exchanges from post-presentation discussions in subgenres A and B and in tutorials (subgenre C) were examined. Two features were found to be distinct to tutor-initiating moves: 1) inputting, informing moves and 2) the use of elicit: commit for structuring discussion. In addition there were instances of extensive tutor inputting at F and F/I slots indicating the display question nature of the opening initiation. ·

Tutor initiating moves in subgenre B (except text 7 which was highly tutor led) were relatively few. Some of the initiating moves in evidence can be characterised as extensive information inputting moves, like mini-lectures starting with a metastatement such as "Perhaps I can just add to that point ....". These were clearly cases of informing moves rather than eliciting moves and were not followed by response moves.

In tutorials and the one student presentation in which the tutor led the proceedings, there was a good number of tutor initiated exchanges. Many included moves which were not part of the central discussion as such but were structuring moves or non-directed nominations which fall within the category of elicit: commit:

> Example 1
> Would somebody like to make a start on that
> (Non presentation discussion text )
>
> Example 2
> Yes, anyone want to comment on this
> (Student presentation text 7)

Another aspect of moves in tutor-initiated exchanges is the pattern of extensive inputting in F or the F/I slot. Tutors use these slots to summarise and add to the previous student's response:

example
P1 ======= I guess that's what they are (R)

T Right so it may be almost that there is a time there is a difference in what the ownership specific advantages are are that they're actually developed over time (P1 Yes) and you might find actually that during the early stages 60 to 72 period it was really the founder of the company he really wanted to go into the shoe business he knew something about it and had a feel for the athletics shoe market for instance and that alongside with that over that period there was development of the shoe design expertise so that was what was internalised and that internalisation didn't actually need Nike to become a multinational to become an international organisation you might say the sourcing from Japan was expressly keeping that outside the enterprise developing a different form of relationship with external enterprises (F/I)

P3 But they did === (R)
(Student presentation text 7)

example 2
T What do you think links Nimbus and Steppe together perhaps more than um Air Data if we look at in particular the second question which was referring to the internal external (I)

S3 I would say Nimbus is external and ==== (R)

T I think
    {
S3 As a researcher as head of the research department so it was eh

T Well it was partly developments internally (S3 OK) but it was an adaptation of external developments (S3 Right) so they had to take in knowledge and expertise from Sony and Philips to adapt their product so it was a combination but === (F)
(Non presentation discussion text 3)


## 6.6 Question Classification in Educational Science

A strand of interest in Educational Studies has been the categorisation of questions and two major divisions have been categorisation of real versus display questions and categorisation according to the cognitive level of the response required. The second strand has led to attempts to categorise questions into lower, less cognitively demanding questions as opposed to higher and cognitively challenging questions (Barnes & Dunkin 1986, Mitchell 1985, Redfield and Rousseau 1981). Various rationales have been given for university seminars and discussion classes (see Cowie and Rudduck 1990: 805-6), but at core many validations of this mode of instruction quote the development of critical or higher level thinking and debate and this was also emphasised by participants during interviews. I will now briefly consider how

the elicit types identified in this chapter relate to concepts of questions from Educational Studies.

## Real and Display Questions

Real questions are defined as those by which the asker genuinely seeks to gain the information he or she doesn't know. Display questions, on the other hand, are those in which the question asker already knows the answer he or she is looking for and they are much associated with teacher talk in classroom instruction. To be able to categorise questions or elicits in this way requires one of two possibilities. Either, the knowledge of the asker needs to be recognised (for example, interactants can themselves classify their questions as those to which they already know the answer but this may be difficult to ascertain from the outside), or the unfolding discourse may contain signals which indicate that the question was not used to genuinely seek unknown information.

It was evident from the discussion of tutor-initiated exchanges in the texts that some tutor initiations were display. Section 6.5 showed tutor use of elicits for display and, by seeing how the tutor responded to the student's response, it was possible to identify this purpose. In these cases tutors responded at some length to the previous responses to their questions and used the question-answer format as an opportunity for inputting information into the discussion. This is a slightly different use of display questions than has been highlighted in literature on classroom interaction which has seen the purpose of the display questions more in terms of testing the students or trying to control the discourse by controlling the contributions students can make (van Lier 1988: 222-25). One function in seminar discussion of tutor display questions is as a way into their own making of a contribution to the discussion and presumably a more direct approach is felt to be situationally inappropriate.

The main focus of the chapter was on student initiating moves. It seems feasible to consider elicit: informs in terms of *display* or *real* functions. Seeing how the discourse develops can help identify this. For example, the occurrence of F/I slot may suggest that the opening

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question was display. The notion of display versus referential functions raises awareness of the more devious potential of elicit: inform moves. Although subgenre A appears high in elicit: informs, it should be borne in mind that the speaker is not necessarily, as was shown, only in the business of simple fact seeking.

It is much more difficult, however, to align the notion of elicit: confirms with the notion of *display* and *real* functions. Firstly, elicit: confirms by definition have an element of the known-answer. One of the limitations of seeing questions in term of known and unknown answers is that it doesn't allow for the possibility of half knowing or having a good guess about something. Moreover, in academic discussion much of the discourse is not on the factual level and there is perhaps not an answer as such but a point of view which people espouse tentatively or strongly. Yet the distinction of known and unknown answer questions is absolute and this is, I would argue, inappropriate for much seminar discourse. Some of discourse in academic discussions can be seen in the paradigm of question and answer, but this does not fit it all and much is more a matter of suggestion and response and thus beyond the application of the notions of *display* and *real* questions.

**Cognitive Levels**

Since Bloom (1956) developed a taxonomy of cognitive educational objectives, a number of researchers have looked at questions in relation to this taxonomy (see meta-analysis by Redfield and Rousseau op cit.). Bloom's taxonomy aims to classify student behaviours representative of the intended outcomes of the educational process. These behaviours are represented as a hierarchical structure with the more complex behaviours including the simpler behaviours. The classification shows six levels: 1. *recall of knowledge;* 2. *comprehension;* 3. *application;* 4. *analysis;* 5. *synthesis* and 6. *evaluation.*

In the present study, a number of moves which are realised by elicit: informs and weak elicit: confirms would appear (in isolation and it should be recalled that many moves comprise multiple initiating acts) to be lower level questions as they seek, at least in part, to gain factual

information or opinions from the other speaker. Bloom further subdivided the category of *knowledge* into *knowledge of facts, of conventions, of terminology of classifications, of ways and means of dealing with specifics, of trends and sequences*, etc. The second level, *comprehension* was further subdivided into *translation, interpretation and extrapolation.* Some elicit: informs in the texts can be seen as closely corresponding to the knowledge and comprehension levels, for example, questions which appear simply to make a demand on the other speaker to recall information: *What was the competition doing* (Outside speaker text 1) or *How would that be presented in the terminology* (Non-presentation text).

Other elicit: informs and weak elicit: confirms in the present study require more of the interlocutor in that they demand mental processing, albeit it at a low level such as interpretation or extrapolation: I *wondered if in your personal experience you could point to any particular types of pattern* (Outside speaker text 4) or *What sort of threat do you think they face from technology* (Student presentation text 3).

. Some instances of strong elicit: confirms appear to suggest higher cognitive level demands, e.g. the following questions appear to function at the level of analysis since they involve identification of assumptions and the making of inferences: *Don't you think you're falling into the danger of assuming that in the future similarities are going to be a lot more and differences are going to nullify relates* (Outside speaker text) or Do *you think do you think that going for achievers when they are trying to put across a value for money aspect Surely the achievers will be looking for a little more up market* (Student presentation text 9).

In all these cases the categorisation can only be very tentatively suggested. As Bloom stated "We can only distinguish between their (2 different students') behaviours as we analyse the problem and each individual's knowledge and experience" (op cit: 16). Besides the difficulty in categorising in terms of cognitive levels when we do not have access to the speakers' state of knowledge and experience, the approach taken in this study does not fit well within the framework of cognitive levels. Elicit: informs can be seen in terms of the cognitive demand

they make on the other speaker but the discussion of the categories of elicit: confirm and the subdivision into weak and strong has emphasised the contribution made to the ongoing discourse by the interlocutor who is asking the question rather than the interlocutor who is expected to respond, i.e. the propositional contribution of the interactant who poses the question. For example, if we take the question, *Don't you think you're falling into the danger of assuming that in the future similarities are going to be a lot more and differences are going to nullify relates*, we can see that the process of recognising an unstated assumption has been made by the interactant who asks the question. Answering the question doesn't place the demand on the receiver of the question to identify an assumption, but only to confirm or disconfirm that such an assumption has been made. This is arguably a very significant point about questions in seminars. Students benefit from asking questions or eliciting not only because these questions are a means to get at what they want to know but also because by formulating questions participants develop their thinking skills. The seminar is a place where it is not only the answer to the question which is the basis for intellectual development but the fostering of intellectual development occurs via the asking. What the analysis of initiating moves in this study has suggested is that much cognitive activity is expended in the formulation of questions or eliciting acts and in their combinations.

## 6.7 Summary

The chapter made a classification of moves and acts and their typical realisations with which participants, especially students, initiate exchanges. To make this classification two general, theoretical models (Coulthard & Brazil 1992 model of exchange structure and Tsui's classification of elicits 1992, 1994) were juxtaposed with the data. A framework for the classification of eliciting acts in initiating moves in seminar discussion was proposed.

The classification made in this study does not involve the specification of exact communicative functions such as *suggesting, disagreeing,* etc. Rather the analysis limits itself to the categorisation into two broad categories which are defined in terms of speaker's role in proffering/seeking propositions and by what we would expect to see in the response. These

are observable phenomena. The framework also allows for the possibility of multi-head initiations in which there is more than one act that is potentially significant in terms of interaction. Therefore, the framework presents a view of moves in initiating slots of interaction as potentially complex and non-reducible to a single, specific motivation.

The survey brought to light some variation in the initiating moves between the subgenres of seminar discussion. In addition, act combinations were presented and some explanations offered. In some cases the motivation for these combinations may be strategic. Weiser defines conversational stratagems as covert devices that aim to promote conversational goals (1975: 650). Combinations within and across turns may be strategic and appraisal of such instructional events should bear in mind the possibility of opaque as well as the transparent purposes of moves. In the following chapter of the thesis, some of the strategic features within turns in seminar discussion are explored.

## Chapter Seven
## Within Turns: Textual and Interpersonal Components

### 7.0 Introduction

The focus of the two previous chapters was on inter-turn structure: Chapter Five was concerned with the structure of exchanges and Chapter Six with the moves that set such exchanges into motion. In this the seventh chapter of the thesis, the focus rests on components within turns in seminar discussion, in particular components related to the *textual* and *interpersonal* (Halliday 1978) functions of language.

Whereas the two previous chapters focused on the skeleton of seminar interaction, the core of interaction patterns and their motivations, i.e. the transactional level, this chapter investigates the outer surface of the discourse, its embellishments and rituals, arguably non-vital yet ever present. The inner core was mainly concerned with *what* interactants can do in the events and offers a limited number of interactional choices. By contrast, the outer level is concerned with *how* interactants go about the business of seminar interaction which allows for a greater range of choices and strategies. The chapter aims to provide information related to the question, *What strategies do seminar participants typically engage in?*, and to offer a description of language within turns which may further inform a seminar skills syllabus.

The chapter is concerned with the textual and interpersonal aspects of language, its functions of indicating textual relationships and enabling the speaker to express his or her own attitudes and judgements and to seek to influence the attitudes and judgements of others (Halliday 1978). Crissmore (1990:1) uses the term *metadiscourse* in relation to both of these functions explaining that the term refers to elements relating to the organisation of discourse itself and to aspects of the relationship between interactants. Similarly, Sinclair (1982) identifies two aspects of language, language as a continuous negotiation between participants (the interactive plane) and language used to record experience and propositions (the autonomous plane). Interactants in seminar discussion are involved in much more than the simple and direct exchange of information or ideas. They typically employ a range of devices, textual and

attitudinal, to ensure that their contributions are effective and that face concerns are met. The aim of this chapter is to extrapolate the interpersonal and textual features and offer an explanatory account of these specific to seminar discussion.

Turns in both eliciting and responding slots are surveyed. The intention is to present a picture of the textual and strategic options and politeness routines with which speakers variously choose to make their way around in seminar discussion discourse. Firstly, typically occurring elements are explored and categorised. Secondly, the occurrence of these features across the three subgenres is investigated: subgenre A, discussion following the presentation by an outside expert, subgenre B, discussion following the presentation by students and subgenre C, the non-presentation discussion.

The analysis of inter-turn structure and moves at initiation was largely made within the framework of analysis set up by the Birmingham approach to discourse analysis, (B)DA. Although this framework accounts for non-core phenomena by identification of position, function and realisation of acts such as *metastatement, starter, clue, comment, etc.* around the *head act* in moves in classroom interaction (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975), it is not concerned as such with their strategic aspect and therefore, does not proffer an explanation of this type. Nor is it concerned with language choices for strategic purposes within *head acts*. To bring to light the varied components within turns, the study looks both to B(DA) and also to the field of general pragmatics and, in particular, the concepts of metadiscourse, hedging, speaker strategy and politeness phenomena.

The chapter is organised into two parts: investigation of devices concerned with textual signalling and those concerned with the interpersonal function of language, i.e. concerned with the speakers' presentation of their selves, ideas and relationship with interlocutors.

## 7.1 Textual Features: Signalling

One of the means by which speakers mark the significance of what they say and draw attention to the content of their utterances is through elements that relate to the organisation of discourse itself, namely, signalling. The use of textual signalling in presentation texts in seminars has been investigated, e.g. Coulthard & Montgomery (1981) and a number of pedagogic texts present such signalling, e.g Lynch & Anmderson 1992. Turns in seminar discussion are often fairly extensive, and signalling devices are used more often than in shorter turns such as might occur in conversational exchanges. Textual signalling thus appears to be a prevalent feature of discussion in seminars and the ability to decode and use it is potentially important for non-native speakers.

The ways in which speakers or writers forewarn their audience of coming text have been variously termed in the literature. McCarthy (1991) discusses *discourse organising words*. Weissberg (1993) talks of *advance organisers and topic shifters*, Tadros (1985, 1994) of *advanced labelling*, Crissmore (1990) of *announcements of main ideas, rationales, purposes and strategies*, Hatch (1992) of *discourse deixis* and Redeker (1990) of *paratactic sequential relations*. Burton (1981) following on from the approach established by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), uses the term *metastatements* for acts that indicate what the next piece of talk will be about. These terms are all used to refer to the same notion of devices with which speakers or writers foretell or postscript the coming or past discourse. From our examination of turns in discussion in seminars, discourse signalling devices were observed to signal topic, interactional activity and type of information.

### Topic

Discourse topic has been categorised into two: *continuous topic* whereby speakers collaborate or incorporate previously occurring subjects into their talk and *discontinuous* topic whereby speakers introduce or re-introduce subject matter (Keenan & Schieffelin 1975: 342-3). The interest in this sub-section is in *discontinuous topic*, i.e. topic that does not draw on immediately preceding topic in the discussion. Topic introduction or re-introduction need not,

of course, be indicated by any discrete item but may be integral to an eliciting move. For example, should a speaker say, *How about the cost of this?* when there has been no immediately prior talk of cost, then clearly this is an introduction of a new and discontinuous topic. Two common, overt markers of discontinuous topic in seminar discussion were observed and are termed in this study *back-referencing* and *titling*. Both of these devices tend to be turn-initial.

Back-referencing

Back-referencing is common in post-presentation discussion as a pre-eliciting act when speakers wish to indicate a new topic. As the term implies, they loop back to previous topics, usually those involved in the presentation. Some examples are given:

> example 1
> T: *Actually you focused on the role of the company* was actually the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for the UK
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)
>
> example 2
> S1 *You say the management team often involved a number of employees* how does it complicate things
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)
>
> example 3
> S1 Yes I have a question *you talked earlier about how they segmented the market you said they'd actually segmented the market in a number of ways that you said were relatively successful you said it wasn't just they hadn't just done it demographically but in a number of ways* do you feel they could have made better use of psychographic profiles of their customers
> (Student presentation text 2)

The first two examples are fairly simple and include the use of reporting verbs *you focused* and *you say*. The third example is more interesting and involves quite a lengthy back-referencing to previous text which seems at first unnecessary. The speaker could have simply said *You talked earlier about how they segmented the market,* which would have clearly indicated the topic and then the speaker could have gone straight into elicitation. However, he does not do this. How can this lengthy back-referencing be accounted for? One possibility is that speakers in these situations sometimes have a dual purpose: firstly to introduce the topic and secondly to recapitulate on the propositional content of the earlier discourse as a strategic

move, functioning to make the speaker's suggestion appear well founded. This then smoothes the way for confirmation of S1's question, i.e. given the build-up of what the presenters are alleged to have originally said, it would be difficult for the presenters to then not confirm in their response that S1's proposition is valid.

Titling

Devices of an elliptic nature and which resemble written titles are also used to indicate discontinuous topic. Hatch (1992: 239) has noted that a feature of unplanned dialogue is that a new topic or topic shifting is often done through use of marked topic-comment structures such as left-dislocation of the subject to indicate its status as topic. McCarthy (1991: 51-52) notes the phenomenon of *left-displaced subjects* saying that although this device is common in spoken language it tends not be presented in pedagogic texts. In the data, titling devices are often turn-initial in post-presentation questions but may occur elsewhere in the turn to indicate topic change or shift. The latter was observed in particularly long turns, including the presentation itself. McCarthy (op cit: 132) notes that "topics can be the reason for talk or they can arise because people are already talking." In seminar discussion, especially in post-presentation discourse, topics are often the reason for talk and titling devices function to orient the interlocutor and audience to the subject. Intonational features observed in the data included stress and a pause after the topic name.

Some examples from the data are:

> example 1
> S4 Yes eh *your pan European policy then* + has it been to so to take say a video shot in ===
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

> example 2
> S3 One other thing you hear *quality of service* + You mentioned eh the convenience eh the convenience shops open from early morning =====
> (Student presentation text 3)

**Discourse Activity**

Whereas the previous subsection showed markers signalling topic, other markers indicate discourse activity. Flowerdew (1992: 213) in a study of lectures talks of *peripheral utterances*

prior to definitions that mark the forthcoming discourse with a *grounder* to prepare the listener. The idea that speakers forewarn and indicate discourse activity is contained by the concept of *prefaces* also. Stubbs (1983: 181-82) talks of the function of prefaces as "displaying an analysis of a preceding or following utterance ....... (which) give hearers clues as to both the illocutionary force and propositional content of the coming utterance." In regard to written texts, Stubbs warns that prefaces should not be taken on their face value and that they may not accurately describe what actually then happens. One function of the preface is to enter a discussion and this may take precedence over following through with the stated action. The following excerpts illustrate this category of devices signalling discourse activity:

example 1:
S2 *Can I ask* um how much more successful the recent sales of 200 400 and 800 has
been ===
(Outside speaker presentation text 1)

example 2: Turn-initial and turn-final signalling devices
S4 Yes *I was going to ask you* when you were going to write to Michael Porter at Harvard and tell him you disagreed with his New-bend where he says you are a cost reducer or a differentiater if you are neither of those two things you are stuck in the middle and what you are saying is actually that doesn't exist you have to combine the two and so *it was just a bit of a frivolous question really*
(Outside speaker presentation text 4)

example 3:
S2                                          \\ *But the point that I'm making is* that you're saying that's the strength of the organisation (P4 Has been yes) at BTR the chief executive officer is that particular charismatic individual without that person will the company continue the path its trodden so well over recent years ====
(Student presentation text 7)

example 4
S1 *Can I just come back in with another question* it's really just to turn all this on its head and ask you comments on the sceptic's view of this partnership purchasing which is the big companies dumping on the small companies =====
(Outside presenter text 4)

From the examples above, it can be seen that a number of prefaces involve the verb *ask or* the nouns *question* or *point*. In example 2, there is both a marker referring forward and one referring back. The latter is among the very few examples of turn-final activity markers in the discussion texts.

How accurate are the interactional markers in foretelling the activity the speaker proposes? Example 1 forewarns of *asking* and the speaker follows through with a 'question'. In example 2, the relationship between the *asking about* of the activity marker and what follows is less clear. In excerpt 3, we see that the marker involves the phrase *make a point* and yet following on there is both a statement about the strength of the individual, which can be seen as a point and also a question about the future of the company. In example 4, the speaker follows through with what can be described as a criticism or a disagreement. To an extent then, some turn-initial activity markers may be misleading.

The approach of some writers of pedagogical materials and language description for pedagogic purposes, e.g. Price 1978, James 1984, to present turns as having one overall and specific communicative function, such as *to disagree* or to *ask a question,* and that this function is indicated by turn-initial prefaces does not represent well the nature of these devices and oversimplifies what an interactant may do within a turn in discussion. Topic indicators (prefaces) have both a descriptive and strategic function: they may accurately describe what is to come or is past but they may simply be a means to take the floor and/or extend the turn in an attempt to render it less abrupt and more polite.

**Information Type Indicators**

A further category of textual signalling device evident are those indicating the type of information that is forthcoming or that has passed. In regard to written texts, Tadros (1985: 73) discusses the concept of *advance labelling.* This she defines as a category of prediction in which the writer both labels and commits him or herself to perform a discourse act and in which the sentence labelling the act must not include its performance. She offers the example: "This analysis leads us *to make the important distinction* between real income and money income. Money income measures a :....." Tadros discusses this category with reference to verb phrases and verbs such as *make a distinction, distinguish, examine and compare.* McCarthy (1991: 74-78) uses the term *discourse organising words* (e.g. *issue, problem*) to denote words signalling the author's intent and which function to organise and structure the argument.

In seminar discussion, such predictive devices are seen in both elicitations and responses and ability to follow them may well be crucial for NNSs. In elicitations, these devices serve to indicate the type of information that is the speaker requires from the interlocutor and in responses they clarify speaker intent. More are more evident in the long response turns characteristic of subgenre A.

> example 1: elicitation
> S6 I was going to ask you about *the similarities and differences* that you pointed out
> towards the end ====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

> example 2: response
> P ==== *the distinctive patterns* I notice are certainly the changes among women
> =====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

## Categorisation of Textual Signalling Devices

An issue brought to light by the investigation into textual signalling devices is the potentially dual function some devices may have for strategic, interpersonal purposes in addition to their overt function of indicating textual relations. For example, extensive back-referencing prior to an elicitation may function to enhance the thrust of the speaker's point. Discourse activity markers were presented as potentially functioning to lessen the abrasiveness of an otherwise short and direct question. The discussion of functions of language separately such as propositional, textual and interpersonal is an artificiality and it must be recognised that any component within talk may simultaneously function on a number of planes. Nevertheless, it is believed that the range of devices functioning, at least on one level, to signal text is a salient feature of interaction in seminar presentations and discussion and one which has relevance to any language description for pedagogic purposes.

The following categorisation is proposed to account for the textual signalling devices which are discrete components evident in seminar discussion.

**Figure 7 Classification of Signalling Devices within turns**

| Signal of | Types | Typical exponents | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. topic | back-referencing | you + reporting verbs | *You say the management team often complicates things* how do you ...? |
| | titling | noun phrase + pause | Yes eh *your pan-European policy then* + has it .....? |
| 2. discourse activity | | requests for permission or statements of intention to ask questions or make points or comments | *I was going to ask* could we be asked to define .....? |
| 3. information type | | mention of types of information, e.g. characteristics, example, definition | first of all *a definition* of conglomerate |

## 7.2. Interpersonal Features: Strategies

The textual metadiscoursal features discussed in the previous section were, by and large, discrete entities which can be separated from other parts of a turn. On the other hand, much attitudinal metadiscourse, though not all, is embedded in moves and acts having other functions. Halliday (1978) views the interpersonal function of language as that which allows the speaker to express his own attitudes and to try to influence the attitudes of others. Crissmore (1990:193) explains that metadiscourse has an expressive, attitudinal function when it indicates how to understand the author's perspective and attitudes towards the primary discourse and toward the reader. In linguistics speaker attitude is discussed in terms of speaker strategies and politeness phenomena and also specific strategies, such as hedging. This study of seminar discussion strategies draws partially upon concepts and terms from these areas although in modified forms. Some of the literature on these subjects is now briefly surveyed and the approach adopted in this section of the chapter is explained in relation to it.

### 7.2.1. Theoretical Perspectives

### Strategies & Politeness Routines

The spectrum of approaches and terminology used in this field and given in the literature were discussed in Chapter 2.5. It was pointed out that conversational strategy is a broad term covering such diverse phenomena as hedges, gambits, conventionalised routines, supportive moves, etc. It was also pointed out that strategies may be means-ends types and involve some consciousness on the part of the speaker and others may be conventionalised routines of which speakers have hazy consciousness or may be operated on an unconscious level. In general terms, strategies are the means speakers use to avoid a minimal form of interaction consisting of getting things done or transferring information simply and directly.

Two theories explain the use of strategic language as motivated by concerns to maintain the face of the speaker and hearer. One very influential theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987) presents strategies as means of achieving politeness and politeness is seen as two-dimensional: *positive politeness* by which S (the speaker) makes H (the hearer) feel "his wants and personality traits are known and liked" and *negative politeness* whereby S attempts to mitigate the effects of FTAs (face threatening acts), such as impositions, on H. Defensive strategy types are identified by Edmondson (1981a) who explains that they are motivated by a desire to pre-empt possible contention or opposition from the hearer. Three types of strategy are distinguished by Edmondson: *disarmers* (denying a potential offence before H can claim an offence has occurred, e.g. I'm sorry to bother you but....), *grounders* (supplying reasons before they are requested by H) and *expanders* (giving more information than is necessary).

### Hedging

The term *hedging* is generally used to refer to the ways in which assertions or elements within assertions are softened, e.g. through the use of such lexical items as *almost*. The term has also been used to refer to the ways in which assertions are strengthened, e.g. through the use of items such as *definitely* (Holmes 1983, Brown & Levinson 1987).

Lakoff (1973) drew attention to hedging, words functioning to make things "fuzzier or less fuzzy." Lexical items such as *sort of, technically, strictly speaking,* etc. demonstrate that natural language portrays concepts as having fuzzily defined rather than sharply defined boundaries. For Lakoff, the main function of hedges is to indicate how true the proposition is seen and truthfulness is presented as two dimensional: 'true to a certain degree' and 'true in a certain respect'.

A dichotomy in the study of hedging has been drawn between *shields* and *approximators* (Prince et al. 1982). *Shields* show the indistinctiveness of the speaker or writer vis a vis the truth of the whole proposition whereas *approximators* express vagueness within the proposition about element(s) of it, e.g. It's *kind of* expensive.

Rounds (1982), in a study of hedging in the written discourse of journal abstracts, proposes that hedging serves three purposes: a means to articulate exactness of truth or falsity of a proposition, to indicate the writer's degree of commitment to a claim, and thirdly, to gain flexibility should, for example, later events or findings prove his or her claim wrong. The means by which writers of economics forecasting texts achieve 'caution in their claims' were investigated by Pindi and Bloor (1987). The three means identified were: hedging; attribution and the specifying of conditions.

Hedges have been viewed as part of larger language phenomena. Hedges are seen within the greater context of *epistemic modality,* i.e. language functioning to express doubt and certainty, by Holmes (1983, 1988b). Holmes (op cit.) argues that non-native speakers have particular difficulty in acquiring *epistemic modality* and as a result may appear as 'abrupt, didactic, rude or - even passionless'. ESL (English as a second language) textbooks tend to be misleading in their presentation of lexical devices for expressing doubt and certainty and Holmes calls for corpus-based data on the range, frequency and contextual distribution of these items. Hedges are seen within the sphere of language by which speakers encode their point of view toward

their utterances to show *commitment* and *detachment* by Stubbs (1986). In a wide ranging survey, Stubbs discusses the kinds of linguistic items to which speakers may be committed or detached (propositional statements, illocutionary forces and individual lexical items) and also the linguistic means whereby *commitment* and *detachment* are realised.

Hedging may be used to show the speaker's or writer's sincere level of belief in the proposition (or part of it), or to demonstrate attitude toward the proposition for strategic purposes. Brown and Levinson (1987) address the issue of the strategic function of hedging. As a *positive politeness strategy*, hedging enables speakers to be vague about their own opinions and this reduces the possibility of disagreement with the hearer. As a *negative politeness strategy*, hedging functions to demonstrate minimised assumptions about the hearer's wants or what is relevant to the hearer.

Some writers have focused on the function of hedging to register an appropriate or conventional stance. Myers (1989) in a study of scientific written texts and working within the framework of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson, finds that hedges are used to accommodate the face concerns of the members of the academic community and that they reflect "the appropriate attitude for offering a claim to the community." The making of a 'knowledge claim' potentially threatens the negative face of the academic community and, therefore, writers alleviate such threats by hedging. Dudley-Evans (1993) takes a similar view in a study of hedging in written economics debate texts and states, ".... generally when an original knowledge claim is presented, this is done through hedging, not because of personal doubt, but to show the proper respect for fellow researchers." However, in economics articles moves of *criticism* and *claim* which might, as 'face threatening acts' be expected to be hedged, were not systematically hedged and this, Dudley-Evans suggests, calls into question the argument that face threatening acts are typically hedged. The use of hedging and claim type were found to be co-related in economics research articles by Bloor and Bloor (1993). *Field central claims* (claims concerned with approaches to modelling and interpretation) tended to

be *shielded* whereas *substantive claims* (those concerned with presenting results) were presented as bold and factual findings.

Other writers have recognised the multi-functionality of hedging. Biq (1990) in a study of hedging functions of the Chinese word *shenme,* proposes that hedges have a dual function: as a sincere disclaimer due to uncertainty about the proposition or, alternatively, as a rhetorical device to show the speaker's wish to disassociate him or herself from or even reject the proposition.

Channel (1994) has concentrated attention on *approximators* in a study of 'vague language'. In her study of approximators, Channel focuses on the conversational uses of vague language. Among the uses she identifies are their use to cover for lexical gaps or gaps in specific knowledge and as a means to achieve social goals such as power, politeness and self protection. In an analysis of the uses of *approximators* in a university tutorial text, Channel argues that "vague language enables a speaker to talk about a subject he or she is not very knowledgeable about, or a subject where he or she does not know the necessary vocabulary" and thus cope with the stressful situation in which one side has a lack of subject knowledge and an asymmetrical relationship with the tutor.

Hedging in written academic texts has attracted considerable research interest (e.g. Bloor & Bloor 1993, Myers 1989, Salager-Myer 1994, Hyland 1994). Some investigation has been made into hedging in spoken texts (Brown & Levinson op cit.). Channel (op cit.) has investigated the use of *approximators* in a university tutorial. The present study looks into the use of hedging in academic discussion in seminars.

## Approach to the study of strategies and hedging adopted

In the study the view is taken that the strategic use of language is motivated by consideration of the face concerns of the speaker for his or her own face and that of the interlocutor. Seminars take place in a public and instructional context and any contribution by a speaker is

listened to and potentially evaluated by a number of hearers as well as the one to whom the contribution is 'addressed'. Speaking in seminar discussion is potentially threatening as speakers may appear to lack knowledge or understanding in a public and potentially critical forum.

Hedging is major seminar strategy. In the following section, hedging is investigated under the headings of demonstrations of *detachment* and *commitment*, terms taken from Stubbs (1986). The terms markers of *commitment* and *detachment* have some similarity in denotation to the terms *strengtheners* and *weakeners* (Brown & Levinson 1987) and *boosters* and *downtoners* (Holmes 1983). Markers of commitment are defined as devices that act to emphasis or reinforce the illocutionary force and stress conviction. Markers of detachment are defined as items that act to soften or render the utterance tentative and to downgrade belief or association. The investigation is limited to *shields*, i.e. speaker attitude toward entire propositions, and focuses on the strategic functions of hedging. The aim is to identify when and why speakers use hedging and choose not to present their propositions as factual but use indirectness or overtly make reference to speaker attitude.

### 7.2.2. Seminar Strategies

The aim of the section is to consider the following questions:

- *What are the interactional uses of demonstrations of detachment/commitment and other conversational strategies and where do they occur in the discourse of seminar discussion?*
- *What aspects of speaker or hearer face concerns can account for the use of these phenomena?*

Strategies are identified by examination of the texts and in consideration of features mentioned in the literature and reviewed in the previous section. Some seminar strategies are, to the best of my knowledge, presented for the first time and may be specific to the context in which the texts occurred or have more universal use. Some features confirm or disconfirm arguments given in the literature and this will be discussed. It is the objective to explore

strategic uses of language in seminar in depth and to offer explanations specific to this context.

Initial survey of the texts led to identification of two major strategy types: demonstrations of speaker attitude toward propositions (detachment and commitment) and the giving of evidence and justification. A third but minor strategy was identified - upgrading the validity of the question.

### 7.2.2.1. Demonstration of Attitude to Propositions

This section discusses where and why speakers encode commitment and detachment to their propositions in seminar discussion. The effects the speaker may envisage this encoding may have on the interlocutor and on the ensuing discourse are considered. Although, it is recognised that markers of detachment or commitment may simply have the function of simply representing the speaker's view of the truth of the proposition, the survey will seek out strategic explanations. The survey is restricted to verbal realisations although it is recognised that this strategy may be realised kinaesthetically and prosodically.

The seminar texts were surveyed and the linguistic realisations of detachment and commitment mentioned in the literature (Bloor and Bloor 1993, Holmes 1988b, Pindi and Bloor 1987, Myers 1989, Rounds 1982 and Stubbs 1986) were identified and selected for investigation. Two additional categories, not mentioned in the literature, were identified from the texts and these are marked with an asterisk below.

1 modals, e.g. could, must

2 modifiers, e.g. actually, obviously

3 impersonal attribution, e.g. It is likely that, If .....

4 other agency attribution, e.g. the sceptic's view that, as you say

* 5 personal attribution, e.g. I think, I suppose
   modalised self attribution, e.g. I would say, I would agree

* 6 agreement prefaces, e.g. Yes but

## Detachment

The use of speaker distancing in questions has not to the best of my knowledge been the object of empirical investigation. It has been discussed in passing by Brown and Levinson (1987: 11) in a description partially drawn from naturally occurring talk and which focused on hedging in "sentence like units." The focus in this study is on markers of detachment in interchanges and draws upon natural data in a specific context. Markers of detachment occur with great regularity in questions and would appear to have a number of strategic interactional uses. Three areas in which the strategies of detachment were observed were: in counter proposals in initiations; offering new ideas in initiations or responses and in disconfirmation in responses. These uses are now discussed and exemplified.

### Counter proposals in initiations

Actually, really & in fact: requesting reconsideration
> example 1
> T: ======= Was *actually* the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for the UK
>
> P: By the time we came to developing Rover 200 which of course is in collaboration with Honda as well um we were looking to a European European market not to the extent that we look today a total European market but certainly taking into account the European market by the time we came to marketing it we were definitely looking at a Pan-European strategy
> (Outside presenter text 1)
>
> example 2
> S3 When you talk to the people you want to sell your products to do you *really* adopt the same attitude when people are selling to you so you're like integrating up the river how about downwards now do the 2 things *actually* match in ==
> (Outside speaker text 4)

According to Leech & Svartik (1975: 201) *actually* is an adverbial conveying the speaker's comment on the content of what he is saying. In example 1, the speaker uses *actually* in a question. In a statement *actually* may indicate a strong commitment to a proposition. For example, if I say, *She actually knows the answer*, I'm proposing that she knows the answer and I'm claiming her knowledge with some certainty. However, beyond this denotation,

*actually* often follows on from some previous argument or discourse and indicates a dialectic stance. This is exemplified in the following extract from within a presenter's turn at talk:

> " === we have made an effort to involve them not to think of them as second class commodities that can be brought in but *actually* thought of them as the key workforce who are we try to lock in as tightly as we do our key managers"
> (Outside presenter text 3)

*Actually, really, in fact* and like items occur regularly in initiations in seminar discussion. They function, I would argue, to indicate reference back to previous discourse topic and tentativise a form of counter proposal in the ensuing proposition, rendering it into a request for interlocutor reconsideration. In a question, such as *Does she actually know the answer?*, we suspect that in the prior discourse, possibly discourse which was at a distance from this question, that the other speaker had claimed or implied at least that she knew the answer.

Let us consider options for making a counter proposal in semi-formal dialogue. Should a speaker wish to return to a proposition given by the other speaker previously and 'question' the validity of the proposition (in example 1, the presenter had emphasised the European orientation of the company's marketing approach), one option would be to frame the question as a negative polarity form, e.g. *Wasn't the role developed basically with the UK market in mind?* But this would appear as overly direct and challenging and potentially risky for S. Alternatively, S could form a positive polarity question such as *Did you develop the role with the European market in view?* But this would look very strange, even ironical, considering that the other speaker had previously made statements to the opposite effect. By using a marker of caution such as, *actually, really,* or *in fact,* S offers H the opportunity to re-consider his or her claim: Do you really think X? Clearly this is tactically a better course of events than a direct challenge: it is not particularly threatening to H but above and beyond that S avoids the risk of making a counter proposal and potential failure of it.

If we look at how the discourse unfolded in example 1, we see that P's response is a denial and he reiterates his former position. It is indeed fortunate that the questioner had framed his question in such a detached and tentative way.

'S-out' clause: showing criticism

In the excerpts below, hedges of the softening or distancing type are used within particularly critical turns. In the first excerpt, S2 is suggesting that H has been wrong in analysis or made a poor suggestion about selling techniques which would lead to '*insulting*' the population. In the second excerpt, S3 talks of the other group giving '*far more*' stress to technology and uses a negative polarity form. In both cases, the strident tone of criticism is 'softened' by markers of detachment - *perhaps* and *seem.*

What is the speaker's game? Is it to soften the blow? I would argue not. Examples like this make it difficult to accept the idea that speakers mitigate the potential offence to the hearer of face threatening acts by hedging which is the argument of Brown and Levinson (op cit: 161) simply because if you wish to *soften* criticism you need to do a whole lot more than insert one softening word into an otherwise critical comment. However, a self face protecting motive can account for these instances of hedging: S makes his/her own proposition more tentative, making it into more of a suggestion, a batting around of ideas, thus establishing an 'out-clause' for S should disconfirmation (as occurs in the second example) follow.

> example 1
> S2 ==== Do you think speaking to them in their own language therefore insulting    .
> them that they're still from the third world is *perhaps* the best way to sell to them
>
> (Student presentation text )
>
> example 2
> S3 The previous group *seem* to have far more stress on the technology importance
> than yourselves didn't you feel that as a \\ factor
>
> P2                                              \\ I think I think it's irrelevant ===
> (Student presentation text 4)

If structures: indicating the 'potential' problem

Writers' use of conditionals to hedge their claims has been discussed by Pindi and Bloor (1987). Conditional constructions are fairly frequent as a distancing device in questions in speaking also. In the excerpts below the speakers use conditional structures and they appear to function to critique a prior claim or inference made by the other speaker.

> example 1
> S1 You mentioned the family experience (P2 Yes um) if they're actually trying to tran to sort of have a transitional period between the family experience and the people who are already there would that not turn them off bringing kids in and \\ eh
> (student presentation text 9)
>
> example 2
> S7 Does that include an allowance for those items that aren't shown because they're actually consumed by the producers themselves because if you do it in terms of value added at market prices if somebody produces something and uses it himself it's not actually going to show
> (non presentation text 1)

If-clauses are used in questions to indicate the possibility of a problem in H's previous argument. They function to make a non-threatening (for both sides) form of counter, a 'potential' critique, and prospect genuine reconsideration rather than denial, and this is illustrated in the extract below, which is the next turn from example 1 given above:

> example 1 cont.
> P2                                                                    \\ Well we talked about
> that and we suggested that they had like time of day differences so typically you offer mothers with young children perhaps an 11 to 1 lunch or something like that and a 5 to 7 special so that you didn't actually Americans have strange eating habits in the sense that they tend to have this happy hour thing and they all go in for about 55 cocktails on the way home so you'd have to be careful that you didn't have overlapping experiences
> (student presentation text 9)

## Offering new ideas

There are a number of ways in which speakers in seminar discussion are cautious and distance themselves from the propositions they make when offering a new idea, perspective or information either in questions (of the elicit: confirm types) or in responses. Two means of distancing were observed to be: stress of S's personal but detached association with the proposition and framing opinion as question.

Stressing S's personal association with the proposition

One ploy of speakers in seminar discussion is to report the idea that is 'running through their minds', i.e. an idea so sudden that the speaker can disclaim some responsibility for it. This is particularly evident in post presentation discussions when a speaker wishes to introduce new information or a viewpoint that was not covered in the presentation itself. The following examples illustrate:

example 1
S2 Can I ask um how much more successful the recent new range of 200 400 and 800's have been and have you got an indication of the sales *it seems to a lay person such as myself* to be significantly better than anything Rover have ever produced \\ which is
(Outside speaker text 1)

example 2
S6 Are you thinking of going back in um because *it strikes me that* just at a time when you are getting your products right you just well pulled out a couple of months ago and especially the 800 coupe was tailor made for the UK US market and it's all over Is that something \\ something
(Outside speaker presentation text 1)

example 3
S5 Yeah um perhaps I'm going off at a slight tangent but *I just think* that the core capacity clearly that Avon have in the door to door type selling and direct selling approach to marketing and I'm wondering if really if *one thing that's going through my mind* is can they expand that area to take advantage of eh some of the more expensive brands thank you
(Student presentation text 2)

The commonest means by which speakers demonstrate caution and distance themselves from the propositions they make is a somewhat paradoxical combination of self attribution and modalised forms such as *I would say or I would think.*

P3 *I would agree* with that um Alan but I think they probably would have been hit less severely by the recession had they anticipated it and changed their structure somewhat they inevitably their figures would have gone down but perhaps not so dramatically *I would suggest*
(student presentation text 10)

S3 Air Data would be market driven *I would say* rather than technology driven because there was a basic need
(non presentation text 3)

Some of the forms of self attribution evident in the texts were as follows:

I don't think / I don't actually think / I'm not sure
I suppose/ I suspect that/ I expect/
I think it's fair to say / As far as I can figure out
I would think / I would subscribe / I would say / I would suggest / I would argue
I must say / And I have to say
I would agree
I don't know that I necessarily agree with / I would disagree .... I would say / I want to disagree/
I'm afraid I'm a little sceptical
I don't know

What can be seen from the examples of both former strategies (detachment by the sudden idea and self attribution) is that suggesting ideas/new information causes speakers considerable stress. If it is stressful to do these things, why then do speakers draw attention to themselves by using personal attribution or reporting *their* ideas? The speaker could use impersonal constructions such as *It would seem* or *It is possible that*. However, when the latter constructions are inserted into the text the question or proposition becomes instantaneously riskier for S. The making of impersonal propositions even when framed with modality is far from safe. Yet speakers, by drawing attention to their own involvement in a proposition and make it more difficult for the other speaker to strongly disconfirm his or her proposition than an impersonally formed one. The following example illustrates the reluctance of the interlocutor to directly disconfirm a proposition given in the form of self attribution:

> example
> S1 I'm just curious about door to door selling I would think it's going to become really passé given the fact that you can ring a bell and not find anyone at home because people have to work =======
>
> T Certainly door to door is looked at as a down market side but there will be a segment there whether you want to continue to position yourself to meet that segment is obviously a strategic question
> (Student presentation text 8)

Framing opinion as opinion seeking

The notion that tentativeness or detachment is achieved in questions by using weak-elicit confirm type of question such as positive polarity and X or Y form questions was proposed in Chapter 6. Another distancing device stemming from speaker caution in positive polarity forms is the use of the opinion seeking device *Do you think...?*. Incorporating a *do you think?*

expression adds further to the tentativeness of the speaker's proposition. He is asking the other speaker if he thinks that S's (i.e. his own) proposition is true. Responsibility is firmly placed at the feet of the other speaker. Instead of S saying *I think X*, and *Do you agree?*, he distances himself from the propositioning role by asking the other speaker if he thinks the proposition X. The example below illustrates two means of S distancing himself from the proposition he is presenting (opinion seeking and modality) and demonstrates S's ability to evade conversational responsibility for his own action of proposal.

> S1 So *do you think* there *may* well be a wider shift then than previously seen alongside decentralisation and divestment and divestment from the big groups getting rid of *do you think* that *may* well change (P I think it will) they *might* start taking on
> (Outside presenter text 4)

A bald or potentially self face threatening question concerning the same proposition could be:

> I think there will be a wider shift than previously seen alongside decentralisation and divestment as the big groups get rid off but that again will change in time and they will take on again do you agree
> (fabricated example)

Perhaps the most excessive means of distancing and self protection is realised by another form of attribution, other agency attribution. In this strategy H, is asked not *How do you answer my question*, or *Is this your idea?* but *How do you answer X's question?* This asks H to debate with a non-participant. It puts H in a particularly weak position and allows S to make an especially critical proposition in relative safety. In the following example the presenter had presented the positive points of partnership purchasing in the presentation, and an audience member (S1) now suggests a Machiavellian motivation behind the partnership purchasing policy. However, S1 frames his suggestion in such a way that there is little possibility of redress and thus little personal risk.

> S1 Can I just come back in with another question it's really just to turn all this on its head and *ask your comments on the sceptic's view* of this partnership purchasing which is the big companies dumping on the small companies and not accepting or really passing on all the responsibility and not paying for it and that's sort of under the difference of cultures between the Japanese approach and the UK approach which we've already talked about how do you answer that challenge
> (Outside speaker presentation 4)

**To surreptitiously input information**

Some strategic behaviour has been identified in the literature as *positive politeness*, behaviour to indicate to H that he is a member of an in-group, somebody whose wants and personality are known and liked (Brown and Levinson 1987: 70). Among the strategies identified as constituting *positive politeness* in Brown & Levinson's theory are the use of in-group identity markers, presuppositions of common ground and of H's knowledge, and including both S and H in the activity. Although these strategies are evident in the data, close examination of them in seminar interaction suggests that these are the not the means of 'anointing the face of H' as Brown & Levinson suggest but a surreptitious and detached way of inputting essential information to H. Two tactics were identified in seminar discussion that enable S to deliver information in a non-factual way: asserting the commonality of S and H knowledge and attributing the knowledge or ideas to H. Both these tactics of discrete information giving can be explained as motivated by S's concern for H's face as well as for getting the message across clearly and comprehensibly to the hearer.

Asserting the Commonality of S and H knowledge

The following excerpts show S's tactic of inputting information as if H already knows it:

> example 1
> S3 How do the market value the shares though I mean I can
>
> P BP is *obviously* a quoted company which we are not we have an internal market which is w use to have a share shop where people just listed the want to buy shares sell shares and a buyer and a seller get together and agreed a price we are now starting an internal market run by our merchant bank ====
> (Outside speaker text 3)

> example 2
> T: ======= Was actually the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for the UK
>
> P: By the time we came to developing Rover 200 which *of course* is in collaboration with Honda as well um we were looking to a European European market not to the extent that we look today a total European market but certainly taking into account the European market by the time we came to marketing it we were definitely looking at a Pan-European strategy
> (Outside presenter text 1)

In example 2 we see paradoxically a strengthener, *obviously,* brought into play to make a proposition in a detached way, by showing the information as commonly held knowledge of S and H. In example 2, P states that BP is *obviously* a quoted company and so presents it as a 'known' rather than as factually.

Suggesting the propositions are H's ideas or information

Another form of S distancing is exemplified in the following excerpt. It is a ploy characteristic of tutors (and also seen in response turns of outside presenters) in which other speaker attribution is used. It allows the tutor to encourage a student and at the same time to input some essential information via reformulation and development of the interlocutor's proposition.

> example:
> S9 Either raise taxes (T Right) or even possibly raise interest rates one of eh problems with raising taxes though is although there'll be less spending on domestic goods (T Right) that in turn could lead to an increase in unemployment (T Right) through the companies folding  cause they're just not selling the goods so it's a vic\\ious circle
>
> T                                                                      \\ Right right
> and I think that brings the question specifically as as it is asked there of saying what policies could be be used and what its consequences would be so *as you say* one thing we could do to actually reduce overall demand and that will mean that the demand for imports will go down ====== one of the things *you could suggest* on the basis of what you were saying was raising tariffs ====
> (Non-presentation text 4)

## Disconfirming

Personal attribution

It is certainly possible to find instances in the data to support the idea that weakening hedges or caution are used to mitigate offence to the other speaker when committing a face threatening act and are thus motivated primarily by consideration of hearer needs (Brown & Levinson 1987). One place in interaction where this typically happens is the disconfirming response following a confirmation seeking question. In the example below an outside speaker is answering such a student question:

> example
> S1 What was the competition doing was that taking in exactly the same stance that you taking

P I don't think I mean to be honest I've not been that close to the advertising certainly
going back 3 or 4 years but *I don't think* this pan European approach is really very
common in the motor industry at the moment
(Outside speaker text 1)

In the example there are a number of tentative devices in P's response but the one that concerns us firstly is *I don't think*....... What is surprising is that P frames his response as opinion here rather than fact, although as a marketing director of a major car production company, it is probable that he does know about the present situation and doesn't need to give opinions which the choice of *I think* implies. Nevertheless, he uses opinion framing instead of information stating as a way to hedge and distance himself from the disconfirmation. This softens the disconfirmation and disconfirmation framed as opinion is less face threatening for H than disconfirmation by a factually presented proposition.

The very high frequency of occurrence of *I think* and *I don't think* as prefaces to claims is a characteristic of interaction in seminars. Although it could be argued that it is a conventionalised form and denotes very little in terms of distinguishing between the presentation of facts and opinions, it is perhaps not entirely predictable that outside experts would present many of their propositions in answering questions as opinion in this way.

In P's turn in the previous excerpt, a second 'hedging' device, *not really very* is used. It seems almost nonsensical that the speaker uses both a marker of detachment or caution, *not really*, and a marker of commitment, *very*, together. But in interactive speaking this mixing of strengthening and weakening devices is fairly common. P is attempting to distance himself from his role as holder of expertise and is using two hedges together to emphasis that he is just in the business of giving opinions with the underlying consideration of preserving H's face.

Agreeing to disagree

In seminar discussion one strategy that speakers employ to hedge disagreement or disconfirmation is the use of agreement. This may be argued to constitute *partial agreement*

and pedagogical works tend to present this notion (e.g. James 1984, Lynch & Anderson 1992). However, it can be argued that 'partial agreement' does not denote agreement at all, but is a strategy: S frames what is a basically a disagreement with an agreement preface in order to render it either more hearer friendly or more self defensive, whichever way we wish to interpret human behaviour. This notion is similar to the pattern of *Hypothetical-Real* identified in written texts by McCarthy & Hewings (1988). McCarthy & Hewings explain the pattern:

> "In the *hypothetical* element the writer reports what has been said or written but does not accede to its truth: the statement to be affirmed or denied is presented. in the *real* element the writer gives what he himself considers to be the truth."
>
> (pp. 4)

In the following excerpt we see 'partial agreement' or the 'hypothetical' situation used as a preface to the presentation of an opposite view. P firstly gives a good deal of credit to S2's idea of joint acquisitions before refuting it by presenting his real view.

> S2 Can they not do that through joint ventures rather than acquisitions because the problem with acquisitions is the management has these diversified diversified cultures can they not do it through joint ventures with co-partnership rather than actual xxx
>
> P That is an option and if 2 managements can work together then there is no reason why that shouldn't take place the thing about an acquisition is if it's a hostile acquisition then the two managements know they are going to fall out from the beginning so one side says we're going to be in charge and you're going to be cut out if it's a merger they'll reach a friendly solution but the problem with the joint venture is structuring it you bring the 2 parties together (hypothetical) / but somebody's got to lead it and then you get the the the articulation between one side and the other saying well we're in this as deep as you are why should you make the decisions and you get into this scenario of no-body will allow the other one to actually take a lead (real) / in theory it's a very sensible approach joint venture (hypothetical) / but in practice a lot of them don't work because of the lack of trust from one side to the other (real) ====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 4)

*Yeah but* or *Yes but* occur frequently in responses in the data and typically function to preface disconfirmation:

> S1 I asked the question because one thing that wasn't mentioned in the case study was the male market and I would suggest that a lot more male fragrances are bought by women
>
> P1 Yeah

S1 As presents rather than by males personally

P1 Yes but I'm not really sure internationally maybe domestic market internationally
they might be say more like Japan more male dominated they're probably be more
likely to buy their own products I think you have to look at each country individually
um as I said Japan where there's where there's more male domination I suppose you're
probably right there probably is a market for male cosmetics
(Student presentation text 5)

The investigation into the strategy of detachment has shown that various forms of this strategy are used in different places in interaction for specific motivations. These motivations have been argued to be largely defensive and concerned with speaker and hearer face needs, although in disparate ways, e.g. the use of if-clauses to indicate a potential problem in the other interlocutor's argument avoids open conflict and gives the other interactant an opportunity to reconsider his or her views in a non-threatening way, or framing opinions as opinion seeking which gives the burden of proposition making to the other interactant and allows the speaker to avoid direct responsibility for the ideas proposed.

## Commitment

Markers of detachment are a prevalent and anticipated feature of seminar discussion, and although identification of them in this context is not new, specific uses and places in the interaction have been presented for the first time. A less expected feature of seminar discourse, and a feature of language which has been less explored than detachment, is the use of markers of commitment. In the following section, these markers are investigated to ascertain both their place and function in seminar discussion discourse.

### Refuting counters

One rather predictable location of markers of commitment is in apposition and following on from criticism or counters in questions. In the extract below, P re-iterates his previous stand and re-inforces it with *not at all*.

S3 ===== What effect did the fact that the vehicle was a Japanese derivative
have on the difficulty you must have had evaluating that Rover that traditional
English mark was there not a conflict at all there that the that the consumers will
perceive it

221

P ========= so the fact that there was a Japanese connection there is *not* causing a
problem *at all* in trying to promote the Rover product =====
(Outside speaker text 1)

In Chapter 6, it was argued that negative polarity or statement type forms in initiation tend to

be critical and thus risky from S's point of view. It is to be expected that the level of criticism

in a move may be countered by the level of criticism in the follow-on move by the other

speaker. This is seen in the above excerpt and may explain the general preference speakers

have for using weak elicit-confirm question forms rather than the strong elicit-confirm form

illustrated above.

There are times when S puts across a message very strongly following counters as illustrated

in the extract below:

S3 The previous group seem to have far more stress on the technology importance
than yourselves didn't you feel that as a \\ factor

P2                                    \\ *I think I think* it's irrelevant you don't
need it you don't buy a television on the basis of technology *I don't think* you buy dry
cleaning on the technology *I think* you need to keep up with it because if they get
well down their competitors can use it against them but *I don't think* it's important as
a mechanism for gaining market share or maintaining market share
(Student presentation 4)

One function of *I think* or *I don't think* is to add a cautionary note to the claim of the speaker

and this was argued to be the case in the some examples in section 7.2.2.1.1 However, in this

example which follows on from a counter this is not the case. If we re-formulate P2's response

above without any modality or markers of attitude, we would get:

It's irrelevant you don't need it you don't buy a television on the basis of technology
you don't buy dry cleaning on the basis of technology you need to keep up with
technology because if they get well down their competitors can use it against them
but it isn't important as a mechanism for gaining market share or maintaining market
share

The second version appears more neutral than the first. In the original version the claims are

framed so as to be directly accountable to the speaker. This direct link of claim and speaker

makes it difficult for the other speaker, S3, to counter again as to do so would be

confrontational. This example indicates a use of commitment which, I suggest, functions to make unlikely further direct counters on this topic from the interlocutor. The idea was suggested earlier that use of personal association with a proposition makes it difficult for the other speaker to then directly disagree. This is again evident here. We see in the example that the hearer changes from his first line of inquiry and turns to a more general and open question through topic modification:

> S3 The previous group seem to have far more stress on the technology importance than yourselves didn't you feel that as a \\ factor
>
> P2                                                                                             \\ *I think I think* it's irrelevant You don't need it You don't buy a television on the basis of technology *I don't think* you buy dry cleaning on the technology *I think* you need to keep up with it because if they get well down their competitors can use it against them but *I don't think* it's important as a mechanism for gaining market share or maintaining market share
>
> S3 So what's their competitive advantage
>
> P2 Quality the service they provide and the people they employ how they provide the service at the front end of the business
> (Student presentation text 4)

## Indicating saliency

Markers of commitment were observed as functioning to allow the speaker to mark points of particular saliency, firstly through the use of the expression *I mean* and, secondly, through a number of devices which indicate the short answer with response turns.

I Mean

Like the expressions *I think* and *I don't think, I mean* is a very frequent item in seminar discussion. A number of explanations can be found in the literature to account for the use of *I mean*. Coulmas (1981: 9) reports on "fillers" in conversation which give the speaker time to formulate what he or she will say. Edmondson (1981b: 277) explains the expressions *I mean* and *you know* as 'gambits' or 'interactional lubricants' having no illocutionary significance. Edmondson and House (1981: 63) talk of *underscorers* which are a means of drawing attention or highlighting a point the speaker is making in a turn at talk to ensure hearer

attention. Williams (1988: 19) sees the function of *I mean* in business meetings as 'to explain'. For Scarcella and Brunak (1981: 61), *I mean* and *you know are* expressions which make the addressee a more active participant. Schiffrin (1987: 267-311) sees the function of *I mean* to show speaker orientation toward his or her own talk, i.e. modification of ideas and intentions and indication of commitment to a position. Schiffrin maintains that material marked by *I mean* is likely to be interpreted as highly relevant and to which the listener should pay particular attention. The following examples from seminar discussion contain the expression *I mean*:

> example 1
> S1 So how would we *I mean* this is a typical situation from the very beginning how  .
> would we know what you want because it doesn't seem logical to me to do it that way
> because ==
> (Non presentation discussion text 1)

> example 2
> S2 What I was looking for is some kind of comment not on the sort of capital value of
> what they've bought or anything like that but the way in which they've had to put
> together a future business plan *I mean* do these things fall into any kind of coherent
> (P Yes) plan at all
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)

> example 3
> S2 Well it's interesting you raise the shirt laundering issue because you were at the
> risk of being controversial slightly dismissive of the first question that said how do
> you choose a dry cleaner one principal criteria is one that launders shirts and *I mean*
> there's quite a big difference between laundering a shirt and dry cleaning it most dry
> cleaners don't launder shirts and that's the major selection point for me I would have
> my shirts laundered normally but I wouldn't have them dry cleaned
> (Student presentation text 4)

In examples 1 and 2, *I mean* appears to be functioning to indicate modification of intentions: in example 1, S1 starts off with an information seeking question but then changes intention to a statement of complaint and likewise in example 2, S2 starts off asking for *what I wanted* but inserts *I mean* when he modifies and shows his commitment to asking direct questions. In the third example, *I mean* indicates what Schiffrin terms 'commitment to a position' or saliency. In example 3, S2's stance is that dry cleaning and laundering are different concepts and he marks this stance with *I mean*.

Saliency and the 'short answer'

Turns at response may be quite lengthy, e.g. there may be a number of supporting acts. As a result, it may be difficult for hearers to identify a specific reply to their elicits among the bulk of acts in the response turn or for speakers to clearly mark their specific reply in the response. Speakers tend to give long answers but may also give a short, particularly salient answer marked with commitment within the long answer and this salient 'short answer' was seen to be marked in the following ways:

1. Lexical repetition of the items in the question.

> S2 Did your employment strategies vary with the various sectors that you serviced and if they did are there any *distinctive patterns* that emerged
>
> P == (very long turn) ====== the *distinctive patterns* which I notice really are certainly the changes among ===
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

2. *Yes or No*

> S4 Yes eh your pan European advertising policy then has it been say to take a video shot in UK and then dub in into various languages is that it or how is your strategy been what have you actually done
>
> P Right if we shot a film in UK and then tried to dub it into European languages that's what our marketing manager would have me call marketing for Warwickshire that's what they didn't like *no* the whole point is to start with the research programme which ===
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

3. Personal attribution

> S1 ===== Do you think that may well change (P I think it will) they might start taking on
>
> *P *I think* it will change yes yes because the other strategic ====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 4)

* This response illustrates the 3 markers of the 'short answer' proposed, i.e. lexical repetition, the use of *Yes* and personal attribution.

The need to indicate short replies in long responses raises the questions, *Why are responses often so long? What else is the respondent doing other than replying to the elicit and why?* The following section investigates informing acts in long turns such as these and seeks to categorise and explain the build up of such acts.

### 7.2.2.2. Evidence & Justification

### 7.2.2.2.1. Evidence: expansion and support of claims in responses

To demonstrate the validity of a claim or proposition, a speaker can use modality and other markers of commitment and saliency. An equally common means of demonstrating validity of propositions in seminar discussion is to expand and support them giving further information, examples, justifications, etc. to try to convince hearers of the validity of the reply. In this subsection, the contents of response slots in interaction are examined with the aim of establishing a means of categorising the acts that make up responses and to identify the ways that replies are expanded and supported.

A review of writings on the topic of relationships between acts in a speaking turn was given in Chapter Two, section 2.5.1. In that review, Ferrara's (1985) notion of a hierarchical structure of speech acts was described and it included the proposal that subordinate acts are related to the main act (goal) by relations such as *justification, explanation. elaboration, repetition, correction, preparing the ground,* etc.

The problem of the 'long inform' is addressed by Burton who states:

> "Where there are long passages of informative offered in the text it seems inadequate
> to give one label of informative to the whole passage, or even to
> label the first clause *inform* and all subsequent units *comment* ..."
>
> (1981: 67)

(Burton here uses the definition of comment given by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) as 'to exemplify, expand, justify, provide additional information').

Clearly, it would be of little descriptive interest to simply name all the acts within a responding turn as *inform* or *comment.* Burton proposes the categories of 1. *additive, 2. adversial, 3. causal* (typically but not necessarily introduced by the items *and, but* and *so* respectively), *4. repeat, 5. restate* and 6. *qualify* to cover the varying acts within a long inform. She says, "Given say an initial informative as the head ....later informing acts can easily be classified under these six headings." This system, however, rests on the identification of the *head informative.* For Burton the *head informative* is the initial act.

However, this positioning may not be the case in seminar discussion data and it may, as was argued in Chapter Six, be difficult to identify one main informing act in the responding turn. There may be more than one major inform just as there was more than one elicit in some cases.

Two samples of the application of Burton's categorisation scheme are given below. Modifications of the framework are then proposed in light of analysis of seminar data:

> Example 1
> S2 ==== I wondered if in your personal experience you could point to any particular types of pattern
>
> P A pattern of
>
> S2 Eh the motivation for it and the future development of the business in fact in other words a pattern of where the increased efficiency comes from
>
> P Right um you must remember the first thing the first thing that happens is that *there is not a draining of the cash resource from the business by vendor PLC (1) I mean it's been running it as its own entity (2) it's been voting at management charges (3) it's been voting at dividends (4) it's probably been asking this subsidiary to trade with other members of the group at less than arms length prices (5) it has been part of a huge group (6) it has not been an arms length third party deal (7) so there's been quite a saving there (8) there is certainly the application of a more efficient and motivated way (9) they work harder (10) they probably save a salary or two very shortly (11) there are often disposables to be made where they will buy some of the assets will be valued at book value (12) freehold land can be valued at what it was 10 years ago and it can be sold within 6 months at 5 times the value (13) that often happens ====
> (Outside speaker presentation text 2)

According to Burton's categorisation scheme the above extract constitutes: * initial inform (1) additive (2) restate/exemplification (3) restate exemplification (4) restate, exemplification (5) additive (6) adversial (7) causal (8) additive (9) restate exemplification (10) restate/exemplification (11) additive (12) restate/exemplification (13) additive

> Example 2
> S2 Can I ask um how much more successful the recent new range of 200 400 and 800's have been and have you got an indication of the sales it seems to a lay person such as myself to be significantly better than anything Rover have ever produced \\ which is
>
> P        \\ Yes if I answer it in terms of consumer research rather than sales and sales volumes are there for all of us to see anyway *yes I mean the satisfaction levels of owners the new range of products starting with the 200 are much more than they were in the early years (1) the images among non owners as well as owners are also much much stronger (2) so really the change to Rover and then supporting that through the new product line has been very positively \\ received
> (Outside speaker presentation text 1)

* marks the initial *inform* (1) *additive* (2) *causal*.

In example 1, the *initial inform* is an adversial, i.e. this is what X is not. The elicit preceding this turn asks for information about whether there is a pattern to account for the increased efficiency. A specific reply that informs along the lines of what X is not, is improbable. I would argue that the reply or *answer* (in this case the information that S2 sought) lies in the total of the initial inform and the additives, causals and adversials **together.** So the major elements of reply to S2's elicit are * + 1 + 5 + 6 + 8 + 11+ 13. The role of the other elements (restates; repeats and qualifies) support the main propositional content of the major elements. In example 2, the *initial inform* is supported with two more acts, one additive and one causal. There are no subsidiary discourse acts. The answer or reply is constituted by whole of the turn (after the initial clause), by the acts * + 1+ 2.

Our analysis is therefore, in line with that of Coulthard and Montgomery (1981) who investigated monologue and on whose work Burton partially based her classification. Like Coulthard and Montgomery (op cit.), the position is taken in this study of turns in seminar discussion that additives, causals and adversials are main discourse acts and restates, repeats and qualifies are subsidiary, i.e. supportive acts.

It is proposed in this study that in response turns replies are *constituted and expanded* by the sum of additives, causals and adversials - typically in seminar discussion by additives and causals. When a speaker asks a question on Who does X?, it is not enough for the respondent to simply supply the information sought, instead it is usual to expand and say not only who does X, but also why it is Y who does X and why it isn't Z, etc. In addition, that replies are *supported* by restates, repeats and qualifies - typically by restates/exemplifications. Expansion and support are two major strategies that speakers use to present claims in a favourable and persuasive light and they account for many of the utterances within responding turns.

### 7.2.2.2.2. Justification & Evidence in Initiation

### (Entry) Justifications

One of the conventions in seminar discussion is for the speaker to justify taking a turn and the question they make. Justifications can be seen as disarming moves. Edmondson (1981a: 126-27) talks of *disarming supportive moves* which pre-empt possible rejection of the interactional move by the other speaker. These are defensive devices arising from "the speaker's knowledge that to deny a potential offence before it is committed forces the hearer into non- co-operative, face-losing behaviour, if he nonetheless attempts to claim that the offence is a real one." This explanation accounts for some of the justifications seen in questions in seminar but not for all of them as example 4 below illustrates. Some justifications appear within prefaces. Many are turn-initial. Some instances of justifications drawn from the texts are:

> *1. Just out of interest* on building the Rover mark which you were putting emphasis right at eh beginning of the talk what effect did the fact that the vehicle was a Japanese derivative have on the difficulty you must have had evaluating =====
> (outside speaker presentation text 1)

> *2. What I'm interested in* is when you actually first approach a vendor and you say === and I just wondered about the contrast of that approach with your approach
> (outside speaker presentation text 2)

> *3. I'm just curious* if any of you were familiar with the Avon products to start with
> (student presentation text 5)

> *4. ====* Um *we're interested* in how you approached the company because I'm sure the philosophy's been there from the start and therefore in a younger and a growth market it's relatively easy to experiment to make mistakes and the recover particularly with an educated workforce who might be thinking in a like mind to yourself how do you suggest your thoughts on empowerment would transfer across to a much more maturer industry say the coop or health service ====
> (Outside presentation text 3)

Examples 1 - 3 appear as formulaic or conventionalised routines, perhaps with no intrinsic meaning other than as a way into gaining the floor. They all refer to the speaker's state of mind, his or her interest or curiosity and act as excuses for asking the question. Since any question stems from interest or curiosity, these devices clearly do not function merely to inform the hearer of such interest. They are justifications for entry through apology and from

this aspect they can be considered as *disarming moves* (Edmondson op cit.). The devices also double up in function to mark topic. They are strategic and speaker oriented aiming to pre-empt possible rejection of the question by the listener (i.e. I'll tell you why I'm asking this before you ask me). Example 4, however, functions differently and the justification is more along the lines of *There is a very good reason why I'm asking this and it is......* In examples 1 to 3 the speaker referred to his or her own state of mind as justification and thus focused on some need or problem of the speaker. In example 4, the speaker stresses the need for asking the question and the first act of expression of interest or curiosity is cursory.

**Justification & Evidence for Elicitations**

As argued in Chapter 6, it is not always possible to distinguish a *head* eliciting act that automatically reduces the eliciting function of other acts. Rather there frequently seems to be more than one proposition or request for information which H could respond to. In example 4, H can be expected and does respond to the two acts in the eliciting move, a) S's proposition that it is difficult to apply worker empowerment to older industries which do not have an educated workforce and two elements and b) the request for information about how worker empowerment transfers to maturer industries.

The relationship between acts within initiation moves can be accounted for by the same categorisation of acts into main and subsidiary discourse as proposed in 7.2.2.2.1. - the additives, causal and adversials are eliciting acts which H may variously respond to and these are supported by secondary discourse, the acts of restate, repeat and qualify. In the following excerpt of initiation, we see the proposition 'alliances with other organisations is a possible idea' is expanded by the reason for the suggestion of this idea, 'because many supermarkets have dry cleaning franchises'.

Additives and causals (and adversials, although there are fewer of these) in initiation function to mutually justify each other. We can look at this two ways: either proposition A (an alliance is a possibility) is supported by proposition B (because other supermarkets have got dry

cleaning franchises). Alternatively, we can argue that proposition A supports proposition B. i.e. (B) a number of supermarkets have now got dry cleaning franchises and because of this (A) did you think about the possibility of alliance? Below the original excerpt is re-arranged in example 2 to illustrate this mutuality of acts of main discourse acts:

example 1: original
You mentioned the possibility of a merger but 1) did you think about alliances with other organisations 2) I noticed that 1 or 2 of the larger supermarkets like Safeways have now got dry cleaning franchises in them so that services are like where the people are rather than attracting the people and the dry cleaning to them

example 2
You mentioned the possibility of a merger but 1) I noticed that 1 or 2 of the larger supermarkets like Safeways have now got dry cleaning franchises in them so that services are like where the people are rather than attracting the people and the dry cleaning to them 2) did you think about alliances with other organisations

It has been suggested then that speakers build up main discourse acts to provide the justification for asking questions and incorporate acts of restatements, repeats, etc. for further support. This is a defensive strategy which functions to 1) make confirmation by the interlocutor more likely due to the weight of evidence supplied and 2) show the speaker in the eyes of the audience as logical and informed in the questions he or she asks in a public situation.

### 7.2.2.3. Upgrading the validity of the question

A further strategic feature of responses in seminar discussion is illustrated by the initial clause P's response turn in the following example in which P upgrades the validity of the question by indicating that it is not plausible to answer it in terms of sales but in terms of research findings:

S2 Can I ask um how much more successful the recent new range of 200 4000 and 800's have been and have you got an indication of the sales it seems to a lay person such as myself to be significantly better than anything Rover have ever produced \\ which is

P                                                                                              \\ Yes
*if I answer it in terms of consumer research rather than sales and sales volumes* are there for all of us to see anyway yes I mean the satisfaction levels of owners the new range of products =====
(Outside speaker presentation text 1)

It is quite common for there to be difficulty establishing the question and this has been mentioned in previous chapters of the thesis. One possible reason behind this is the gap in knowledge and expertise between the speakers. One way round the problem is for the presenter to reject the elicit and/or ask for clarification which leads to extended exchanges. This possibility was discussed in Chapter Five. If the presenter does not do this, an alternative and indirect strategy is for the speaker to reformulate the elicit: to give his/her interpretation of the elicit, to qualify the elicit to make it more plausible or to give some background information before replying. Any of these actions then allow the presenter to answer meaningfully what otherwise would be an invalid question. This is clearly less face threatening for the interlocutor than the scenario of the exchange being extended and clarification sought.

## Review and categorisation of seminar strategies within turns

In section 7.2 a number of specific speaker strategies in seminar discussion were identified. Many of them were accounted for by a basically defensive drive, e.g. detachment in suggesting new ideas, self protection by expansion and support of questions and replies, marking counters in initiation with detachment, etc. Not all the strategies identified in seminar discussion were however, of this ilk: detachment in disconfirmation in responses, the surreptitious inputting of information and upgrading the question were explained as concerned (at least partially) with H face interests.

From the discussion of seminar strategies, it can be seen that participation in these public speaking events puts speakers in a difficult position: on the one hand they want to propose new ideas, counter propose, draw attention to inconsistencies in another's argument, etc., but, on the other hand, they wish to avoid open or direct confrontation and protect themselves against the possible loss of face that making a contribution in a public situation entails. This leads to large amounts of indirect and mainly defensive language use, such as hedging, justifying, copious amounts of support for statements made, etc. What emerges from our

examination of turns in seminar discussion is the tendency for tentative, guarded and often indirect discourse.

For the categorisation of strategies, two major categories and one minor one are proposed. Sub-categories are presented with their specific functions in particular slots in interaction and the face concerns underlying the uses of the sub-strategies are suggested.

**Figure 8: Classification of Seminar Strategies**

**1 Demonstration of S attitude to own propositions**

**a) Demonstration of detachment**

- to tentativise counter propositions *(I) ** ((S))

      *actually, really, in fact* to request reconsideration

      inserting 'S-out' clauses in criticism

      if-structures and the 'potential critique'

- to propose new ideas (I or R) ((S))

      stressing S's personal association with the proposition

      framing opinion as opinion seeking

- to surreptitiously input information (I or R) (( H & M))

      asserting commonality of S and H knowledge base

      attributing knowledge and ideas to H

- to disconfirm (R) ((H & S))

      representing knowledge as  beliefs

      agreement prefaces

**b) Demonstration of commitment**

- to refute and forestall counter propositions (R) ((S))

      use of strengtheners, e.g. at all

      personal attribution

- to indicate saliency (I or R) ((M))

- to indicate location of specific answer among responding acts (R) ((M)) ***

      repetition of lexical items in question

      *yes* and *no*

      personal attribution

**2. Giving evidence and justifications**

- to justify replies (R) ((S))

      providing expanded replies with additive, causal & adversial acts

      supporting main discourse with exemplify, restate & qualify acts

- to show the rationale for questions asked (I) ((S))

      apologies for entry

      providing expanded questions with additive, causal & adversial acts

      supporting main discourse with exemplify, restate & qualify acts

**3. Upgrading the validity of the question (R) ((S  H & M))**

- to justify the reply given

      giving background information,

      showing necessity of reformulating the prior elicitation

Key

*(I)  = at initiation slot in exchange structure  and (R) = at response slot in exchange structure

** double brackets indicate probable motivation of the use of the strategy: S = primarily speaker face concerns, H = primarily hearer  face concerns and M = clarity of message concern

H= the interlocutor

*** This strategy is also arguably a textual signalling device

## 7.3. Comparison across Subgenres

The textual and strategic features identified in the previous sections of the chapter were derived from texts from three subgenres: A discussion following the presentation by an outside speaker; B, discussion following the presentation by students and C, the non-presentation discussion/tutorial. Although, the majority of features are evident in all three subgenres, there are quantitative differences in their occurrences and some features are common to one subgenre but relatively rare or absent in another. This section reports on how the features vary across the subgenres.

The literature on NNS (non-native speaker) spoken discourse indicates that NNSs may lack the socio-pragmatic competence to function effectively in seminar and discussion (see Chapter 2). We would expect that textual and strategic features, i.e. non-core items which imply a highly developed and subtle aspect of communicative competence in a language, would be a language lack. Texts from UK and Turkey are compared to see if there are qualitative or quantitative differences in student speaking in them in respect to these features.

The identification of textual and attitudinal features in this chapter has been partial. It is hoped that the categorisation has a wide coverage but it was not an attempt to show a comprehensive picture of the metadiscoursal options and therefore, it is not the purpose here to exactly quantify the metadiscoursal features across the subgenres but to discuss variation in general terms.

### 7.3.1. Textual Features

Comparison is made between two of the textual signalling devices identified, topic indicators (back referencing and titling) and discourse activity indicators (activity or activity/topic). Information content type are not considered since they are not discrete devices.

## Topic Indicators

Although back-referencing and titling topic markers were evident to a limited extent in subgenre C, they were strongly in evidence on subgenres A and B, i.e. in discussions following presentations. Here these markers function to overtly relate the content of the questioner's turn to aspects of the presentation. As the presentation was some time ago in relation to the 'question', there is a clear need to indicate the part of the presentation to which the forthcoming 'question' is topically related. This is not a need in the non-presentation seminars because topics do not generally have a relationship with distant prior text and topics are generally continuous rather than discontinuous. As a consequence, there is a greater tendency in non-presentation discussions for topics to be introduced more as part and parcel of the speaker's elicit rather than as a discrete and marked item. In this respect tutorials are similar to conversation. McCarthy (1991: 70) states that in conversation ".. topics unfold interactively rather than 'existing' as static entities. Example 1 (from subgenre B) shows a topic marker back-referencing to the presentation. Example 2 (from subgenre C) shows introduction of topic as an intrinsic part of the speaker's interactional move. In example 2, there is anaphoric referencing (*that*) to the immediate prior text:

> Example 1
> S1 Yes I have a question *you talked earlier about how they segmented the market you said they actually* =====
> (Student presentation text 2)

> Example 2
> T === the value of their output is calculated on the basis of how much people are paid when they are employed and some allowance for the capital elements as well
>
> S7 Does *that* include an allowance for those items that aren't shown because they aren't actually consumed by the producers themselves ==
> (Non presentation discussion text 1)

## Discourse Activity Indicators

Activity markers were a feature common to all three subgenres but with only a couple evident in subgenre C. In both these cases, the activity marker seemed to function mainly as a device for interrupting rather than highlighting discourse activity and in both cases a topic not related to the central business of the seminar discussion was introduced. In discussions following presentations, turns are mainly received after bidding and nomination (verbal, gesture and/or

eye contact) and activity markers were not in evidence in turns that were taken by interruption rather than awarded by previous speaker. The examples below indicate the interrupting function of activity markers in subgenre C, non presentation discussion:

Example 1
S7                                              \\ Excuse me

T Yes

S7 *I was going to ask you* could we be asked to define ===

Example 2
S3                                              \\ Kirit *can I say*
*something* we walked over from Nelson building and ==
(Non presentation discussion text 1)

## Data from Turkey

In the discussions following presentations by expert speakers in the UK, a good number of back-referencing topic markers were observed and this was also the case with the Turkish data. The Turkish instances of this feature are shown on the following page. One type of topic indicating device was present (seen only once in UK data) and it marked with an asterisk.

- You said you are in the cosmetics salmon fish such kinds of things

- You mentioned that you tried to be sound as a company For example you
mentioned the Gulf crisis did not affect much your company

- In your previous talk you mentioned about this salmon fish productions and the
investment required

-*Eh the concept of 5th generation of computers is being talked about these times
quite a lot (compare UK data: S3 One other thing you hear quality of service)

Two discourse activity markers were present in the eliciting slots of the Turkish students and they are shown below. It is noticeable that they contrast with the realisations from the UK seminars in terms of modality. The more typically, distancing, polite forms of *Can I ask* and *I was going to ask* of the UK contrast with the abrupt *I want* of the Turkish students.

- I want to talk a little bit about the strategy formation process at Alarko

- I want to ask something

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## 7.3.2. Strategies

### Demonstration of Detachment

Hedging in proposing new ideas and disconfirmation

There was predictably a higher frequency of markers of detachment, especially hedging, than of commitment in all three subgenres. This of, course, ties in with the commonly held expectations for academic debate and the norm that propositions are presented as qualified statements. Hedging appeared frequently in both questions and answers in all three subgenres. Most markers occurred in acts eliciting confirmation rather than eliciting information. In Chapter Six it was argued that in elicitations of confirmation speakers are involved in making propositions and, therefore, caution in these sorts of questions is only to be expected. The following example of a partial turn illustrates the potential for density of markers of detachment for caution in an elicitation of confirmation:

> S1 ==== Does that mean to say that *if you could perhaps do things again that you would not have sought equity finance* but offered the shareholding to the workforce and *perhaps* taken on *some kind of* debt financing
> (Outside speaker presentation text 3)

Hedges were found to be more prevalent in the discussions following presentations than in subgenre C, the tutorials. The excerpt below illustrates the high level of caution that can take place in post-presentation discussion:

> S1 *I don't know that I would necessarily agree with that* I mean the amount of time getting in the car driving somewhere and paying money \\ to wash things
>
> P1                                                                                          \\ Well it's not that people do it on the way to do something else to do shopping go to work or whatever these people open from early to late and people drop in on their way to do other things going to work or whatever and the principal reason for going is time to save time
>
> S1 *I would disagree I would say* I take things to the dry cleaner because I have no option I mean I take them there because the label says dry clean only (P1 Well I) I can't wash it in a washing machine in fact sometimes I do I just take a flyer on it
>
> P2 *I think* our market would be *slightly* different from the American market *I expect* theirs is *probably* more advanced than ours with people prepared to take their various garment along even if they could clean them themselves and certainly that did *seem* to be the case

S2 *I think* the Americans are much more geared up towards easy care clothing than we are *as far as I can figure out* they love non-iron non-care cleaning
(Student presentation text 3)

Personal attribution hedging for caution was highly prevalent in subgenres A and B. It also occurred in subgenre C but to a lesser extent. It was surprising to find a number of wordy and formal markers of personal attribution in the student-student interaction in subgenre B, e.g. *I think it's fair to say, to the best of my knowledge* and *I don't know that I necessarily agree with that.* There were few occurrences of such ponderous alignments in subgenre C.

Due to the fact that hedging can represent both perceptions of truth value as well as strategic uses, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the strategic significance of the occurrence of a relatively high quantity of these markers. All that can be meaningfully said is that it is possible that responses in student peer interaction appear more tentative than student to outside speaker interaction due to two reasons, genuine lack of certain knowledge and for strategic stance. Certainly the role of presenters in subgenre B as pseudo-experts must contribute to the caution with which so many propositions are framed in responses.

Hedging and counters

In Chapter 6 questions seeking confirmation using negative polarity forms were identified as critical in nature. Some examples are drawn from the three subgenres for comparison.

Subgenre A: student questions to outside experts
1 Were you not re-inventing the wheel if you'd looked at what they were doing presumably you did look at what the opposition was you said so (P Hm) how they were operating on a European basis (P Hm) and if they were doing it on a European bias would that not have saved you some leg work
2 Was there not a conflict at all there that the customers will perceive it
3 Don't you think you're falling into the danger of assuming that in the future similarities are going to be a lot more and differences are going to nullify themselves
4 If it were plant building machinery etceteras presumably it wouldn't be any different in concept from (P Not at all) the ones you described
5 Can they not do that through joint ventures rather than acquisitions because the problem with acquisitions is ===.

Subgenre B: student questions to student presenters
1 The previous group seem to have far more stress on the technology importance than yourselves didn't you feel that as a \\ factor
2 Aren't they actually tapping that market through the area of men's aftershaves and that kind of stuff because you don't only get aftershaves you get ====
3 Aren't these companies though just aberrations of the system that creates them it's the stock market system and the pension houses and the big industrial share holders that create companies like this
4 === if they're actually trying to tran to sort of have transitional period between the family experience and the people who are already there would that not turn them off bringing kids in and \\ eh
5 Don't you think though that approach might affect its share performance that

Subgenre C: student questions to tutor
1 But wouldn't that mean that it would actually show the GDP lower than it really is
2 Shouldn't that be 0.05

It might be expected that in acts of criticism in initiation, demonstration of detachment and caution would be more marked in remarks addressed to strangers and people of higher status, i.e. in subgenres A and C rather than in subgenre B. However, we see is a similarity between subgenres A and B with the negative polarity forms occurring in longer and complex constructions, i.e. conditionals, the use of reasons for the point made, e.g. *because the problem with acquisitions is .........., whereas in subgenre C, the act is minimal and more direct although again framed by modality, e.g. *wouldn't.* This finding would seem to indicate that defensive strategies, such as speaker hedging and justifying/expanding the question, is very similar in student peer interaction as in student interaction with those experts and guests.

Indirect informing devices

Devices whereby speakers surreptitiously input information were observed in the turns of outside presenters and tutors. It can be tentatively hypothesised that this is a strategy typical of situations of asymmetrical status and knowledge and is a device used on the whole by those with more status and power. Only a couple of examples were identified in subgenre B. They are given below:

> I doubt whether *you'd* say (text 4)
>
> *You're* probably right (text 5)

**Demonstration of Commitment**

Refuting counters

Markers of commitment through means such as *not at all* and *I think* were mainly observed in outside speakers' responses to counters in initiations. Some, but few, were evident in student questions in the same events and in the responses of students in subgenre B.

Saliency

*I mean* to mark saliency was seen across all three subgenres with great regularity. Markers of saliency to indicate the short answer were found more in responses in subgenre A which was characterised by particularly long response turns.

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## Evidence and Justification

Turns in discussion in subgenres A and B tend to be considerably longer than turns in subgenre C. The major reason for this is the amount of expansion on the questions and replies and the supporting acts of exemplification, restatements and repetitions.

Responding turns by outside speakers tended to be longer than by student presenters. Minimally a turn of response can comprise a one act move. Maximally, it can constitute a page of transcribed text. The longest response turn in the data comprises approximately 590 words and was recorded in outside speaker text 3, the most formal of all the events in the corpus. In the same text the longest initiating turn comprises approximately 120 words. In subgenre A, most discussion time is taken up with responses rather than questions. For example, in outside speaker text 1, many initiation turns appear between 30 to 40 words. Response turns, on the other hand, appear from 50 to 250 words, many in the upper range.

The lengthy responses in subgenre A seem to pre-empt the initiator of that exchange from making any follow on move or initiating a second exchange. Thus we see in outside speaker text 3, which has the longest response turns, that all exchanges are simple two part structures and each new exchange is initiated by a different speaker. A possible explanation of this is that the initiator of the exchange feels that he or she has taken up enough of the time available through asking the question which led to such a lengthy response and has thus forfeited the right to go on. The length of responses in subgenre A suggests that there is a correlation between the formality of the event and the amount of talk expected in response moves. The more formal outside speaker events require lengthy response turns.

In subgenre B, initiating and responding slots are of more comparable lengths. Questions in student peer interaction tend to be more 'justified' in terms of expansion and support. The following example illustrates a heavily validated question in student peer interaction:

> S4 Um since to the best of my knowledge door to door selling is something of a is
> considered to be something of a downmarket activity and since one of the ways in
> which most Western countries have been moving lately is a sort of progressive
> gentrification of the population do you consider that tone of the weaknesses or threats
> I'm not sure which that Avon now face is a customer perception of them being
> basically a company company that sells products to low status people
> (Student presentation text 2)

n student-initiated exchanges in subgenre C, initiations tend to be shorter than responses. There is little need to validate or justify questions as they do not concern previous discourse, .e. the ideas or information necessarily put forward by an interlocutor. Student initiations are almost always in these texts addressed to the tutor. Responses tend to be longer than nitiations and this is presumably due to the asymmetrical relationship between students and :utor. Responses may be long or short as shown in the extract below:

> S1 That's including taxes and subsidies and things like that
>
> T That's right yes because it's on the expenditure basis that the that various items that
> actually include the taxes indirect taxes less subsidies whereas of course if you look at
> the output basis the value added initially starts out by being a de facto cost basis OK
> so I mean in the sense there is a question of saying value added is this term why is
> that and why is it used in economic national accounting because it's the actual basis of
> actually building up the GNP on a output basis and it makes sense to do it that way
> because in a sort of market based economy that provides you with the value of the
> output that's produced without double counting
>
> S2 So it is a value added on the expenditure basis
>
> T No value added will always be related to the output basis
> (Non-presentation discussion text 1)

Apology type entry justifications were equally evident in both subgenre A and B but not in :vidence in subgenre C.

n short, turns at initiation tend to be longer in subgenre B, student-student interaction, due to :xpansion and elaboration of the question and the speaker seeing a need to justify questions to )eers. Response turns are longest in subgenre A due to the amount of evidence speakers )roduce to expand and support their replies and also due to 'additional information' as the :xperts use the opportunity of the question to talk on the subject. In subgenre C, response urns (of tutors) are frequently long with the tutor inputting information as well as responding

o the question. In subgenre C, turns at initiation are fairly short as there is less need to justify the questions asked as this is not a post- presentation situation.

## Upgrading the validity of the question

This strategy was observed in the response turns of outside speakers.

## Data from Turkey

In the texts from Turkey long outside speakers response turns were evident as had been the case with the UK outside speakers' turns. Eliciting turns were, however, shorter and the reasons are discussed below.

There was a noticeable paucity of interpersonal strategies in the Turkish student production. Only one apology type entry justification was evident (*I'm curious about the fact that...*) and one marker of personal attribution for hedging (*As far as I know*). It was pointed out in the preceding discussion that attitudinal features were particularly predominant in post presentation events in the UK texts. Therefore, this lack in the production of the Turkish speakers was particularly conspicuous and supports findings in the literature on modality and the socio-pragmatic deficiencies of NNSs (Edmondson et al. 1984, House & Kasper 1981, Trosberg 1987). Some examples of the Turkish students' initiating turns are given:

examples:

- Why have you been so late in Turkey

- Did you have to do anything special to sell your computer in Turkey compared to European situation

- Was the Turkish customer aware of your products by this time

- Are you free in decision making or are you responsible to another centre

(Turkish outside speaker presentation text 2)

As can be seen these are one act moves, not justified by apologies or by expansion and exemplification. They come across as abrupt and uninformed.

Not all student initiations in the Turkish data are so direct and unembellished. For example:

> S1 I want to talk a little about the strategy strategy formation process at Alarko for example you come along with an idea and then what happens they accept or reject your idea
> (Turkish outside speaker presentation text 2)
>
> S2 As far as I know I mean you have a very wide range of products and in order to have a competitive advantage we know that one has to either be the cult leader or have differentiated products what is your differentiated
> (Turkish outside speaker presentation text 1)

However, 6 out of 12 student exchange initiations in the Turkish texts were abrupt and lacking in metadiscoursal features and this lack clearly led to communication breakdowns in the events. For example in text 2, 3 out of the 4 such short and abrupt initiating turns led to the need for the presenter to seek clarification of the question through a (r/i r) sequence.

## 7.4. Summary

The aim of the chapter was to investigate components within turns in seminar discussion that would have relevance for pedagogy and two areas, textual signalling and strategic devices were focused on. These two categorisations were argued to account for 'non-core' elements within turns fairly comprehensively. Variation across three seminar subgenres was discussed. In addition, texts from UK and Turkey were compared in the light of textual and strategic devices which indicated the Turkish students under-used metadiscourse, in particular, strategic devices.

Textual signalling is seen to be a prominent feature of seminars involving presentations. Topic and interactional activity markers are widely used and the nature of post-presentation discussion accounts for much of this as speakers need to indicate the relationship between their contribution and the presentation.

Secondly, the chapter brought to light interpersonal strategies within turns in discussion. Two major strategies in seminar were identified: demonstrations of speaker attitude (especially

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marking detachment) and the giving of justification/evidence for propositions. A number of specific uses seminar participants have for these general strategies were identified.

The strategic use of language was discussed within the general paradigm of *face concerns* (Goffman 1967). Many strategies were explained as motivated by the speaker's fear of losing face, e.g. justifications for entry, supporting claims with exemplification and restatements and the use of markers of detachment in the proffering of new ideas. Certain other strategies, such as prefacing disagreement with agreement, were argued to be concerned with both speaker and hearer face concerns. Some strategies, however, e.g. upgrading the validity of the question and indicating saliency were argued to be concerned with adding clarity to the message as well as being concerned with face interests.

The investigation into strategies in seminar discussion calls into question aspects of the influential theory of politeness and strategy use of Brown and Levinson (1987).

1. Brown & Levinson's theory rests on the basic tenet that the likelihood and amount of indirectness and politeness used when committing face threatening acts is determined by the variables of social distance, power and ranking of impositions in a culture. Certain findings from this study do not support this. Firstly, high levels of detachment and indirectness were observed both in student peer interaction and in student talk to those of higher status, i.e. tutors and visiting experts, even in acts of comparable intention and form, e.g. criticism through negative polarity forms. Secondly, certain strategies were identified in the talk of the outside experts and tutors that seem to arise from their concerns for the face concerns of students.

In light of the above, two conclusions are drawn: in public forums speakers use defensive strategies as much in their interactions with peers as with those with higher status and the situation $S > H$ motivates certain specific speaker strategies that cannot be explained by Brown & Levinson's theory.

2. Brown and Levinson argue that acts threatening the face of the hearer are mitigated by use of strategies, mainly softening mechanisms that give the addressee an 'out' face saving line. Chen (1993) argues that a fundamental problem in the theory is Brown and Levinson's supposition that nearly all speech acts are FTA's. The problem this investigation found in Brown & Levinson's theory (op cit.) was that the theory focuses mainly on acts threatening to the hearer. However, in the public situation of seminar, many acts are primarily threatening to the speaker and indirectness in much seminar discourse can be explained as motivated by speakers' concerns to maintain their own face. At times, speaker strategy can be explained as giving the hearer an 'out' face saving line. Yet, in seminar discussion strategic language use stems mainly from the speaker's feeling of vulnerability and attempts to alleviate this through a number of defensive strategies.

The major contribution of this chapter has been in the extrapolation of textual signalling and strategic devices typically used in seminar. Frameworks have been offered which we claim account fairly comprehensively for components within turns in seminar discussion. The range of devices and strategies brought to light provides a description of language within turns in seminar discussion which has not been available to date for those working in the field of E.A.P.

# Chapter Eight
## Conclusion

## 8. 0 Introduction

In the introduction to the thesis, it was stated that a major motivation for the research had been the lack of good pedagogic texts for seminar skills in E.A.P. (English for Academic Purposes). Initial investigation, however, revealed a more basic problem which was that very little was empirically known and very little research had been made concerning discourse in seminar discussion which could inform pedagogic practice. Thus, the present research has been at a basic and descriptive rather than applied level and it has aimed to extrapolate from texts of seminar discussion the underlying components and patterns of interaction. The study has centred on three major areas with the objective of producing frameworks which can fairly comprehensively account for major elements of the discourse. These areas are - exchange sequences between interlocutors, components of exchange initiation and the strategic use of language within turns. The study provides descriptive frameworks and explanations to account for the discourse of seminar discussion and in these ways aims to meet the need for basic, empirical knowledge and a terminology for discussing this genre of instruction.

This, the eighth and final chapter of the thesis, aims to summarise the findings made in response to the research questions stated in Chapter One. It aims also to state the conclusions drawn from the study and evaluate the extent to which the hypotheses stated at the outset of the research have been supported by the findings. Theoretical implications and practical applications of the study and its findings are outlined. The chapter reports on the shortcomings of the present study and makes recommendations for further research.

## 8.1. Summary of Findings

### Exchange Patterns

The first chapter of language analysis was an investigation into exchange patterns in seminar discussion and, in particular, exchanges initiated by students. It found the basic, highly

prevalent pattern of a two-part, initiation/response or question/answer exchange. The analysis also brought to light extended and complex interchanges. Some of these included a final third part follow-up move and some were found to be driven by clarification sequences. However, it was argued that the major impetus for intentionally extended exchanges was a follow-up move registering dissatisfaction to the response given. This follow-up move functions to re-initiate and thus develop and prolong the exchange. A framework was proposed to account for the various patterns of exchange evident.

The patterns were found to vary quantitatively across the three types of seminar investigated. For example, in subgenres A and C (discussion following the presentation by an outside expert and the non-presentation discussion respectively) fewer exchange-final follow-up moves but a higher number of follow-up moves expressing dissatisfaction and acting to re-initiate and extend the exchange were evident compared to subgenres B (discussion following the presentation by students).

The investigation into exchange patterns in discussion raised theoretical issues. The approach to the analysis of exchanges was initially based on existing constructs (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Coulthard & Brazil 1992). However, the data driven framework eventually proposed in the chapter differed from the aforementioned constructs in three significant ways.

Firstly, it was observed that many exchange initiating moves in seminar discussion were complex and multi-targeted. Therefore, it was found that the notion of quantity and type of information being transmitted as a basis for delineating exchanges as suggested in the existing constructs (Coulthard & Brazil op cit.) was not feasible. It was proposed in the chapter that factors in the delineation of exchanges were the change of interlocutor, change of topic and the occurrence of eliciting moves.

Secondly, the notion of a four part extended pattern posited by Coulthard and Brazil (op. cit.) of I (R/I) R (F) (initiation, response as initiation, response and follow-up) was rejected in

favour of the extended pattern I R (F/I Rn) (Fn) (initiation, response, follow-up as initiation/response once or more times and follow-up once or more times). The basic pattern of I R was modified to I Rn to accommodate the sometimes multi-party but dyadic nature of seminar interaction. Exchanges involving clarification sequences were formulated as I (r/i rn) R (Fn) and I (r/i rn) R (F/I (i/r rn) Rn) (Fn). The modelling of extended exchange structures has theoretical implications for the notion of prospectiveness and the role of the post-response follow-up slot.

The notion of prospectiveness has been used in the literature to account for the linear and adjacent relationship between discourse elements and is seen as a means of accounting for interactive elements both in a forward and a backward manner. However, the portrayal of clarification sequences (r/i r) as inserted sequences goes against this concept. In the extended exchange pattern proposed in this study, I can be seen to prospect R as the next discourse move (although it may fail to come about in actual practice), R is prospected, but paradoxically not by the immediately preceding discourse move.

A further theoretical implication of the model proposed in the study concerns the role of follow-up (F). It is presented as potentially exchange final or as a slot in exchange structure that can drive the interchange onwards. The implication of this is that the follow-up slot is imbued with a dual interactional function and interactants have the option of using it either way. Therefore, the follow up slot is particularly critical in discussion. At initiation or response, interactants are limited to initiating or responding or not doing so. At follow-up there is a wider choice: follow-up, no follow-up or follow-up as re-initiation. It was argued in Chapter Five that it is at follow-up, the post-response slot, that 'question/answer' sequences are developed or not developed into deeper discussion. Just as exchange initiation is viewed as a proactive action, we need to recognise that it is the will to drive interchanges on beyond the two-part pair into development that transforms an exchange of information or views into debate. Thus the role of the interactant at follow up is critical and there is a need to focus more attention on this slot in studies of interaction.

The research questions which motivated the study of exchange patterns were essentially empirical: *What is the basic pattern and what extended exchanges occur? What are the typical patterns of exchange?* The study has sought to answer these questions in two ways. The former question has been answered by the explication of the basic and extended patterns evident, which have been outlined in this section and in more detail in Chapter Five, and additionally, by attempting to quantify the occurrence of these various patterns in subgenres of seminar. On a quantitative level, the findings were that the two-part pattern predominates, but that variations exist in exchanges involving exchange final follow-up slots and follow-up as initiation/response sequences in the different subgenres. Thus, in our attempt to answer the second question, *What are the typical patterns of exchange?*, it was found that the answer depends to an extent on the type of seminar. In subgenres A and C it was observed that two-part initiation/response exchanges predominated and that nearly all other exchanges were initiation/responses follow-up as initiation/response structures. Exchange final follow-up was rarely observed. In subgenre B, two-part initiation/response exchanges accounted for just half of all exchanges and more exchange final follow-up moves were observed.

**Moves at Initiation**

The aim of Chapter Six, which concerned acts and moves at initiation, was to formulate a framework of acts and moves with which exchanges, especially student-initiated exchanges, are started in seminar discussion. The analysis and framework building was, as in the previous chapter, initially based on existing constructs (Coulthard & Brazil op cit., Tsui 1992, 1994). However, problems arose in applying these constructs to seminar discourse and led to developments in the means of analysis and the subsequent framework proposed to account for the acts and moves at exchange initiation.

One tenet of the constructs mentioned above is the idea that a move at initiation may be realised by either an informing or eliciting move. According to these models, an informing move leads to an acknowledgement as response whereas an eliciting move leads to a reply as

response. In the course of examining the data in regard to this point, moves which are clearly questioning and those which at first appeared as informing in view of their forms (lack of perceptible question-like features, e.g. intonation, inverse subject-verb form) were both observed to lead to responses that are full and information supplying. The 'informing-like' move was not found to lead to a response that was qualitatively distinct from a reply. This finding led me to argue that moves at initiation in seminars should not be conceptualised as either eliciting or informing moves, but that they function as eliciting moves regardless of their form. This in turn led to reformulation of the construct of moves at initiation to the view that exchanges in discussion are initiated by elicitations.

A further point from which the approach to analysis diverged from the constructs on which it was initially based was in regard to the notion of *head* acts within moves. The existing models theorise that there is a *head* or main act in moves and that other potentially informing or eliciting acts around this *head* are subsidiary to it. This notion was not supported by the analysis. Instead, it was observed that when a number of elicits are made by a speaker, more than one of them may be responded to by the interlocutor and that it is often not feasible to relate a response to one specific act within the preceding initiating turn. For example, an elicit and the giving of the reason for asking that question may co-occur. The reason may be as interactionally significant as the question-like item itself if not more so. In the response to such an initiation it may not be possible to differentiate between a response to the question-like item and the reason for it. Although it may sometimes be the case that one elicit may replace or supersede another as shown in the models from which our analysis was initially derived, this is not inevitably so. As a result of this observation, the framework proposed in Chapter Six allows for the possibility of multiple acts as initiation to reflect the often complex nature of the initiation of exchanges.

At initiation and follow-up as initiation, two major functional categories where perceived in discussion: elicits seeking information and those seeking confirmation. The two categories were delineated according to the discourse act prospected. Elicitation of confirmation was

observed to embrace a range of forms and two subcategories of intent were identified: the weak elicit: confirm by which speakers tentatively make propositions, e.g. Does A lead to B? and the strong elicit: confirm whereby a speaker indicates clearly his or her own idea on the subject, e.g. Don't you think A leads to B? or A leads to B.

The subcategorisation outlined above drew into the theoretical underpinning of the analysis a meshing of two categorising principles. The first was the notion of Tsui (1992, 1994) developed from the Birmingham approach to discourse analysis, B(DA), of categorisation according to the discourse act prospected for the interlocutor. The second was categorisation according to the source and attitude of propositional content of the act. In an elicitation of information, a speaker seeks propositional content from his or her interlocutor. In a weak elicitation of confirmation, the speaker offers a tentative proposition as a suggestion and in a strong elicitation of confirmation the speaker asserts a proposition for interlocutor verification. The study thus offered a two-dimensional perspective of elicitations: categorisation in terms of what is prospected at the next place in exchange structure by the interlocutor and in terms of the propositional value of the 'question'. Although much theoretical interest has been given to the notions of the presuppositions and presumptions involved in questions, the propositional aspect of questions has to date drawn little attention from theorists.

Chapter Six of the thesis was motivated by the research question *How and why are exchanges initiated?* The analysis showed that exchanges may be initiated through single or multiple acts and that the different types of seminar varied in this respect. In the non-presentation discussion type of seminar, initiation was seen to be very largely realised through single acts whereas moves of initiation in post-presentation discussions had a higher incidence of multiple acts. The second way in which the study addressed the question of how exchanges are initiated was by the identification of typical forms used in acts at initiation (e.g. it was observed that weak elicitations of confirmation were typically formed with positive polarity and tag forms). The attempt to address the question of why students initiate exchanges was

addressed by the formulation of a categorisation of the three types of eliciting act at initiation as outlined above. Overall the study concluded that students' motivation in initiating exchanges is either to seek unknown information or to seek confirmation of their own ideas. The latter, which is essentially information or idea giving, may be presented tentatively as mere suggestions or more strongly as assertions or critical questions. In all three cases initiation is performed as an elicitation, i.e. 'question'.

The third means by which the research question was addressed was through a quantitative analysis of variance between the three subgenres focused on in the study. Results of this analysis indicated that the reasons why students initiate exchanges varies somewhat according to particular subgenres. In subgenre A, similar amounts of weak elicitations and strong elicitations for confirmation were seen alongside a slightly higher number of elicitations for information. In subgenre B, on the other hand, acts of strong elicitation for confirmation predominated, and relatively few elicitations for information were seen. In the non-presentation tutorial discussion, a higher number of weak and strong elicitations of confirmation were observed and concomitantly few elicits of information. However, it needs to be borne in mind that these acts often occur in combinations, e.g. two elicitations for information or one elicitation for information and one weak elicitation for confirmation. For this reason, a major argument made in Chapter Six was that it would be misleading to represent moves at exchange initiation or follow-up as initiation as driven by a singular motivation. What occurs may be too complex to be reduced to a single intention.

The major theoretical implications of the analysis and framework building were three-fold. Firstly, the notion that exchange initiation or follow-up as initiation may be multi-faceted was proposed and the notion that initiation is necessarily a single act phenomenon representing a single impetus was challenged. Secondly, the discourse of the seminar discussion was presented as driven by initiation and follow-up as initiation which essentially involves two functions: the asking for and supplying of ideas and information. However, it is the nature of seminar discussion that both these functions are performed and acted upon as elicitations and

not a mix of elicits and informs. Thirdly, acts of elicitation were conceptualised as dual-aspected: they vary in terms of what they prospect and they vary in terms of their function in demanding and supplying propositional content.

## Strategies

The investigation into metadiscourse within turns at talk in seminar discussion focused on the two areas: textual signalling and the ways speakers mark their attitudes towards their contributions to discussion.

Analysis revealed three categories of textual markers commonly used: signalling topic, discourse activity and informational type (e.g. example, definition).

The investigation into attitudinal markers investigated the wide range of means by which speakers make their contributions to discussion in seminar less simple and direct. A myriad of such devices are present in this kind of semi-formal speaking and the study sought to explain and categorise commonly occurring attitudinal devices in reference to the general theory of *face concerns* (Goffman 1967). Three major categories of strategies were proposed to account for such phenomena in seminar discussion: demonstration of speaker attitude to the propositions he or she makes, the giving of evidence and justifications and upgrading the validity of questions. Further subcategorisation was suggested and some typical exponents shown.

Although a number of the devices discussed have attracted previous research interest, they have mostly been dealt with individually A notable exception is the theory of Brown & Levinson (1987) which offers an account of strategies as motivated by face concerns and presents an overall framework. Their framework proposes two major rationales for strategic language use: *positive* and *negative politeness* which aim to 'anoint the face' of the hearer and to avoid imposition on the hearer respectively.

Similarly, the framework of strategic language use proposed in Chapter Seven represents an attempt to gather together such devices and view them under the theoretical paradigm of face concerns. However, this study differs from that of Brown & Levinson in that the focus of the investigation was limited to the specific context of seminar discussion and that strategies were identified from examination of interactional sequences rather than individual utterances. Strategies were not differentiated into those related to *positive* and *negative politeness*, but an attempt was made to relate strategy use to speakers' concerns for their own or their interlocutor's face and with the clarity of the message.

The presentation of strategies in Chapter Seven showed the possibility of meshing language phenomena that have been discussed under different paradigms within one framework, i.e. the categorisation of sequences of informing acts that has interested those working within B(DA) was discussed within the framework of strategic behaviour.

The research question that guided the investigation was, *What strategies do speakers typically use?* A number of recurrent strategies were derived from scrutiny of interactional sequences. Two major strategies predominated: demonstration of speakers' attitude to the propositional content of their contributions and the giving of evidence and justifications. The chapter described when and in what forms these were evident, e.g. in initiating or response moves, and suggestions were made to the motivations behind the use of such devices, e.g. to tentativise counter propositions or to show the rationale for questions asked. In response to the research question it was shown that speakers typically use a range of strategies to minimise the potential for loss of face, e.g. counter propositions tend to be hedged and the making of a suggestion or a request for information is veiled in justifications and evidence, and to ensure that the message is made clear and is highlighted, e.g. through metadiscoursal devices. None of this is, of course surprising, except perhaps in the extent and range of strategic devices apparent.

Any description of strategic use of language in a given context is inevitably partial and the framework given in Chapter Seven is a partial picture of the phenomenon as it occurs in seminar discussions. Chapter Seven shows an endeavour to extrapolate and rationalise strategic devices into an overall paradigm of the face concerns of speaker for him or herself and the hearer or for the clarity of the message. This notion is hypothetical and open to question. Alternative interpretations of the underlying motivations for the strategic use of language and potential categories of strategy types are obviously possible.

An implication of the approach used in Chapter Seven was that strategies can usefully be investigated by looking at interactional sequences, i.e. stretches of language between speakers, and should not be limited to describing what one speaker does without reference to what the following speaker then does. This entailed focusing not only on how a speaker carries out acts and moves through languages within utterances but on the study of effects in interaction.

The second theoretical implication concerns the impetus for strategic language use, i.e. that it is mainly driven by face concerns and that much strategic use of language is primarily defensive. Defensiveness was seen mainly to be manifested in two ways: firstly, it was seen in tentativising or avoidance of direct commitment. This lack of commitment has been viewed by Brown & Levinson (op cit.) as conflict avoiding. However, in Chapter Seven it was argued to be a stance which allows the speaker to avoid responsibility and potential demands for proof. The second manifestation was the giving of evidence and justifications which it was argued diminish the likelihood of any form of counter from the other interactant, e.g. rejection of a question, negation by the other speaker.

In summary, in answer to the question of *What strategies do speakers typically use?*, Chapter Seven presented the view that, in the main, speakers are concerned in seminar discussion with the potential for loss of face and that they use strategies of defensiveness. Some are defence through avoidance, such as demonstrating lack of commitment, and some are defence through

a pre-emptive show of strength, such as the giving of evidence. In addition, language is used strategically to highlight and clarify informational content.

## 8.2 Conclusions

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the study. The first two relate to the hypotheses posed in the initial stage of the research which were concerned with the predictability of interaction in seminars and variation across seminar subgenres.

- *Hypothesis One: Interactional structures and strategies in seminar discussion are highly constrained and predictable.*

In the study frameworks were proposed to account for interactional structure in terms of typically occurring exchange patternings and initiation. These frameworks were argued to account in good measure for interactional structures with relatively few categories. In this way the hypothesis has been confirmed since most exchange patternings and moves at initiation were shown to be able to be reduced to a few generative categories in two-party discussion.

A further framework was proposed for interactional strategies and again relatively few categories were argued to account for a number of strategies. It was proposed that there are a few predictable categories of strategy type at the base of seminar discussion. These strategy types may be realised in different ways and thus we do not argue that the language realisations are entirely predictable. Although some realisations were seen to occur with some frequency, other realisations doubtlessly exist.

- *Hypothesis Two: Subgenres of seminar discussion vary in respect to the occurrence of interactional features.*

In the three chapters of language analysis, following the extrapolation and presentation of categories of language behaviour, the subgenres (discussion following the presentation by an outside speaker, discussion following the presentation by students and the non-presentation tutorial discussion) were compared. A number of quantitative differences were observed and

were explained in relation to contextual features. It was surmised that major factors underlying such variety in the differing types of seminar were variations in the levels of symmetry of knowledge and status between the interlocutors, variation in some of the purposes held for the type of event and factors such as whether the event included a presentation.

On the whole variation between subgenres of discussion was found not be absolute in qualitative terms but in the frequency with which certain features occur, such as the piling up of discourse acts in initiating moves or the length of responses. It is concluded that situational variables influence interaction not in terms of what may occur but in terms of how often certain interactive features occur. In this way the hypothesis has been supported by the findings.

Other general conclusions drawn from the findings are:

- *Seminar discussion is an umbrella term for instructional events among the varying purposes of which is the desire for students to be proactive in discussion.*

The lack of definition of what a seminar is or consists of has been noted in the literature (Jordan 1989: 154). From our exploratory investigation of practice and literature, it was found that the term seminar discussion could be used interchangeably with tutorial and class discussion. Jordan states in relation to this problem of definition that the ".... only common features agreed upon are that seminars involve a number of students and that speaking and interaction are expected." (ibid.: 154).

Swales has put forward the view that a genre can be defined as a class of communicative events with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their content, positioning and form, that these events share some communicative purposes but that exemplars of genres vary in their prototypicality (1990: 45-58). In line with this view, the following definition is proposed.

A major purpose of seminars is that students have an active role in discussion and that through critical discussion and information sharing, at least partially initiated by the learners themselves, thinking is developed and learning enhanced. A seminar type discussion in which students only responded but did not initiate any kind of interchange would not be seen as successful. In terms of 'allowable contributions', the active student role is realised in the initiating and extending of exchanges. Contributions which initiate interchanges take the form of elicitations whether they consist of offering propositional content or seeking it. Many contributions are formed with textual and strategic devices to clarify the message and paradoxically to make it less direct and face threatening respectively. As for variation, a number of subgenres can be identified. Some involve a presentation and some do not. Some involve a measure of tutor-led interaction whilst others rely almost exclusively on student initiative for discussion. Some are fairly spontaneous, whilst other require preparation and certain language features may be more prevalent in one rather than the other.

- *Discussion in seminars is dyadic and information and ideas are exchanged during elicitation sequences.*

Although interaction in a discussion may be multi-party, much of it is essentially dyadic in nature. When more than two interactants are involved in discussion in seminars, they tend to act from two sides. More than one interactant (e.g. two presenters, three students from the class) may constitute or come to constitute either side of the interchange. If there are clear sides in a discussion situation, a framework which accounts for two-party interaction may also reflect multi-interactant discussion.

The business of seminar discussion is the exchange of information, ideas and opinions. Exchange initiation by students takes the form of elicitations. Through exchanges initiated and extended by moves functioning as elicitations, information is transferred and thinking developed.

• *The discourse of seminars is characterised by a high level of strategic devices.*

It may be desired that academic debate be open and direct, however, it was found that much tentativeness and justification characterises the discourse of seminar discussion. Interactants are defensive and cautious and this leads to a high number of 'comments' being in the form of tentative elicitations for confirmation, large amounts of justification of a point made or question asked, hedging and distancing of the speaker from his or her contribution and participant reports of apprehension of being direct and concerns over the appropriacy of being 'critical.'

The discourse of seminars is characterised by a high level of strategic devices. Turns in discussion are often long and this leads to large amounts of textual metadiscourse. On the other hand, a range of attitudinal devices function mainly to make contributions to discussion less direct and simple. Some protect the speaker whilst others appear to minimise the threat to the other interactant.

## 8.3 Theoretical Implications

Specific theoretical implications resulting from the findings from each chapter of language analysis were outlined in section 8.1. In this subsection, general implications of the study for the analysis of spoken interaction and description of spoken genres are suggested.

1. The approach to spoken interaction developed at Birmingham University, B(DA), was the starting point for much of the analysis in the thesis - the analysis of exchange patterns, moves at initiation and sequences of informing acts. Through juxtapositioning these constructs (Burton 1981, Coulthard & Brazil 1992, Coulthard & Montgomery 1981, Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Tsui 1992 & 1994) with seminar discussion texts an assessment has been formed of their adequacy to account for the discourse of discussion.

The approach of identifying units in speech by the notion of prospectiveness was found to be suitable for analysis of interactional moves, i.e. what one interactant prospects his or her

interlocutor do at the next slot in structure. However, it was found to be less appropriate for accounting for components within turns. The original model (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) was derived from school classrooms and depicts the components within turns in a linear progression. This was not found to be tenable in regard to turns in seminar discussion which are often much longer than those of school pupils. It was observed in the study that predictable components occur within turns, such as those opening an exchange or functioning as responses, but not in predictable sequences. For example, apologies for questions were observed both turn-initially or elsewhere in the turn. The theoretical implication we draw from this is that in certain genres such as the less ritualised genre of seminar discussion, prospection may operate at the level of moves within exchanges but not at the level of act sequences within turns.

A further aspect of the B(DA) concerns the search for structure beyond two-pair parts. The study brought to light extended patterns which account for interaction in sequences and thus more holistically than would be the case if the focus was restricted to adjacency couplets. The findings of this study indicate the possibility of identifying extended macro-structures in spoken interactive discourse and imply that those studying other genres of discussion may find this aspect of the approach favourable.

And finally, the approach of assigning meaning to interactional acts and moves was found to be feasible within this specified context as a means of analysis. Speech or discourse act approaches have been criticised on the grounds of the difficulties of attributing act categories to utterances (Levinson 1981: 112). Levinson (op cit.) argues that most properties of discourse are context-sensitive. "In general we may say how an utterance will be taken, and in what way it will be responded to, are facts that are in part determined by the social activity within which the talk occurs."

Although the general approach of B(DA) has been assessed as favourable to this study, the findings of the research indicate the need to establish categories derived from data from the

specific context of the research. The models used as the initial reference points had been derived from classroom instructional data. Yet, they were not directly applicable to seminar discussion. Thus, the qualitative study of the texts preceded further analysis and categories of behaviour were derived from the context-specific texts. By this methodology, new categories and concepts were deduced from close scrutiny of texts. Schegloff (1993: 114) states, "Quantification is no substitute for analysis. We need to know what the phenomena are, how they are organised, and how they are related to each other as a precondition before cogently bringing methods of quantitative analysis to bear on them."

2. The study has reinforced the need to be aware and make explicit the possible range of event types that may be subsumed under a genre label, in this case 'seminar discussion.' A number of subgenres may exist. Those studying academic genres need to be aware of the range of events covered by a general label. Reports of research and language descriptions into academic genres need to make explicit the subgenres from which the descriptions were derived so that others may then assess their relevance to their own situations. The range and variety of events found implies the need for E.A.P. practitioners, to continually reassess modes of instruction in order to realistically evaluate them and not rely on potentially out-dated personal perceptions or descriptions in the literature that are not empirically based.

### 8.4. Practical Applications

**English for Academic Purposes**

Findings from the study may have applications in practice in the field of E.A.P. The study aimed to find out about the practice of seminar discussion in a university context and to show some of the common patterns and features of interaction in seminar discussion and to offer explanations where possible. In this section, suggestions are made whereby the information and discourse-based description provided in the study can feed into the teaching and studying of academic discussion in the E.A.P. classroom. Firstly, improvements in syllabus and secondly, in methodology are suggested. Finally, some considerations are suggested for needs analysis.

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**Re-assessment of language objectives: a discourse-based syllabus**

Following on from this research, a fuller and more realistic picture of the language of seminar discussion needs to be disseminated to E.A.P. practitioners. In Chapter Two (section 2.2.3) attention was drawn to the limitations of some commercially produced E.A.P. materials in the area of discussion in seminars. Relatively few published pedagogic works specifically addressed to academic discussion. Some of these provided information on presentation skills and offered discussion activities for the classroom. However, the description of the language of discussion was found to be largely restricted to a handful of functional categories and 'useful phrases,' such as *to disagree,* and the listing of language exponents for each category. These 'language exponents' were in the form of entry prefaces such as *I disagree* or *I didn't understand your point about.* In these materials the presentation of turns in their entirety, an account of the complexity of elements within turns, information about responses or how language components co-occur in sequences within or between turns were not presented. In short, the description of seminar discussion language offered by such materials was limited. In Chapter Two, such limitations were largely attributed to the lack of investigation that has been carried out in this area and, in particular, the lack of investigation and analysis of stretches of interaction and whole turns as opposed to turn entry fragments.

Before discussing what should be in a syllabus for seminar discussion, I would like to consider the match between the view of language of discussion presented in textbooks with some findings from this study. Firstly, the 'useful phrase' approach relies heavily on the presentation of overt metastatements and this implies that learners of English would do well to make their contributions to discussion highly explicit. Secondly, an assumption behind the emphasis on presenting metastatements would seem to be that in making a contribution to discussion, participants make basically one act moves with one overall intention. The general impression is given that contributions to discussion are clear and brief. How well does this view serve our NNS students? From our examination of texts, the answer to this would seem

to be not very well. In texts from both UK and from Turkey, it was observed that perhaps the commonest cause for conversational hitches (as seen to be leading to clarification sequences) was a short and much to the point question. When a NNS or NS made such a question, the result was often incomprehension on the part of the interlocutor. To make contributions understandable in these speaking events speakers use an amount of supporting and additional acts and moves. Without such 'non-core' linguistic items, contributions may be too difficult for the interlocutor to process.

A further assumption behind the 'useful phrases' approach is that discourse acts tend to be overtly marked with metastatements such as *I have a question I would like to ask.* Findings in the study indicated that such markers are not used very frequently and that when they are used they may function as turn-taking gambits not necessarily accurately reflecting the illocutionary force of the forthcoming utterances. So, for example, *I'd like to say something* may as well precede a 'question' as a 'contributory statement.' What our examination of components within turns showed was the amount of conversational work that was put into making contributions full and quite indirect rather than short and transparent. To illustrate, in discussion, a participant is more likely to preface disagreement with agreement than to use a metastatement, such as *I really can't agree* and is likely to provide a good deal of support, expansion, examples, etc. rather than a short, bald on record type of remark and thus maintain certain conventions of politeness and formality.

Furthermore, from the limited presentation of language in pedagogic works, the idea is given across that participants in seminar discussion ask questions or make contributions. The thesis has tried to show that questions and contributions are, in this situation, often one and the same the thing. I have tried to show that interactants advance ideas and information through contributions that function as elicitations. These may be in 'question' forms such as polarity structures or in the form of statements, but regardless of this aspect, they are acted upon as elicitations, and replies are almost invariably given in response. Moreover, the study showed the complexity within the interaction and that interactants may try to get a lot done within a

turn at talk. Finally, in pedagogic texts on speaking there is no view of interaction as such, what we see is an itemised list of openings of what one would imagine to be a series of questions or contributions. There is no view of any structure in interaction beyond this and no illustration of question answer pairs as such.

The present study has aimed to provide a fuller and more realistic description of the language and interaction in seminar discussion by investigation of chunks of discourse in the discussion sections of seminars and by the establishment of frameworks which attempt to account for sequences of interaction and turns in seminar discussion. The frameworks provide concepts and terminology with which interaction in discussion can be analysed, assessed and discussed in specific terms and this account should be of use in the field of E.A.P. One major potential use is that the frameworks and categories may inform E.A.P. syllabus design and materials production. The findings showed a number of potential syllabus components: e.g. the range of textual signalling; acts building up support for responses and clarification sequences. Two major language areas that E.A.P. needs to consider are elicitation sequences and the tentative uses of language. There are a number of reasons why these areas are very important and these are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The analysis has shown that information and ideas are exchanged during elicitation sequences. Interviews revealed faculty demand for 'active' student participation. Therefore, it is essential that students can form appropriate elicitations for initiating, repairing and extending exchanges and also that they can follow such interchanges. Seminar is generally portrayed as an event in which participants exchange ideas. It may be inferred that the latter comes about by means of sequences in which participants express opinions such as, *X: I think ... , Y: I think ... , Z: I think ...*. However, the study has brought to light the fact that the arena for the exchange of information and ideas is not a series of contributions that give information or opinions but a series of elicitation sequences. Ideas and information are exchanged through 'question'/answer, 're-question'/answer routines. For E.A.P. this implies that attention needs to be given to question types, to exchange patterns and also to the potential of the follow-up slot

to re-initiate. It cannot be assumed that non-native speakers are fully aware of the potential of these means to contributing information, ideas and controversy.

Language use in seminars is sometimes direct but much of it is semi-covert and pedagogy needs to reflect this in addition to the sort of overt markers of intent that have dominated materials. Some contributions to discussion in seminars are *bald on record* (Brown & Levinson 1987: 60) but many are not. For the non-native student, this is an area in which their use of language was identified in the study as divergent from that of native-speakers. Holmes (1988b: 40) has pointed out a need to investigate the use of *epistemic devices* in texts in order to inform ESL (English as a Second Language) textbook writers. Holmes says "... many discussions of the pragmatics of epistemic devices and, in particular, their use to express politeness, ironically make little or no use of corpus data or attested evidence from genuine contexts, but rather discuss concocted or artificial utterances in a social vacuum." The data collected in the study, revealed participation in seminar discussion to be perceived as potentially face threatening and high in the use of strategic devices. The two-fold implication of this is that non-native speakers need training in the recognition and production of indirect language use and that materials present this vital aspect of language in discussion.

The study has brought to light a number of patterns and features of spoken discourse in seminar discussion, such as move sequences and the typical components of turns. However, to what use can this description be put in terms of a syllabus? What should such a syllabus consist of and is there an alternative to another itemised list of functional categories or 'useful phrases'? Hoey (1986) argues the case for a discourse-oriented syllabus on the grounds that in E.S.P. contexts English is a tool and we need to show how English is used. More recently, McCarthy and Carter (1994) argue for a discourse-based approach to syllabus design and offer a framework for discourse strategies as the base of such a syllabus. They present categories, such as *genre-related, politeness* and *repair strategies*. These are areas for which the study has provided some description for seminar discussion. For example, under the heading of *genre-related strategies*, students could be made aware of the different subgenres of seminar

that they are likely to meet and the teacher could lead a discussion of some of the conventions associated with those subgenres as practised in the target community. McCarthy & Carter (op cit.) suggest the category of *politeness strategies* and ask "What aspects of face will be involved?" Such considerations need to play an important part in a syllabus for seminar discussion since politeness strategies and face concerns have been identified in the study as a persistent undercurrent of seminar discussion. Students need to be made aware of what face concerns may be important and some of the ways face is maintained in difficult interactions, such as counters. Description from the chapters of language analysis in this thesis can be used to feed into a syllabus.

A syllabus for seminar discussion strategies could be specified in terms of discourse goals, an idea taken from McCarthy & Carter (op cit.) and these goals may be specified as the intended learning outcomes. Some examples that can be suggested for the syllabus are:

By the end of the course learners will be able to function in interchanges in which they:

1 take part in short exchanges to get and give information or confirmation

2. form and be able to follow exchanges involving complex elicitations and responses.

3 manage exchanges in which there are communication breakdowns and inter-turn repair sequences

4 extend exchanges until a satisfactory outcome is achieved

The examples of learning outcomes can be broken down into more micro level objectives which can be matched to specific language realisations and features of discourse identified in the study. Some examples are:

By the end of the course, learners will be able to

1. make substantial contributions to discussion

- by supporting elicits or responses with main and subsidiary discourse acts

- by justifying 'questions'

2. take part in contentious interchanges while preserving face

- by hedging counters

- by using distancing devices for own ideas

- by suggesting possible replies to own questions

- by hedging and partial agreement when dealing with 'difficult questions'


3. follow complex elicitations and responses

- by recognising signalling devices

- by identifying main and subsidiary discourse acts

- by identifying attitudinal features within turns

- by recognising extended exchange patterns

- by identifying markers of saliency


4. take the floor and take leave of it

- by linguistic means, such as turn-initial prefaces

- by non-linguistic means, such as ending eye contact, nodding


5. present a picture of themselves in question asking as informed and considered

- by giving evidence for their questions

- by showing appropriate stance via hedging


## Methodology

*The need to raise awareness of learners to discourse patterns and features*

Most seminar discussion preparation takes place in courses targeted at those with a fairly high proficiency in English. A teacher-led presentation practice approach would be unsuitable both because of the level of the students and the study of discourse does not lend itself readily to this kind of approach. It is important to ensure than learners are provided with exposure to typical discourse patterns and that they play an active role in learning about the language. Willis (1990: iv) states, we need to provide meaningful exposure and an approach which

"takes advantage of the learner's natural tendency to make sense of the language and learn for himself ..... teachers need to encourage learners to look critically at language and to recognise the need to develop and refine their language code in order to achieve their communicative aims."

Communicative methodology holds that learners learn best by communicating, by using the language to achieve meaning and outcomes. One common practice in E.A.P. courses that deal with 'discussion skills' is to provide learners with opportunities to engage in discussions by means of role plays, simulations and classroom debates. These activities promote meaningful language use and are, I believe, a necessary part of methodology in this area. E.A.P. courses generally include such activities and pedagogic texts provide useful materials for them. Role plays, simulations and debates are an important part of classroom practice in this area and many lead to interesting and stimulating discussions, some of which are integrated with reading and even writing activities.

These kinds of discussion activities encourage meaningful language use. However, this approach to preparing students for seminar discussion poses two issues for E.A.P? Firstly, do such discussions, in fact, replicate the kinds of interaction that may be expected in the target academic community? The discussions used as data in this study showed post-presentation discussion that was largely led discussion and involved orderly sequences and predictable patterns with one side controlling the interaction. The tutorials in our sample were also fairly constrained and interaction was mostly student to tutor or tutor to students. We did not find much unstructured free-flowing and student to student discussion (other than to student presenters). Other subgenres of seminars and instructional discussion may vary in these respects but in E.A.P. we need to be aware that debate in the EFL classroom on topics such as drug abuse may not necessarily replicate fairly formal seminar discussions. Classroom debates may not, for example, be dyadic or they may not involve asymmetrical knowledge and status variables which would influence the structure and patterning of the discourse.

Learners need to be engaged in interaction parallel to that of the target situation so as to develop appropriate competencies. Current thinking in the field of second language acquisition holds that language development is determined by the kinds of interactions in which learners are engaged (Gass et al. 1989). E.A.P. material writers need to devise activities to ensure that learners are given opportunities to engage in interactions parallel to those in the target situation, e.g. interactions in which one side has more information.

Secondly, what input is provided by general discussion activities? Although students can practise what they already know and hopefully become aware of what others in the group know of the language or strategies of discussion, little other input is usually given. Some teachers may introduce some useful phrases or language points in advance of the discussion and some provide feedback on language, often in the form of error correction, at the end of the activity. A difficulty with the former is that it entails the teacher in predicting what language will be needed once the discussions are set up. However, free discussions may develop in different directions. In addition, it may be difficult for the learners to mentally engage with language in advance of actually being involved in any activity. In my experience, one unfortunate consequence of this procedure is that some students try hard to insert the useful phrases into the discussion and may do so at inappropriate points. As for the latter procedure, the teacher focuses on errors that occurred and often provides better formulas. In work on writing, this procedure works well as learners have the chance to amend their work. In discussion, learners are unlikely to want to do the discussion again and thus apply the input. The next discussion activity is perhaps another day and a possible result of this procedure is that learners merely take down some written notes. A more fundamental limitation of both of these procedures is that the language the teacher highlights is often highly fragmented. It is not the presentation of chunks of discourse which would illustrate how the components of talk fit together to form meaning in text. Ventola (1989: 154-55) points out that "When learners learn only one speech act at a time, or possibly an adjacency pair, they may not get the feel of social interaction as an on-going process."

One motivation for the study into seminar discussion discourse was a feeling of uneasiness about setting up discussion activities for my E.A.P. students and offering little in the way of instruction other than giving feedback on errors or input which was mainly confined to 'useful phrases', none of which the students had any difficulty in remembering but which did not in themselves seem to lead to any overall improvement either in their ability to produce or follow sequences of discussion. Practice in classroom discussions and meaningful exposure are not, I would argue, sufficient in preparing students for discussion in instructional contexts. Learners need to become familiar with the kinds of social interactions they may be expected to participate in. They need also to be provided with some input on the discourse of seminar discussion and, most importantly, they need to be sensitised to features of interactive discourse. Students need to be aware of language use as well as practice it in order to move forward and in E.A.P. contexts learners often need to move forward and extend their productive or receptive repertoires quite quickly. Pre-sessional courses may last only a few months and academic speaking will only be one element in them. Although engaging in communicative activities will doubtlessly enhance our learners discourse competence generally, E.A.P. practitioners can aim to foster specific academic discussion discourse competencies and awareness. The precondition to this is establishing the kind of discourse-based syllabus discussed in the previous section. However, the second issue is how to translate the syllabus into classroom methodology.

*Discourse focused activities within tasks*

One means to realise discourse objectives in the classroom is by raising learners' awareness of discourse within task-based activities. The two precepts involved in this, i.e. raising learners' awareness of discourse and task-based methodology are now briefly outlined and a sample of pedagogic material which brings the two together is given.

The first precept is that learners need to become observers and analysts of language so that they may be actively involved in recognising features in it that will serve their communicative purposes. Carter and McCarthy (1995) advocate the idea of raising learners' awareness of features of spoken language by exposing learners to natural spoken data from different genres and fostering awareness of grammar in talk through the process of observation. Riggenbach (1990), reports on techniques linking spoken discourse analysis with instructional contexts: learners to act as language researchers themselves by collecting, transcribing and analysing their own and others' texts, interviewing the protagonists of texts and discussing variations in texts and some teacher input through the introduction of terms and concepts from discourse analysis to help structure students' analyses.

Behind task-based methodology is the notion that language is best learnt when learners are focused on meaning and are engaged in coping with language, i.e. through the *deployment* of language. A task is provided for the learners, some ways may be demonstrated of tackling it and the learners are given the chance to attempt the task themselves. This is followed by feedback to the learners on their performance (Prabhu 1983). Swales (1990: 76) defines tasks as "a set of differentiated, sequenceable and goal-directed activities", the aim of which is to engage learners in cognitive and communicative procedures which are "relatable to the acquisition of pre-genres and genre skills."

Illustration of genre-based tasks are given by Swales (op cit.) and Bhatia (1991, 1993). Both involve awareness raising of discourse but both focus on written tasks. However, their approach can be adapted to teaching spoken genres. Although spoken genres are less clearly

structured in terms of move or acts than moves in written texts, the study has brought to light some of the predictable structures and components of the discourse between and within turns and these findings should now feed into the development of teaching materials.

The sample material below illustrates an attempt to integrate raising students' awareness of discussion discourse into a task-based practice activity. It aims to engage the learners in analysing for themselves samples of discourse. Bhatia shows the need for learners to try to understand the strategies that the expert genre writer (in our case speaker) uses to realise his communicative aims (1993: 183).

The task replicates a student case study presentation event which is broken into sequenced activities which are to use Swales' term 'relatable' to genre skills. In this case, for example, the learners predict potentially 'difficult' interactions in the discussion following on from a presentation. The students are pre-sessional Business Management post-graduates with upper-intermediate proficiency and the main discourse objectives are to sensitise learners to some ways seminar participants make 'difficult questions' and presenters deal with them after a presentation.

**Figure 9: Sample material**

Student A

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Stage One: Explanation of aims

By the end of the session you will have learnt about some of the ways people make 'difficult questions' and presenters deal with them after a presentation.' You will also have practised formulating responses to 'difficult questions.'

---

Stage Two: Task Preparation

You are going to present a three minute presentation and deal with some questions from the audience after it.

The Moritsu company is currently deciding whether to produce the G4X or G2X engine. Your group will read the notes provided on both products and company background and prepare a case presentation in which your group explains why your company should produce G4X. Read the case study notes provided.

Note down your arguments for this product and plan your presentation briefly.

---

Stage 3: Language Focus

Some members of the audience will question your decision to produce the G4X. In your group predict what arguments may they make. Write down two of the questions they may ask. How would you respond? Make notes in your group.

Consult the two text samples, A and B ,of questions and responses.

1. What is similar in the student questions in samples A and B?

2. Do the presenters in samples A and B accept the audience members' criticisms. How do they respond to these criticisms?
- How does A structure his response and how does B?
-What components can you see in the responses?

2. What strategies does presenter A choose and why?

3. Can you think of any other ways that A and B might give formulated their responses?

---

Stage Four: Application

1. Now you have seen how a speaker dealt with a difficult question. Go back to the difficult questions you predict that you may be asked about your choice of product G4X and plan how you would respond.

2. Give your presentation on your choice of G4X to the other group. Afterwards take questions. The interaction will be recorded.

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Stage Five: Evaluation

1. Listen to the recording. Can you identify the difficult questions? What were they? How did you deal with them. How did you formulate your responses and why?

2. If you were to respond to those question again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

3. Write the questions and your responses on a OHT and explain to the class how they were formulated and what strategies you used. Explain any alternatives you think might have been better.

---

1. Would the interaction have been different in your country?

2. What kinds of strategies do you have in your culture for making and dealing with 'difficult questions' in this kind of event?

---

Sample A

S I think one point I know it's rare for you to have the pleasure of hearing my voice but nevertheless one point I think needs raising. You mentioned one of the strengths of both these companies was its chief executive directors. By the very nature of them being the main individuals concerned with the success of these what happens when they reach the age of maturity and decide to leave or whatever. They might die or whatever happens I mean I would suggest that is a major weakness That I would suggest is a major weakness

P Well I mean in both cases they'd be replaced. And the evidence would suggest that there would still be Hanson there in the subsidiary. The guy is still very much in control. So I would suggest there is a risk but he's he's probably been well groomed and knows exactly what's required.

---

Sample B

S The previous group seem to have far more stress on the technology importance than yourselves. Didn't you feel that as a factor?

B I think I think it's irrelevant. You don't need it. You don't buy a TV on the basis of technology. I don't think you buy it on the technology. I think you need to keep up with it because if they get well down their competitors can use it against them. But I don't think its important

Notes:
1. B students would argue the case for producing G2X.

2. Stage Six of this activity may be less important for some groups of learners, e.g. those who are studying English for university courses in their own countries.

3. In Stage Three the students look at samples of interaction. This stage may need to be teacher-led and a teachers handbook could guide the teacher is drawing learners' attention to what is happening, the components in the turns and subtle uses of language such as hedging. For example, in sample A, the teacher may draw students' attention to the amount of restating, hedging and personal attribution and also the back-referencing in the question and in the response to the agreement preface before *but* and rejection of the idea.

In sample B, the teacher might also highlight the use of hedging in the question and the negative polarity form to illustrate an opposite view. In the response, the teacher could draw attention to the use of personal attribution and 'think' to show commitment to a position, the use of prefacing disagreement with agreement, i.e. I think you need to keep up with it ... but

*Video Recordings and Discourse Focused Activities*

A second means of sensitising learners to the discourse of seminar discussion is through watching videos of academic seminars. Kinetic discourse features and turn taking were not within the scope of this study. However, videos are a useful means for the teacher to focus learners' attention of the use of these features. Learners can be asked to identify the means by which a participants show they wish an exchange to end, for example by nodding or breaking eye contact, or the means by which interactants get access to the floor.

However, for the purposes of raising awareness of verbal discourse, the video texts need to be made more accessible for closer scrutiny. The verbal discourse of discussion is complex and subtle and by listening alone learners may come away only with an overall impression of what the interactants did, what happened in the event or remember a few phrases used. However, a deeper level appreciation of how language is used would be difficult to achieve in this way. Listening alone will not afford the learner with the opportunity to identify the patterns and features of discussion discourse at any but a fairly superficial level.

One means for the learners to be able to scrutinise the text is for them to transcribe parts of it, for example one exchange. This can be identified by the teacher before the lesson or by the learners themselves as the part they were interested in or didn't understand. Following transcription, the teacher can introduce some terms to help learners identify or analyse elements within the sample and in this way learners can enhance their understanding of the features of spoken discourse. A further possibility for the materials writer is to develop materials around video sequences, e.g. partial transcriptions or jigsaw activities of turns in a complex exchange. Teacher's notes can be provided to help them illustrate the kinds of discoursal features and patterns of discussion identified in this study.

Considerations for Needs Analysis

In the study it was found that a range of events that could be covered by the term 'seminar' or 'discussion class' and that there is some variation in interaction in the differing event types in

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accordance with contextual features. These findings indicate the need for those working in E.A.P. to identify the types of events and the contextual variables operating in the target situation for which students are headed and not to assume that modes of instruction, such as seminars, are singular entities. Locating interactive speaking situations can be problematic. Ramani et al. (1988: 83) advocate that ESP (English for Specific Purposes) programmes centred on genres should focus on events "identified by participants" and not outsiders so as to ensure that they accurately represent target community practices. Once events are located, the demands they pose for students can be assessed by observations.

E.A.P. practitioners need to investigate speaking genres in instructional contexts and find out first hand what speaking demands and problems NNS students face. However, analysing speaking has seemed difficult because there has been a lack of terminology with which to describe interactive language in the university setting. Questionnaires about speaking may be difficult to devise and most students and staff may only be able to discuss interaction in quite general terms. Questionnaires can provide information on perceptions of needs and difficulties but is limited in providing information about what happens in terms of discourse and interaction. The study has sought to provide tools for describing discourse and interaction in the form of a terminology and it is hoped that this terminology can be disseminated to E.A.P. practitioners and will enable them to make needs analyses of speaking in the university by structured observations of events and not to rely entirely on questionnaire data about perceptions of speaking demands and needs.

Although most of the language features identified in the thesis are relevant to the three subgenres we investigated, there were variations in how prevalent they were. A course preparing students for discussions following presentations would need to emphasise the need for justification and evidence in contributions more than a course preparing students for the non-presentation tutorial type seminar. A further implication of the variety of event types is that needs analyses need to take account of the possibility of such variation. Interviews with those in the target settings need to specify the nature of the events that are the subject of the

interview. Without this precaution, it is possible that interviewer and interviewee may have different event types in mind. In addition, it needs to be ensured that observations for the purposes of needs analysis cover the range of events in practice. The same implication would presumably hold true for other instructional genres, e.g. lecture or laboratory session.

## Higher Education

The assessment of cognitive level behind question formulation

One aspect of the findings of the study concerns Higher Education. An important reason for academic discussion from the point of view of those in Higher Education is the cognitive development of students in the discipline under study. However, in education the tendency has been for analysis of cognitive level in terms of ideas or information expressed. Some attention has been given to the cognitive level of questions but this has focused around questions in terms of the cognitive level of the response sought, e.g. a question which demands the respondent to make a synthesis or simply to recall factual information.

The present study has drawn attention to the propositional content in two question types, weak and strong elicitations of confirmation. It has been proposed that these 'questions' involve the positing of propositions. This, therefore implies that it is feasible to assess cognitive levels of thinking behind the question itself, i.e. the cognitive processes involved in the formulation of the question itself. Therefore, it is suggested that educators be aware of the possibility of evaluating the level of academic discussion by focusing on questions as well as responses.

## 8.5 Limitations of the study and recommendations

In the study video texts from the MBA programme at Aston University constituted the main source of data. Although, this programme practises types of seminar and discussion classes that are practised in other disciplines, at undergraduate levels and outside universities in the workplace, the fact remains that the data represents practice in one location which may have features peculiar to itself. Further research is needed to establish whether the patterns and

constructs established from this data source are generalisable to similar events in other locations and to other forms of discussion-based event types in education.

The study offers models of interaction derived from and argued to be readily applicable to interaction that is essentially dyadic and structured by a leader, e.g. a tutor or presenter. However, it is possible that the models cannot account for interaction of a freer, non-led fashion and this was indicated by analysis of a limited amount of non-led discussion in the study. Although the seminars and discussions in the corpus for the present study were found to be largely dyadic, this may not be the case for discussions in other educational settings. Therefore, there is a need to apply the constructs with data from varied, especially less structured discussions.

Any description of interaction is bound to be limited in the number of features that can be encompassed within a descriptive framework and the description of seminar discussion interaction presented in this thesis is but a partial picture of the myriad of aspects of interaction that could fruitfully be exposed. A main concern of the study was on discourse function, yet a major limitation has been the study's almost total attention to the verbal and neglect of paralinguistic means of realising discourse functions. Some study has been made of non-verbal forms that discourse function may take in seminar (Gosling 1981, Micheau & Billmeyer 1987), however, further study is required in this area to supply information concerning how the aspects of interaction that have been the foci of attention in this study may be realised either completely or in part by paralinguistic means and also to provide insights into interaction of a non-verbal dimension that may not have parallel verbal forms.

The literature is rich in indications of disparities between the production of the non-native speaker and the native speaker. The small amount of data of non-native speakers that was discussed in the study generally reinforced the perspective that a major hindrance to the ability of the non-native student is deficiencies in sociopragmatic competence. However, the question remains as to the source of this lack of competence? Is it that the non-native speaker

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has not developed the necessary competencies in the foreign language or does the problem stem from the negative transfer of patterns of behaviour from the native culture?

There is a need for further study to gather extensive observational data in order to compare native and non-native speakers in seminars and academic discussions. One approach would be to compare the performance of native and non-native speakers in the same group. However, a number of factors may influence the production of an outsider group such as is the case of a minority of non-native speakers in a class composed predominantly of native speakers. An additional drawback in such an approach would be the difficulty of identifying native and non-native speakers. In the limited investigation of this issue in the present research, the production of non-native speakers using English on their own territory (and thus not as a subgroup within a dominant culture) was used. This methodology could be used with more extensive data to assess linguistic impoverishment or divergence. As to the question of whether language variance is in part attributable to cultural patterns of behaviour, rather than due to a lack of English Language proficiency, other studies could compare non-native speakers using English as a medium for their discussion and the same non-native speakers using their own language, for example in a seminar with a tutor or presenter who does not use English.

Finally, the present research has been limited to exploratory and descriptive research interests in what has been described as a relatively neglected area of E.A.P. As such the study's main focus was on the formation of descriptive constructs and explanations. Further research is needed at an applied level. A gap in the market was identified, i.e. the small amount of commercially produced material concerned with preparing non-native speakers to participate in academic discussion. It has been suggested that the syllabus in this area can usefully be based on discourse objectives. Yet, before the preparation of materials, investigation should be made to explore applied areas, for example: How would learners respond to a discourse-based approach to the study of spoken language? What does such an approach imply for teacher training?

In short: further research is need both descriptive and applied levels. At the descriptive level, further work is needed to bring to light a richer description of discoursal features, e.g. intonational and paralinguistic features. At the applied level, research is needed to find out ways in which descriptions of discourse can most effectively feed into practice in the classroom.

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In the transcriptions, T refers to tutor and I to interviewer. Parts of the interview recordings which were inaudible are marked with a dotted line (...). The transcripts are abridged: parts of the interviews in which less significant information, such as long anecdotes or repetitions were not transcribed. These parts are indicated with a dotted line also. Audio-recordings are available on request.

## Staff Interview 1

Notes:
Initial discussion: Tutor explains that he has non-presentation discussion/tutorial classes. They are called plenary tutorials and he held three such sessions in the last course. Interviewer asks what happens in them.

T In a way what is going on there is I'm trying to work the way through a problem and I'm following their suggestions. They may say *What about this or what about that?* And some of the learning takes place but clearly I depend on them ... because if I spend all the time talking myself it would be repeating myself. So I would say highly interactive.

I And what should students be doing? What do you expect them to do in these sessions?

T I would say success would be very participative, easy-going relaxed atmosphere and people prepared to produce an alternative, their own ideas.

I OK participative and offering ideas.

T Or structuring, not necessarily new information previous information maybe. Eventually getting a wonderful insight.

I Should the students be critical?

T I should hope so

I Openly?

T I would hope so. It's very important that they show some healthy criticism.

I What's healthy criticism?

T Unhealthy when they say there may have been an issue and they say this is all rubbish. I already know this. That is what I refer to as syndrome of the bull in the China shop. If you have a bull in the China shop you can't expect to have much left after a while. And the bull cannot make a distinction between nice china and a piece of rock or anything else. So many students don't recognise the distinctions that we're making. They think they already know. I

say you're like a bull in a china shop you don't really have subtleties and recognise distinctions .... Depends on time of the year what kind of subject topics are in the discussion. The healthy criticism is one where they say *Why I don't understand that. I think it seems to me that it's perhaps rather over-complicated. We could do this in a simpler way.* I would be absolutely delighted and I'm delighted whenever that happens you know when you start to create distinctions.

I Do students disagree about the things each other say?

T I do not have enough evidence... I can certainly recall situations when they start to debate among themselves though I think it's quite unusual whether it's a common trait of the tutorial I don't think so, tends to be more through me.

I Do you prefer it that way?

T I would be delighted to sit there and see them sorting out their own for a while for a short period so that they have the chance to have some kind of checks and balance in there. That seems to me very healthy. You'd have to be careful not to let it go out of control.

I Can you think of reasons why they start to debate among themselves or not?

T I think what sometimes may happen is that someone understood the idea and ... That's wonderful when that happens ...

I Would you like to see any changes in these?

T: There are two different questions here. One of them is saying what happens as a matter of fact in a tutorial and another is saying what would you like? The kind of situation that I find more useful is the one where the students have a very strong participation where they debate along themselves, where they check their views.

I Does that happen enough?

T Well sometimes in certain groups yes in others not. There is no real clear pattern there.

I Can you think of any reasons why some groups do?

T I think sometimes it relates to that sense of feeling comfortable and at ease in the situation, the group dynamics that they normally have, the maturity of the students. Normally with mature students, part-time students you tend to have more participation. With younger students you tend to have more constraints though that varies. There's a little piece of magic in all this you have to have there as well. Sometimes things click and they start to unfold very nicely. Sometimes you say the wrong thing at one point.

I Who says?

T I say

I What is the wrong thing?

T For instance, if for whatever reason I put down a student when he or she makes a question. If I am dismissive, for instance. The chances are that will create more reservation. So that is why you might make a mistake and then you pay for that.

I You said that there are differences among the groups in group dynamics What about individuals in groups. Is participation even?

T No it's always the case particularly if we are talking about large groups that we get a very small percentage who are active participators.

I Who are they?

T They vary. I can recall over the years from those who participate and ask questions because they're prima donnas and they want to be always asking and they don't have a very clear understanding of what is going on but they think they know everything and they are all the time coming in and the only thing you want is to shut them up and say *get out of here*. That is the one extreme. To the other extreme where you have a thoughtful and very very positive, highly effective participants who really make the difference. Whether in large groups it's a matter of a little bit of magic or luck something of that kind. It's very very difficult to control that.

I How do you manage with the very active participants?

T How to deal with them? They tend to be the ones I dismiss and I put them down and they're the ones who latter on tend to be very aggressive. So it a sort of very difficult relationship that one.

I What about quiet ones?

T The quiet ones you don't know whether they are quiet because that's what they normally are and therefore they might be understanding everything, just in class don't contribute. That's one case. Or they're quiet because they haven't understood a single thing and is getting totally out of depth. So one of the things I tend to do which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't work is I positively ask people to come in and so I put a question and I say *Come on .. What do you think?* Sometimes people like that and sometimes they don't like it. Again it's a very very sensitive area. There are many cultural things there. It may be very difficult for some people. The Chinese they don't ask questions as a sign of respect. So however hard you try ... the Chinese in trying to get participation and they wouldn't come in. And I remember on one occasion I said *If you don't ask questions, I'm going* and they started to ask questions and I realised that they had been understanding perfectly well.

I So you see differences in level of participation according to cultural background?

T ... I'm telling you my very anecdotal way my own experience so I cannot generalise any of these things.

I Have you noticed anything else about who participates: male? female?

T No I think you find all the combinations are there - female, male, old, young, all of them behaving in all the different forms and shapes I have mentioned. Perhaps the older ones and I mean the older older ones - forties late forties and so on they tend to be far more reserved because ....

I How important do you think these tutorials are for students?

T I think they are very important. It is the only time when some of aha effect takes place, particularly you have to take into account the kind of teaching I do ..... The sort of subject I teach is very abstract and those can't ... they do prefer to have some concrete examples. Even if you give examples during the lectures, they are examples you have produced and they haven't had the experience and ... so you put them in the position where they're in the driving seat and they have the experience of using ideas. So I think it's very very important.

I Second from last question. What's your role as a tutor in these situations?

T My role varies. From the examples last week I was very much a facilitator. It may change.... explaining ideas, making it more tangible ...

I And very last - the non-native speaker students on the MBA course. Have you noticed language difficulties?

T It's very difficult to notice. It's extraordinarily difficult. I wish I knew how to handle that. Sometimes you get students who have very great difficulties explaining themselves.

I in speaking or writing.

T. In speaking they have tremendous difficulties and you have difficulties understanding their questions. I must say that is exceptional. It is not common. In that case ... I would say over the years the quality of the language skills of the overseas students have improved. I remember when I first came here there were students who couldn't actually speak English at all.... That is much less the case these days. I find difficulties with native English people who don't know how to use the language.

I OK. Thank you very much then.


Staff Interview 2

I OK on your course, courses. Course, courses?

T Well there are called different things. The whole thing is called programme, MBA programme. Then there's three modes - part-time, distance learning and full-time modes and then there are courses or modules. They are usually called modules now like M 200 M 300.

I Thinking of the MBA course in particular, do you have any of these things - case study presentations followed by discussion?

T Yes

I Outside speakers coming in followed by discussion?

T Yes

I And discussion class but not one that starts with a presentation?

T Not as such but obviously if you're giving a lecture presentation and they choose to ask questions then it can become a discussion session but it's not sort of formally called that.

I Some people, for example, have some questions that they set and students bring their answers.

T I haven't done that in M300.

I Or in any of the courses you've taught?

T Well the only other one that I've taught was M600 and I've not done it on that either.

I How often do you have events like the case study presentation?

T Case study is pretty well every week. Not the first week or last week but all weeks in between - 7 weeks ..... although I have done one in the first week, a very quick one just to give them an idea.

I And outside speakers coming in?

T I've only get two this term. Two is a fairly typical number. It breaks it up a bit.

I How valuable do you think these sorts of instructional modes are?

T Case study is I think essential. I think one which is well it's the core teaching method really for a MBA programme... The whole thing is very important. I think it is one of the major factors which as I was saying to you earlier in a lot of overseas students not doing well because they didn't maximise their use of this technique.

I And what about the outside speakers coming in?

T That's more difficult because you have to select them carefully. What I tend to do is try a speaker see how they go and very often I don't invite them back, not because they're not good but because they're not quite appropriate. So I tend to swop around external speakers quite a lot. So it's more difficult to decide on their worth. ... So as a general educational device, I think it's very important, not quite so high as case studies but almost in general. But the trouble is you have to use it sparingly on any module because basically they've got to take an

exam or do some sort of assessment and therefore you've either got to instruct your external speakers very carefully about what you want which is not very desirable because you want them to have a free hand and you want the exposure as well. So it's always a bit of a trade off which is why I always end up with about two.

I What about the case study after the presentation the discussion part what is valuable about that?

T You're asking me what we would hope the students would get. I mean I hope that they would be able to challenge the ideas or suggestions that are being put forward, that they would be able to suggest alternatives so that there is a strategic orientation to that as well.... They need to have that overview factor and they need to sort of challenge on the basis of *Have you thought of all the alternatives?* That would be the main thing.

I And the outside speakers?

T The thing that they get from that is mainly the thing the outside speaker has is tremendous credibility, they've done something. So they have an option to be exposed to someone who's become a millionaire through their own efforts or who's been a managing director of a major company and they're exposed to these people and they can actually reflect from these people how close their own ideas match their ideas. So what the outside speaker gives, particularly an eminent one, is or one who has been quote 'successful' it gives them a matching opportunity of how near am I to this person if you like to put it that way... It also exposes them to real life events which they can then relate to other aspects of the course - how do these things fit in? So yes it's very important. Obviously there are other things that are unique to each individual. Each individual course member obviously has their own motivations of benefits they will get.

I So they get contact with these eminent people. Anything else?

T Obviously there will be other things, but they're probably unique to each individual .....

I Coming back to the case study presentations. Why is necessary to present them in a spoken form rather than a written form? Why have this discussion?

T Well the alternative is very much what happens at undergraduate level... The second thing is that most of them have work experience, ideally all of them and therefore, they've got beyond the simple academic type learning and therefore it's more in line with their work experience which is to discuss things with colleagues.... Traditionally they have been spoon fed. This is the information, this is the course work, this is how you present it. So it's a different way of thinking at post-graduate level.

I What do you think they get from the discussion part?

T I think they obviously benefit from each others' experience and this is or should be a key factor when we select people for the programme. That why we're looking for people who not only can benefit from but also can contribute because a major part of the learning experience

is what they gain from one another. So you want people in there who have got experience and are willing to share it ....

I If an outside speaker came in and there were no questions, would it matter?

T I think it would reflect very badly on the programme, the individuals and us for not selecting people who would ask questions.

I What motivates people to ask questions in that situation and after case studies?

T Embarrassment. Someone will break the silence and think no-on else is going to say anything so I'll have to.

I What sort of questions, getting information or?

T Some of them are simple requests for information. I suppose some of them are at different levels. Some are requests for clarification or tell me more about this that or the other. Others are seeking more than that - understanding about how decisions were made. I remember a speaker from last year who'd sacked half the workforce and everybody was really interested and wanted to know if any were ever reinstated, what the outcome was and they asked questions about particular scenarios... Or they're asking about what is the key to this particular success. You know *How do you make quality work instead of just talking about it?* So they're interested in underlying aspects of business, in applying their understanding, in how general principles apply to specific cases.

I In discussion what should students doing exactly?

T My view is they should be enhancing their learning experience in whatever way is appropriate to them. That will be different because different people have different learning needs....... Obviously the main thing they need to do is understand processes, not facts. The idea is that they understand the principles of business and how management operates so what they should be getting is a better understanding and this is probably where either we fail or there's some mismatch I expect which has possibly happened this year, we are not getting across there idea that they have understand develop their understanding. That's the feeling I have.

I Do students point out shortcomings, is that allright?

T It depends how it's done .... They'd normally say *Don't get that person again.* We didn't like that. They wouldn't say it to their face.

I What about student to student presenters?

T No they tend to be sympathetic because they know their turn will come and so it's a reasonably benign environment. They're not usually aggressive. They almost always applaud each others' contribution so they are generally very supportive, particularly I think for overseas students. I mean I can give an example from last year. The first case study was really quite a difficult one and the first group to present the person to present was actually a French

exchange student and I think he did really extremely well. He stood up there and spoke in a language which was not his first language and I think he did very well... So it's an opportunity for you, it's an opportunity to stand up and make mistakes. They get an opportunity to test their own ability, particularly when they are in front of a camera - they would then have the opportunity if they wanted to then go and watch their own performance on camera ....

I To what extent are you happy with these discussion events?

T There always room for improvement obviously ... One of the visiting speakers last year gave out raffle tickets and said when I ..... So everybody had to be ready in case their number was called... That would be one way of doing it. When I did my MBA we all had our name plates in front of us so lecturers could see everyone's name....So we could actually be a lot stricter on that. We could actually force people to give an opinion instead of just relying on the vocal ones in a class. We could certainly do more in that direction.

I Who are the vocal ones?

T Well obviously differs from year to year... I don't know whether they have any particular characteristics. Age and experience by themselves don't guarantee it. The course members from the Far East tend not to be because of their cultural background their tendency to be receivers and acceptors of information. So they tend to be home students rather than overseas students. That's a bit of a generalisation and they tend to be of a certain extrovert character ....

I Does it matter if some participate more?

T We would like everyone to participate to they get the benefit of doing that, they gain self-confidence you know the psychological aspect. Yes I think it would desirable so probably we should do more to encourage participation.

I Any ideas how to do it?

T Well the two I've just given you ......raffle tickets, name plates ..... call out someone's name.

I How important are these events for the students?

T Vital. I think they're vital.

I Are they graded?

T No they're not. It's something we've discussed a lot like 10% of their grade for modules should be on their presentation or their active class participation. They do that at Harvard. At Harvard they do. I don't know if they do that here in UK. The problem is there's such a degree of subjectivity involved in that and unless it's on video it's not subject to verification. That's the main problem. So a written piece of work an external examiner can look at it. Class participation is very much on the say so of the lecturer..... I've done it in my undergraduate class and ......... if they know they're being graded on it obviously improves the quality. If it were part of the assessment, people would put in more effort. There would still be the problem of fairness, verification. We talk about it but it's a practical problem....

I In these sorts of events what is your role?

T We have many roles. Obviously we have primary role as an instructor and facilitator would be the main ones. Facilitator would cover thing like getting people to come out with ideas. ..What I often do in a presentation is I sit at the back and refuse to say anything when they've finished deliberately and then it forces someone else to say something. Everyone sits there in embarrassed silence. So you have to sit them out ... because if you stand at the front and say OK let's have some comments and questions and nobody says anything, what do you do then? So if you sit at the back and say nothing, everyone looks round in embarrassed silence and eventually someone comes up with a question....

I So am I right in saying that as much as possible you try to stay out?

T Well it depends what it is. You have to choose the appropriate point to intervene.

I When's that?

T Can't say, play it by ear. Try to judge. The ideal point to intervene is just before the last question so people still want more. So you don't wait until the topic's exhausted and say *Right I think we'll leave it there. ....*

I What about non-native speakers on the course. Have you noticed any language problems?

T Well it's very difficult to know ...... Some of them do have problems. There's no doubt about it. I think they have more problems with the spoken delivery than they do with the written material usually. Most of the problems are speaking in that sort of mode.

I Discussion or monologue?

T Probably both. Difficult to say because they don't really release that much information. So it's difficult to know . Occasionally yes they'll come to and say *I'm having problems understanding this. My English isn't really very good.* You know one or two do come up and say that but usually they try and sort it out themselves.

I Written texts?

T No not in my subject. It's usually the spoken delivery. But then it's always on video. They can go and watch it again. We have that facility, although by itself that won't improve their comprehension ....

I Thank you ...


Staff Interview 3

I You said you had case study presentations. How often do you have them?

T Every week in the sessions that I teach which is probably about 6 out of the 10 sessions we have case study presentations.

I And are they always followed by discussions?

T Yeah. The format is three hour sessions. I give a fairly straightforward lecture for the first hour. Then they break up into small group discussions an hour or so and then we reassemble for presentations and general discussions in class.

I What about non-presentation discussion?

T Yes

I What are they like and how often?

T That's in small groups. In the class overall it's always preceded by case study presentations.

I So there's no general non-presentation type discussion in the classes?

T Well unless it arises from questions during the lecture that would be the form that took.

I OK thinking about the discussion following on from a case study. How valuable do you think that is on the course?

T I think it's very important. The case study presentations tend to be variable and in a sense they're sort of scene setting because the main points or analysis or purpose is usually clarified in the discussion rather than in the presentations. I mean the presentations will vary to the degree to which they successfully managed to work out the most relevant bits. So the discussion is vital. If you didn't have any discussion, it would leave it in a rather confused state. So the discussion actually clarifies the main lessons on the case studies.

I So the students can focus on the main points. What do you get?

T Well I'm aware yes you see from my point of view I will have given a lecture which will have outlined certain ideas about innovation. I will then have selected a couple of case studies that illustrate some of those ideas. Now as I say when I hear the presentations I'm usually aware that some of it hasn't completely sunk in. So the value is, as far as I am concerned, being able to relate the ideas in the lecture to the case studies themselves.

I So what's your role in that discussion?

T I try not to dominate but I do intervene. I do give it a stir because the case studies are there for a purpose. They're not just there to pass the time. So if I feel there's a drift from recognition from a pretty central part of it then I'll try to stir it onto that.

I How do you do it?

T Well I'll ask people questions. I mean not sort of start giving an interpretation but I would ask, I would usually start asking the presenter of the case study *Didn't they think X Y or Z?* Or if I felt that what they presented was inconsistent, I would say *Is that consistent with this and do you think this?* So I would start by asking questions. I think as the discussion progressed towards the end I probably would, if they were the areas that hadn't been adequately expressed, I would then start to insert interpretations and conclusions. I'd try doing it in the sense of drawing people of sort of responding to what people had said but sort of just then trying to restate it but in a way that locates it a bit more clearly in terms the objectives of the class. So towards the end, I would be saying more in terms of some statements in terms of what we could conclude from the study.

I Do you get students to students to interact with the presenters?

T Yes I will - always every opportunity for contrasting views that are being expressed then I will try to encourage that as a way of stimulating the debate. As I say, I don't I don't particularly like to come in with statements until much later because I mean that is not an exploratory thing if you do that.

I Why do you have case study presentations? They could be written or they could be spoken. Why do you have the spoken ones?

T That's a good point. I actually think that it is just to provide focus and scene setting. I'm not sure that it is much more than that. So first of all it defines. At some stage every student will have a specific obligation to study a case and present it to the class and it seems to me that establishes a certain level of commitment and involvement by the students. And secondly, I just think that to have a discussion you need a formal scene setting so even though they will be looking at it in their groups, I find discussion needs a structure, partially it's a sort of a ritual, that is the way to start the thing going. Now that's the minimum thing. It then depends on the quality of what the students have done. They can be very imaginative interpretations. They can be quite original - things I wasn't that conscious of. They can be quite entertaining and stimulating but you can't rely on that because all those things are a reflection of the students' effort and ability. So it seems to me the situation one's creating you've got to accept there's got to be variation on that......

I You said that the presentation is in a way is a springboard for discussion.

T Yes

I What's the value of such discussion?

T Well I mean my view unless people are actually using their brains to actively process ideas and information it doesn't stay there. I mean it floats in and out. I mean that's the problem with giving lectures. I mean you know you can express things which you think you've done perfectly clearly and probably felt you've repeated them about 20 times and then after a lecture you ask someone what about this and sometimes they can't remember or understand very well. Well active involvement in thinking and speech interact. I mean it's people expressing things and then it being contested by other people. I mean that's a much more active process.

I Getting students to challenge. Does it ever get aggressive?

T I mean my own feeling is size of group is very important ..... It's difficult to manage. First there's inhibition of people to speak with that number of people but then when you break through that it can actually start to become unmanageable because you only need 2 or 3 people and ... then there's a real problem in terms of size class..

I What would be an ideal size?

T Well it's difficult I think with 20 people I feel in control of a discussion .... Over that I think it starts to become increasingly difficult..... You then, if you try to control things, probably everyone shuts up but sort of maintaining a flow of interaction is not very easy.

I Can we think about the things you like students to do in these situations. When they make a contribution what sort of contributions are they? What motivates those contributions?

T I am not looking for sharp conflict. It's all about the ability to interpret empirical evidence in relation to some theoretical ideas. Now that process is not straightforward. So the passage from empirical material to some clear interruption is not a smooth path. I think what I want to see is contributions are to reveal that the evidence may not be 100% but it is pretty well pointing in that direction. So I want people to be discussing how you make a judgement when things aren't absolutely certain or absolutely wrong so it's getting interaction which is then coping with the reality of having to make judgements and interpretation ...... So the sort of contributions I like are those that are confronting that and so say *You say it proves this but actually isn't there some other evidence that might suggest this approach?* Critical - but it's hopeless if it's just a contest of one person saying technology push and another saying it's market pull. I mean that's unproductive then. You just have a sort of shouting match about the concepts. So it's recognising uncertainty and difference in the process of interpretation. Recognising that there's an alternative set of choices but at the same time you have to try to say I know there's a range but on balance I would try to go for this and some one else might say well on balance might go for the other. It's that sort of discussion I'm keen on.

I That's what you're keen on. Is that what you get?

T Part of the time. Not as much as I would like. There is some of that in most sessions and a good session is when it's all like that. I find that very stimulating but it's true that very often it can just be contestation of rather abstract interpretations which doesn't get us anywhere or preoccupation with the empirical detail not in an analytical sense but in people bringing in their own knowledge about that company or that innovation. Both of those can play their roles but if it starts to dominate, one's then losing.

I Have you noticed who participates in the discussion?

T In the general discussion I mean it will less than 50%. I would say between 25 to 30 people who participate.

I The same people?

T Some people the same but there is variation. The case studies vary a lot and some people would be more excited by the topic ... but probably there's a hard core of people who don't participate.

I Any idea why?

T I I've got ideas yes. Unless you're accustomed to speaking in front of large groups, if your personality is more differential ... you may find that very difficult. Some people are more anxious about whether the lecturer is going to make a judgement in terms of how clever they are in terms of what they say.

I Do you? Do they get graded?

T I wouldn't.... I might think that comment isn't quite right, but I wouldn't say *Oh it's that person. They've got it wrong again.* I wouldn't notice that... Some students might feel that I was and therefore that if I was and they said something wrong, they'd get  black. Anyway there are all sort of reasons for people not participating. Anyway with MBA students quite a few of them are experienced at addressing large groups and secondly they are quite confident and aren't particularly bothered about the lecturers' assessments....... In an MBA class some people are going to be very confident and assertive about sounding off and that make it more inhibiting for others.

I You say you don't grade class participation. What about grading oral presentations?

T No I don't asses that. It's a requirement of the course that they do a presentation ....

I Do you have non-native speakers in your class?

T Quite a few.

I Have you noticed any language difficulties?

T There's quite a lot of non-native speakers but in my judgement I mean my class varies ...... my full time class probably 40 to 50 % non-native speakers. I would want to be very cautious about generalising. We have French and Greek students - some when they are writing have problems with their expression but they are actually very good presenters and participants in discussion because they are very lively and aren't particularly inhibited.  In conversational terms they can express themselves quite well, particularly some of the French students. Although their English is sort of incorrect, they actually can express themselves in written form in quite an interesting way... If you judged them in language terms, they'd be a lot of errors in their written work but its sufficiently clear in terms of their ideas. There are other groups of students who I think have much more difficulty in expressing themselves in verbal discussion - avoid stereotyping here. Some Asian students have more difficulty but again but one's got to be very cautious about generalising because some are highly articulate. So you can't generalise in terms national types but there is variation in terms of their ability to participate and it's not simply linked to how perfect their English is. It's also just as much about whether they are thinking clearly and whether they have communication skills and I

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think what I am saying is with interesting ideas and reasonable communication skills that can easily compensate for shortcomings in their spoken English...............

I Thank you very much.

T Is that allright?

I Yes that's lovely ...

Staff Interview 4

I So case study presentations - how often did you have them on your course?

T Most weeks. It was arranged so that each group had a case to look at and obviously they wouldn't all present each case, so that like a blue team and a red team and four groups. We would then sort of say well we will start off with the blue team this week. They do it on a random basis. Okay, now the red comment on what blue team has presented with constructive criticism. I can't remember

I What do you mean by constructive criticism.

T It's very easy to sit there and say, oh that was rubbish. Which is very deflating for people who present it but it doesn't actually move things forward. Constructive criticism would be something like, while we would agree with your analysis up to this point we think that you should also have looked at. So that you are actually moving understanding forward, so that it is constructive rather than destructive. The same as with such things like you don't wait until they have finished presenting and say, well I couldn't hear a word. What you do is you wave your hand and say the microphone is not working. Actually do it at a point where something can be done about it.

I How important is the discussion part of these presentations?

T To a certain extent it varied from week to week. It was too heated how involved how extensive a discussion was for different questions because some questions focal topics are cut and dried and others are much more open. But with any particular case study some of the questions would be much more straightforward and some would be more discursive anyway and at that level, yes useful because bearing in mind that at the MBA level there are some individuals who are part-time so they are still actively involved in the real commercial world. There are some who are full-time but have had relevant experience before and it's a small minority who have come direct from previous education to do the MBA. Therefore you have got people who say, ah yes but when I was involved in such and such we found etc. So you can have inputs from reality as opposed to theory and see how the two mesh and whether the one contributes to the understanding of the other. So it's a two-way process.

I So people can share their experience. What about as a tutor on a course like that. What did you get from it?

T    We sometimes get useful bits of information in the sense that they are obviously going to have experience that I won't have had because I can't possibly have done all the jobs. Some of them will have something of particular interest, you know, a particular technique and can give additional insight to that. It's also teaching at that level, one is in the sort of business where there are going to be times when they ask you something and you are going to have to say, well I'm sorry I don't know. It's much better I always feel to be open because if you try and flannel they are going to sus out fairly quickly that you don't know what you are talking about anyway. And at that level it is an interaction thing and everybody has scope for making positive contributions and while one might be a tutor giving guidance one isn't necessary going to be the fount of all knowledge.

I    So it's a very different role?

T    It would be different if, bearing in mind those are post-graduates and those are different from dealing with under graduates, because the under graduates are bound to have a more limited range of experience. You notice the difference between the under graduates in the final year, particularly those who have done a placement year and those in the first and second year. Also going to be life experience and what they have actually got to contribute. If you haven't had much water go under the bridge.

I    What they are contributing, what do the other students get from it?

T    Some of it would be insight into, oh I haven't thought of things like that. It is also going to be use of techniques and seeing how different techniques can be applied. Because one would hope that, for example, if we do a case study on say attitudes, it's a different way of thinking about behaviour and how people react to things to sort of try other and internal understanding of processes that go on behind and while with something like that one's never going to be in the business of making an absolute one to one prediction you are into the business as it were of reducing uncertainties. But case studies also give the opportunity to practice making decisions in a situation where you are dealing with real life problems or in a constructive case study an approximation to a real life situation but in one way if you do make totally the wrong decision and you go completely the wrong path it isn't going to be financially disastrous, or disastrous for your career.

I    Do you choose to have the case study presentations as oral instead of having a written report?

T    At the MBA we did it as an oral thing partly because of giving students practice at doing presentations. But with the under graduates what we are doing this year is, because we are doing it with the psychologists.... One of the options for their course work is to do a written case study and it's again giving them some practice in doing that. It's not whether we choose one or the other option. If one is looking at helping students to develop appropriate skills that will be useful to them after they graduate then you enter the business of communicating and they get a fair amount of practice in

communicating in the written word in different formats but they don't necessarily get a lot of practice in doing presentations which are clear, concise and make an impact.

I     And are they like that?

T     Well bearing in mind that we were taking the MBA students in term 3, so they would have a certain amount of practice in term 1 and term 2 and they were sort of getting more polished. Now, I don't know to what extent they did as we suggested, which was saying to them well it's worthwhile encouraging people who perhaps haven't had a lot of practice to have a go. Often they do it with two of them, somebody who has been experienced and somebody else as well. So that they have all improved by the time they go because it's always a toss up with the MBA's. If the presentations which are assessed and contribute to your final grade. Now we didn't .........we were just saying we are making points about stuff that we had perhaps done in a previous lecture, manipulating, using it, because if you use material it's more likely to be retained because it's not  directly assessed into your grade ..... So that if you ..................the chance to have a go ......... but one of the things we also looked at and which I have done in the final year and first year students on the management course is working up from some ....... from elsewhere is a marking sheet for presentations so that you are looking partly at content and partly at the process of presentation which includes things like you haven't kept to time.............. also talking at the appropriate level and the sort of visual aids you have used, were they legible etc. etc. and those are all things that have nothing at all necessary to do with content.

I     Can we go back to the grading... What about participating - students asking questions do you give grades for participating in that?

T     We weren't at that point but as an MBA student myself we were assessed on their contribution to the discussion but they required each team to actually sit together and you all had to have name labels, large size name label out in front so that it was quite clear who was making.

I     Successful?

T     Well again it encourages one if one has a point to make to actually make it and though the credit went to the team as a whole and with any one team there were actually some people who contributed and some who didn't to a great or lesser extent.  But it certainly meant in that particular unit that there was much more toing and froing of comments rather than spasmodic and the tutor really having to prompt to get people to contribute. Despite the fact that I am told that there is some research that indicates that if you make contributions in class even if they are awful contributions you are usually going to be graded better than someone who gives no contribution at all.

I     By the tutors?

T     By the tutors.  I say usually, because again I have been in the situation as a student where one of the other students did make regular contributions and he sort of put his

hand up and made a contribution and you could hear all the other students Oh because it was so much that he was making a contribution but his contributions were usually way off target and this didn't move things forward.

I       Can we look at this making of contributions. What is the nature of them?

T      It depends at what point one is in the process. Because there is going to be.. In some instances tutors will be attempting to control what is happening fairly closely and so you might be sort of saying questions like now they suggested alternative A, alternative B - how many of you would go for alternative A, how many would go for alternative B. Now they suggested this, this and this. Has anybody got any further suggestions to the list and you can make a request for fairly specific information or you can be in a situation where have as it were thrown it open for general comment and what you would expect is obviously going to be different in the different context. I know some tutors don't like free-wheeling in the sense that some of them feel it can get out of control. It's also a situation where you do have to be able to shut up some individuals. There are some who will tend to try and hog the limelight and shout down others.

I       Giving opinions?

T      Yes. Which means that you may then be missing useful or valuable contributions.

I       What are useful and valuable contributions?

T      Useful in that it is making points which either add to the direction or raise critical aspects that haven't been raised, get people to think in a slightly different way. Whereas things that are irrelevant can sometimes be telling illustrative stories yes very nice, but how does it help? Sometimes one is going to be in the situation .yes fine, ah good. You can't always be sure if you are asking for an answer that you will necessarily get the answer that you want if you are trying to get close type answers, where you are saying we are two items short on this list can anybody provide me with the two missing items. The whole class can sit there and sort of er. And it may simply be that they haven't clicked in that particular way.

I       How about people making quite critical comments? Is that all right?

T      With the MBA's it was generally more oriented towards the content but there were times when they did make comments about the presentation. Some of them would sort of say *Really like the suit Stuart, first time I've seen you on one this term.* Usually what would happen would be the guy at the front might say something like *Glad you noticed. Next question.* Some of them could handle it fine, some not so. Okay you might be in a situation if you are doing presentations when everybody knows everybody then you might well get a bit of barracking and you've got to learn how to handle it But if somebody was attempting to do that with some first year students whose confidence levels were much lower then I would be rather more inclined to say something to the person making the comment.

I    Sometimes do you find that some of the things were critical in terms of content?

T    Very rarely. There was one occasion where there was clearly a certain amount of antagonism between two individuals and in that sort of situation you would say *Now then gentlemen let's bear in mind that we are looking at the case we are not looking at individual personalities and confine our comments to the task in hand.* So you are trying as it were to take the heat out of the situation without apportioning blame to either individual. You are not sort of saying *You started it. Come on chaps let's concentrate on what we are supposed to be doing.* Certainly never had anybody storm out in a tantrum or anything like that. It's always possible! Sometimes there's a situation when the class will be saying, in a case study, do we know what actually happened?

I    What does that mean?

T    Let's say that you've got a case where you are looking at a particular company and the scenario is this problem that they have identified as that you've got them some focal topics which they are supposed to address and they will make recommendations. Like we think what the management ought to have done is. Sometime they will say, *Well do we know what the management actually did and what the outcomes were.* Because obviously usually they would be based on things that happened some years back. We did one which was to do with automated telling machines ........... because you are doing away with cashiers which in fact is actually what is happening.

I    So were they sort of pointing out that the presenters had missed something. Is that what they did?

T    If you are talking about the class. Sometimes yes, as I say we had a blue team and a red team. One goes first on .......... the topics and the blue team would say well we think you've missed out, we would have thought, we suggest and then you would say okay rest of the class have you any further comments. Then we would do the next two topics, blue would perhaps present. Then red would comment and then the rest of the class would have further to add. So sometimes yes they would be saying we think you've missed something. But sometimes they would be saying *We think the management has actually missed the point and that the problem that they have identified isn't actually the problem that they have really got.* The problem that they have really got is that they are looking at the wrong thing. And that can certainly be true in real life companies where they are sometimes not seeing the wood for the trees.

I    Did you notice any difference in the level of participation in the group. Did you tend to have some people who participate a lot more?

T    Oh yes. There were some where unless you actually specifically asked them to make a contribution they would tend to sit there quietly.

I    Who were they?

T     In the past some people have said do you find that people for whom English is not their first language are less likely to contribute. And that isn't necessarily true. There are some people who have excellent English in a one to one conversation who may still be reluctant to contribute. That might be in part a cultural thing. One of the ladies from Hong Kong who was a student said *In my country oh will you all shut up and listen to me.* It might be just the individual personality. It might also be their level of understanding which are factors which in terms of personality and level of understanding are not necessarily related to straight language ability in the sense that you can have individuals whose first language is English who will still miss the point and don't make a contribution. So you have got to be careful of that, of making very simplistic overall simplifications. We certainly have students whose spoken English may not be excellent but who have been keen to try and make an appropriate contribution. It's obviously the other factors are pushing them to make the contribution rather than holding them back.

I     And in your experience?

T     If you are talking about under graduates?

I     No the post-graduates.

T     Then the more mature ones are more likely to contribute. If you are looking at post graduates, the ones who have experience relevant to the topic in hand certainly are more likely to make a contribution then because they feel they have something worthwhile to say. Younger people who feel that they haven't got anything worthwhile, whether this relates to self esteem factors as well, because there are some people who could make a useful contribution who still don't feel that they have a useful contribution to make. Mind you equally, there are some people who tend to make a contribution which everyone thinks they would have been better keeping quiet. When I was a student in one of my study groups there was a chap who was very inclined to shout the ladies down and it turned out that he had been working as an engineer on oil rigs. You don't have women working on oil rigs, so women to him were either mothers or social entertainment! And it was partly getting him to accept the value of contributions from women was somewhat misplaced. So it's partly, if you are going to take contributions from the floor then you do it in the order....... It's difficult to decide what is actually the best way to actually decide how to get people to make contributions. If you simply allow people to shout, those with the loudest voices always win out. That's one advantage if you have rooms where you've got microphone systems .....So they could actually be heard, even somebody who was fairly softly spoken could be picked up as long as they didn't actually whisper.

I     Were you generally quite happy with the quality of the discussions?

T     Generally, yes. Again we also knew we'd got a time limit and so we were trying to crack on through, so that they could then have their tea or coffee break. Because we would normally have a presentation, discussion, tea or coffee break, lecture. So that if we had a reasonable discussion and got through it fairly promptly then we could have a longer tea break.

I      As the tutor in that sort of situation what would you define as your role?

T      In some circumstances as a referee. Also giving sort of guidance. Usually if one is dealing with cases taken from text, some of those come with an instructor's manual which gives you the information, such as what the company actually did and what happened as a result. Doesn't necessarily mean that the students would agree with the line of action the company took. So that you would be providing that sort of information but you would also be providing feedback on feedback on the presentation. If someone had used an overhead, diagram .... then you would be sort of saying *That's a novel way of doing it, like that, well done.* Or if they've got hiccups whatever. One group .............

I      So you are sort of refereeing, also giving feedback.

T      And what else? Because it's been a little while since I've done case studies so this is - I would try to set it up for them to start and say well so-and-so is starting, so people knew what the expectation was and would like to finish by.... So that one would have set the ground rules and would then sort of say *Over to you.* So that the guys who do the presenting could in fact then ask for questions and handle. I'd just sit in the audience and only come out at the end or if there was likely to be a riot. So it was trying at the post-graduate level to not so much control as to referee to sort of stand back a bit.

I      And the last question. With the overseas students have you noticed any language problems?

T      Occasionally some of them would ask for an explanation of a specialist term which is quite reasonable. Mind you there are going to be English ones who ask for explanations of specialist terms as well so if I'm talking psychology stuff occasionally we do forget what it's like not to know. Oh sorry, don't you guys know what that term means - my mistake. So again it's unfair to say that they are the only ones with a lack of understanding. In specialist terms it could be true for everybody. Speaking from when I was a student rather than a member of staff, by term 3 a lot more as it were had warmed up. What was fairly noticeable was that in the first term some of them were still at the situation where sitting listening they could follow what was going on but to actually formulate what they wanted to say to get it out by the time they had formulated what they wanted to say everybody was now 3 or 4 sentences down the line..

I      Did you do your MBA here?

T      No I did it over at Warwick. But we were asked to be understanding of this. It   was noticeable that what happened also when I was student, was that what you might   call   the Hong Kong contingent. ....

I      They don't evaluate themselves in their groups?.

T      Some tutors do that with some classes. We didn't when we were doing stuff that I was involved with because the mark didn't actually go forward to contribute to the overall assessment and our view was that if the students hadn't actually done the work they weren't getting the benefit of doing the work because when you actually come to doing a case study in the exam then which it doesn't help. In terms of the other thing we do with the overseas students contributing - in certain types of cases they are in a position to make very useful contributions if you are looking at cases which have an international dimension whether it is a within Europe setting ... or whether you are doing a more international setting. Whether it's sort of within the EEC boundaries or whether it's on a broader scale, people who are not British can puncture some wildly and varied assumptions that people who are very insular will tend to make. So within a study group if you can have a mixture of home grown individuals and people from outside but could actually have a very useful group where it helps them to improve their English but they are also in the position of making useful contributions if everybody else actually gives them a chance to sort of say....

I      Thank you

T      Well I don't know whether that's useful for you ...

## Staff Interview 5

I      How many courses do you teach?

T      Well I teach 2 courses on the MBA.

I      Right, it's the MBA I am looking at.

T      Ah right. So, 2 courses on the MBA.

I      How often do you have these sort of events. For example, case study presentations with a discussion.

T      Well that varies. There is quite a big difference between the two courses. The first one is one of the foundation courses, it's an introductory ....... course and so we would probably tend to have less in that than the other course. But I would say that on the foundation course last year it was a nine week course and we probably had three to four weeks of presentations.

I      Right, so it's the students presenting is it.

T      That's right yes.

I      Followed by the questions. And the other course?

T      The other course, I have only done half of that course and within that proportionately we have more of the presentation, more studies - something like in 4 - 5 sessions in 3 sessions we would have some kind of presentation by our students.

I      Outside speakers coming in these discussions?

T      Again it depends on what you mean by outside. I have one person who is actually a lecturer here who does a session with me and he is outside in that he has experience of particular industry. This is what we call the foundation course. For the second course we had two speakers.

I      And that's over six weeks.

T      Over five weeks.

I      And the other sort, the group discussion tutorial?

T      We have those kind of tutorials near examination time but also with each lecture in principle I give an opportunity for people to bring up any questions they want to either at the beginning or at the end and sometimes there's discussion and sometimes there isn't. It varies really. It would not have been specifically a programme as a tutorial. Those would be a couple of sessions towards the end of the year. There's a big difference because on the second course we would tend to have much more of a discussion in or as a part of the lecture because it's a smaller group. But also we tend to have discussions in the other groups as well.

I      Thinking back to the case study presentations where students present. How valuable do you think that is?

T      Well I'm always a bit nervous about it. It depends very much on how good a presentation is and there have been some, I would say that the majority of them tend to be good presentations but I have had occasions when I say this has been a waste of time ...

I      And the outside speakers?

T      That's worked extremely well, yes. They are probably quite pleased to have a different person. It depends very much on the selection of the outside speakers as well. I have been lucky enough to have good speakers.

I      So, as important as case study presentations and discussions or less important?

T      I think it depends on the topic. The reason why I have outside speakers is for focusing on a particular topic and I think in that way they are probably just as useful. I would say just as useful.

I      And tutorials? I know you have them less often.

T     Tutorials are, yes for the students extremely important because they come before examinations. We use them mainly as trying to clarify a number of things we have done during the course and they also have the function of being revision sessions.

I     What you think the students get from the case study presentations. I mean you could do case studies and just have written reports coming in but you have them in this oral form - the students presenting and then a discussion. What do you think students get from that?

T     Well interaction I think is probably important in a number of ways. First of all although it's not specifically a part of presentation, it does give them confidence to be able to present things and possibly in a subject that they don't know much about. And the other part is I think all the rest of the group perhaps have greater confidence to participate.

I     Because they are students.

T     Because they are students presenting. Generally it lightens the atmosphere. And it probably increases the confidence of even the other students because they say well here's somebody else and either they are doing it well or they are making a mistake. And they see other people can make mistakes and perhaps I'm not quite as bad as I thought.

I     A mistake in what, the content?

T     In terms of the analysis. Not necessarily a mistake in the presentation. They I am sure will learn from different qualities of presentation. But I was thinking there more in terms of the analysis itself.

I     Coming to the discussion part after the case presentation has finished. Does it matter about having the discussion, could there just be a case study presentation. Is the discussion part really necessary?

T     Yes, I think it is necessary.

I     What happens?

T     There will be some just straightforward questions.

I     What do you mean by straightforward questions?

T     Factual questions. The second element is there will probably be a dispute in the judgement that has been made. With the MBA this is quite useful because quite often there are people who know something about the particular industry or subject who come in and we don't have enough information to say that case should be done by somebody who knows something about the subject and also I also tend to interject by just making sure that all issues going on are brought out.

I   So you've said things going on - getting factual information, adding their own experience. This disputing - does it happen much?

T   Perhaps it doesn't happen quite as much as I would like it to happen. I suppose it's because people don't want to, well they are not such a disputatious lot I suppose that's part of it. But they also say well it's going to be my turn next and I don't want anyone to be too tough on me. But yes, it depends very much on personalities. There are some personalities who .... I would say it happens less than I want. There will be at least one or two interjections which will be like that.

I   The outside speakers coming in - do you get the same sort of thing happening or slightly different?

T   They are very respectful. Maybe it's because of the kind of people we choose but they are very respectful. They ask very respectful questions.

I   What a very respectful question?

T   In the sense of saying, you are the authority on this subject and they might want to ask additional questions but it's certainly much less frequent that they would say it's rubbish.

I   The tutorials. What happens in those? What's going on exactly?

T   With tutorials, they are really very specifically focused on revision, so that determines what happens. We usually ask them to give us a menu of things that they have difficulties with and we also will have given them some questions to help with revision and we just try to weave all that in and more often than not we have to try to get everyone to participate and try to answer some of the questions.

I   So you nominate people?

T   That's right. We try to give everyone a chance to speak. It starts by saying this is how I've tried to answer the question and then merges to questions which arise because of the difficulties they've had with interpreting. Then it also widens up to some of the other related areas.

I   Does the interaction tend to be student to you or student to student or?

T   I think it involves probably more student to me. But we try to get as many people involved so it's not just one person.

I   Have you noticed any different levels of participation in these sort of interactive classes or is the participation quite equal.

T   You mean in terms of all the people in the group? Clearly there is always a big difference. There are some people who are much more keen to participate.

I      Who are they?

T     They come in all shapes, sizes and sexes. I haven't seen much of a pattern.

I      Do they tend to be the same people each time?

T     Yes they do and sometimes I have to be quite firm to let other people have a chance. There are always some people who would rather be invisible.

I      Any ideas why?

T     Well it could either be because they haven't done the work or just by nature they are diffident. I think it's a bit of each. It's very difficult to say is there a particular type of person ..... There is a wide variation. You might expect say that foreign students with less language are more diffident but some are so worried about passing this exam that they try to participate and even within if you like the British group it's very difficult to say. Why does somebody who has a lot of experience in industry and comes to a class like this and says nothing. It's very difficult. But I would say that those are the two characteristics. Some people are much more outward going and happy to speak and some people have done the work.

I      Does it matter if some people don't participate very much?

T     Well I somehow feel that everyone ought to say something, right or wrong. So I try to get everyone to at least say something. I go around the class.

I      Do you think students find these sort of events where there is interaction and they speak - do you think they find these important or not very important compared to lectures?

T     I think in my view the more chance we give them to be able to talk to us the better and in various different kind of class situations. I am specially conscious of this where we have very large class numbers. For instance the foundation course, each one now has something like 70 - 80 people in a lecture and so trying to organise smaller groups or have some kind of participation is important. One of the things that comes back is that they don't get much of a feedback on it on some of the subject because when they write answers on ... we just don't have any opportunity to read these things and tell them what we think.

I      Do they find them important? Are these discussions are particularly useful?

T     I think these discussions are, from the evidence that I have, quite important. Whether they would be important if we had them much more regularly in the course I don't know.

I      How is learning different in that sort of interactive situation compared to a lecture for example.

T    Well the lecture is, I think it is important for people to actually apply their knowledge to some problem rather than just take in a stream of verbiage and the way to improve the understanding of concepts, ways of looking at things is I think very much tied up with trying to solve problems or look at a particular issue and then try to apply their knowledge to that issue. From that point of view participation is important. Whether it's student presentations or classroom discussions.

I    With the case study presentations, when the students finish their presentations, what is your role as a tutor in that situation?

T    I first of all try to make sure the thing goes smoothly. There are times when they might ask me for some information. I try to make notes of whether they are looking at it in a way that perhaps maybe some genuine mistakes interpreting and using theory. Then I would have to make a note and try to.... Then whether they are bringing out all the kind of issues I think are relevant and try to bring those in at a later stage.

I    How do you do it, do you ask them questions about it or do you try and get the other students to? If there was something that wasn't covered that you think should have been covered what exactly do you do to deal with it?

T    In the first instance I try to - I mean if there are things to be corrected which are just factual then I would do it myself. But especially when it comes to interesting bits about issues and the way in which it is interpreted, etc. I think in the first instance I try to get the rest of the class to participate ............

I    So would you ask them a question?

T    Yes, I would probably highlight some of the points and some of the questions and then sort of - I don't think I would point at people to ask questions, I would just generally ask the question and then see what comes across.

I    Thinking about the non-native speakers on your courses - have you noticed any language problems?

T    Yes and well one of the things they say to me is understanding the lectures and it varies. Some people say, yes it's very difficult to understand the lectures. I usually actually have some notes that I have given to them as part of the resource pack. So whatever main things I put up as exhibits, even my notes, are all in summary form in front of them and so they would simply be making some additional notes. So if they have problems in problems in writing it's perhaps a little easier in that respect .but I am sure there perhaps quite a few aspects that they probably miss out on. Because they might say well this is the only thing that I can remember and.........

I    So understanding lectures.

T    Understanding lectures but variable. There are people who will come and say to me that I speak relatively slowly so they find it fairly easy to understand, but there are others who say I speak too fast. The other aspect of writing is when they answer

questions in examinations. Again my subject isn't quite as problematic as some of the others in that I have a combination of relatively short answers but having said that I think that yes there are people who lose out because in summary form they can't put their point across.

I        What about participating and interaction?

T        Yes, some of them are think do keep their head down because of the language problem and I think I'm certain to have had some disasters in presentations. The worst disaster I have had is that I have just picked a group of students for quite an important presentation. They all turned out to be foreign students and they did a very poor presentations in terms of the content as well as the presentation.

I        So you won't do that again.

T        Well it's just a question of chance sometimes.

I        OK


Course Member Interview 1

I What classes have you been to that are not lectures?

S Most of them have case study presentations all of them.

I And have you been to classes where they call in someone form outside?

S Yes we have many have those.

I Which courses?

S Oh like strategy there were managing directors. Actually one of them was different was different he came with a balloon and raffle tickets .....

I When you have a case study presentation and there is discussion - do you ask questions?

S Yes we do. Anyone can ask questions.

I What sort of questions?

S Yes questions ... and sometimes they don't know how to answer it.

I What type of questions?

S Difficult to say, relates to case

I Asking for information or ?

S Yes asking for more information or if they'd forgotten something like another group would say *Why didn't you mention it.* That sort of question.

I What about to criticise?

S Yeah they do... Not nice questions. I wouldn't because I wouldn't like to be criticised.

I Do you enjoy presenting?

S I think it's good to present a case study. You learn a lot at least I do.

I Any problems with it?

S: It's scary to be in front of so many people. In the beginning I didn't like to do it but then I got used to it.

I Do people ask you lots of questions?

S Yes the first one no and the second one they do.

I Nice questions or ?

S No they were not...

I When you say not nice what do you mean?

S People asking questions like, *Why didn't you do that or why didn't you know like why did you prefer this strategy?* Things like that and you decided in a group so it was a difficult for me to say why ......

I Do you enjoy these case study presentations?

S I think it's good. I think it's a good way of learning.

I How? Is it different from a lecture?

S I think you get involved in it. It's better.

I Do you think the discussion part is important?

S Yes because if not you just go away. I think it's important.... I think the discussion sort of closes the case study. I think it's good to ask questions....

I If the Business school stopped having these events, would it be OK?

S I think it would be bad. You know after one hour (lecture) you don't take anything in. I think it's important.

I Do you enjoy discussing things in class after a case or outside speaker?

S I find it enjoyable yes.

I Any problems noticed?

S Yes I think the some people who ask the questions are aggressive.

I Are you?

S No. I just feel I'm not really sure. Maybe they are more outgoing people than me.

I Is it important for you to ask questions?

S It doesn't matter for me. If there is something I really want to know I would ask.

I Is it important for the tutors who talks?

S I don't think so. I don't think they keep a diary or you get better marks or anything......

I Would you like to see more of these speaking events.

S I think it's OK

I The right level?

S Yes in most classes there are case studies and .... and some courses there are outside speakers.

I Which course have you attended that have outside speakers?

S Well M 700 ....

I Thank you very much.


<u>Course Member Interview 2</u>

I Do you enjoy the case study presentation and the interaction part? Do you find it useful?

S Yes it's useful. Why it's useful - is to work in a team..... It's more useful than for an English person because I can learn.

I When there's a discussion after the case. Is it useful?

D It depends on the presentation in fact. If the presentation is a good one you want to ask some questions. But if it's a common sense or common vision, no ... but we have some

courses at 6 6.30 to 9 and if it's at that time, if it's at that time I really think people are bored and don't want to discuss, just want to leave. That's true. It's really true. It depends on the time.

I What kind of questions do people ask?

S They would like more detail about the presentation.

I Any other sort of questions?

S Sometimes it's about a particular point, clarification about this part. So more detail about this and that and to understand why people say that. I think the debate is not a long debate. It's a short one.

I Why?

S Because in part it's always the same thing. When you have done an exposé or a presentation people who present have got the knowledge so they can talk about it but all the class haven't got enough knowledge to maintain a discussion you know what I mean. So you understand what the people said but you can't argue. So I think you can't argue and you can't ask questions only clarification, not important questions or debate.

I Do you participate a lot?

S I'm more quiet.

I Why's that?

S Certainly because I'm foreign. It's not easy to talk in English. So sometimes you've got ... you wanted to say something but you got no time, somebody talks and ..so language.

I If someone presented something and you disagreed, would you say something?

S I would say something to understand why they say something *Why did you..?* to see their consideration.

I Why does MBA programme have these kinds of events - presentations?

S Because I think it's useful for the other students to understand, to learn about the presentation of somebody .. how you present and how you try to give information to someone. Certainly it's useful for presentation.

I Are you expected to ask questions and discuss?

S I think so .... They expect a small debate. It's not a long debate, not hours and hours but you get sometimes a small debate and I really think it depends if you are full-time or part-time because the part-time students have worked so are older and they have got more experience.

So in fact they would like to ask more questions because they know how the ... So they could ask more questions but with the full time ones it is different.

I Do other students participate equally?

S As I say foreign because of the language, yes OK.

I What about events where they call in an outside speaker, presentation and then discussion. Is that the same kind of thing?

S People who have worked in the same business could ask much more questions than somebody .. if you don't know really what is going on..... (student gives a lot of course information).

I OK that's lovely.


Course Member Interview Three
Note: Two students were interviewed together. They are referred to as S1 and S2 in the transcript.

I Did you give any presentations recently?

S1 Yes I gave one alone and one in a group.

I Did people ask questions?

S1 Unfortunately yes. I'm kidding but we have a very well prepared texts with slides and everything. So I mean we don't expect people to ask questions outside our subject. Sometimes they do. From our experiences when we do case studies during the lectures what happened was we had quarter of an hour to prepare it. So after we did it. Everyone knew we had done it very quickly. So if someone were to ask a question, he knew that we didn't have the answer so we didn't have time to think about it before so we would have to think while on the spot. So it would be a bit more difficult.

I You go to other peoples' case study presentations. What kind of questions are asked?

S2 I happen to ask questions about comparison between countries, questions about about the books, where they got the information from. Sometimes I find details.

I What are you looking for?

S2 For me if they just have a national point of view and don't want to see anything else. Sometimes they give statements and as I come from somewhere else and you know that's not factual so you just want them to think about something else, make them think.

I What about disagreeing?

S1 I raise the point but not really go on very far with it. I would raise the point and listen to the answer and I don't dare go any further.

I Why not?

S1 It becomes like a match and you don't have to go on ... it doesn't become interesting for the people who are watching. So you just want to raise the points and listen to the answer. If you don't agree with it you'll go after and see the lecturer after.

S2 The problem is it is often like introducing something. You don't have the basis or the knowledge to take your point any further. I remember like a presentation on the predictive validity of selection methods. And the teacher kept telling that ....some global generalities about the habits in other countries. I didn't agree but it's like a discussion but I didn't go further because in that case it's just intuitive thinking just feelings and you don't have the background. You are not in a position to discuss further.

I Knowledge?

S2 Yes. That's the level of the discussion most of the time.

I Would you agree with that - knowledge?

S1 For me most of the time I didn't disagree on the subject because I knew didn't have the knowledge so I didn't raise any point or that. You know most of the time it's kind of intuitive or really deep feelings. So it's very difficult. You don't try to convince the person. You just try to raise the point. So it's not really to disagree just to say *Well perhaps you could have looked at it a bit differently.*

I Do you participate a lot?

S1 I am quite quiet because I am the only foreign student in my class. So compared with the other students I don't participate a lot. I raise one point, ask one question that's all.

S2 I used to ask some questions I mean comparing with the other French people because we were 12 French on the course. I used to be one of the ones who asked the most questions. Just because you know I felt at ease speaking in front of other people so you even if I knew I was making mistakes I was asking. And sometimes it wasn't my questions. Sometimes Sylvie was quite shy and was saying *Could you ask that?* So I just asked.

I Another student said to me there's a divide between those who participate.

S1 Yes.

I Why is this?

S2 Some students don't try to get involved in discussion at all. Right from the start just make notes and watching.

S1 It's always the same people. That's obvious. And I think some people are very reactive. They have something - they've got to speak. Some people think about it and often it's too late to participate. The people are there and they write it down but they don't have time to think and speak at the same time. Because usually people are talking are not taking a lot of notes. I can see that often from the another French girl and she used to lots of times make a lot of notes and think about it and she used to make points afterwards and she used to say *Ah have you seen that?* And it is too late to ask questions. So she didn't speak at all but she used to listen a lot.

I Do you think course tutors want more discussion?

S2 They always want more ... That was a question that I was thinking about. Some students they don't know what is appropriate as a question. Some do. Some people .. in the course they don't mind asking questions that seem a bit further from the subject. And some just don't.

S1 I would say sometimes, especially when you are a foreigner you are afraid that they already answered the question but you didn't hear, didn't understand. If I ask the question, they are just going to say *Well I already answered it.* It happened to me. I used to interact a lot in the discussion in the lectures. I happened once that he said *Well that's what I said before.* OK And I was listening but I missed the point."

I What about when you have people come in from the outside?

S2 Quite a lot actually.

I How do you find them?

S2 In my opinion they were the best. ... It makes a change. I don't think it the kind of lesson where you learn the most but everything you will remember.

I Why?

S2 Because if depends on the kind of memory you have. I have a visual memory so I can visualise and remember people. can see people speaking, making gestures, and using examples. So it's easy for me to remember.

S1 And furthermore, .. it's from the experience background not the academic background. You feel more at ease in that. But because of the academically background you never know as much as the other one so you can't really talk about it because they refer to books and all that and you don't know about them. When people are from experience background you just listen and get the impression you learn at the same time.

I How's the participation?

S1 Well it depends on the person who is presenting. It really depends, if you manage to raise questions.

S2 Basically questions in that kind of discussion are more interesting and more structured one. I think much more ...

I What kind of questions?

S1 In this sort of interactions people normally start a question with mention of their experience *Well when I was working I saw that.* I think it happens much more than when you have a lecturer in front of you.

I Why does MBA have classes like this with interaction, not just lectures?

S2 Because it makes things relevant. It shows that they are using in some ways to be applied.

S1 I think there are questions you would ask to an outside speaker that you wouldn't ask to a lecturer because lecturer is involved with so many processes which are exam papers and essays. You don't want to ask lots of questions. An outside speaker is a way of checking things and asking things.

S2 Another problem is when you are in front of the teacher you know he has a very large knowledge. You know that. In front of someone from real life, I remember ........ In lectures you are taking notes and everything. So it's not the same thing.

S1 You feel a bit closer with someone from the outside because .... usually you feel more at ease. ... You learn a lot form his experience and there were a lot of questions at the end.

S1 If you wait 2 minutes I think I've got the records form that session.

I Right.


Course Member Interview 4

I OK let's start with the case study presentations. What's the aim of these?

S Well using theory learnt from the lectures and gain experience from real life of others.

I Do you like giving the presentations?

S Well personally I think the presentations are OK but others don't like it.

I Why?

S Well I can't really say. I just know that they don't like it.

I But you don't mind?

S Not if I know what I'm talking about.

I What about the questions after?

S In most presentations people tend to ask questions. Some of them are useful questions and some of them are more getting back at you questions.

I What's a useful question. What do you mean?

S You can't really say .... but things that may have been in the presentation and they're just repeating it and it's not very, you now it's just to actually show.

I So you don't think it's sincere?

S Some of it no

I So why are they doing it?

S It's all about face about being noticed and known.

I Does it matter?

S I think it does. .... People get to know you and what not.

I Tutors. Is it important for them?

S I think it may actually sway their decisions on somethings. If they see that you participate and that you come up with the goods, for instance ... appropriate theories ... innovative ways then I do think that they look at you in a different light ....

I What's your role if you're in the audience?

S Listen ...... if you're presenting then you need to get some feedback...

I Are the case study presentations useful, why do you go?

S You're there anyway ... - sometimes you haven't got a choice. You think it may be useful for me later on.

I Do all students participate - you?

S I ask questions if I think they are useful but sometimes I'm very quiet.

I What sort of things do you ask?

S Depends on what the presentation was about.... factual information sometimes to disagree but that doesn't happen that often.....

I What about when an outside speaker comes in - is it useful?

S Some are very good and some are not very good. Some speakers from outside aren't used to giving presentations or whatever and so they may pace it too high too low. So you don't get a lot out of it but ones that I've been to on ... are very good you get a lot out of it.

I Do you ask questions again?

S I'll ask if I feel there's a need. A lot of the time someone else will actually ask the same question....

I Why does the MBA programme have discussions events like these?

S I think probably to get other peoples' views on your presentations and you're actually getting criticisms from your peers which is better than from tutors because you're actually making your presentations to your peers anyway so if they like it, you gain from each other and everyone's got different experiences and they can actually input something.

I Any other reasons?

S As I said you can gain from each other and learn from each others' experiences. You can actually input something with the people who are working like *In my life* Right that's about all really. That's it.

## Course Member Interview 5

I Case study presentations. Do you like giving them?

S Initially it was a bit foreign to have an audience in that situation but then it actually after a while it becomes quite fun.

I Do you prefer to give a presentation on your own or in a group?

S It doesn't matter for me.

I What sort of questions do people ask after?

S It depends on the topic of the presentation - hopefully on content, or misunderstanding, .... they may be people in the audience who have specialist knowledge in certain areas and they could be testing you and if they want to know specific details that you may know or not know

I Has that happened to you?

S Yes .... But we weren't expected to know everything...

I Why do people speak or ask questions?

S It depends on who is in the audience and character. People do speak for the sake of it too sometimes ....

I Does it matter?

SI would think that tutors notice people but they also know if the questions are relevant and they try to .....

I Do you participate a lot?

S Perhaps a little more than the average.

I Who in the classes participates more? Foreign students, girls, or?

S Between foreign and domestic students it's spread pretty evenly in my point of view. Male and female again it's spread. There are quite shy characters who very very rarely ask questions and I think there tends to be more comments from the older experienced students.

I So someone who's quiet or shy?

S It may be that or everything may be clear and there may be no questions to ask.

I What about when outside speakers coming in and giving presentations? Do you like it?

S Yes I do actually in term of seeing the applied factors and it may and may not marry in with the academic theory we've been given.

I Is it the same kind of discussion afterwards? Is there more interaction there?

S Slightly more because the audience are aware that they are expected to ask questions. Generally you put on a bit more of a show for an outside speaker. Generally students audiences are much more responsive to an outside presenter and have more confidence in their presentations.

I Why have these discussion/interaction events on the MBA programme?

S To stimulate discussion and to get away from hard written facts.

I What's the benefit of knocking ideas around?

S There's looser brainstorming session, perhaps don't feel inhibited in asking what may be a silly question...... They may tie in with the lectures and often highlights an issue.

I Thank you very much

Course Member Interview 6

I The situations I'm looking at are case study presentations and when they call in a speaker from outside like business and there's a discussion in class. Could you tell me first of all what happens in a case study presentation?

S .... a red case study which we are asked to discuss in a group and later on a presentation is made to the class and then the class asks questions. That's one method. The other method is the group is supposed to discuss the case study and then you have to come into class and the lecturer asks questions so he can take anyone from the class to answer the questions. So if you haven't read the case study and discussed in your group, you could be stuck for words.

I Can you give an example of a course when you did that?

S Yes M700 ...

I OK red case studies then. Afterwards is there a discussion?

S Yes discussion in the sort like *Is it true that* ... For example, in international marketing we had two groups doing it on the same day so what happens is that one group has made a discussion and they went to a different way and the other group went in a different way. So ...... the other group will ask questions to hold them out or try to understand their approach better so it becomes like a discussion by asking questions.

I What about the rest of the audience - do they ask questions?

S Yes because it's like they do understand. Maybe they know more than what the presenters have done and they want to bring out that information.... and sometimes it's just someone wants to enquire about it. For example, if I was doing the case study and didn't understand how this would be done and when they were discussing in the lecture and I still did not get that I would ask *What if this thing goes wrong, how would you...?* Sometimes when they are experienced they tend to tell their story - what really happened when they were in that particular situation but that doesn't happen very often - either people are shy or they can't be bothered. Sometimes there are people who say *But in real life, in industry, when I approach this problem it is not following this sequence* and the discussion starts again whether it is really principles or ...

I Are there differences in participation?

S Yes some people are very quiet and some people are always outspoken - you can divide the class into three groups - one is a group are always outspoken, and there is a group for who this only qualifies for certain subjects who are very interested in certain subjects and will straight away ask questions on that particular subject and there's one group who never ask questions ....

I Who are they?

S Some because of language they think they cannot explain themselves well

I Are these the foreign students?

S Mostly students from abroad who think they cannot ask a question immediately. That's why sometimes there's a rush of students when the lecture is finished. I do that sometimes because

I think the question is not that relevant to that particular time or sometimes I think it's too stupid to ask in the class. I should have known it sort of thing. Or sometimes I think it's just going to waste a lot of time me interrupting.... For example, if you ask a very basic question, the lecturer may say don't you understand that?

I Does the lecturer intervene?

S Sometimes questions are directed towards the lecturer .... and sometimes they direct it towards the students....

I Are the tutors interested in who participates?

S I'm not sure they care. I think they give everybody the opportunity to present and ask a question. They don't go out of the way to say *OK why don't you ask a question?* They notice. Some people become very popular in the class after being there for 2 or 3 weeks. It's because they always whenever you ask a question you talk to a lecturer so you build a relationship with him because he's sees you all the time. Now if they have 40 50 students, so he'll either know the people sitting right at the front or he'll know the people who always ask questions and talk. So there are certain students who always build a rapport and become popular.

I Also you have the outside presenters. Is this useful?

S To a certain extent. Some of the presenters are very interesting, some of them have either been through the MBA ......and some of them were sort of talking of their glory and sometimes when you are sitting there it is interesting to know how the person made it to the top but you say *OK what have I learnt form this? Have I learnt to. ... that someone was very lucky?*

I Is there a lot of interaction when the speaker has finished?

S Oh yes, they are very interesting subjects. For example a person came ....... I asked one question which was the difference between buying in and buying out which I didn't know.

I Same sort of questions as to student presenters?

S The difference when you are asking a question to a student is you're not expecting him to give you a very factual and right answer - it's more like a discussion. But when a person from industry comes we look up to him .... we ask in a different way for example, *How would your industry do it?* and he won't present an answer in a way like *I think we would do ...* He would more positively answer the question. So we expect him to really answer the questions more positively and more precisely and take his word for it.

I Why are there discussion classes like this on the programme?

S I'll tell you what I learn from it. What I learn is how to obtain information from someone, how to understand someone's point. Sometimes when I first came, before I did my MBA I was very inward looking - taking someone's point of view was very difficult for me - he had to give me facts and figures to convince me. I never looked at points of view because my

MBA, talking to people and arguing with people and trying to understand their point of view made me realise that there is someone else has got a better option there. He doesn't have to explain it and sometimes it's correct... It's opened me up more to other people's viewpoints. This kind of interaction has given me that given that kind of

I Do you think it's a good idea to have these discussions?

S I think it's very useful. I learnt a lot more in case discussions especially working in a group ....... I've learnt how to cope with it different situations.

I Thank you. That's lovely.


Course Member Interview 7

I Could you tell me what happens when students do a case study presentation?

S We have maybe a week or a few days to prepare it or maybe right there on the spot. We present them on overheads and slides. There can either be up to 1 or more, maybe 3 or people ....sometimes the whole group there or sometimes just one person will volunteer. The presentation sometimes take 20 minutes or as short as 5.. and then in certain modules because there are few people there they don't always like to ask questions or it depends how enthusiastic the class is in the particular subject. Sometimes it's like *Oh carry on we don't want to..* Some modules there were only 10 to 15 people there were very few questions after that.

I Could you think of a course where there is discussion?

S . Strategic management because we were in a group environment we were bouncing ideas off each other ... but some courses nobody really wants to ask any questions. The impression is if people are close enough together in a course, they'll want to ask questions but otherwise...... It depended on the week as well.

I What sort of questions do people after the students' presentations?

S It's more in the line of *Can you define a certain point? Are you sure that's right? Can you give an example?*

I What do they mean - *Are you sure that's right?*

S Well clarification or *We think in our experience this. How can you justify your points?* It's usually from ... it's usually the younger ones that are more competitive. The older ones will say *Oh never mind, we know it's right.*

I Do you ask questions asking for definitions, questions if something is right, asking for clarification. Do you ask questions or make comments a lot?

where it's a very interactive course and if I didn't it would count as a black mark against me.

I Oh really?

S I felt that because of the sort of course it is... I knew somebody in another MBA where participation was very important so I carried that.

I Do you get a grade for participation?

S I feel it's an intangible grade. I mean towards the second term I was asking a lot of foolish questions.

I What's a foolish question?

S Well it's things like I thought it was relevant but it was to the point of saying something rather than. Oh it's not a showing off thing like - Oh I'm so intelligent here. To get myself at least in the process of asking questions. Otherwise you just sit there and you know you become like any other undergraduate.

I Another student said to me there a divide between those who participate a lot and those that don't.

S Very much so.

I Can you tell me about that?

S Well between track A and track B - there is certain people in each division that will ask questions. One girl here on the MBA always asks a lot of good questions. There were one or two others. They are also divided between people who want to ask questions obviously for intelligence purposes and others who always I felt were just asking to make their voices heard. And maybe those with more confidence. It depends on who was giving the presentations. If it's the older set, the younger set didn't always ask questions but if they were the younger set, the other younger set were more inclined to ask questions - colleagues. I felt the reason was they felt they knew what they were talking about...

I What about girls, boys, non-native speakers?

S The only the foreign students I was in groups with were the French and a couple of Indian colleagues. The French were OK because they had done business before so they were treated equally. The Indians one was ....... and I think their personalities were much quieter so the people I worked with no not because of racially but because they were less assertive and language was no problem.

I What about when people come in from the outside and give presentations. Did you find them useful?

ght and a lot
of people didn't bother..... Timing and it was people talking about their experience and some
of the track Bs thought *Well we've done this before. We're not really interested* ... The first 2
to 3 were really good because they had the most people ...... ... there was just no get up and go.

I Did you go to any that you thought were really?

S Just the first 2 or 3 were the best because they had the most people.

I Does it matter if people don't ask questions there?

S I think it does. I've noticed that whenever anyone asks questions the whole class sits up and
listens while if no-one does, someone else says *Oh well I won't bother*. I think there's like a
time barrier - if you don't ask questions up to a certain point, nobody asks questions after that
time .. I really noticed that on the MBA. If people ask questions in the first ten minutes, the
questions really start flying after that.

I Are the question the same kind as when students present?

S I think a lot different - they're more based on the presenter's experience because they were
very much experience talks - *How did you start it?* Maybe on strategy maybe - *Give us your
reasons for going into..* Nothing like *I don't think that, I disagree with that* because they were
all very successful. They were 50 plus. They had the experience

I Why have these interactive type classes?

S I think you actually exchange twice as much information when you ask questions than listen
and I feel you are a community. I really feel that when you are all asking questions - it gets
everyone buzzing ..... which ... if one asks questions everythings dead and everyone wants to
leave....

I OK What about situations when there's no presentation but there's a discussion. Have you
been to classes like that?

S I don't know of any. On my modules ....

I That's it. Thank you very much.


Course Member Interview 8

I Maybe we could start with the case study presentations. Do you enjoy those?

S The way they do the case studies, I don't think it's particularly enjoyable because you might
get 3 groups presenting exactly the same case study. You switch off and stop listening. I think
if it's a case study done by one group then yes that's interesting but not one done by 3.

I What about the discussion after the case study - is it useful?

S Yes it would be if we'd read the case study. If you've read it then yes, it's useful it's interesting. If you haven't you're all at sea. 50/50 of the students prepare... It's makes it very difficult to participate if you haven't read the material. Some people don't participate anyway.

I Are you one of those?

S I'm one of the former not the latter. If I've read it then I do participate.

I Why don't some participate?

S I think some of them are frightened to show that they don't know anything - they don't understand and rather than thinking *I've paid good money for this course. I'm going to learn what I can,* they are more concerned about other people's opinions of them. They don't want to show ignorance - some of its cultural. Some of the cultures just don't ask questions. One of the girls is Chinese and she told me the Chinese don't normally ask questions. But some of the cultures seem to be a little bit less assertive and they're less likely to speak their mind or have personal opinions or just express a different view from the lecturer.

I OK if it's students doing a case study presentation, what kind of questions or comments do the rest of the class make?

S It depends on the individuals. Very few students would attack another student doing a presentation. If they disagreed, they would probably say *Have you considered this aspect or that aspect* rather than say *In my experience it doesn't work, it isn't practical* or whatever. So there's less aggressive disagreement. It's more likely to be highlighting an area they haven't gone into. Yes or because the viewpoint they're putting they've obviously ignored a particular aspect. So you say, *What do you think about that .. rather than you've totally ignored.* There's a certain amount of empathy for anyone who's going to stand in front. You know one of us has to stand at the front and speak.

I Do you like presenting?

S No I don't. I've done it in industry .... I don't find the interaction a problem. I find the presentation more of a problem because you're stood there talking and everyone's looking at you. I find that a real trial. I don't find the interaction a problem because I don't have a problem saying *I don't know* and I don't have a problem saying *Yes I've made a mistake* but a lot of people do. They wouldn't say *Oh I forget all about that bit.*

I What do they do then? How do they handle it?

S Some get very aggressive about it and others will just bullshit. There are some that are good. They will actually take the point and they will look at it as a request for information and not an attack. Some people look at questions as an attack rather than a a request for information.

I Does it matter how it's asked then?

question in quite an aggressive manner but because I'm used to answering questions... the I
will diffuse the situation whereas some people you can ask them very diplomatically *What is
your perspective on this angle* sort of thing and because they're not used to handling questions
they will just fire back at you anyway. So it depends on who's asking, who's receiving, the
tone - there's all sorts of things. I try to be gentle when I'm asking questions. There is one guy
on the course on the course that I didn't like so when I questioned him I was very assertive in
my way of asking questions and when he just dismissed me I wouldn't let it go. I went back at
him again. So it depends on personalities and you know your interaction with that individual.
It's just this guy ....... You can tell when people are nervous - dying at the front there.

I Does it matter if people participate in the discussions?

S I Think it adds to it if people have read it and they do ask intelligent questions. Then it adds
to it. When you read a case study you see it from your experience and perspective and other
people would have different perspectives on that and when they ask a question they are
opening things up in your mind as well *Oh I hadn't thought of it from that angle*. Some
questions are just naf.

I What would be a naf question?

S A question where it shows they haven't thought through what they've been told. Someone
makes a statement and you can take that and apply it to different scenarios. So you can say
*How will it work in such a such instance?* So they've actually thought about it and applied it
whereas some people don't get that far. They just take the information and just a very basic
sort of question.

I Basic question?

S I can't think of examples - its a question the answer to it is obvious. If you'd thought or
applied ....

I Intelligent questions?

S You have thought it through and applied it and thought of a scenario where it couldn't work
and therefore you're asking questions about how would you adapt that principle.

I Do you get irritated by the level of discussion?

S No because I think the stupid questions are the ones that are not asked. Sometimes I'm just
like surprised at people that they haven't gone through that additional thought process.

I Does it matter for the tutors if people interact?

S I think so.... If people ask questions that at least tells you that they've been listening because
they can formulate a question about the subject if you haven't been listening. I always ....

I There's no grade for participation?

S Not to my knowledge but I think lecturers form an impression of people from that interaction. I think they remember people who ask questions and they remember those that ask sort of perceptive questions and I think that can influence anyone's perspective on you.......

I What about when the outside speaker comes in. Are they useful?

S Yes if the speaker has got something relevant to tell you. Some are sort of egos on wheels *I did. I am.*

I Same sort of discussion after that kind of thing?

S It would probably be the same. I think we make more of an effort because we appreciate that people have taken time out and I think we make more of an effort - actually paying attention to what they've got to say and again formulating questions because to come and do a presentation with no interaction is I think soul destroying.

I Do you think that there are the same or different kinds of question to an outside speaker?

S No they'd ask the same - different areas that they neglected to talk about.

I OK. Thank you very much.

The following sample shows the system of analysis used in the study to account for the structure of seminar discussion discourse.

Categorisation of the turn in terms of slot in exchange structure and move is indicated by the brackets on the left of the turn.

E - slot in exchange structure
Pre-I (pre-initiation)
I (initiation)
R (response)
F/I (follow up as re-initiation)
r/i (response as initiation)
r (response to r/i)

M - move
El (eliciting)
I (informing).

Categorisation of the turn in terms of acts is indicated by the uses of slashes within the turn and categorisation in the brackets following the turn.

A - act
el: inf (elicit of information)
el: conf w (weak elicit of confirmation)
el: conf's (strong elicit of confirmation)
el: clar (elicit of clarification)

In the case of inform acts, these are categorised without the use of abbreviations in the text sample below.

Subgenre A: Text 1

[E Pre-I]    P  ==== You had a question

[E I]        T Actually you focused on the role of the company was actually the role
[M El]       developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed
             first for for UK
             [A: el: conf w]

[E R]        P Erm I think it's fair to say that in the early 80's we were very much UK
[M I]        dominated  and we eh had been developing products for the UK by the
             time we came to developing Rover 200 which of course is in collaboration
             with  Honda as well um we were we were looking to a European European
             Market  not to the extent that we look today a total European market/ but
             certainly  taking into account the European market/ by the time we came to
             marketing it we were definitely looking at a pan European strategy
             [A: initial inform additive adversial/additive]

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[E I]    S1 What was the competition doing in its eh advertising policy/ was that taking
[M EI]      in exactly the same stance as you were taking
            [A: el: inf/ el: conf w]

[E R]    P I don't think I mean to be honest I've not been that close to the advertising
[M I]       certainly going back 3 or 4 years/ but I don't think this pan European approach
            is really very common in the motor industry at the moment
            [A: initial inform adversial]

[E F/I]  S1 Well who would you identify as your competition who one competitor that
[M EI]      you would identify in Europe
            [A: el: inf]

[E r i]  P For Rover 200
[M EI]   [A   el: clar]

[E r]    S1 Yes
[M r]    [A Inform]

[E R]    P Well it would be cars like the Golf the Astra like the BMW 3 series the the
[M I]       stronger more premium medium sized cars / more so perhaps than things like
            the Escort certainly abroad
            [A: initial inform adversial]