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**CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES IN EFL SETTING – GENDER X FLOOR
DOMINATION**

por

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Àqueles que de alguma forma
contribuíram para que esta dissertação
pudesse concretizar-se...

Enquanto o homem e a mulher não se reconhecerem como semelhantes, enquanto não se respeitarem como pessoas em que, do ponto de vista social, político, econômico, não há a menor diferença, os seres humanos estarão condenados a não verem o que têm de melhor: a sua liberdade
(Simone de Beauvoir)

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ABSTRACT
CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES IN EFL SETTING – GENDER X FLOOR
DOMINATION

MÁRCIA DE S. THIAGO ROSA

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

2001

Supervising professor: Viviane M. Heberle

This study examines how conversation evolves within the classroom at a private English school in Florianópolis. Following the steps of the research carried out by Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) at the Technological University in Michigan and based on studies concerning language and gender and gender roles in education, I provide a description of classroom conversations and identify the strategies and behaviors which students make use of during such interactions. In carrying out this research, I was especially interested in identifying traditional gender roles in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting. I employed quantitative and qualitative methods to draw conclusions about students' participation. Through the quantitative method, the female participants were shown to occupy less floor than the male participants. Aware that simple counts of turns and words are not enough to have an exact picture about the students' participation, I privileged the results shown through the analysis of qualitative methods, including the tape transcriptions of classes, information obtained in interviews with students, observational field notes and the positive or negative nature of the strategies used by the participants, respectively: *Task-continuative* and *Task-divergent* behaviors (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). This qualitative analysis demonstrated that although women in this specific group actively participated in the conversations, asking challenging questions and taking many and long turns, they also fought against still remaining traditional male dominance in the educational system. I conclude this thesis highlighting the importance of carrying out studies on gender roles in classroom settings to show educators and students that the positive use of conversational strategies result in productive and more constructive classes. I also stress the importance of the awareness concerning the position of female students within the classroom and, this way, encourage some changes.

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RESUMO**ESTRATÉGIAS DE CONVERSAÇÃO EM SALAS DE EFL
GÊNERO X DOMÍNIO DO ESPAÇO DA CONVERSAÇÃO****MÁRCIA DE S. THIAGO ROSA****UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA****2001****Professora orientadora: Viviane M. Heberle**

Este estudo examina como se desenvolve a conversação em sala de aula numa escola particular de inglês. Seguindo os passos de uma pesquisa desenvolvida por Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) na Universidade Tecnológica em Michigan e com base na teoria sobre linguagem e gênero e sobre os papéis que o gênero ocupa em sala de aula, descrevo alguns exemplos de conversação ocorridos em sala e identifico estratégias e comportamentos usados pelos alunos. No desenvolvimento desta pesquisa focalizei minha atenção na identificação de papéis tradicionais de gênero masculino e feminino em salas de EFL (inglês como língua estrangeira). A fim de tirar conclusões sobre a participação dos estudantes, utilizei métodos quantitativos e qualitativos. Através do método quantitativo, observei que os participantes do sexo feminino ocupavam menos espaço em conversações do que os participantes do sexo masculino. Porém, sabendo que a simples contagem de palavras dos alunos e alunas não é suficiente para que se tenha uma idéia mais exata sobre a participação dos estudantes, privilegiei os resultados obtidos através de métodos qualitativos, entre os quais: transcrição de gravações de aulas, informações obtidas nas entrevistas individuais com os alunos, observações anotadas durante a assistência de aulas e a natureza positiva ou negativa das estratégias usadas pelos alunos, respectivamente: *Tarefas-continuativas* e *Tarefas-divergentes* (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). A análise qualitativa demonstrou que, apesar das alunas deste grupo terem participado ativamente das conversações, fazendo perguntas desafiadoras e tendo muitas e longas falas, estas alunas também lutam contra o ainda remanescente domínio masculino no sistema de educação. Concluo esta dissertação reforçando a importância de se desenvolver estudos sobre os papéis que os gêneros masculino e feminino desempenham em sala de aula para que se mostre aos educadores e alunos que as estratégias positivas de conversação resultam em aulas mais construtivas. Também reforço a importância da conscientização em relação à posição da mulher em sala de aula a fim de que mudemos este quadro.

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KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS¹

FS	Female student (unidentified)
MS	Male student (unidentified)
FT	Female teacher
/	Latching, when one speaker immediately follows another speaker Without pause
//	Interruption, one speaker gives up the floor when another begins
[Overlap, when two speakers talk simultaneously
]	endpoint of an overlap
<u>Underline</u>	emphasis
:	Lengthening of syllable
(())	Stage directions, describing tone of voice or nonverbal actions
()	Unclear words (guesses noted within parentheses, if empty, the words were indecipherable)
•	Pause of 0,5 second per period

2	}	TM	Teacher Márcia
		TS	Teacher Simone
		TL	Teacher Lúcia
		“quotations” Indicate use of Portuguese or nonexistent words in English	
		Ss	Students
		MSs	Unidentified male students
		S	Student (sex unidentified)

¹ Transcription conventions adapted from Bergvall & Remlinger (1996).

² My own transcription conventions. I used TM, TS or TL to differentiate the teachers, when in one excerpt, more than one teacher speaks. If only one teacher speaks, I use FT.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*O mito do feminino nada mais é do que
as algemas em que a mulher é mantida
em sua alienação.*

(Simone de Beauvoir)

1.1 Gender and its reflection in the classroom

Many sociolinguistic theorists have been greatly concerned with the development of studies related to gender. The word gender, differently from the word sex, which is connected to biological characteristics, has been used to refer to socially learned behaviors. This dichotomy between male and female is enacted through these behaviors, especially through linguistic behaviors, and it has been the focus of a great amount of research. Studies have shown that in labeling or polarizing behaviors as appropriate to men or to women, presupposed natural-born differences are established, creating barriers that may restrict opportunities for women in the various segments of the society, for example, in the Educational System (Bing & Bergvall, 1996).

As well as in the social system as a whole, also in the educational system gender roles have been historically and institutionally constructed (Connel, 1987 in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). It means that through the relationship with their peers, students reproduce social values and beliefs brought from the patriarchal society in which they are inserted.

However, many of these researchers point out that other aspects besides gender may influence students' behavior such as social class, ethnicity, goals, interests, etc (Cameron, 1992; Coates, 1993; Mills; 1995, Heberle, 2000).

1.2 Purpose of the present study

In carrying out this research, I want to investigate if and how the reproduction of gender roles occur in an EFL classroom, during conversations.

Grounded on the basic assumptions of the theory concerning language and gender and following the procedures of a research developed by Bergvall & Remlinger (1996), I depict and identify the conversational strategies and behaviors students make use of during conversations in the foreign language.

In order to accomplish my goals, I employed ethnographic and quantitative methods. The quantitative method specifies the amount of participation students had, since it provides the number of words spoken and turns taken. On the other hand, the ethnographic approach allows for a deeper analysis about the quality of these conversations. The research tools used are individual interviews with the participants, class observations, audio tapes, field notes and the identification of conversational strategies and behaviors.

Research questions

The following questions are the point of departure for the present study:

- 1 Who is engaged and how are the participants engaged in the conversations?
- 2 What other kinds of interactions are taking place ?
- 3 To what extent does gender influence these interactions?
- 4 Are there similarities between the results obtained by Bergvall & Remlinger and my results?

1.3 Organization of this thesis

Chapter 2, *Classrooms as settings of reproduction and resistance*, presents an overview of the theoretical perspectives that bear my viewpoint concerning gender roles in the classroom. The chapter is divided in seven sections. In the first, I briefly comment on the correlation between Discourse Analysis and social change; in the second, I make a short review about the discussion related to the role of education, focusing on power relations in the classroom. In the third section, I provide a review of the basic assumptions concerning language and gender studies, emphasizing the dichotomy between male and female, while in the fourth section I discuss the role of the educational system in the construction of gender roles. The fifth section is concerned with the "feminisation" (Swann and Graddol, 1995) of classroom talk, and in the sixth section I talk about the interpersonal involvement in classroom conversations. The last section of this chapter presents an overview of the research carried out by Bergvall & Remlinger (1996), on which I based my study.

In chapter 3, *Data Background*, I provide within 5 sections basic information about the context of investigation, the participants, the encounters and the procedures for data collection, adjustment and analysis. In chapter 4, *Data Analysis*, divided in 3 sections, I depict examples of the conversational strategies categorized in Bergvall and Remlinger's study as task-continuative (intended to contribute positively with the conversation), and task-divergent (intended to derail or disrupt the conversation). In the last section, I am concerned with the description of other strategies I could identify in my data but that were not mentioned in Bergvall and Remlinger's research..

In chapter 5, *Gender roles in EFL setting*, I analyze, describe and draw conclusions about the excerpts depicted in chapter 4. This chapter is divided in 4 sections in which I present, respectively, the quantitative and qualitative results, then I compare my

results with Bergvall and Remlinger's results and finally I move on to discuss the role of gender and other variables which may have influenced students' behaviors during the classes observed.

My final remarks are stated in chapter 6 within 3 sections. Initially, I summarize the findings of this thesis, making some remarks on these findings. I also comment on the limitations and implications of the present study. As a closing point, I emphasize the importance of studies related to language and gender, giving suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Classrooms as Settings of Reproduction and Resistance

*Ambos os sexos são
ao mesmo tempo
vítimas do outro
e de si
(Simone de Beauvoir)*

This chapter is divided in six parts. In the first section, I stress the correlation between discourse analysis and social change, and in the second section, I discuss the role of education, focusing on the reproduction of and resistance to power relations within the classroom. After that, in the third section, I review language and gender theory, discussing traditional male and female roles. In the fourth section, I return to the classrooms, depicting the role of the educational system in the construction of gender. In the fifth section, I am concerned with the "feminisation" of classroom discourse (Swann & Graddol, 1995) which is related to often reported facilitative or cooperative nature of women's talk (Jenkins and Cheshire, 1990; Holmes, 1992). The sixth section is concerned with the importance of interpersonal involvement among students in classroom conversations. The last section provides an overview of the research carried out by Bergvall and Remlinger with university students, on which I based my work.

2.1 Discourse Analysis and social change

Fairclough (1992) stresses the importance of discourse analysis to study social change. The author believes that scholars recognize the intrinsic relation between changes in language

and social and cultural processes. Thus, he developed an approach to language analysis which contributes both to investigating change in language and to studies concerning social change. In order to develop a social theory of language he connects linguistics and language studies to social and political issues. It is quite important for critical discourse analysts the observation of the two sides of language use, called by Fairclough "the socially shaped" and "the socially constitutive" (Fairclough, 1993^a 134, in Heberle, 1997). As Heberle puts it,

Being socially shaped, language use is related to the conventional, the reproductive side of language, in other words, by using language we perpetuate social conventions. The constitutive dimension of language, on the other hand, means that by using language we are able to transform social relations. Discourse helps us to construct social identities, social relationships between people, and, on a wider scale, our system of beliefs. (p. 14)

Heberle also points out that the complexity of Fairclough's theory relies on the fact that it puts together theories and approaches concerning language and society. Furthermore, the critical discourse analysis he has developed is grounded on the observation of language use taking into consideration the social contexts they occur. Similarly, McCarthy & Carter (1994) argue that a discourse-based view of language requires a careful observation of the relationship between the social context and the linguistic patterns which are detected in such contexts. Concerning the use of discourse analysis in education, these theorists stress the idea that language learning is an ongoing process that depends directly on the comprehension and production of texts as well as their possible variations. In their words,

The better a text analyst a teacher can be, the better equipped - all other things being equal - his or her students are likely to be in using the language appropriately (pxii)

2.2 The role of education

Besides being a place for learning different subjects, classrooms can also constitute a good field for investigation, especially in the area of discourse analysis (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). Moreover, students' talk within the classroom can reveal important aspects of the society such as values and beliefs. In other words, students' discourse may reproduce normative attitudes, behaviors and roles learned in the social context in which they are inserted. Bordieu and Passeron (1977, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) point to the fact that the ultimate goal of education is to reproduce the social system reinforcing the idea of roles among students. As they put it:

The educational system ... is for bourgeois society in its present phase what other forms of legitimization of the social order and of hereditary transmission of privileges were for social formations differing both in the specific form of the relations and antagonisms between the classes and in the nature of the privilege transmitted: does it not contribute towards persuading each social subject to stay in the place which falls to him by nature to know his place and hold to it? (p.455)

On the other hand scholars such as Freire (1983) and Nystrand and Gamoran (1991,1992, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) have tried to change this picture. They oppose to the idea of reproducing pre-existed social values in the classroom trying to engage students in the process of learning, bringing them to participate actively rather than passively. Thus instead of only receiving information, students should "construct" knowledge through the interaction with other students and the teacher.

The reproductive educational system is criticized by Freire (ibid), who claims for the "revolutionary futurity", in which students are active subjects in the educational process. Freire compares the traditional view of education where students occupy passive positions to a banking system, in which teachers make deposits and students are restricted to making

withdrawals. Similarly, the “substantive engagement” proposed by Nystrand and Gamoran (ibid) consists in making classrooms student centered in which actual conversations, that go further than the common question-answer model, can occur more often.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) can help educators to establish resistance to the *status quo* reproduced in classrooms. Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) argue that critical discourse analysis in education may transform reproductive behaviors by warning students about problematic and repressive forms of discourse as well as by pointing new directions to more liberatory strategies. In their words,

Discourse analysis can aid these educators as they challenge restrictive reproductive pedagogies. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be a useful tool in challenging passive acceptance of the *status quo*. CDA aims to reveal how texts operate in the construction of social practice by examining the choices that discourse offers. (p.454)

One attempt to change the picture of the educational system has been carried out by language teachers, educationalists and applied linguists who have created the language awareness movement (LA). This movement claims for the inclusion of a new language awareness in the school curriculum. Although Fairclough (1992) agrees in part with this movement, he points out that this movement has not dedicated enough attention to relevant social aspects of language, mainly the aspects concerning the correlation between language and power. Furthermore, most language awareness programs are, according to Fairclough, grounded on theoretical beliefs about language and schooling. Thus, the author claims for the implementation of the language awareness programs in various educational contexts, joining theory and practice. A critical view of education and a critical approach to language study are key issues of a critical language awareness. Fairclough (1992) believes that "the development

of a critical awareness of the world, and the possibilities for changing it, ought to be the main objective of all education, including language education".(p.7)

Regarding EFL teaching, one important tool which can be used by teachers in order to improve language awareness is helping students to look at authentic texts in English from a critical perspective (Heberle, 1995). Heberle argues that the use of critical discourse analysis principles in the analysis of written texts (editorials of women's magazines, advertisements, newspaper's articles, etc) constitute a useful way to develop critical reading abilities of EFL students.

2.3 Language and gender - beyond dichotomy

Having a classroom in which students are "substantively engaged", as Nystrand and Gamoran (ibid) propose, is not an easy task. Researches have shown that, although in theory all students have equal access to the conversational floor it does not necessarily happen in practice. They bring to class different interests, background knowledge, personalities, etc. These and many other variables affect their relationship with the other peers (Scollon, 1985; Scollon and Scollon, 1983; in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). Studies on academic talk have suggested that one of these variables is gender.

The word *gender* was first used by linguists to designate a grammatical word category. The word *sex*, on the other hand, is connected to biological aspects (Bing & Bergvall, 1996). Theorists nowadays have been using the term *gender* to refer to behaviors, including language, that are socially learned and that have no specific connection to biological characteristics (Mc Connel Ginet 1988, Nicholson 1994, in Bing and Bergvall, 1996). As Coates (1993) explains,

As children, we become language users and, through using language, become gendered members of the community: both language and gender are developed through our participation in everyday social practice. In other words, language and gender are inextricably linked. (p. 204)

Similarly, Davies (in Sunderland, 1995) points out that the idea of masculinity and femininity can not be considered inherent characteristics of each man and woman, rather, they are, as Davies (ibid) explains, "inherent or structural properties of our society" (p.176). The author also stresses the fact that each individual, man, woman and child is implicated in the construction and maintenance of the society, because we recognize and acquire the discourse practices of the social context in which we are inserted.

Poynton (1989) stresses the fact that the biological differences between male and female have great importance in human societies. However, she explains, what is considered appropriate behaviors for men or for women differs from one society to another, and such behaviors have no direct relation to biological differences. Since gender can not be considered a natural consequence of sex, the author points out that biological sex (female and male) ought to be separated from social gender (feminine and masculine).

Regarding language and gender, Bing & Bergvall (1996) observe that the common belief about the existence of a clear dichotomy between women's and men's speech styles, which is intrinsically connected to sex, emphasizes even more the idea that there is a fundamental and categorical difference between males and females.

According to these authors, the focus of the discussion is not concerned with biological differences, which are undeniable; the problem lies on stereotyping and polarizing behaviors. Labeling behavior as adequate to men or to women may result, among other things, in restricting opportunities for women both in education and in the work market. As Cameron (1990) observes;

it is thus of the most importance for feminists to examine how issues of gender are represented in languages. Like other representations..., linguistic representations both give a clue to the place of women in the culture and constitute one means whereby we are kept in our place (p.12) (also cited in Heberle, 1997 p. 21)

Bing & Bergvall (ibid) also stress one problematic aspect related to one trend of literature on language and gender that reinforces presupposed gender differences between male and female. Theorists writing about: “how do men and women speak differently?”(e.g. Lakoff 1975, Maltz and Borker 1982, Tannen 1990, in Bing & Bergvall,1996), besides affirming categorically that men and women do have different speech styles, also suggest that women’s language is inferior (Jespersen 1922, Lakoff 1975, in Bing & Bergvall, 1996).

Furthermore, one category of the term “Verbal Hygiene” used by Cameron (1996), refers to the way the popular press has been using research on language and gender with the purpose of creating recipes for women to achieve success behaving “like a man”. In her words,

verbal hygiene is my collective term for a diverse set of normative metalinguistic practices based on a conviction that some ways of using language are functionally, aesthetically or morally preferable to others. These practices include what we usually call prescriptivism that is, the authoritarian promotion of élite varieties as norms of correctness, but they also include activities with very different ideological underpinnings...(p.36).

As Freed (1996) observes, many inaccurate generalizations about female and male speech styles have been made. She criticizes Jespersen, Lakoff, Labov, Trudgill and Tannen for “describing women and men as belonging to socially and linguistically distinct groups and each portrayed the group as internally homogeneous” (p.55). Thus, these theorists do not consider the wide social and cultural differences among men and women that may influence people’s speech styles. Freed (1996) also observes that people have taken for granted the

empirical results, interpretations and conclusions described by these researchers. As she puts it:

People generally persist in believing that women are more conservative in their speech than men (Jespersen 1922), that women are more polite than men (Lakoff 1975), that women seek more verbal intimacy than men (Tannen 1990), that women are less secure and more status-conscious in their speech than men (Labov 1972), and that women use standard speech more than men (Trudgill 1972) (p. 55).

Theorists investigating gender-related issues have emphasized the importance of the examination of variables that may influence people's behavior. Variables such as race, social class, age, occupation, setting, discourse function, etc. must be taken into account in such investigations (Cameron, 1992; Coates, 1993; Mills, 1995; Heberle, 1997). Similarly, Eckert and Mc Connell-Ginet (in Bing & Bergvall, 1996) point out that gender and language research must be based on the linguistic and social characteristics of the group under analysis, rather than simply taking gender as natural and innate. Mills (ibid), referring to her book *Language and Gender*, stated,

This collection of essays has indicated some of the directions which future research might follow. One trend that several of the essays seem to be pursuing is that of studying the language of women or men in very specific contexts, rather than making generalizations about sex-specific language as a whole. When women's language is considered, it is necessary now to specify which type of women's language, in which context, at which historical moment, and so on. (p. 257)

2.4 – Gender roles within the Classroom

To return to education, gender roles in the classroom have been historically and institutionally constructed (Connell 1987, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996), which means that, as well as in the social system, students become gendered through their relationship with colleagues. As Sunderland (1996) points out,

Any school or other educational establishment must play some role in the construction of its learners' gender. In a patriarchal society (and all societies are arguably patriarchal in some way) patriarchal values will be brought into the classroom by learners and teachers, through (perhaps unrecognized) gendered practices, and gender roles, relations and identities. (p.6)

Sunderland (ibid) states that the English language classroom (EFL and ESL) may also influence the social construction and reproduction of gender. She gives three main reasons that might contribute to this interference. The first reason concerns the language itself. English, she explains, is "gendered linguistically in its code" (p.7), thus, through the target language learning, we also learn to conceptualize the world in a gendered way. The second reason has to do with the teaching methodology. The author argues that the communicative approach, widely used nowadays, is more likely to reproduce in the target language, preexisting gender imbalances, since this approach is learner-centered and based on oral skills. The third reason would be the women's verbal ability which is, according to some researchers, superior to men's (see Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974, in Sunderland, 1996).

Ethnographic studies have shown that school influences the construction of gender roles (Arnot, 1982; Foley, 1990; Remlinger, 1995; Spender, 1992; Thorne, 1993, in Swann, 1992). This can be noticed in the low status positions occupied by women, in: stereotypical classroom materials, extracurricular activities that are appropriate to men, and through classroom strategies, where boys dominate the floor most of the time. Such studies have also shown that women control less floor than men, take shorter and fewer turns and receive less attention from the teacher (see Poynton, 1989).

Research on gender roles in the classroom have found a vast number of ways in which gender differentiation is reproduced in the classroom (see Clarricoates, 1983;

Delamont, 1990; Lees, 1986; Sadker, 1985; Spender, 1982; Stanworth, 1983; Whyte, 1986, in Swann 1992). Swann (ibid) lists the major finding of these studies:

- While there are quiet pupils of both sexes, the more outspoken pupils tend to be the boys.
- Boys also tend to “stand out” more than girls.
- Boys tend to be generally more assertive than girls.
- Girls and boys tend to sit separately; in group work, pupils usually elect to work in single-sex rather than mixed-sex groups.
- When they have the choice, girls and boys often discuss or write about gender-typed topics.
- Boys are often openly disparaging towards girls.
- In practical subjects, such as science, boys hog the resources.
- In practical subjects, girls “fetch and carry” for boys, doing much of the cleaning up, and collecting books and so on.
- Boys occupy, and are allowed to occupy, more space, both in the class and outside – for example, in play areas.
- Teachers often make distinctions between girls and boys – for disciplinary or administrative reasons or to motivate pupils to do things.
- Teachers give more attention to boys than to girls.
- Topics and material for discussion are often chosen to maintain boys’ interests.
- Teachers tend not to perceive disparities between the numbers of contributions from girls and boys.
- Teachers accept certain behavior (such as calling out) from boys but not from girls.
- Female teachers may themselves be subject to harassment from male pupils.
- “Disaffected” girls tend to opt out quietly at the back of the class, whereas disaffected boys make trouble. (p.p 51, 52)

Swann (ibid) also points out that any finding resulting from class observation must be interpreted with care, since other factors besides gender may influence students’ behavior such as social class, ethnicity, personality, etc, as has been pointed out before. According to Swann, the following variables must be taken into account:

- Differences between the sexes are always average ones. Clearly, in the classroom you get some talkative girls and quiet boys. Girls and boys also behave differently in different contexts.

- Factors other than gender influence how pupils behave and how they are responded to. Perceptions of, and behaviors towards, pupils are likely to be colored by other social factors (for example, class, ethnicity), by personality, and by perceived ability.

The studies from which the list derived were carried out in different contexts; they used a variety of methods, and they focused on different aspects of talk; not surprisingly, not all studies produced identical results.(p. 53)

Swann (ibid) stresses that, after analyzing academic discourse, taking into account the context in which discourse occurred, different researchers found that girls made use of critical support work in conversations, asking questions that engaged other participants in the conversations. Thus, these researchers believe that the cooperative behaviors performed mostly by girls benefited the group as a whole, since such behaviors improved the conversations in terms of quality. Holmes (1992) finds these cooperative skills, or as she calls “facilitative nature”, positive, mainly because they lead to a more extensive analysis of the subjects being discussed. These scholars stress, however, that such features of women’s talk have been seen as inferior throughout the years; their goal is to change this picture giving these features higher importance as conversational strategies.

2.5 The feminisation of classroom talk

The National Oracy Project created in 1987 by the National Curriculum Council in England has stimulated oral techniques in the classroom in which collaborative talk is widely employed, such as discussions in small groups in which students are supposed to explore subjects or solve problems together (Swann and Graddol, 1995).

Following is a list prepared by a group of National Oracy Project Coordinators that summarizes the values in which this movement is grounded:

The good speaker and listener:

- Expects the speaker to have something to say to her/ him and expects her/ his contributions to be valued and sometimes responded to;
- Is open to what the speaker has to say and is able to value others' contributions;
- Brings her/ his experiences of life and previous talking/ listening to an exchange;
- Anticipates what is to come and reflects on what has gone before;
- Relates what is said to what has gone before;
- Can reflect on what the speaker says to correct first impressions and is able to use exploratory talk to consolidate her/his own thinking;
- Is prepared to suspend judgement and modify opinions. (Johnson in Swann & Graddol, 1995, p. 138)

According to Swann and Graddol (1995), the rules cited above might be seen as a process of "feminisation" of classroom talk. In other words, these rules that come from the Oracy movement reinforce and value the conversational features generally associated to women (cooperative and facilitative nature) rather than the ones associated to men (competitive, assertive). The authors argue that the stimulation of a more collaborative talk in class aims, above all, to promote greater democracy and more effective learning. These interactional norms, they point out, benefit primarily women, since these norms promote "equality between speakers and more democratic procedures in decision making" (p141).

2.6 Interpersonal involvement in classroom conversations

According to Tannen (1989), scholars have devoted a great amount of research to the examination of literary discourse. The author argues that ordinary conversation is built of linguistic strategies which are pervasive, spontaneous and functional, whereas in literary

discourse they are shaped and elaborated. Tannen (ibid) calls these strategies "involvement strategies" because they create and also reflect interpersonal involvement.

Regarding involvement, Gumperz (1982, in Tannen, 1989) explains that conversational involvement is the starting point of any linguistic understanding, in other words, it is the result of the ability to infer and to make interpretations. The author argues that in order to maintain the involvement it is necessary that the participants of the interaction share culturally similar background, otherwise the interaction may become problematic. The involvement strategies discussed by Tannen (ibid) are primarily based on sound (rhythm, phonemes, morphemes, etc) and on meaning (indirectness, ellipsis, narrative, etc).

Also in EFL and in ESL teaching, involvement seems to be a relevant factor. Aware of the importance of shared background to maintain students' involvement in class discussions, Green et al (1997) point out that a learner centered approach is the key for the success in developing conversational skills. It means that students should participate actively in the process of selecting topics. The authors argue that if the topics are imposed, and if there is little direct learner engagement in this process, the students' involvement will probably be poor. Green et al (ibid) explain that the imposition of topics does not take into account the experiences, values and preexisting knowledge with which each student could make use of to enrich the conversations. Thus, the learners might not find any actual motivation to engage in the conversations. The heuristic approach proposed by Green et al (ibid) is learner centered, thus it allows students to choose and organize their own topics, carry out peer and self observations and evaluations and analyze findings.

Similarly, after analyzing EFL classroom data, Cadorath and Harris (1998) found that the strictly planned classes they observed, which did not allow students and teachers to go further than what was planned and restricted students participation in the class' building process

resulted in a lifeless and uninteresting class. The authors depict the three major consequences of lesson-plan-based classes identified in their data:

The inhibition of interaction between teacher and student, the avoidance of genuine communicative opportunities available in unplanned language, and the loss of aspects of local knowledge and experience as topics for classroom talk.(p.188)

2.7 Approaching Bergvall & Remlingers's research

In this section I provide a summary of the study carried out by Bergvall and Remlinger in which I grounded my own research. First I give an overview of the objective of the study, context of the investigation and the basic methodological procedures. I finalize depicting the most important findings and conclusions.

The research carried out by Bergvall and Remlinger analyzes the reproduction of and resistance to traditional gender roles in the academic discourse of teachers and students as they engage in conversations. Through the employment of quantitative and ethnographic methods they identify *how much* and *how* male and female students participated in classroom interaction.

The data examined in their study were collected at a mid- sized technological university in the Midwestern U.S., where women are outnumbered four-to-one by men. The environment in which students are inserted is both androcentric and gender polarized. As Bergvall (1996) describes it,

While most gender theorists see gender as non-binary and fluid, it is easy to use the terms *female* and *male* or *women* and *men* to describe two distinct groups at the Midwestern, technological university in this study, Michigan Technological University (MTU). This gender polarization arises from years of strong, dichotomous gender role socialization, starting at birth. (p. 178)

The prevailing model at this university, according to Bergvall (1996), is based on competition. Furthermore, classes are usually taught in big lecture halls, limiting interactions among students and between teacher-students.

The recordings were made in humanities courses, where interactive conversation is more likely to occur. The classes observed were composed of 18-35 students, with 11-40 percent women. Bergvall and Remlinger employed quantitative and ethnographic methods to survey students' participation (relying primarily on ethnographic methods).

For the quantitative method, which identifies who occupies the conversational floor, how many turns are taken and how many words are spoken, they analyzed one class session in which the teacher, students and researchers judged the students to be actively engaged.

The ethnographic resources they made use of were: audiotapes and coded transcriptions of classroom observations, maps of classroom settings, observational field notes, interviews with professors, graduate student observers and the students.

Table 1 shows the total turns taken and words spoken in one class session:

Participants	Turns		Words	
	N	%	N	%
Instructor	116	30	2350	45
Students	273	70	2857	55
Total	389	100	5207	100

Table 1 Total number of turns taken and words spoken

In this class there were twelve male and six female students and it was taught by a male professor. As the table shows, although the students were actively engaged in the

conversations, thirty percent of the turns taken and forty-five percent of the words spoken are the teacher's.

Table 2, that follows, shows the total turns taken and words spoken by male and female students separately:

Participants	Students		Turns		Words	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female students	6	33	93	34	1209	42
Male students	12	67	180	66	1648	58
Total	18	100	273	100	2857	100

Table 2 Number of turns taken and words spoken by male and female students

Analyzing the numbers of Table 2, Bergvall and Remlinger (ibid) observed that women took turns in proportion to their numbers in class (34%), but taking into account the total number of words, women occupied proportionally more of the conversational floor (42%).

In order to examine how conversations evolved within the classroom, Bergvall and Remlinger were concerned with the nature of the strategies students used to maintain or to challenge power during conversations. Analyzing students' exchanges during conversations, Bergvall and Remlinger found that they presented two basic kinds of behaviors: task-continuative and task-divergent. Task-continuative behaviors are characterized by the use of strategies that contribute to the development of the discussion. On the other hand, task-divergent behaviors are intended to open a second conversational floor, challenge the control of the dominant floor, and can also be used as a means to maintain the *status quo*.

Table 3 shows some of the linguistic behaviors found in the data collected by Bergvall and Remlinger:

Task – continuative behaviors	Task – divergent behaviors
• Questions and answers (IRE)	• Asides
• Validation	• Derisive comments
• Back – channel ³ comments	• Derisive laughter
• Repetition	• Ad hominem humor
• Extended development - Internal - Interactive	

Table 3 Classroom discourse behaviors

Observing Table 3⁴, we can notice that students engage in task-continuative behaviors by raising or answering questions; reinforcing, validating or extending classmates' ideas and opinions, repeating classmates' words or sentences, laughing with comments or analysis in a supportive way. Either instructors or students make their point through long – turn taking (internal extended development) or through the interaction with a limited number of participants (interactive extended development).

On the other hand, students become task-divergent whenever they make off-task comments, laugh at other class members or when they make asides to colleagues seated

³ According to Cook & Seidlhofer (1995) backchannels are signals (e.g. "uh huh", "yeah", "mmm") which "provide feedback to the current speaker that the message is being received. They normally indicate that the listener is following, and not objecting to, what the speaker is saying".(p.p 75-76).

⁴ Chapter 4 provides a detailed depiction of the behaviors listed on Table 3.

nearby, usually audible to most of the students. In other words, it can be considered task-divergent any attitude intended to divert the attention from the academic task.

Table 4 that follows, shows the attributes of the linguistic behaviors summarized in Table 3 above:

Task – continuative attributes	Task – divergent attributes
• Content – directed	• Phatic, socially directed
• Focused	• Tangential
• Cooperative	• Disruptive
• Aimed at group (primary Floor)	• Aimed locally (secondary Floor)
• Acquiescent to authority	• Autonomous, expressing personal authority
• Accommodating	• Resistant

Table 4 Linguistic attributes

According to Bergvall & Remlinger, the attributes they found to improve on-task, active work that engaged all participants of a classroom were the ones focused on relevant academic subjects, on the group discussion and directed to the primary floor. The group was cooperative and acquiescent but not submissive to the members who held the floor. Other participants, on the other hand, showed behaviors that were phatic and usually intended to amuse the classmates instead of contributing with the academic content. These kinds of behaviors can be considered tangential to the objective of developing the class discussion in a homogenous way, with the participation of the whole group in a single floor because they disrupt that single floor and open limited secondary floors, expressing, this way, their personal authority or autonomy.

2.7.1 Results and conclusion of Bergvall & Remlinger's study

Bergvall & Remlinger observed that only the use of the quantitative methods would not be enough to have an “in depth” picture about discourse practices in the classroom; rather it could give a wrong idea about access to the floor, as the numbers in Table 2 show. It is necessary, besides looking at how much, to look closely at how talk occurs, because it can reveal social aspects such as the reproduction of traditional gender roles⁵. As they observed,

At least some of the women in these classes escaped the often-reported patterns of women’s silence in public domains, such as classrooms, to actively share the conversation-al floor – as evidenced by the number of their turns at talk and words spoken. However, simply taking long or frequent turns does not establish power or domination of the floor. Content analysis suggests that these women’s attempts to assert themselves were resisted by other students, male and female (p.470).

As Bergvall and Remlinger explain, task-continuative and task-divergent behaviors are connected to models of accommodation and resistance in the classroom. According to their observations, the use of these behaviors was not gender exclusive, however it was the men who engaged in task-divergence, challenging one’s control of the floor, many times with *ad hominem* attacks⁶. As Bergvall (1996) puts it,

men did more the audible, tangential, task divergent talk (e.g. more asides that are audible to the rest of the class). They did not mute their voices as much when making asides to their peers, hence they had a presence in the conversation even when someone else ostensibly held the floor (p.182).

⁵ Gender roles within the classroom are discussed in this chapter (section 2.4)

⁶ *ad hominem* attacks are off task criticism directed to someone, rather than to someone's ideas or opinions.

On the other hand, women frequently performed task-continuative behaviors, engaging in conversations and giving valuable contributions to the subjects under discussion. Furthermore, some of the women in Bergvall and Remlinger's data resisted the reproduction of traditional gender norms taking several and long turns, making their points and asking challenging questions.

However, they stress that the role of gender in their research is complex and subtle. They emphasize that women's and men's behavior can not be labeled task-continuative and task-divergent respectively, since these behaviors are not gender exclusive:

Men also engage in task-continuative behaviors such as extended development, and women both initiate and support task-divergent laughter and topics.(p.472)

These authors also observe that the fact that task-divergent behaviors had been used mostly by men in their data is due to persistent yet subtle gender imbalances that are reinforced by historic, androcentric traditions and institutions. This also explain, in part, why women's power is more easily subverted within this particular context. Moreover, Bergvall and Remlinger claim that the analysis of the social roles is pivotal to figure out the enormous complexity regarding language and gender. Although the androgenic status *quo* still prevails, they could notice some evidence of a weak but growing change. In their words:

The variation evidenced in these contextualized forms offers clues about a changing world and changing role expectations, where discourse participants are struggling to challenge restrictive notions and pursue new choices. Unfortunately, such participants also struggle with the continuing forces of traditional gender norms and the maintenance of the status *quo* by those who oppose the loss of their power and privilege (p. 472, 473)

In this chapter, I pointed out important studies regarding language and gender and classroom discourse. I also presented a summary of the research developed by Bergvall and Remlinger focusing on gender imbalances. The next chapter is dedicated to the description of the data that compose the corpus of my research.

CHAPTER 3

DATA BACKGROUND

*A idéia da feminilidade impõe-se de fora
para dentro a toda mulher, precisamente
porque se define artificialmente pelos
costumes e pelas modas.*

(Simone de Beauvoir)

In this chapter I will be concerned with providing an overview about my data. I present the context of investigation, some information about the participants and the description of the encounters. In the last section I depict the procedures taken for data adjustments and analysis.

3.1 The Context of Investigation

The data examined are drawn from a private mid-sized English language school located in Florianópolis, SC. The school has three branches in Florianópolis and the one in which the recordings were made is where I work. Nowadays, in this school there are about 352 students, 14% are children, 68% are teenagers and only 18% are adults over twenty-one years old. Most of the children and teenagers (about 85%) belong to middle or upper classes and study in private schools in the neighborhood or downtown. Simone, another graduate

student who has also been working in this school as a teacher, made the recordings with me. We intended to use the same data in our dissertations focusing on different aspects. This cooperative work was worth doing because this way we could take notes and contextualize the class organization more efficiently. When one of us was leading the activities, the other could observe and write down the stage directions or important notes, remaining in the “blind spot” (Duranti, 1997, in Dornelles, 2000), trying to be the least intrusive we could.

The fact that my colleague and I have been working at the place where the data was collected also helped us to apply ethnographic methods and make them more reliable since we knew the students regarding their voices, accents, behavior and personalities. Taking into account that ethnographic descriptions result from very complex relationships between researcher and researched (Duranti, 1997; Ellen, 1984, in Dornelles, 2000) it became easier to transcribe the audio tapes of the classroom conversations, to write observational field notes and to exchange ideas with the group’s teacher. Other strategies employed to draw the student’s profile were the examination of students’ papers, compositions, assignment sheets, grades and individual interviews.

3.2 The Participants

The participants of the present study are the fifteen students of the group observed and the three teachers involved in the data collection, including me. In order to keep the ethics of my work, notice that all the names were changed.

3.2.1 The teachers' profile

There were three teachers involved in the data collection: Lúcia, the group's teacher; Simone, my colleague, and I. Lúcia (37) has been working at the school where the data were collected for thirteen years as a teacher and as a coordinator for five years. She graduated in

Letras at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in 1987. Simone (32) has been working at the school for ten years. She graduated in Letras at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in 1997. We started the university course in the same year. I (31) have been working at the school as a teacher for seven years and as a coordinator for five years. I also graduated in Letras at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in 1996.

Besides attending the classes in which the data were collected, the two teachers and I also had five meetings to exchange ideas, impressions and to prepare the activities employed in class. Note that, since Simone and I made the recordings, planned activities, and made the tape transcriptions together, I use first person plural (we) when I refer to the data collection.

3.2.2 The students' profile

In this group there were fifteen students: eight girls and seven boys. However, during our data collection we never had the whole group present. There was always someone missing. The group chosen to be recorded was in the fifth year of the course, which means the last year. In fact, most of these students have been studying in the school for more than five years, in the junior's course as Table 10⁷ shows. From the fifteen students of this group, only one, Caco, had not been my student before. Six had been my students only for one semester: Renata, Magali, Daniel, Paulo, André and Julia. Eight students had been in my classes for two or three semesters: Flávio, Lia, Dora, Thaís, George, Beto, Carla and Betty. I had been the teacher of four of them when they were children⁸ in the junior's course: Lia, George, Carla and Betty.

The fact that we have known each other was positive in collecting data. When asked about the possibility to be recorded they promptly accepted. They did not show any visible surprise, or make any negative comment. By the time we asked for their permission, we made

⁷ See the information about the students on table 10, chapter 5, p. 91.

⁸ The students were ten or eleven years old by the time I taught them in junior's course.

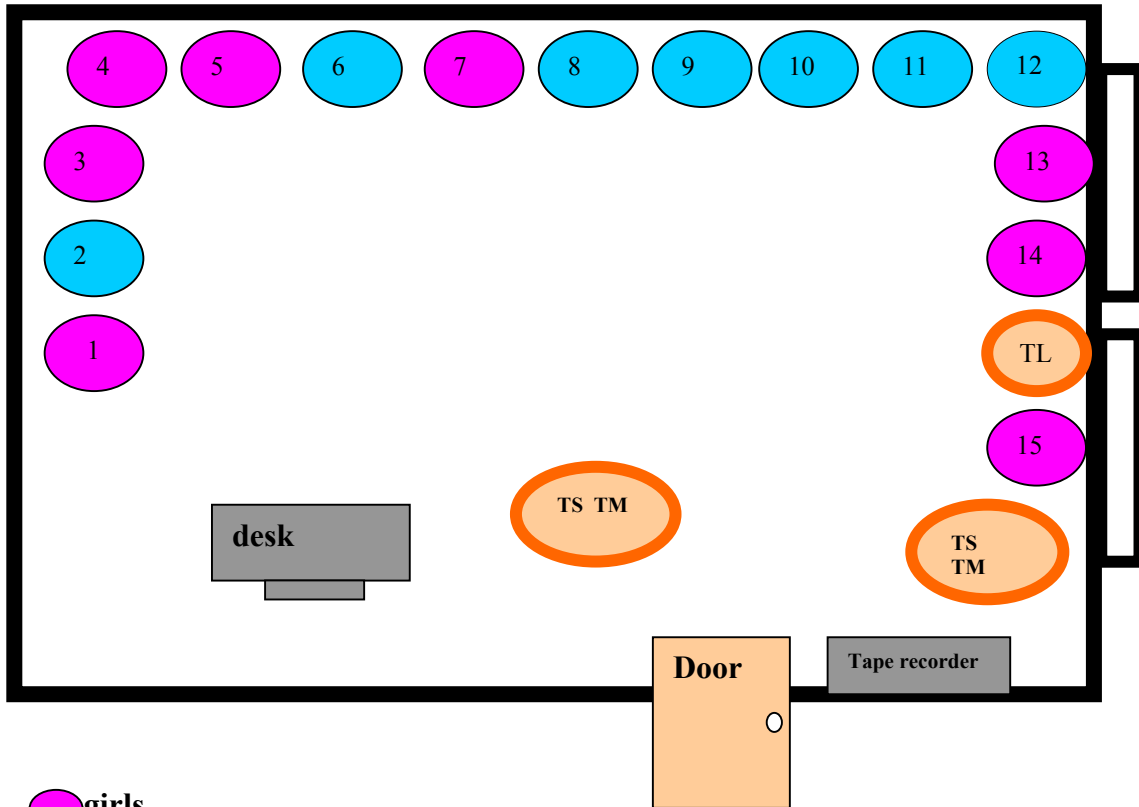
sure we would preserve their identities using pseudonyms and that we would restrict the use of recordings, as well as the information obtained during the interviews, only for academic purposes .

Although my colleague and I were not strangers to them, we cannot deny that there was a “break in” in the normal class since there were two extra teachers in class that interrupted their routine in the last thirty minutes to record, observe and take notes. As far as we could perceive, however, they did not seem embarrassed or uncomfortable with our presence in class or with the activities proposed.

The main reasons that led us to choose this group were:

- 1- In advanced groups, students are able to communicate more efficiently and with more confidence.
- 2- The number of boys and girls is evenly divided.
- 3- They are used to the school methodology.
- 4- Most of them had already studied together.
- 5- Most of them had already been our students.
- 6- The students were about the same age.
- 7- The group’s teacher is very helpful and willing to exchange ideas and impressions in extra meetings .

Following is the layout of the room where the recordings took place. The organization of the students within the classroom varied a little. They usually sat in the same places, near their closer friends. Note that we put the tape recorder in a place where it was not easily seen, in order to make students feel more comfortable and forget its presence in class. My colleague (TS) and I (TM) exchanged places: while I was leading the activities, she was sitting taking notes and vice-versa.



 girls

 boys

 teachers

1. Renata

13. Júlia

TL- Teacher Lúcia

2. Flávio

14. Carla

TS- Teacher Simone

3. Lia

15. Betty

TM- Teacher Márcia

4. Magali

5. Dora

6. Daniel

7. Thaís

8. Paulo

9. George

10. Beto

11. André

12. Caco

3.3. The Encounters:

The conversations that compose my data were recorded along the first semester and in the beginning of the second semester. Simone and I entered the classroom once a week, Thursday, in the last thirty minutes of the class. We proposed the topics and led the conversations. As said before, this cooperative work we carried out was extremely profitable regarding writing fieldnotes, especially the observations about the interactants' nonverbal behavior. In the total, there were ten meetings, which amounts to five hours of conversations. The topics of the conversations in the order they occurred were:

- Break ups (one session)
- Internet (one session)
- Prejudice (two-sessions)
- Why do you deserve this gift? (two sessions)
- Would you take your hat off to ...? (one session)
- Survival (three sessions)

In the first six encounters the procedures we adopted were basically the same:

- a. We entered the classroom in the last thirty minutes of the class.
- b. One of us adjusted the equipment while the other exposed the topic of the conversation.
- c. Students, divided in small groups, received a sheet of paper with the main topic and subtopics
- d. Students discussed for about five minutes in small groups.
- e. In a big circle students discussed the topics.

For the last four encounters we changed the procedures to deal with the topics for conversations. We proposed different activities that, besides involving students in pro/against argumentation, could make students feel more relaxed and stimulated to take part. Our goal in varying the activities was to avoid routine, since the students could be bored and not willing to participate. Furthermore, in applying varied activities we could have better chances to please a bigger number of participants. As Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) point out, "students come to class with different interests and different degrees of preparation" (p. 457).

Another positive aspect about changing the way to have discussions in class is that we could reach, engage more participants within the activity, preventing the conversations from being restricted only to a couple of students – the most talkative ones. Bergvall (1996) points out that class discussions will often be dominated by few voices, unless these conversations are carefully planned and conducted with cleverness. In the last five encounters fewer steps were followed:

- a-we entered the classroom in the last thirty minutes of the class.
- b-One of us adjusted the equipment while the other explained the activity.
- c-we put the activity in practice.

Below, I present more details about each encounter: The topics for discussion, subtopics and activities.

1st Encounter

Topic: Break ups

Subtopics:

- How do you deal with this situation?
- When your boy/girlfriend breaks up with you, how do you react? (e.g. try to talk about your relationship, cry, get angry, etc.)
- Is it difficult for you to breakup with a boy/girlfriend?
- How do you think women/ men usually react in this situation?

2nd Encounter

Topic: Internet

Sub topics:

- Advantages x disadvantages
- Is it another hobby, a source of knowledge, or a way to be far from friends and social life?
- What do you like doing on the net ?
- How many hours do you spend on line a day/ a week/ on weekends?
- Chats: can it be a good way to make friends?/ to know about different cultures ?
- Is it possible to believe in what people say on the chats ?

3rd and 4th Encounters

Topic: Prejudice

Sub topics:

- Give examples of prejudice
- What's the worst kind of prejudice?
- Do you have any kind of prejudice?
- Have you ever suffered any kind of prejudice?
- Why do you think prejudice exists?/What can be done about it?

As I had mentioned before, for these classes, we followed the steps previously listed. According to students' response⁹ to the subject of the conversation, we decided to keep the same subject in the subsequent meeting, skipping steps **C** and **D**.(see p. 31)

5th and 6th Encounters

Activity: Why do you deserve this gift

Procedures: Students divided in small groups received a list of characteristics about an imaginary person (psychological and physical characteristics). Each group represented this person with the characteristics listed. We brought to class a big bag with many objects inside (e.g. a bible, a hat, a toothbrush). Students had to convince us they deserved those objects giving arguments based on each group's characteristics. The other group could interfere using counter argumentation.

7th Encounter

Activity: Would you take your hat off to ---?¹⁰

⁹ If the students were really engaged in the conversations and if the subject had more subtopics to be explored we continued to discuss it in the subsequent encounter.

¹⁰ This activity was adapted from a famous Brazilian tv program, first used by Flávio Cavalcanti in the seventies (on Tupi TV) and nowadays by Raul Gil. It is named "Para Quem Você Tiraria o Chapéu ?".

Procedures: We attached five hats on the board with names of famous people or polemic subjects inside. One student was supposed to choose one hat, describe that person or idea and also justify why he or she would or would not take the hat off. The others tried to guess what that was.

8th , 9th 10th Encounters:

Activity: Survival

Procedures: for the last three classes we proposed a competition based on the Brazilian TV program NO LIMITE that was playing by the time we made the recordings. This program had become very popular, especially among the youngsters. Since we had three encounters with this activity, I decided to call them Survival I, II, and III

8th Encounter

Activity: Survival I

Procedures: We brought articles form magazines about the TV program NO LIMITE and passed around the class.

Sub topics:

- Students first gave their opinions about the program.
- SS discussed about TV programs in which people expose themselves for money
- Which tasks showed in the program they found less/ more interesting. Why?
- From the twelve participants of NO LIMITE, which deserved to win and why? Who did not and why not?

At the end of this session we told the students that in the following two encounters we would have two teams doing tasks. We would give them points for the task accomplished and the winner would get a prize.

9th Encounter

Activity : Survival II

Procedures: Two teams: Sun's group and Moon's group.

Task 1- Each group had to choose one component (and justify the choice) of their own group they considered the best to perform activities that involved: strength, intelligence, fast reasoning, domestic chores and patience

Task 2- We spread big cards on the floor with adjectives (physical and psychological attributes). Each team was supposed to tell us which ones were characteristics of a winner/loser and also justify their choice.

10th Encounter:

Activity: NO LIMITS III

Procedures: two teams: Sun's group and Moon's group

Task 1 – Mystery box: We showed students an ordinary shoe box with small holes on the cover. One component to each group saw what was inside, and the teams took turns to ask questions to which these two students could answer YES or NO. The winner was the group that guessed what it was.

Task 2 – What would you take to the jungle? Students were supposed to give examples of things they would take to the jungle and justify their choices.

Task 3 – What would you take to a non English speaking country? Similar to task 2. Students gave examples and justified their answers.

Task 4 - What is something you could never live without? Same procedures of previous tasks.

Task 5 –What is something you could easily live without? Same procedures of previous tasks. If students gave good, reliable argumentation about their choices they received a point. If their choice were included in a list I had prepared they received two points instead of one.

Task 6 – Talk about your Final Paper- we put blue and red coins in a bag and passed around the classroom. The students who had taken the red ones were supposed to talk nonstop for three minutes about the topic of their final papers.

At the end of this last session we counted each team’s points, gave the prize to the winners and thanked the students and teacher for their cooperation.

3.4 Collecting Data

Regarding the classes observed, as I mentioned before, we recorded a total of ten conversations of thirty minutes each. Simone and I divided the work of transcribing, which was helpful for both of us.

For the recording we used a stereo of good quality available in the school. In the first two sessions we used a portable tape recorder, but the quality of the recording was not good and we had a hard time transcribing the tapes. Besides, the classroom was very noisy due to the traffic outside; and because it is located in the front part of the school. Through the window we could see an avenue and, to make things worse, the class started as 6:30 p.m., which means “rush hour”. Because of all these factors, we decided to enter class in the last thirty minutes, when the traffic had already calmed down.

3.5 Procedures for Data Adjustments and Analysis

I had a hard time selecting data. Firstly I thought I could choose the topic in which the students got more enthusiastic and participated more. But I figured out that just one session (and just one topic) would not be enough to describe “task continuative and task divergent” (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) behaviors, let alone to draw conclusions.

Then, after listening to the tapes again, I decided I would take examples from different class sessions and with different students engaged in the conversations. However, as I expected, the most talkative students appear in most of the examples.

Furthermore, since I was interested in investigating how conversations evolve, the examples that compose my corpus ended up being drawn from classes in which the topics and activities led to more interaction among students, such as polemic subjects.

Even before entering the fieldwork properly, I had clearly in mind what I wanted to investigate: the conversational strategies Brazilian students apply in a foreign language (English) and what role gender plays in such exchanges. My difficulty, as I mentioned before, was in choosing among the great amount of data, and consequently among the great amount of examples available, the ones to be part of my corpus without influencing the results. As I explained in details in chapter 2, I based my analysis on Bergvall & Remlinger’s study (1996).

Following these authors' procedures I asked: Who is engaged and how are the participants engaged in the conversations? What other kinds of interactions are taking place? What role does gender play in such interactions? Are there similarities between the results obtained by Bergvall & Remlinger and my results ?

I employed qualitative and quantitative methods to survey students’ participation.

3.5.1 Quantitative Method

The quantitative method helped me to identify the total number of turns taken and words spoken. Determining who occupies the conversational floor, who takes turns and how many words are spoken is a device that helps to answer the question of who is engaged in classroom conversations. Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) chose one session in which students were actively engaged to determine students' participation and I decided to adopt the same procedure. The two other teachers and I selected one class session we judged the students to be substantively involved to survey students' participation regarding quantity.

3.5.2 Qualitative Method

In order to draw conclusions, I relied primarily on ethnographic methods which included classes' coded tape transcriptions, field notes, individual interviews and maps of class settings. Besides, for the qualitative method, I was concerned with the strategies students used to exert power and hold the conversational floor in the classroom. As I described in chapter 2, Bergvall & Remlinger (1996), in their research with university students, found that they employed two basic kinds of behaviors: task-continuative and task-divergent. Thus, I listed examples in which such behaviors are used in my data. Right after each example I make comments about how, why and when the strategy occurs, but at this point I did not draw any conclusion or relation to gender yet. After depicting task-continuative and task divergent behaviors identified by Bergvall & Remlinger, I describe other strategies students used during conversations identified in my data.

3.5.2.1 Individual Interviews

Simone and I prepared a questionnaire¹¹ with thirteen questions to which I added two more items I found relevant to my research. These questions guided us during the

¹¹ See the questionnaire in the appendix.

individual interviews .We interviewed the students at the end of our activities in class with the group.

First, we gave each one the questionnaire, and established some objective questions to be answered before the interview (such as age, period of time studying English/at that school, etc). After that, we set up a time with each student to ask the other questions. This way we were able to ask more details and ask other correlated questions.

To my understanding, it is important to apply both methods: qualitative and quantitative. Only the use of the quantitative would not be enough to have a clear picture of discourse practices in the classroom and it could give a wrong idea about access to the floor. It is necessary, as Bergvall & Remlinger stress, besides looking at how much to look carefully at how talk occurs, because it can reveal social aspects such as the reproduction of traditional gender roles¹².

In the present chapter, I provided a general description of the context of investigation, encounters and participants and the procedures in collecting, adjusting and analyzing data. In the next chapter I will be concerned with the depiction of examples of conversational strategies drawn from the classes observed.

¹² Gender roles within the classroom are discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.4)

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

*Ninguém nasce mulher: torna-se mulher
Nenhum destino biológico, psíquico ou
econômico define a forma que a fêmea
humana assume no seio da sociedade, é
o conjunto da civilização que elabora
este produto intermediário entre o
macho e o castrado que qualificam de
feminino.*

(Simone de Beauvoir)

In the following two sections I depict which task–continuative and task–divergent strategies (demonstrated on Table 3, chapter 2) male and female Brazilian students who participated in my research used during conversations.

As I explained in chapter 2, task-continuative language behaviors constitute the linguistic strategies intended to contribute positively to the development of the task being accomplished. On the other hand, task-divergent language behaviors are intended to derail or disrupt the conversation, opening a secondary floor.

4.1 Task-continuative behaviors

4.1.1 Questions and answers (IRE)

The following question–and–answer segments (Example 1 and 2) present elements of the typical teacher–student interactions in which the teacher controls the conversations: the teacher starts with a question (initiates), the student answers (responds) and the teacher makes

a comment (evaluates). This interaction is called IRE sequence (see Cazden, 1986; McHoul, 1978; Mehon, 1985; Stubbs, 1983, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996), TST: teacher-student-teacher, or IRF: initiation- response- feedback (see Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975).

This strategy is clearly task continuative because it is aimed to develop the topic which is being discussed. Although this kind of drilling strategy in ESL and in EFL classes restricts real communication due to the predictability of its patterned answers, examining these extracts closely, I noticed that they imply messages and intentions rather than simply drilling a grammatical structure:

EXAMPLE 1

TOPIC-Prejudice

This segment is drawn from the 3rd encounter. The teacher is trying to know students' opinions about women who practice soccer, a typical male sport:

1. FT: ((Towards Magali)) So, what do you think about
2. women that play soccer? (louder, towards the
3. whole group) What do you think about women
4. that play soccer?
5. MS: [nice]
6. SS: [(laughter)]
7. FT: Be sincere, what do you think? Do you think
8. It's normal or//
9. Carla: // I think it's bad
10. George: normal
11. Paulo: normal
12. Beto: but... err...
13. FT: but?!
14. Beto: the most part of they they practice this sport are
15. ((very low voice)) homosexual
16. FT: homosexual?!
17. Magali: Beto, please (laughing because she practices it)
18. Ss: ((laughter))
19. Beto: the most part
20. FT: ((to Magali)) do you like it?
21. Magali: yeah, I like it
22. FT: have you started it?
23. Magali: No, I stopped
24. FT: oh, you stopped
25. Magali: yeah

In lines 1 – 4, in the excerpt above the teacher asks a question and one male student answers not very firmly (line 5); his answer is followed by laughter. The teacher’s evaluation to his response is another question (line 7-8), since the teacher does not feel the student is being totally sincere. Saying: “be sincere” and asking another question: “do you think it’s normal?” the teacher probably means: I did not feel through the way you looked or through the tone of your voice that you are being sincere. The question made by the teacher (line 7 and 8), although addressed to this male student is answered by other students: Carla (line 9) and George (line 10). The teacher validates and stimulates students' participation repeating what the students have said (lines 13 and 16).

In another IRE sequence (lines 20-25) the teacher asks a question (line 22), Magali answers and the teacher repeats what she has said, but differently from the repetitions in lines 13 and 16 whose purpose was to make students expand their ideas, in this example the repetition shows the teacher’s opinion about the fact that Magali is not playing soccer anymore. When she says “Oh, you stopped” (line 24) she probably means “oh, it’s a pity”.

Notice that, in the whole example transcribed, four students participated within eighteen turns, eleven taken by the teacher and seven by the students. The teacher clearly leads the conversation by posing questions (lines 1 – 4, 7, 20, 22) or making comments about students' contributions (lines 7, 13, 16, 24).

The following excerpt, drawn from the fourth encounter (about prejudice), illustrates another example of the IRE sequence:

EXAMPLE 2

TOPIC- Prejudice

1. FT: Ok! ok! Why do you think people have
2. prejudice? Why do you think prejudice exists?
3. Renata: ((very Low)) It’s cultural

4. FT: Do you think it's cultural?
5. Renata: ((very low)) [()]
6. Betty: [(cause)] /
7. FT: / uh huh
8. Betty: Because it's different ()
9. FT: other cultures
10. Daniel: Lack of culture, less culture
11. FT: Ah, ok people who have [()]
12. Renata: ((very low)) [what I think]
13. that is important in society that have
14. black and white with no past ()
15. I think () it's culture about your
16. our past /
17. FT: / uh huh
18. Carla: It comes since () we repeat just
19. [because]
20. FT: [why? why?]
21. Carla: The...the black, the black men were called slaves
22. so (we have prejudice) we (repeat) without
23. thinking [()]
24. George: [()]
25. FT: It hasn't changed /
26. George: / because we call ourselves
27. like rational people, you know.
28. FT: ah, yeah!

In this excerpt the teacher starts the conversation posing two correlated questions (lines 1 and 2). Notice that Renata answers in a very summarized way (line 3). The teacher's validation to Renata's contribution is done through the repetition of her words in an attempt to make her develop her opinion better. Asking "Do you think it's cultural?" (line 4), the teacher is stimulating her to continue talking. It is interesting to notice that although this question has clearly been addressed to Renata, other students make contributions. Renata's answer is not audible because she speaks very low and also because Betty intrudes her turn.

The teacher validates Renata's participation (a very quiet girl who rarely speaks in class), making a backchannel support comment "uh huh" (line 7) that, in this specific case, means: "I'm listening to you, go on" rather than "I agree with you", because the teacher could not figure out what she has said due to the overlap with Betty (a very communicative student who is often willing to participate in class conversations). However, in another instance, the same marker "uh huh" is used by the teacher to show her agreement with

Renata's comments (line 17). The use of this marker meaning "I agree" by a female speaker contradicts Maltz and Borker's study (1982, in Wareing, 1994) that claims that backchannel support, in women's speech, would always mean "I'm listening, I understand, go on" (as in line 7), and in men's speech this marker would mean "I agree with you" (as in line 17). A deeper analysis of these two examples suggests that the different meanings of this marker are due to the contexts in which they occur rather than to gender: In the first (line 7) the teacher's goal is probably to have Renata continue talking; she wants to show that, besides Betty's attempt to hold the floor, she is trying to listen to her and wants her to finish making her point. The second use of the marker occurs after Renata has taken a long turn (lines 12 – 16). The teacher actually listens to her comments (differently from the previous example). The backchannel support (line 17) and the intonation employed by the teacher means that she really agrees with Renata's comments.

Three other students also answer the question addressed to Renata (line 4). To Daniel's contribution (line 10), the teacher's validation is done through agreement. When she says "ah, ok people who have..." (line 11) she is both saying that she understands his point and that she agrees with him. The same happens to George's contribution. She shows agreement and comprehension in her comment (line 28) "ah, yeah". In line 20, the teacher stimulates Carla to extend her point asking "why?" (twice) and in line 25 she supports Carla's opinion saying "It hasn't changed". In fact, she uses other words to summarize what Carla has said, showing, this way, agreement and sympathy.

The two segments analyzed in this section show how the typical IRE sequence occurs in these conversation classes, and how it contributes in a positive way for the development of the discussion.

4.1.2 Extended development

The extended development is a task continuative behavior in which a student tries, within many and long turns, to expose ideas and opinions:

EXAMPLE 3

TOPIC-Prejudice

The example that follows illustrates the efforts that both a student and the teacher make to construct meaning in the conversation. The student Betty, during a debate about homosexuality, struggles to make her point clear while the teacher tries to engage in the conversation to help her:

1. Betty: teacher, I have... the only [prejudice that I have is err... of]
2. Beto/George: ((comments)) [()]
3. FT: ((louder addressing to the whole group)) now I
- 4.. want to [talk about the prejudice you have]
5. Betty: ((loud and fast))but, I, I don't
6. have [the prejudice about the person: homosexual]
7. Beto/George ((comments showing surprise)) [()]
8. FT: ((towards the group)) [SSSHH! OH!]
9. Betty: I..I don't have prejudice about the person
10. who's homosexual, I have [prejudice]
11. Ss: [(comments showing surprise)]
12. FT: ((towards the group)) [SSSHH!]
13. Betty: out the couple that is homosexual ((Laughs))
14. FT: aahh! () [you can be homosexual]
15. Betty: [I can't see, I can't]
16. FT: but you can't have sex!
17. Betty: ((Very loud and fast)) no, I can't [see, I can't see the:]
18. Ss: ((comments showing surprise)) [()]
19. Betty: the couple
20. FT: aahh! ((figuring it out)) you can't see them
21. kissing, you think it's strange//
22. Betty: // yeah, it's
23. strange to me, so it's the only pre...,
24. I can, I can talk with a gay, I can talk to a
25. lesbian but: I can't: ... [see] them together.
26. FT: ((fast)) [see them together]
27. FT: have [you ever seen?]
28. Dora: maybe[because you] don't (see) //
29. FT: // have you ever seen?
30. Betty: at the shop /
31. Paulo: / I have, I have, I have seen...
32. FT: ((towards Betty)) yeah?!
33. George: ((towards Betty)) really?!
34. Bia: at the shopping mall

In the segment above, it is important to point out that the great amount of repetitions of single words and complete sentences (lines 1,5,9,17,24), lengthened syllables (lines 6,17,25–twice), pauses (lines 1–twice, 23,26) and overlaps (lines 1 and 2; 6 and 7; 10,11 and 12; 14 and 15; 17 and 18; 25 and 26) indicate that Betty has difficulty in making herself clear. The controversy of the subject being discussed – homosexuality – can be considered one cause of her difficulty. Talking about something that involves prejudice, social rules and personal feelings towards it is itself embarrassing even to an outgoing, talkative and self confident person. In a later interview Betty explained she was not worried about making grammatical mistakes, or lack of vocabulary. She was afraid of being misinterpreted and viewed as a girl full of prejudice.

As she shows difficulty in making her point, the teacher tries to help her through an extended interaction. As I mentioned before, Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) call this kind of conversational behavior, in which a student takes several turns to clarify or develop an idea, of Internal Extended Development. However, this example can also be considered Interactive Extended Development. According to Bergvall and Remlinger, the extended development called “interactive” involves a limited number of participants, usually the teacher and one student, who together try to develop a deeper idea or a more complex analysis.

Notice that the teacher tries to help Betty clarifying what she has said. In line 14, although the teacher is ironic when she responds “aahh! You can be homosexual but you can’t have sex?”, she instigates Betty to react, to be clear in expressing her point of view. In lines 20 and 21, the teacher clarifies, softens the student’s feelings towards gay couples saying that Betty cannot see homosexuals kissing each other because it is strange, not common. Similarly, with the goal of helping Betty construct meaning, another student, Dora, briefly

engages in this interactive development (line 28) saying, in other words, that maybe Betty has prejudice because she does not see them around, that is not something usual for her.

All this struggle to construct meaning constitutes a very positive way to participate in class. Betty, Dora and the teacher are making use of a task continuative behavior and, this way, enriching the discussion.

4.1.3 Active engagement

In the example that follows, which is a segment of the discussion about the work market in Brazil, the students are actively engaged in the conversation, asking questions and evaluating them. This class is substantively engaged (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1992, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) in the conversation. Observe that the students break the typical IRE pattern by giving their own positive evaluations: They do not wait for the teacher's interference or commands:

EXAMPLE 4

TOPIC- Prejudice

- 1-George: Do you know what I think is happening also now is
 2- that women are changing men places of work /
 3-Ss: ((overlapped comments)) / ()
 4-Carla: what do you think... a man's place?
 5-George: aahh! That used to be a man's job, you
 6- Know? When a woman gets into this job,
 7- a lot of women go after and men..., they
 8- say, oh, three is a woman working and they
 9- give up /
 10-Carla: / men? They give up?
 11-George: like. err because. Err. how can I say?
 12- err. it used to be a man work, you know,
 13- a work that man used to do /
 14-Ss: ((overlapped comments)) / ()
 15-George: yes, [like.... I don't know]
 16-Fs: [taxi drives] /
 17-George: / yeah, when women do ,
 18- you know, there's a kind of prejudice that
 19- no more me will do it anymore, like
 20- "biblioteconomia".
 21- FT: ((showing she understood what he meant))
 22- aahh! teachers, primary teachers, very difficult

23- to see, yeah?!
 24-George: yeah, like /
 25-FT: ((to Renata)) / what?
 26-Renata ((very low)) nurse?
 27-FT nurse only?
 28-Renata: ((laughs timidly))
 29-George: yeah, there's a social //
 30-Paulo: // There's prejudice
 31-George: they have prejudice
 32-Dora: this is the reality
 33-George: you know... social service
 34-Paulo: this is the reality
 35-FT: social service
 36-George: a lot of people do
 37-Dora: Now we don't have
 38-Paulo: () on airplanes
 39-FT : flight attendant
 40-Betty: now we have //
 41-George: //[no]
 42-Betty : [a long] time ago //
 43-George: //()
 44-Paulo: most part of them are double... my cousin
 45- worked there. She said that most part of
 46- them are ((very low)) homosexual
 47-FT: aahh, homosexual.

If we analyze this interaction both quantitatively (total of turns taken) and qualitatively (how conversation evolves), we can have a clearer idea of students' substantive participation. In this exchange, the teacher takes only six of the total thirty-three turns. Her participation aims to help students provide vocabulary and show agreement. Within her 6 turns we can notice that three are repetitions of others' comments, one she provides vocabulary, one she clarifies a question (the student speaks low) and one she makes a supportive comment (showing agreement). On the other hand, the students take 27 turns and five different students contribute (three of the five girls and two of the six boys). There is also the (overlapped) participation of other students but they are not loud or clear enough to be understood.

Regarding the quality of such exchanges, we can notice that students respond to other students' questions (lines 5 and 11), extend, complete other students' opinions, contribute with supportive comments and examples, and repeat what someone has said as a

way to show agreement. In lines 16, 26 and 38, Renata, Paulo and another unidentified female student contribute to George's point of view exemplifying what he has said. They give examples of jobs typically feminine or masculine – taxi drivers (line 16), nurse (line 26) and flight attendant, (line 39). The last one is mentioned by Paulo in line 38; as he does not know how to say it in English, the teacher provides the vocabulary in line 39. This way these students are endorsing their classmate's idea. Furthermore, the comments made by Paulo (line 30) "There's prejudice" and by Dora (line 32) "this is the reality" are also evidence that the students are supportive towards George. In a longer comment in lines 44-46, Paulo strongly emphasizes George's comment, saying that his female cousin, who is a flight attendant, told him that most male flight attendants, a typical female job, are gay.

The supportive repetition in line 31 done by George "They have prejudice" to Paulo's opinion "there's prejudice" (line 30) is actually "the support of the support" done previously to George. George is returning Paulo's previous contribution. Notice that in line 34 Paulo repeats what Dora had said two turns earlier "this is the reality", to show his agreement with her. The same is done by the teacher in line 35. She repeats the example of a typical female university course "social service" showing, this way, that she has the same opinion.

It is important to mention that repetition, in this exchange, plays other roles besides showing agreement. In the following example, repetition plays the opposite role: disagreement. We can notice that Carla (in line 10) repeats what George has said in a question tone: "Men? They give up?". She shows, this way, that she does not agree with him when he says that men give up taking a job because there are women involved. Through the repetition + question, she wants him to explain his comment better. On the other hand, the repetition in line 48: "aahh, homosexual" is done by the teacher because she does not understand what the student has said (he speaks very low). In this case, the repetition is a means to clarify the student's utterance, rather than show agreement. In another example (line 27), the teacher

repeats Renata's example saying "nurse, only?" in order to stimulate her to speak more, to develop her comment.

Another relevant observation is that the interruptions (lines 30, 41,43) and overlaps (lines 3,14, 16,42) in this particular context also constitute supportive talk (Tannen, 1994) and signal substantive engagement. The purpose of their use, in the examples given, is to improve the discussion and not to wrest the floor away (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996).

4.1.4 Dominating the floor

The next three excerpts (examples 5, 6, and 7) show that active participation is not always supported by all students. The students Carla, Betty and George, in different moments, dominate the floor across several turns. Although classmates challenge their control of the floor through humor, derisive laughter or comments and ironic questions (through resistance to their opinions), they still persist in making their point:

EXAMPLE 5

TOPIC- Prejudice

1. Carla: ((very loud)) [drunk people, drunk people, I can't, drunk people,
2. [I think it's disgusting]
3. Ss: ((overlapped comments))
4. FT: ((towards the group)) Sshh! Oh! She has ((referring to Carla)) prejudice against
5. people who//
6. Carla // Yeah! I never (thought) about alcohol, yeah/
7. George ((in a very surprised tone of voice)) / you have prejudice...who drinks alcohol ?
8. Carla: No, just because... then you ((faster and louder)) [then you get drunk], you know
9. ((slower and lower))
10. Ss: [(comments)]
11. Carla: it's so: we get to: how do we say//
12. FT: // Do you consider//
13. George ((ironic, tone towards Carla)) Ah, you never drink alcohol!
14. Carla: No: [()] ((trying to explain what she meant))
15. Ss: [()] ((comments about Carla's opinion))
16. Paulo: [Aahh!] ((Ironically towards Carla))
17. George: [Aahh!]
18. Carla : [you have to:] to drink moder: ((lower tone of voice)), moder: modera:
19. ((meaning moderately))
20. Betty: ((very low)) "moderadamente"

21. Carla: Yeah, [moderadamente]
 22. George: [you don't have to ()]//
 23. Carla: // because get drink just because: you: [()]
 24. Ms: ((criticizing tone of voice)) [()]//
 25. Carla: // no, I don't have prejudice of
 26. ... drunk people that be quiet on his place.... [but there are]
 27. MS: ((side comment)) [()] //)//
 28. Carla // drunk people
 29. that goes in: [()]
 30. Ss: ((comments about Carla's opinion)) [()]//
 31. FT: // Do you think it's a sickness or
 32. do you think it's a matter of personality? [Weak personality]
 33. George: [of course]
 34. MS: what?
 35. George: alcohol
 36. FT: people who are addicted to alcohol
 37. Ss ((comments about the topic))
 38. FT: do you think it's a sickness?
 39. Carla: yes, I think it's a sickness //
 40. George: // yes, I think [()]
 41. Carla : [()]

In this example Carla is expressing her feelings about drunk people. In line 2, Carla is very emphatic and firm when she says she thinks drunkards are disgusting. This strong opinion provokes surprise in most students. This surprise can be noticed more clearly in George's comment in line 7 "you have prejudice.... who drinks alcohol?", in Paulo and George's overlapped expression in lines 16,17 "aahh", and in the great amount of intelligible overlapped comments about Carla's opinion in lines 10, 15, 24, 27, 30. The students' reaction might have changed Carla's assertive tone against drunk people. It is noticeable that, just after the turn in which her classmates demonstrate their reaction, Carla gets a little embarrassed and moderates her vocabulary, in other words, her opinion towards the subject becomes lighter. She starts saying in lines 1 and 2 that drunk people are disgusting, a very strong comment. In lines 8 and 14 it is difficult for her to justify her opinion. This fact can be seen through pauses and tone of voice. In lines 25 and 26 she attenuates her opinion saying that she does not have prejudice against drunkards who keep quiet on their places. However, when the teacher asks

students if they think alcohol addiction is a sickness or a matter of personality (line 32), she ends up saying that she thinks it is a sickness (line 39).

It is clear that by the end of the conversation Carla's point of view becomes less radical. People who think drunkards are disgusting, probably would not say it is a sickness but, rather, they would say that it is a matter of weak personality, a fact that would make it disgusting. On the other hand, accepting the idea that the drunkards' annoying behavior is the result of a sickness, weakens, in a certain way, their guilt since such behavior does not depend exclusively on the person's will. Although Carla is affected by her classmates' criticism and surprised exclamations, she does not give up the floor, and does not become silent. Instead, she struggles within various turns to make herself clear.

Similarly, in Example 6, that follows, Betty is also criticized by her colleagues:

EXAMPLE 6

TOPIC-Prejudice

1. Betty: I saw in the shopping I , I thought
2. It was a woman with long hair and a man
3. with long hair but I saw it was ((very low))
4. two women
5. FT: what was your reaction?
6. Betty: ((laughs)) I just thought, my god [I'm shocked,
7. no, no, no,]
8. Paulo: ((imitating a female voice)) [uuuhh! Call
9. the police officers]
10. George: ((joking)) kill them
11. Ss: ((laughter over 5 seconds))
12. Betty: not that I can't see, but just...look at that
13. oh, I can't imagine, like...it's too strange

It is interesting to notice that some turns earlier (Example 3 lines 17,19), Betty is talking about her repulse in seeing homosexual couples together. She declares she does not have prejudice against gays alone, but she cannot stand seeing them together, as a couple.

There are some clues that besides being a very self confident and talkative girl, Betty becomes quite reticent talking about her feelings towards the subject. In line 3 she lowers her tone of voice when saying that the couple she has seen are two women instead of a man and woman. Besides that, when the teacher asks about her reaction (line 5), she laughs nervously before reporting it, as if she were ashamed of having prejudice. Some turns later Betty is criticized by her classmates Paulo (lines 8-9) and George (line 10). Paulo, besides being ironic through his utterance, is also ironic through the tone of his voice – he pretends to be Betty imitating a female voice. Right after Paulo, George also criticizes Betty ironically saying “kill them!”. Their comments show that they think Betty has an exaggerated reaction related to homosexual couples.

The students support Paulo and George’s jokes through an extended laughter (line 11). Notice that right after that, Betty takes a less radical position towards the subject. In lines (12-13) she says “not that I can’t see”. However some turns before that, she says very emphatically “I can’t see, I can’t see them together”. Although Betty’s participation is not supported by her colleagues, she does not become silent and, similarly to Carla in the previous example, she continues contributing up to the end of the class.

The next excerpt, Example 7, in which the students are talking about drugs, George dominates the floor within various and long turns, and although his comments are also criticized, he persists in his explanation:

EXAMPLE 7

TOPIC- Prejudice

1. George: teacher, I think addiction, each person
2. has a different personality, there is a person
3. who likes drugs and there is a person
4. who doesn’t //
5. FT: // yeah, but I’m talking not about this, I’m
6. [talking about addiction]
7. George: [yeah, but you know] it’s a kind of

8. personality, you know, because I have friends [()]
9. FT: [I'm talking]
10. about people who give up.... doing any.... anything
11. [because]
12. George [to give up] for drugs....it's a kind of, err:
13. yourself, you know... you, you can't, you can't
14. run into a person and say, oh, you are a
15. drug..., you're drug [you]
16. FT: [addicted]
17. George: suck and you smoke cigarette, you can't
18. say this, you have to respect the other
19. person. It's not because (he's having like one)
20. it's not because he's having a cigarette
21. that he's not going to be a normal person,
22. cause: person... I think that each person
23. deserves respect ((louder)) [()]
24. Betty: [(teacher my) ()]//
25. George: // it's
26. a kind of delicate subject because, we: like
27. we have prejudice, we don't have the: imagine
28. if you don't use drugs, you don't have the
29. consciousness, the awareness to, to, to run into
30. a person and see that running into a person
31. () you can help, if the person wants
32. help [you, you can't interfere]
33. Betty: [(my) ()]
34. George: you know, I think you can't interfere
35. in a person's personal life /
36. FT: / yeah, only
37. if the person //
38. George: // yes, like.... imagine if you: if you
39. are not addicted to cigarette, you go at night
40. and you smoke three or: I don't know or
41. you are going (to play what you're doing) and
42. you have cigarette or something you are not
43. addicted, addicted you just have a cigarette
44. once... in a while, you know, and: //
45. FT: ((in a very low tone of voice)) // addiction
46. is completely different /
47. George: / yes, addiction is like.... //
48. Betty: ((laughing)) // like
49. my mom, [my mom, she has to smoke because he gets]
50. Ss: [laughter]
51. George: ((towards a colleague)) [no?! it's not the person?]
52. Betty: [she gets nervous] and she have to.. it's.. like
53. auto: /
54. FT: / hum hum
55. Betty: automatically/
56. George: / only this kind of person [()]
57. Betty: ((louder)) [()]
58. George: you can't like her mother having a
59. cigarette [()]
60. FT: [(have her) stop if she doesn't want to]
61. George: you can't say, oh you have to stop, you
62. must stop, no:

We can notice that, besides Betty's attempts to interrupt (lines 24 and 33) and the insistent interference of the teacher (lines 5-6, 9-11, 16, 36-37, 45-46), George does not give up the floor. The teacher tries to clarify a misunderstanding: George is talking about prejudice against the sporadic use of cigarettes or drugs and the teacher is trying to discuss addiction, that is a very serious problem whose symptoms affect the person's behavior and, as a result, transforms the drug addicted's life completely. When he finally tries to develop the topic "addiction" (line 47), his difficulty in doing so, noticed through a lengthened syllable followed by a pause, is quickly seized by Betty who has tried to take the floor twice before that, and this time she succeeds. Some turns later, however, George takes advantage of Betty's example of a smoker, her own mother (lines 48-49) to take the floor back, reaffirming what he has previously said.: "only this kind of person" (referring to Betty's mother, line 56)," you can't like her mother having a cigarette" (lines 58- 59)," you can't say, oh you have to stop, you must stop, no"(lines 61,62).

What is interesting to point out is that although George's control of the floor has been challenged through interruption and negation to his comments, George persists in his point of view up to the end of this exchange. Furthermore, George, differently from Betty (in example 6) and Carla (in example 5), does not change his mind towards the subject and he does not attenuate his opinion after receiving criticism.

Through Examples 1 to 7, I exemplified all the task-continuative behaviors categorized by Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) and shown on Table 3 (chapter 2, section 2.4.3). Such behaviors demonstrate several ways the participants of the conversations – teacher and students- make use of to take and hold the conversational floor through answering and asking questions, validating and criticizing other people's opinions and keeping the floor through internal or interactive extended development. Task-continuative behaviors, as we could

observe through the examples, contribute to the development of the conversations, and as Bergvall & Remlinger (1996) put it, "when distributed among several students, these behaviors combine to create a class substantively engaged in academically sanctioned, on task discussion" (p.463).

In the following section, I will depict, among the task divergent behaviors pointed out by Bergvall & Remlinger (table 3), the ones I could observe in my data.

4.2 Task divergent behaviors

The participants of a classroom can find other ways to gain the floor that are essentially different from the ones described up to now. Such behaviors diverge from the task being carried out by the class, derailing or sidetracking the classroom discussion.

4.2.1 Non- cooperation

The following example was taken from a class in which the activity is named "Would you take your hat off?". The teacher is inviting students to come to the blackboard where five hats are attached. Inside the hats there are names of famous people, events (e.g. war) or ideas (e.g. globalization). The students are supposed to choose one hat and give characteristics, descriptions or opinions about what is inside, while the others try to guess. After that the students would debate the subject in a big group. The student Daniel, chosen by the teacher, refuses to participate:

EXAMPLE 8

TOPIC-Would you take your hat off ?

1. F T : Who will be the first victim ((joking)) Daniel ?
2. Daniel : ((emphatically)) Oh, no teacher.
3. F T : Come on Daniel, come here!
4. Daniel : No, teacher. I don't want to "pagar esse mico".

- 5. Ss : ((laughter))
- 6. Carla : Go, go Daniel.
- 7. Paulo : Yeah, go.
- 8. Dora: Ok, teacher . I'm going

At the beginning of the class the teacher explains the activity, that is simple and supposedly does not expose the students to any embarrassing situation. Besides, they are used to activities like that (games, role plays, etc.). Daniel's refusal to take part of it lies in the fact that he is not in the mood to stand up and go to the blackboard (he reports it in a later interview). I have coded his behavior task divergent because he threatens the teacher's authority, and denies the rules of the class. Through resistance to the teacher's invitation his behavior was not supportive to the academic task. Furthermore, saying "I don't want to pagar esse mico" (line 4), he is underestimating the activity, he could influence the others, that could have also refused to participate.

On the other hand, Dora is willing to participate and replaces Daniel, supporting the teacher in her academic goals. While Daniel's behavior is task-divergent, Dora's is task-continuative.

The next exchange represents another example of challenging authority in class through a task divergent behavior. During the class SURVIVAL II, students, in groups, are supposed to give examples of things they would take to the jungle. Previously, the rules for the activity were established. The teacher says they should give the example and tell the class why they would take that object. The aim of the activity is to practice argumentation. If the arguments were strong enough and convinced the teacher, who played the role of a judge, she would give a point to the team.

EXAMPLE 9-**TOPIC- SURVIVAL II**

- 1 – FT: ((Pointing to one group)) So, what would you take to the jungle and why?
 2 – Abdul: a survival knife
 3 – FT: a survival knife
 4 – TS: why? /
 5 – FT: / why?
 6 – Abdul : To defend yourself and to, to ma:ke ()//
 7 – Flávio: // Tent
 8 – FT: tent? Why?
 9 – Flávio: ah, teacher it's obvious, né! ((ironic tone))
 10 – Ss: ((laughter))
 11 – FT: It's obvious but you have to tell why
 12 – Flávio: Why?
 13 – Ss: ((laughter))
 14 – FT: because we want you to speak more.
 15 – Abdul: a : sleeping bag
 16 – FT: why?
 17 – Ss: ((laughter))
 18 – Abdul: to sleep.

Although the rules for the game were clear, Flávio is not willing to follow them. By saying “Ah, teacher it’s obvious, né” and asking “Why?” (lines 9 and 12), he disrupts the task by challenging the authority of the teacher, focusing on the necessity of doing the task. Flávio’s question about the need to tell the class why has its consequences up to the end of this activity. Students start to make jokes, giving short and obvious answers, when they have the capacity to give better arguments. Notice that right after Flávio’s divergent comment, Abdul gives a poor and ironic contribution (line 18) “to sleep”.

4.2.2 Challenges to domination of the floor

In Example 6 shown previously, in which Betty exposes her prejudice against homosexual couples, Paulo and George employ humor in order to criticize their classmate:

EXAMPLE 10**TOPIC-Prejudice**

- 1 – Betty : ((laughs)) I just thought, my God [I'm shocked, no, no, no]
 2 – Paulo: ((imitating a female voice)) [uuhh! Call the police officers]
 3 – George: kill them ((joking))
 4 – Ss: ((laughter over 5 seconds))

Paulo and George's joke provoked students' laughter for over five seconds, which, taking into account their facial expression at that moment, seems to be a reward for their divergent participation. Although their objective in criticizing Betty is probably not to open a second floor, but rather, to show her she is exaggerating in her prejudice against homosexual couples, I (and the other two teachers) viewed their comments as task-divergent. It is important to point out that the extended laughter sounds (line 4), on the tape, different from the laughter in previous examples. It gets louder and louder and lasts about 5 seconds. Another aspect in this exchange that made me code Paulo and George's behavior task-divergent is the fact that Paulo imitates Betty's voice very ironically. He is, actually, criticizing the speaker employing *ad hominem* humor, which is not an appropriate way to express opposition. Although Betty has not given up the floor, it is noticeable that she is affected by her colleagues' comments. As I discussed before (in Example 6), right after receiving criticism she adopts a less radical position towards homosexuality .

In the following exchange, also discussed previously (Example 5), Carla is, just like Betty, target of her classmates' divergent criticism:

EXAMPLE 11**TOPIC- Prejudice**

1. Carla: ((very loud)) [drunk people, drunk people, I can't, drunk people,
 2. [I think it's disgusting]
 3. Ss: ((overlapped comments))

4. FT: ((towards the group)) Sshh! Oh! She has ((referring to Carla)) prejudice against
 5. people who//
 6. Carla // Yeah! I never (thought) about alcohol, yeah/
 7. George ((in a very surprised tone of voice)) / you have prejudice...who drinks alcohol ?
 8. Carla: No, just because... then you ((faster and louder)) [then you get drunk], you know
 9. ((slower and lower))
 10. Ss: [(comments)]
 11. Carla: it's so: we get to: how do we say//
 12. FT: // Do you consider//
 13. George ((ironic tone towards Carla)) Ah, you never drink alcohol!
 14. Carla: No: [()] ((trying to explain what she meant))
 15. Ss: [()] ((comments about Carla's opinion))
 16. Paulo: [Aahh!] ((Ironically towards Carla))
 17. George: [Aahh!]
 18. Carla : [you have to:] to drink moder: ((lower tone of voice)), moder: modera:
 19. ((meaning moderately))
 20. Betty: ((very low)) "moderadamente"

The overlapped comments suggest that the interest in the conversation is vanishing and that they are commenting among themselves about Carla's opinions. Furthermore, Paulo and George's ironic tone in the overlapped surprised expression (lines 16 and 17) "aahh", and the questions asked by George (lines 7 and 13) constitute direct criticism to Carla rather than to her comments. When she exposes her prejudice against drunkards and George surprised says "aahh, you never drink alcohol ?!", that are distinct things, he is derailing the subject (addiction) to Carla's private life and habits. During the interview George reported that Carla, in his opinion, had been childish and radical in her comments about drunkards (Carla is stereotyped by the classmates as naive and childish).

There are some points in common between Example 10 and Example 11. Firstly, similar to the humorous comment addressed to Betty (by Paulo), the ironic comments addressed to Carla (by George) can also be considered *ad hominem* attack. Secondly, in this example, and in the previous one, Carla is affected by her classmate's resistance to her opinion. It seems she is not so emphatic towards the subject of addiction after that.

In this section I analyzed some examples drawn from my data that illustrated the task divergent behaviors identified by Bergvall & Remlinger. In the next section I will be depicting other behaviors, besides the ones described up to now, found in my data.

4.3 Strategies identified in my data

Analyzing my data I could notice other strategies, besides the ones observed by Bergvall & Remlinger, which the participants make use of to take or hold the conversational floor and to contribute to other people's turns. Some of these strategies, such as positive humor¹³ and positive counter argumentation¹⁴, were mentioned briefly in Bergvall & Remlinger's work, but not depicted in detail with examples. As I could notice that these behaviors occurred very often in the classes observed, and this way constituted a relevant feature of my data, I decided to comment on them in this section of my thesis.

Besides these strategies, I observed other strategies used by students during conversations such as: speaking in Portuguese, asking about vocabulary in English, speaking louder and faster and using mimicry (in order to avoid losing the floor); calling the teacher's attention (in order to gain the floor) and providing vocabulary in English (in order to contribute to others' turns).

In the following pages I will be describing examples in which the students engaged in conversations employing such strategies found in my data. I decided to name (categorize) each one, since these behaviors did not appear in the study carried out by Bergvall & Remlinger.

4.3.1 Task continuative divergence

Although divergent in its essence, expressing opposition within a class can not be always considered a task – divergent behavior. Some ways to express divergence are quite positive, as when students stop being passive receptacles of information and start to intervene (to become subjects) in the process of education and to question restrictive authority that does

¹³ when humor is on task, used for example, to relieve the class from a serious topic, or to cheer the students up. Humor used in a positive way is not intended to embarrass or to attack (mocking humor). (see Foley, 1990)

not respect or does not listen to them. According to Trimbur (1989, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) this kind of divergence, or better, dissensus, “offers students a powerful critical instrument to interrogate the conversation – to interrupt it in order to investigate the forces which determine who may speak and what may be said, what inhibits conversation and what makes it powerful” (p.612). In the following exchanges I will analyze some examples of useful (positive) forms to show disagreement within a class. I decided to sub-categorize the task-continuative divergence identified in my data in: continuative divergence through interruption, continuative divergence through challenging questions and continuative divergence through argumentation.

4.3.1.1 Task-continuative divergence: Interruption

In Example 7, as I pointed out before, George takes long turns to express his opinion towards drug addiction. His comments are confused and not clearly expressed. Betty tries to gain the floor twice but fails, and George continues in his internal extended development. When he demonstrates difficulty in making his point, his pause (line 1, Example 12) is quickly seized by Betty, who this time gains the floor. What is interesting in this example is that she, through a humorous comment, brings back the primary floor lost in George's extended development (George is talking about prejudice against people who smoke or use drugs once in a while, when the topic is prejudice against drug addicts). When Betty suddenly intrudes George's turn, completing his definition about addiction through the example of the mother, she provokes laughter:

EXAMPLE 12

TOPIC- Prejudice

1. George: yes, addiction is like //
2. Betty: ((laughs)) // like my mom,
3. my [mom]

¹⁴ when divergence in class is done through "on task" argumentation and not through *ad hominem* humor. Trimbur (1989) calls this kind of divergence "dissensus".

4. Ss : [((laughter))]
 5. Betty have to smoke [because he get], she get nervous
 6. George: ((to someone next to him)) [(it's not the) person?]

Although her behavior, at first, seems to be task-divergent (she interrupts twice and takes the floor from George), I have coded her behavior task- continuative because of four main reasons: Firstly, the interruptions refer to the task, she wants to show opposition to George's comments about people who make use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes: Betty says she gets angry with her mother because of her addiction to cigarettes and that she has tried to make her mother see that using cigarettes is harmful. Differently, George thinks you must respect the other person's choice without interference. This way, her opposition is on the task and focuses on George's ideas, in other words, it is not a direct, personal attack to him.

Secondly, her final interruption, when she gets the floor from George (line 2), happens without an abrupt break; actually, it was a continuation of George's sentence. Thirdly, the class laughter (line 3) provoked by Betty's comment is supportive to her, but it is not a criticism towards George. It becomes evident by the students' expression at the moment and by the tone of the laughter which is very different from the laughter provoked by Paulo and George in Example 6. The last reason that made me code Betty's behavior as task continuative is complex. After analyzing this exchange many times and after discussing it with the other two teachers present in class, I found that this specific example constitutes an interesting case of a student, Betty, asserting task-continuation after a long divergence done by George: She brings back the main subject of the discussion after he has derailed this subject – addiction to drugs, cigarette and alcohol, to the sporadic use of these substances.

4.3.1.2 Task-continuative divergence- Challenging questions

In another exchange already discussed here, (Example 4) Carla asks a critical question to George who was talking about men's jobs. This kind of question constitutes a very useful way to show opposition within a class:

EXAMPLE 13

TOPIC- Prejudice

- 1-George: do you know what I think is
 2- happening also now is that women
 3- are changing men places of work..
 4-Ss: ((comments))
 5-Carla: what do you think ... a man's place?
 6-George: aahh! That used to be a man's job
 7- you know? When a woman gets into this job,
 8- a lot of women go after and men...they
 9- say, oh, there is a woman working and they
 10- give up /
 11-Carla: / men? They give up?
 12-George: like... err ... because, err... how can I say ?
 13- err ... It used to be a man work, you know,
 14 - a work that men used to do

In the excerpt above, I considered Carla's questions (lines 5 and 11) positive opposition, because they are on task, not intended to open a second floor to take the floor from George. Rather than that, her comments are challenges to George's opinions, that enrich the quality of conversation (Trimbur 1989, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996).

4.3.1.3 Task continuative divergence - Contrary points of view

The next example involved students with different ideas about a controversial subject: English as global language. This example was taken from the class "Would you take your hat off to...?"

Abdul chooses one hat, and inside the hat, the subject of the discussion was written.

Notice how the students engage in the conversation, showing disagreement in a healthy competition of arguments:

EXAMPLE 14

TOPIC- Would you take your hat off to...?

1. Abdul ((comes towards the blackboard and takes one hat))
2. I'd take my hat err... [off]
3. FT: [off] to this?
4. Abdul I think it's good to :, to: because you can
5. err, err, make a relation, you can communicate
6. with anyone in the world
7. Ss: ((guessing what it is)) aaahh!
8. FT: yeah!
9. Abdul It's a ... language that we can say it's a:
10. universal language.
11. FT: but why do you think it's good?
12. Abdul: I think it's good because, err: , err: ,
13. you, you, it's a, the way you can communicate
14. to anyone and, not only communicate, but in
15. business or () internet
16. Renata: the influence of English in the ((very low)) () //
17. Caco: // we are losing our culture, cause we
18. have lots of, err: words in English
19. if someone doesn't like cause, you know,
20. they are bringing a lot of slogans in English
21. and [()]
22. Paulo: [yeah, but] //
23. Caco: ((fast)) // I know a lot of people
24. that they don't know what delivering
25. means /
26. Carla / yeah! I saw in //
27. 2 or 3 Ss: // in Fantástico
28. Carla yeah, I saw this
29. Ss: ((comments))
30. Paulo: I don't think it's a problem of the
31. language, it's a problem of the [people]
32. Daniel: [American]
33. FT: establishing limits
34. Paulo: the problem of the () /
35. Caco: /yeah, It's about the globalization of the language,
36. and not because of the language
37. FT: yeah.
38. Daniel I don't think it's the globalization of the language,
39. It's the globalization of the economy, I think is the
40. problem the American are: , ...im... improving
41. not ((trying to remember the appropriate word))
42. FT: imposing?

43. Daniel: imposing, the, the: //
44. Abdul: // no, they are not imposing,
45. we are, we are: //
46. Daniel: // no, they are imposing /
47. Abdul: / going, err,
48. () if we got in this way, we aren't, we
49. weren't here in this English class, cause we
50. want to , to know, they're not imposing,
51. it's like eerrr, a consequence of their potential, you know.
52. FT: It's a way to impose.
53. Daniel: I think they impose.
54. TS: do you think Brazilian people, like your
55. friends are accepting these ideas, are following/
56. Renata: /culture, customs.
57. Daniel: there's nothing to do, we have to dance the music.
58. Caco: I, I know a lot of people, most of my friends
59. they're err, how can I say..., anti American,
60. against, they think they are the best of
61. the world and: /
62. Daniel: / American?
63. Caco: even in Europe they think like , ... they
64. don't like them
65. FT: yeah?
66. Daniel: in movies Americans, err, always... "salva",
67. save the world
68. Ss: ((comments showing agreement))
69. FT: "the Fourth of July, yeah! September seventh, never! ((joking))

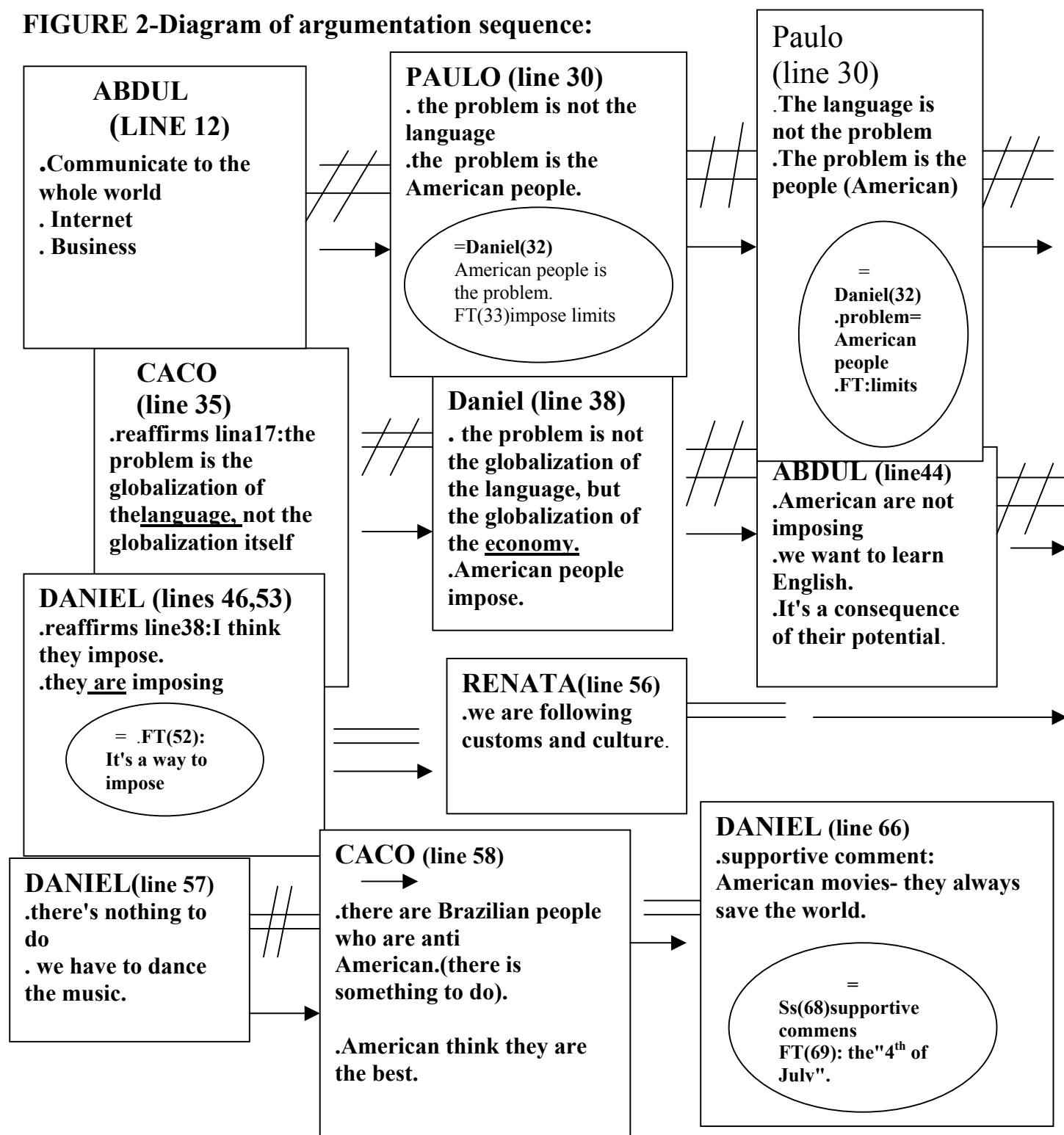
The opposition in this example is done through argumentation. Although the students do not agree in many points, we notice few interruptions (six out of forty-one turns taken), few overlaps (three out of the total 69 lines), and there is no derisive laughter or comment. The students take turns, listen to each other's ideas, state and reaffirm their position given valuable counter argumentation. This kind of opposition, like the example discussed previously (challenging questions), is on task, directed to the speaker's ideas and not the speaker's personal features (it is not a direct attack). This constructive opposition contributes to the development of a healthy discussion.

In order to portray more clearly the sequence of pro arguments and counter arguments, I decided to draw a diagram. Through the diagram we can better identify how students engaged in a task-continuative divergent conversation. The arrows show the sequence of turns. The signs = and # show "for" and "against" arguments, respectively,

(agreement and disagreement). Notice that inside the squares and rectangles I summarized the students arguments' and inside the circles I put each brief supportive comment the speakers received during their turns. It is interesting to observe how the students use counter arguments in a row. The second speaker disagrees with the first and so on. Only at the end of the diagram we can see students agreeing with something someone said one turn before.

Another important point to be observed is the fact that, in this excerpt, the girls' participation is very limited. Carla and Renata make brief supportive comments, whereas the boys make use of task-continuative divergence, giving counter arguments:

FIGURE 2-Diagram of argumentation sequence:



7th ENCOUNTER

Activity: would you take your hat off to...?

Number of students: 13

Girls: 7

Boys: 6

Absent students: 2

George and Betty.

4.3.1.4 Task- continuative divergence - Humor

Used as a conversational strategy, humor can become a double bind. It can play a divergent role or a continuative one. It can either derail the classroom task or make the students feel more comfortable in a pleasant atmosphere. Foley (1990, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996) points out that even though such (positive) humor distracts the students from the task on hand for a while, for the students it has the function of softening the seriousness of the activity being accomplished.

In my data I could observe many instances of humor employed in a positive way. I selected some examples that better illustrate this function. The next two examples drawn from a discussion about the Brazilian TV program “No Limite” show three moments in which humor was used positively.

In the first sequence, when the teacher poses a question at the very beginning of the class, the students are not willing to participate; they are quiet and reticent:

TOPIC -Survival I

EXAMPLE 15

1. FT: I want to know your opinion about these kinds
2. of TV programs in which you usually have money,
3. you change money for something, you expose yourself.
4. for example: “Tudo por Dinheiro”, yeah? “do
5. milhão”, you’re exposing yourself because of the
6. money, because of a prize. What do you think
7. of these kinds of prize?
8. Ss: ((silence about three seconds))
9. FT: What do you think?
- 10.Ss: ((silence about three seconds))
11. FT: ok, ok, don’t fight
- 12.Ss: ((laughter))
- 13.Paulo : you mean... here in Brazil?
14. FT: yeah, like “No Limite”
- 15.Abdul: I think it’s the best way to get easy money.

It is very likely that if the teacher became angry or embarrassed with the students because of their silence (lines 8 and 10), the atmosphere in the class might have become unpleasant or even unbearable. Instead, after the teacher takes advantage of their silence to make a joke (line 11), students seem to be relieved and start to participate. In this example humor works also as a stimulus for students' participation.

The next sequence happens about fifteen minutes after the previous example and shows two moments in which humor is used by students:

EXAMPLE 16

TOPIC - Survival I

1. FT: Who do you think, from the twelve participants
2. . in the beginning, deserved to win?
3. Lia: Chico. cause I think he's the most ((very low))
4. simple
5. TS: ok, humble?
6. Lia: Yeah, the most humble.
7. Flávio: Rambo, Rambo ((showing his muscles))
8. Ss: [((laughter)]
9. Lia: ((laughing, continuing talking)) [he, he doesn't cri]
10. . tica /
11. Betty: / Tica? Who's Tica?
12. Ss: ((louder laughter))
13. TS: ((towards Betty)), critica ((towards Lia)) criticizes
14. Lia: he never criticizes the others
15. Paulo: Tica ((laughter))
16. Betty: ((laughing a lot)) Who's this?
17. Ss: ((laughter))
18. Betty ((laughing)) Tica, I don't know this participant...
19. Ss and teachers: ((laughter))

Note that in the excerpt above, when Flávio (line 7) plays with the pronunciation of the words “humble” and “Rambo” (Rambo with a Brazilian accent), the strong well known movie character played by Sylvester Stallone, the class responds with laughter. Lia, even laughing, continues explaining the reasons of her choice (Chico), but a funny misunderstanding created by Betty (line 11), when she understands “Tica” instead of “critica”, interrupts her turn for a while (she finishes her comment in line 14).

After discussing these exchanges with the other two teachers present in the classroom, I decided to classify these examples as task-continuative. The humor was not employed with the objective of taking the floor, opening a second floor or attacking the speaker – Lia. Furthermore, Lia could finish her comments in a more relieved mood. Humor was a way to create a nice atmosphere in the classroom that lasted up to the end of this class.

In this section I described and exemplified some task continuative divergence briefly mentioned by Bergvall & Remlinger. In the next section, I will depict other strategies students made use of, identified in my data.

4.3.2 Strategies identified in my data to keep/take the floor and to contribute to other students' turns

Observing my data, I could identify strategies students employed during conversations in order to keep or take the floor and to contribute to other students' turns. I decided to categorize each one, according to the goal of the speakers:

GOAL	KEEP THE FLOOR	TAKE THE FLOOR	CONTRIBUTE TO OTHER'S TURNS
STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Asking words in English - Using mimicry - Speaking louder and faster - Speaking Portuguese - Inventing words in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calling the Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing vocabulary in English

Table 5 strategies identified in my data

EXAMPLE:19
 TOPIC- PREJUDICE
 STRATEGY Speaking in Portuguese:

- Lia: Independent.
 FT: Independent? Why?
 —▶ Lia: I think, err... I don't know... for example, eerrr..... In sun's group, err..., Ilma just
 atrapalhava",
 TS: made trouble
 Lia: Yeah
 TL: Do you think she was not independent?
 —▶ Lia: no, but I think, err..., for example, they didn't "tiraram ela" /
 FT: / take her out /
 Lia: / yeah, because, I think,
 my opinion, she know how to cook.
 FT: aahh! She was useful
 Ss: aahh! ((showing they understand her point))

EXAMPLE:20
 TOPIC- PREJUDICE
 STRATEGY: Asking for vocabulary / speaking louder and faster / inventing words in English

- FT: Are you afraid when, some... boys//
 Beto: // but
 Betty: // ((louder)) Mal, err.. it used to have ((laughs)) that... when you stop the car, err...
 FT: aahh! /
 —▶ Betty: /in the light, I don't know the name, how can I say /
 George: / traffic light
 FT: traffic light
 Betty: In the traffic light, you stop the car and [they ask]
 Daniel: [()]
 —▶ Betty: ((louder and faster)) Do you have prejudice about gays?
 And you say no ((laughs)) and they start to ask you some, oh, I'm from
 a: Group of AIDS, and I'm looking about that and [you]
 FT: [()]
 —▶ Betty: can't say ((louder and faster)) you can't say that you are not going to
 Buy the things that he's...
 FT: offering
 Betty: offering because you said that you don't have prejudice, so
 FT: [you say that you don't have] money either ((laughs))
 —▶ George: [they "aborded" me] they "aborded" me once

EXAMPLE 21
 TOPIC- PREJUDICE
 STRATEGY: Using Mimicry / speaking in Portuguese

- ▶ Betty: ((referring to Argentinians)) they use socks like here ((showing her knees))
 Ss: ((laughter))
 Dora: What?
 Betty: They use socks //

- MS: // yeah
 Ss: [((comments))]
 Paulo: [teacher, teacher]
 → Júlia: ((very low)) one day I saw one in the shopping Beira Mar with a: “sungá”
 Ss: ((in chorus)) [Aahh!]
 Julia: [pink t-shirt], and/...
 FT: / socks?
 → Júlia: no, err... ((gestures pointing her feet))
 FT: tennis shoes?
 Júlia: yeah.
 Thaís: they’re very corny

EXAMPLE 22

TOPIC- PREJUDICE

STRATEGY: Inventing words in English:

- Paulo: ((referring to male flight attendants)) most part of them are “double” ((meaning bisexual)). My cousin worked there. she said that most part of them care ((very low)) homosexual.
 FT: aahh! Homosexual.
 Paulo: yeah, I don’t know.

EXAMPLE:23

TOPIC- PREJUDICE

STRATEGY: Inventing words in English / asking for vocabulary / using mimicry

- Betty: I saw one, in the mall, a man dressed like a superman,
 [but with] a err... ((laughs pointing to her head))
 George : [()]
 FT a wig?
 Betty: yeah, I don’t know the name, and.... ((laughs))
 George: It’s a normal thing, In the carnival
 FT: yeah, In the carnival everybody...
 Daniel: everybody
 Paulo: In the carnival, carnival you see ()//
 Ss: // [((very loud comments))]
 → Paulo: [()] how I know... “rabo”?
 FT: tail
 Paulo: tail, you know, and... there was a man with high heel shoes with a ()
 FT: aahh.
 Ss: ((comments and laughter))
 Paulo: and he was black, you know....
 Ss : ((laughter))
 FT: have you ever dressed as a woman in the carnival?
 Flávio: no:
 George: I have /
 Beto: / I have, I have
 FT: yes?! so tell everybody
 Ss: ((laughter))
 George: no, you [()]
 Beto: [African]
 FT: African?

- George: me too!
- Beto: orange dress err... err.... until here ((points to the upper part of his legs))
Ss : eehhh!
- Beto: and...((points to his wrist))
FT: bracelet?
- Beto: yeah, and “colar” ((meaning necklace))
FT: necklace
Flávio:humm!
FT: did you feel good?
Beto: yes, very good
Ss: ((laughter))
FT: and you George?
- George: we know each other but we weren't in a “block” ((meaning group, troupe))
- Beto: no, I don't have a specific “block” ((also meaning troupe))
George: I put on a dress, I put like a wig, my, my mother made a make up. I put a, a ,
an old dress from my gramma, so beautiful, orange inside....
Ss: [((loud laughter))]
- George: [how can I say] “meia – fina”
FT: tights
Betty: I can't imagine you wearing tights ((laughs))

EXAMPLE 24

TOPIC- PREJUDICE

STRATEGY: Inventing words in English:

- Paulo: ((talking about common kinds of prejudice)) we have pre, prejudice...
→ people with " physician problems" ((meaning handicapped))

It is noticeable in examples 17 - 24 that most of the students prefer to make use of the strategies to keep the floor (Table 5) rather than pausing, giving up the floor or keeping in silence. I find these strategies, in general, positive and task-continuative, mainly because making use of them, students are giving more value to participation than to the problems they may have with the language (grammar, lack of vocabulary, etc). Notice, for instance, that Lia in Example 19, within five turns, makes grammar mistakes and mixes Portuguese and English. Even though she has difficulty in making her point, she does not stop talking.

In another sequence, Example 23, in which the students are really enthusiastic talking about carnival, four different students (Betty, Paulo, Beto and George) make use of mimicry, ask for vocabulary and invent words in English. The fact that they lack vocabulary

does not interrupt the flow of the interaction, and the involvement of the students with the topic makes the strategies used sound very natural.

Regarding the strategy "inventing words," it is important to stress that its use can be harmful both for the speaker and the listener if used frequently. It can make the students confused about vocabulary, learning nonexistent words and can also become a habit for the speaker. Analyzing seven examples (from the same class) transcribed above I could observe that the students who used this strategy were always the same : Paulo (3 times), George (twice) and Beto (twice). Another point I would like to comment concerns the strategy of speaking louder and faster in order not to lose control of the floor. I found out that this behavior can be considered positive if the interruption threatens the speaker's control of the floor, but it can be considered negative if this interruption is task-continuative, intended to contribute to the speaker's comments. Note that in Example 18 Paulo speaks louder because his turn is threatened by overlapped comments among several students. On the other hand, in Example 20, Betty uses this strategy three times in order to avoid interruptions from two classmates and from the teacher. In this example the interruptions could have been positive, enriching the conversation.

4.3.2.2 Strategy to take the floor: Calling the teacher

In order to take the floor, students in my data use to call the teacher's attention. Students are aware that the teacher conducts the conversation and is the most empowered participant. Calling the teacher is, thus, a strategy to get the attention of the whole group. I collected some examples in which the students use this strategy:

EXAMPLE:25
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Ss: [((comments))]
→ Paulo: [teacher, teacher!]
Júlia: ((very low)) I saw one in the shopping Beira Mar with a: "sungá"

EXAMPLE:26
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Carla: yeah, I know, it's a person, [the same]
 → Bia: ((loud)) [teacher, I have]
 the only prejudice that I have

EXAMPLE:27
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- FT: do you think it's a sickness?
 Carla: yes, I think it's a sick //
 George // yes, I think [()]
 Carla: [()] //
 → Beto: // teacher, we have "a enzima" in our body that....

EXAMPLE:28
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Dora: drugs, no: , ah.... [()]
 → George: [teacher], I think addiction, each
 person has a different personality....

EXAMPLE:29
TOPIC- SURVIVAL I

- TS: In the next class you will participate of a competition,
 maybe you can win something!
 → Abdul: teacher, teacher! Why don't we do a competition to
 see who eats more chocolate?
 Ss: aahh! ((laughter))

It is not simple to categorize this strategy as task continuative or task divergent, mainly when its use interrupts someone's floor (since interruption does not have only the function of taking the floor from someone). According to Greenwood (1996) if we want to investigate interruption, we must consider the characteristics of the group, the speakers' relationship, the topic and the goals of the participants. Thus, to analyze its continuative or divergent nature, the context in which it occurs must be taken into account. Observe that in

the Examples 25, 27 and 29 the students Paulo, Beto and Abdul are not intruding another student's turn. Abdul calls the teacher to make a joke. It seems that in doing so he wants to be sure that everybody, not only the teacher, will listen to his funny comment (Example 29). Paulo and Beto (Examples 25 and 27 respectively) call the teacher in a moment in which the conversation is confused due to overlaps. They are, actually, trying to reestablish the flow of the conversation. On the other hand, in Examples 26 and 28, Betty and George interrupt another student's turn, calling the teacher. This may be, for them, a more efficient way to get the floor from someone.

4.3.2. Strategy to contribute to other students' turns -Providing vocabulary

.Although it is a typical teacher role, in my data there are some instances where students play this cooperative role:

EXAMPLE 30 TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- FT: ((referring to female taxi drivers)) taxi driver too
have you ever seen here in Floripa?
Flávio: No:
Daniel: [a what?]
Dora: [I've never] /
Paulo: / neither bus driver
George: I saw that.... tickets, I've seen ((louder)) tickets.... err....
→ Dora: cashier? ((meaning the person who charges the bus ride))
FT: Because in the States they don't have this I don't know if it has a proper name..

EXAMPLE 31 TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Paulo: you know, err.... it would be a: how, do you say "prefeito"?
→ George: [mayor]
FT: [mayor]

EXAMPLE 32
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Carla: you have to... to drink moder.... ((lower voice))
 moder..... ((meaning moderately))
 → Betty: ((very low)) “moderadamente”
 Carla: yeah, “moderadamente”

EXAMPLE:33
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- FT: ((talking about prejudice)) what do usually people think when
 they see a black person driving a limo?
 Betty: They always say that... ((making gestures to explain what she meant))
 → Paulo: a robber?

EXAMPLE 34
TOPIC- PREJUDICE

- Betty: In the light, I don't know the name, how can I say /
 → George: / traffic light
 FT: traffic light

This strategy is, undoubtedly, task continuative since it helps the other to continue his / her comment. In providing vocabulary these students are not only helping the classmates, but also showing they are paying attention to what the others are saying, in other words, they show they are committed to the task being developed. This commitment is clearly expressed in Example 30. Note that although George does not express the vocabulary he needs very well, Dora promptly helps him, showing that she is involved in the conversation.

In this section of my thesis, I was concerned with the depiction of some conversational strategies students in my data made use of to keep/take the floor and to contribute to other people's turns. These strategies, as I said before, were not mentioned in Bergvall & Remlinger's work, maybe because the use of most of these strategies is related to the fact that my data come from the use of a foreign language and not the mother tongue as they do in Bergvall & Remlinger's study. In the next chapter, I will present the qualitative and

quantitative results of my research. I will also discuss the role gender plays in the classes I observed.

CHAPTER 5

Gender Roles in EFL Setting

Esmagada pelo respeito às autoridades e pelo peso à erudicao, o olhar cerceado por antolhos a estudante demasiado consenciosa mata em si o senso crítico e a própria inteligência...nas classes reina uma atmosfera sufocante que desanima todas as individualidades um pouco vivas.

(Simone de Beauvoir)

In this chapter I focus my attention to determine how class conversations developed, more specifically who participated and controlled the class conversations and at what extent gender influences such participation. Following the steps of the research carried out by Bergvall & Remlinger (1996), in the technological University (U.S.), I asked: Who is engaged and how are they engaged? What other kinds of interactions are taking place? What role does gender play in such interactions? Are there similarities between the results obtained by Bergvall & Remlinger and my results?

Based on the methodological procedures established in chapter 3, I proceed to the discussion of gender in the EFL.

5.1 Quantitative Results

In order to answer the question “Who is engaged”, I applied quantitative methods. Following Bergvall & Remlinger’s procedures, the other two teachers and I chose one class session in which the students were actively engaged to determine who takes turns and how many words are spoken. Some reasons that explain why we chose this particular class to survey the amount of students' participation are:

- the students were actively engaged in the conversations;
- the main topic provided several and different sub topics, increasing the chances to please a bigger number of students;
- the polemic nature of the topic could reveal gender biases;
- the number of male and female students was quite similar.

Following, I provide some information about the class under analysis.

CLASS N. 3

- main topic – prejudice
- number of students in class – 12
- number of absent students – 3 (1 girl and 2 boys)
- number of male students – 5
- number of female students – 7

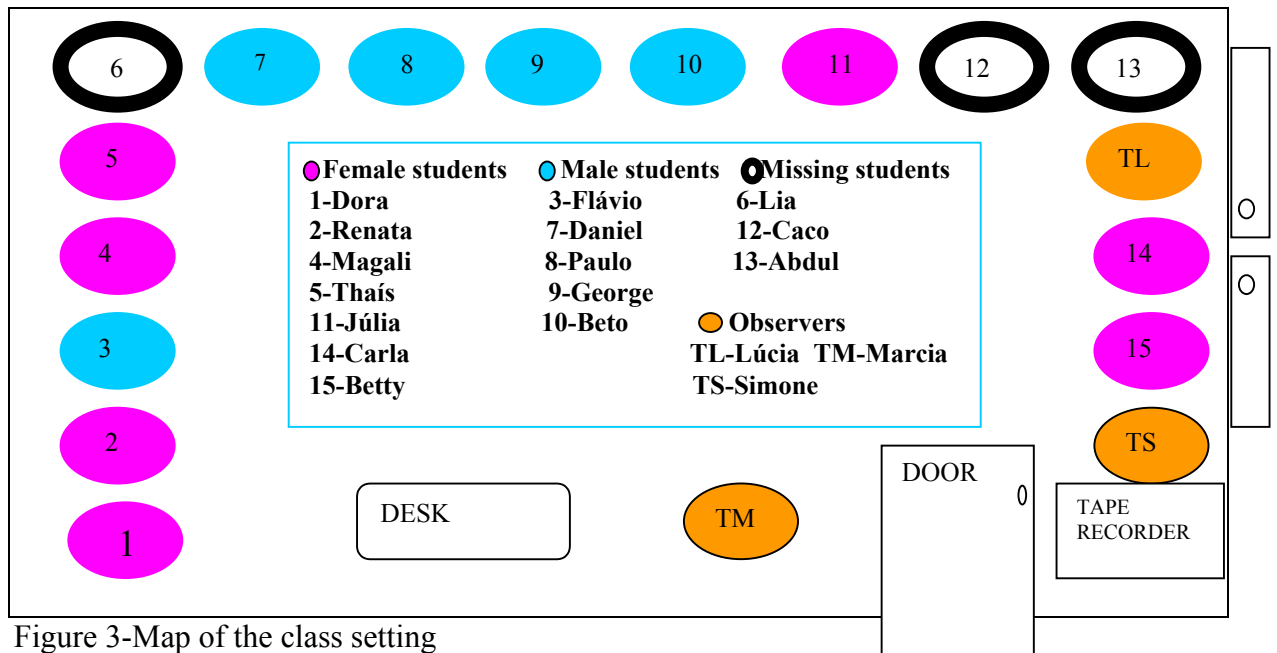


Table 6 shows that even though the students are actively engaged in the conversations, the teacher took a considerable number of turns (29%). This percentage is repeated also in the number of words spoken (29,5%).

	Turns	%	Words	%
Teacher	149	29	884	29,5
Students	358	71	2119	70,5
Total	507	100	3003	100

Table 6-total number of turns taken and words spoken

Dividing students by gender, I found that, although being the minority, male students outspoke the female ones, both in the number of turns (9% more) and in the number of words (3,5% more).

	Turns	%	Words	%
Female	157	31	1005	33,5
Male	201	40	1114	37
Teacher	149	29	884	29,5
Total	507	100	3003	100

Table 7-turns taken and words spoken by male and female students and the teacher

This difference is even more evident when I divided proportionally the number of turns per female/ male participants. Notice that boys almost outnumbered girls 2 to 1:

F	Turns		# of students		Turns Male/female participant
Female	157	÷	7	=	22,4 turns per girl
Male	201	÷	5	=	40,2 turns per boy

Table 8-turns taken by male/female participants

Breaking down the total male and female into participants (Table 9), I observed that even the two most talkative girls (1st and 2nd places) are outspoken by the two most talkative boys, respectively. In other words, the 1st place male outspoke the 1st place female, and the 2nd place male outspoke the 2nd place female. Table 9 also shows that the other five female participants together have taken almost the same number of turns that the other three male students together. The difference is about 2%.

Girls' ranking	% of female's turns	% of students turns	Boys' ranking	% of males' turns	% of students' turns
Betty	50%	22%	George	52%	29%
Carla	20%	9%	Paulo	29%	16%
Magali	7,0%	10%	Beto	12%	8%
Julia	6,5%		Flávio	1,5%	
Dorai	4,5%		Daniel	1%	
Thaís	2,5%				
Renata	2%				
Unidentified	7,5%	3,5%	Unidentified	4,5%	2,8%

Table 9-ranking of students' participation

From the numbers, I might conclude that in this particular class, traditional beliefs concerning women's participation in class have been reproduced. These beliefs, as I have described in Chapter 2, come from studies in which quantitative methods showed that women, in general, take fewer turns and speak fewer words (see Cameron and Coates, 1989; Hall and Sandler, 1982, Kramarae and Treichler, 1990; Sadker and Sadker, 1990, 1994; Swann, 1989, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996).

At least some of the girls did not follow this pattern engaging actively in conversations. On the other hand, some boys also contradicted these studies, keeping in silence. As Swann (1992) points out, any finding regarding class observation must be interpreted with care, because other factors besides gender can influence students behavior . As she puts it:

Differences between the sexes are always average ones. Clearly, in classrooms you do get some talkative girls and quiet boys. Girls and boys also behave differently in different contexts.(p. 53)

5.2 Qualitative Results

Aware of the fact that numbers are not enough to draw conclusions about participation in class, I examined the content and style of students' conversational strategies. Like Bergvall & Remlinger, I relied primarily on ethnographic methods, such as interviews, field notes, maps of the class, the context of the investigation and the nature of the conversational strategies: task-continuative and task-divergent.

The great majority of the conversational strategies identified in my data are task-continuative. Students, both male and female, engaged in conversations in a supportive, collaborative and constructive way (Jenkins and Cheshire, 1990, in Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996 and Holmes, 1992). I could find a vast number of instances of task-continuative behaviors performed by students.

As the examples of conversational strategies in Chapter 4 show, boys and girls engaged in task-continuative behaviors answering and asking questions, validating and extending other participants' turns, laughing along with positive on-task humorous comments. They also developed their point of views taking long turns (internal extended development) or interacting with a limited number of participants (interactive extended development).

Students also engaged in task-continuative divergence, which is very positive, since this kind of apposition or dissensus (Trimbur, 1989, in Bergvall & Remlinger) enriches the conversations and constitutes a powerful and useful way to express disagreement within the classroom. Students did not mute their voices interrupting whenever they had contrary ideas about the subject under discussion, stating counter argumentation, asking challenging questions or even making positive humorous comments. Although the girls also engaged in task-continuative divergence, the boys in my data made use of these strategies more often.

Another important finding is that at the same time some girls resisted the reproduction of traditional gender roles, taking many and long turns, stating their ideas and

asking challenging questions, they were also target of resistance through task-divergent behaviors.

Regarding task-divergent behaviors, I could observe that, in my data, they were performed exclusively by male students towards female participants (including the teacher). I did not find any single example (in five hours of recordings made in ten different encounters), of a girl engaging in a task-divergent behavior. It was always the boys who performed *ad hominem* humor, played the classroom-clown role, opened secondary floors that interrupted the speaker or resisted to cooperate in classroom activities.

I can not claim, however, that task-divergent behaviors are gender exclusive. As an experienced teacher I have had female students who also made use of these strategies. I can only state that such behaviors occurred in these classes with that particular group, in that particular context only with boys towards girls.

5.3 Comparing Results

The similarities concerning the qualitative results of my data with the qualitative results¹⁵ of Bergvall & Remlinger's data were surprising and unexpected to me.

The context in which my research was carried out, apparently gender neutral, was very different from the context of investigation of their research. At the technological university, as I mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.7.2), gender dichotomy is strongly stressed, favoring male dominance. This dominance is not only due to the fact that women are outnumbered by men, but also because the environment of the campus has been for years traditionally androcentric and based on competition.

Differently from the Technological University the environment of this English school is neither androcentric nor based on competition. If we try to find any gender polarization

¹⁵ The qualitative results of Bergvall & Remlinger's research are presented in chapter 2, section 2.7.2

within this school, it would favor female, not only because the staff is totally composed of women, including the cleaner, secretaries, teachers and coordinators, but also because the environment in which the teachers are inserted is based on cooperation and interaction, skills stereotyped as “feminine” (Holmes, 1992) Furthermore, in this cooperative and interactive environment the methodology is based on the communicative approach, which also contributes to a more interactive environment. Another aspect that would favor female polarization is this EFL setting concerns verbal ability. Some researchers suggest that females’ verbal skills are innate and superior to males’ (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, in Sunderland, 1996).

Although intended to be a gender-neutral setting, the fact that gender roles in classroom have been historically and institutionally constructed is undeniable (Connell, 1987, in Bergvall and Remlinger, 1996). The apparent innocent fact that students chose to sit in gender separated groups (as noticeable through the maps presented before), is evidence that gender dichotomy still exists. As Delamont (in Swann and Graddol, 1995) states:

Schools develop and reinforce sex segregation, stereotypes and even discrimination which exaggerate the negative aspects of sex roles in the outside world, when they could be trying to alleviate them (p.135).

5.4 Looking at variables – the role of gender

Taking into account that other variables besides gender may influence students’ behavior, I analyzed the information obtained through individual interviews. The answers, which are summarized in Table 10, showed that the most talkative students had been studying English since childhood (for six or seven years) and that the age of these students varied greatly – from 15 to 25 years old. From the girls, only the most participative one reported that

she felt comfortable speaking English, while only two of the seven males said they did not feel comfortable. Only two of the eight girls had been to an English speaking country, including the most participative. Three boys had already traveled or lived abroad (the two most talkative ones are not included, although these three students were also participative). Five boys and four girls had had contact with native speakers of English here in Brazil (including the most talkative).

Most students reported that they usually watch films, serials, news and songs in English. Only four students (two boys and two girls) do not have any person in the family who speaks English (the most participative are not included). Half of the female students considered themselves shy or were seen as shy by a classmate (three of them had little participation during class). None of the boys considered themselves shy or were seen as shy by a classmate.

Through this information, I concluded that besides the amount of time of exposure to the target language inside and outside the classroom, personality features (shyness, for instance) are relevant in determining students' participation in class. However this aspect might be connected to gender behaviors learned since birth, when female children are socialized to be silent and "behave well".

However the role of gender in students' participation in this analysis is quite complex and subtle. It seems that task-divergent behaviors employed by male against female, reflect persistent gender imbalances in classroom discourse. As Bergvall (1996) puts it,

Academic discourse is not gender neutral: evidence from discourse analysis shows that gender roles continue to be reified and challenged through such linguistic means..(p. 194)

Although women seem to be vulnerable to the resistance imposed by men, due maybe to the "lack of institutional power to overcome opposition to their turns" (Bergvall &

Remlinger, 1996, p.472), some female students have been struggling with traditional gender norms in order to achieve equal access to the conversational floor.

Being aware of what is happening within the classroom is the first step towards a change. As Bergvall and Remlinger stress, educators should make use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to show students how positive use of continuative and divergent behaviors can result in active and constructive conversations.

Table 10- Students' Profile

Student's Name	Age	Period Studying English (English course)	How comfortable speaking and understanding English?	Traveled / Lived abroad? How long/where	How often had contact with English native speakers?	How often watch serials or programs in English?	Who speaks another language in your family?
Letty	15	7 and ½	Yes/very comfortable	15 days / USA	American family was at my house (2 weeks)	Yes, frequently	Brother (English)
Marla	17	7 years	Not very comfortable	No	No	Yes, frequently	Brother mother Sister (English)
Magali	17	6 years	No / I feel nervous	10 days/USA	Exchange student at school	Yes, not frequently	
Julia	18	4 years	No / I feel nervous	No	No	Yes, not frequently	
Mani	18	4 years	No/I feel embarrassed	No	Yes at the beach, mall	Yes, frequently	Sisters are learning English
Maís	17	6 years	Not very comfortable	No	Exchange student at school	Yes, frequently	Brother and sister (English)
Mariana	19	5 years	No / very nervous	No	No	Yes, not frequently	Me – Italian All family (English)
Maria	16	7 years	No / I feel uncomfortable	Italy – 1 year	No	Yes, frequently	Father (Italian) Me – Italian
George	17	7 years	Yes/I like it very much	No	Exchange student at school	Yes, I love MTV Interviews	Brother – a little English
Paulo	19	5 years	Yes/very comfortable	No	Met some American guys in São Paulo de Noronha	Yes, Interviews, movies	Brother (English)
Pietro	22	5 years	No / lack vocabulary	No	Sometimes at the beach	Yes, only when I have time	
Álvio	17	6 years	Yes	15 days / EUA	Yes, school, nightclubs		
Eniel	24	5 years	Not very comfortable lack vocabulary	No	No	Not so often	
Abdul	17	7 years	Yes	1 year Spain – 2 months London – 2 years USA – 2 weeks	Mostly through internet	Yes, frequently (TV)	Parents (Hindi)
Marco	25	5 years ½		Spain – 1 month (1 st year) USA – 2 weeks Germany – Several times	Yes, many times	Yes, frequently (TV)	Brother and father: German and English. Mother – Italian, German

CHAPTER 6

FINAL REMARKS

*O certo é que até aqui as
possibilidades foram sufocadas e
perdidas para a humanidade, já é
tempo, em seu interesse e no de
todos, de deixá-la enfim correr
todos os riscos, tentar a sorte*

(Simone de Beauvoir)

6.1 Summary

This thesis investigated how classroom conversations evolve at a private English school in Florianópolis, focusing on gender roles in the analysis of these interactions.

Initially, I reviewed the basic assumptions concerning language and gender and classroom discourse. I also presented the procedures and findings of a research on classroom conversational strategies in which I grounded this study. After that, I moved on to the description of the setting in which the data were collected and provided information about the context, the participants and the encounters. I also gave an account of the way I collected the data and proceeded with the adjustments and analysis of the conversations that compose my corpus.

The subsequent step in this study was to exemplify, with excerpts from my data, the conversational strategies categorized by Bergvall and Remlinger (1996) as task-continuative and task-divergent, and also other strategies that occurred during the classes I recorded.

Examining my data, I found out that, although the group under analysis had been substantively engaged (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991, 1992), making use most of the time of task-continuative behaviors, the few instances of task-divergent behaviors were performed, in this particular group, exclusively by male participants towards female participants.

6.2-Remarks on findings

Since the findings of my analysis were obtained based primarily on ethnographic methods, such as the nature of the conversational strategies employed by students, interviews and observational field notes, besides the number of words spoken or turns taken, I could draw a more reliable picture about gender roles in classroom. I found that other variables, such as the amount of exposure to the target language and personality features (e.g. shyness) may have influenced the quality of students' participation. However, gender differences were still present in conversations. I could observe that, although the female participants of the group observed had shown, in general, good conversational skills, giving important contributions, asking challenging questions and speaking frequently, their participation also suffered resistance. This resistance, which occurred in task-divergent behaviors, and performed, as mentioned before, only by men, may be a reflection of the still persistent patriarchal dominance in the educational system.

6.3 Limitations and implications of this thesis

One of the limitations of the present study concerns methodological procedures. Although my colleague and I had taken a great amount of observational field notes during the recordings, the use of a video recorder instead of a tape recorder would have enabled the observation of many more nonverbal behaviors, which constitute a relevant aspect in communication. Another limitation I recognize is related to the observation of a single group for a limited amount of time. In order to examine gender roles more deeply I would like to have had the opportunity of observing either the same group for a longer period of time or more groups, perhaps with different characteristics from the one I chose, such as a disparate number between male and female students. To my understanding, it would permit a more complete and deeper analysis on power relations within the classroom.

Despite these and other limitations that may be pointed out, I believe this work to have its strengths. One is the observation of gender roles in the classroom by means of ethnographic methods, rather than quantitative, since the simple count of words can not show the problematic speech discourse differences that continue to reproduce male dominance in the public arena.

One interesting point to be investigated would be how gender roles are reproduced or played by the teacher during conversations. Another aspect that could be examined is which conversational strategies are used among Brazilian adults and children, either in the mother tongue or in the target language.

I hope the present thesis can make at least little contribution to researchers interested in examining gender roles in the classroom, adding some more information to this area. I aim to increase social consciousness about the position of female students in the contemporary Brazilian educational system and, this way, encourage some changes.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH THE PARTICIPANTS

Name: _____

1. How long have you been studying English? _____
2. Have you ever traveled abroad? If yes, how many times and how long did it take _____
3. Have you ever had any contact with foreign people.? If yes, when? _____

4. Do you speak English outside the class? _____
5. Do you like to listen to music? Which styles do you like ? _____

6. Who are your favourite singers/bands? _____

7. When you listen, do you try to sing together, reading the lyrics? _____

8. Do you feel comfortable speaking another language? How many languages do you speak? _____

9. How old are you now? _____

10. How old were you when you first started speaking/studying English?

11. Have you ever had any native teacher? If yes, when? _____

12. Do you like to see movies / sitcoms / cartoons in English? _____

13. Does anyone in your house speak another language? If yes, who, and which language?

14. During the classes, did you feel uncomfortable because of the tape recorder,

or because of our presence? _____

15. Do you consider yourself shy or outgoing? Who do you consider shy in your classroom? _____
