The structuring of language-learning tasks

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THE STRUCTURING OF

LANGUAGE-LEARNING TASKS

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CHAPTER 4: THE TEACHER AS PROVIDER OF STRUCTURING

The analysis of the data is presented in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 focuses mainly on the teacher and chapter 5 on the students. This somewhat artificial division between teachers and students has been made for the sake of facilitating the presentation of the analysis. It does not in any way mean that teaching/teachers and learning/learners are considered as two isolated entities in the classroom.

The present chapter starts with some preliminary information about how the data for analysis was identified from the classroom transcripts (4.1.1 and 4.1.2.). There follows a brief introduction to each teacher teaching style (4.1.3). The rest of the chapter is devoted to the description of the teacher as provider of structuring and it follows approximately the same organization as the review of the literature in chapter 1. The first five sections deal with different aspects of procedural structuring (4.2.-4.6). In 4.2. the appropriateness of the teachers' directions is examined. 4.3. is a

description of the times when the teachers went into detail as to what students needed to do in carrying out a task and 4.4. is a close examination of each teachers' implementation of group work. 4.5. looks at whether students were allowed to participate in the planning of classroom activity. 4.6.. is an analysis of the teachers' announcements of future tasks and reviews of past ones. The sections on linguistic and topic structuring are dealt with separately in sections 4.7. and 4.8. respectively. Psychological structuring is found in 4.9. The last section deals with the teachers' attempts to provoke laughter in students during structuring (4.10.).

4.1. PRELIMINARIES

4.1.1. First two levels of segmentation: tasks and stages

Once the recorded lessons were transcribed, a logical step was to identify the major instructional parts in each lesson, the tasks. This segmentation of classroom activity was carried out because it made sense to think that structuring would be mostly found at the boundaries between each lesson's major constituents, that is, at the shifts from one instructional part to another. Homework assignments were also identified.

The criteria that I followed to identify tasks was pedagogical. Each lesson's major constituent, that is to say, each task was defined as having a distinct pedagogical purpose. The following types of tasks, a typology emerging from the data, were identified in the lessons of the three teachers:

- comprehension of texts (oral or written): tasks where students read or listened to a text and had to extract information (for example answering questions, reading to get the main idea, drawing a plan)

- reproduction of oral texts: tasks where students listened to sentences and reproduced them (i.e., a dictation).

- language exercises: structured tasks for controlled practice of a formal aspect of the language. These tasks typically consisted in rewriting sentences, filling in blanks, giving definitions, matching words with pictures and classifying, among others. They were usually written tasks but not always.

- word games: tasks where students had to do some guessing or played word association.

- problem-solving tasks: tasks where students were given a situation to solve. The solutions would be later on presented and justified to the class.

- class surveys: tasks where students prepared questions and interviewed each other.

- discussions: tasks where all the class or groups of students talked about a general issue (i.e, violence in sports) and personal arguments where exchanged.

- role-plays: tasks where students were given roles to play in groups.

- written production tasks: tasks where students did some writing in class on a topic set by the teacher.

- oral exchanges: tasks where students in small groups exchanged information on personal experiences (i.e., their best friends).

A further subdivision was identified below the task, the stage. A task was subdivided into stages if its performance was preceded by instructional content or followed by a correction or a public report. Four types of stages emerged from the lessons analyzed:

- presentation stage: the teacher mainly transmitted or provided information and students listened. Two types of content have been identified, one where the teacher explained grammar (a presentation on grammar) and one where the teacher went into detail about how to perform a task (a presentation on procedure).

- performance stage: students were given time to prepare a task individually or in groups before it was reported in public or corrected with the teacher.

- reporting stage: students presented what they had prepared in the performance stage to members of the class either in the format of groups or to the whole class. The major focus was on the information that was being communicated.

- correction stage: students got feedback from the teacher on the task that had been previously carried out in the performance stage and/or reported in the reporting stage.

In some tasks there was no subdivision into stages. Others had two or more of the above stages, usually in the same order they have been presented here. In Appendices K, L and M there is a description of the tasks subdivided into stages preceding each transcribed lesson. In these descriptions of each stage/task there is specification of (a) the material that was used (the input), if any, (b) what students were required to do (the activity and grammar focus when relevant), (c) about what (the topic, if relevant) and (d) who were the interlocutors (the participation mode). In these Appendices, the location of the boundaries between stages and tasks in the tape is indicated with the number of the tape counter (called "location of shift").

4.1.2. Third level of segmentation: the preparatory and wrap-up segments

In order to identify the times when the teacher structured language-learning tasks I looked at the openings and closings of lessons, tasks and stages. Structuring provided to open one of these three units has been called preparatory segment[1], regardless it is a lesson, a task or a stage that is opened. The preparatory segment covers from the first indicator that "new business" is about to get started (a pre-opening) until this "new business" gets going (i.e., students start carrying out the task). Structuring provided to bring one of the three units (lessons, tasks and stages) to a close has been called wrap-up segment. This concluding segment covers from the first indication of a pre-closing until the eventual closing. According to van Lier (1988), the wrap-up segment is not always present in the language classroom, since a common method of closing a task is by opening the next one. Consequently the preparatory segment is always present.

The following criteria, especially the third point, helped me in the identification of preparatory and wrap-up segments:

- the length: segments are usually short;
- the frames (Sinclair, 1990) or decision markers (van Lier, 1988): segments are usually initiated with them; and
- the content: they need to make reference to the whole task, stage or lesson.

In the transcripts in Appendices K L and M, the preparatory and wrap-up segments have been bold-typed.

In identifying preparatory and wrap-up segments, sometimes it was difficult to determine what counted as a task in itself from what counted as part of the preparatory or wrap-up segment.

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[1] I am not using the term "phase" as Gagné (1992) did, because this term is used by other authors to refer to what I call "task."

Gagné (1992) had observed in her data the existence of subordinate tasks that had a preparatory or wrap-up role. Distinguishing subordinate tasks from talk included in a "segment" was a problem. Another criterion that I followed to consider a sequence of talk within a segment or not was whether it felt incomplete without what preceded or followed it. If the talk did not make sense on its own, mainly because it was short and not thorough, then it was included in the preparatory or wrap-up segment. Instead, if the talk with a preparatory function had a degree of autonomy and thoroughness, then it was considered a task on its own.

For example, the interaction in excerpt 56 on pp. 185-6 was included within the preparatory segment (and thus has not been considered a task in itself). It took place before students were asked to write a recipe and the teacher introduced the topic of the stage ("gazpacho") first by telling students what Spanish people think to be the typical food in Britain and then by having students guess what British people think of as the typical food in Spain. It is clear that all this introduction was done because the teacher was going to "use" this information later on. It had a kind of instrumental purpose and that is mainly why it was identified as part of the preparatory segment.

In contrast, a time when the teacher wrote a number of words on the blackboard to prepare students for a subsequent listening was considered a task in itself (Mark, 23/3, task 3). The decision was taken because of the considerable number of words and the time that was spent on the task (first students worked in groups and then the task was corrected).

Even though structuring is most likely to occur at the introductions and ends of tasks, it is also provided at other times

during the lessons. That is why once the preparatory and wrap-up segments were identified in my transcripts, another look was given to identify traces of structuring talk outside these boundary episodes. That is to say, during the time the class was "officially" on-task. The times where the teachers explained to students what they had to do for homework were also identified.

The present study did not include the examination of times when the class was engaged in purely managerial matters such as the distribution of material, the getting of students into groups, checking that students had done the homework etc.

3.1.3. Description of Bob's, Mark's and Sharon's general teaching styles

A brief macro-description of the characteristics of the type of tasks that each teacher implemented will be presented next (see Table 4) with the purpose of providing contextualization to the subsequent analysis on structuring.

Bob's lessons consisted of few tasks, one or two per one-hour lessons and sometimes the same task ran over to the following lesson. In part, tasks took long because they usually consisted in more than one stage. Students were usually set to work in groups for a considerable amount of time, followed by a time when the task was presented to the class and/or a time when the task was corrected. In any case, group work was the leading mode of participation in this class.

Table 4

Description of tasks by teacher

	Teacher		
Descriptors	Bob	Mark	Sharon
Number of recorded hours	4.h 52'	9h. 29'	4h.58'
Number of identified tasks	9	25	25
Task types			
Comprehension of texts	1	5	5
Reproduction of oral texts	—	1	1
Language exercises	3	15	4
Word games	—	—	3
Problem-solving tasks	5	—	2
Class surveys	—	—	—
Discussions	1	—	1
Role-plays	—	—	2
Written production tasks	—	1	1
Oral exchanges	—	—	—
Number of stages			
One-stage tasks	—	15	20
Two-stage tasks	7	8	4
More than two-stage tasks	2	2	1
Distribution of stages			
Presentation	1	2	1
Reporting	5	2	1
Correction	4	17	4
Interlocutors in stages[a]			
T—C (participate)	7	15	9
T—C (attend)	2	10	3
G/S—C	1	2	4
Group work	9	7	17
Seat work	1	5	2

[a] Interlocutors

- T—C (participate): The teacher addresses the whole class but individual students participate verbally in the public discourse of the classroom. Students may self-select or the teacher may allocate the next speaker.
- T—C (attend): The teacher addresses the whole class and learners either mainly attend or participate chorally (i.e., in drills).
- G/S—C: A student or a group of students, usually sitting in the front of the class, interact(s) with or present(s) information to the rest of the students in class.
- Group work: Students work in groups of two or more people on an assigned task. The teacher's participation in the groups may vary but his participation is intermittent and secondary.
- Seat work: Students work on their own on an assigned task. The teacher's interaction with individuals may vary and it is secondary.

Tasks in Mark's class were shorter than in Bob's but longer than in Sharon's. Mark implemented an average of four tasks in two-hour lessons. The most outstanding feature in this class is the preeminence of one type of task, language exercises. These were very controlled exercises with a focus on form and they were either done for homework and corrected in class or were done and corrected in class. In fact, it was frequent to spend a considerable amount of time at the beginning of lessons correcting as many language exercises as the teacher had assigned the previous week. Probably connected to the high number of language exercises is the fact that there were so many correction stages. A high percentage of tasks in this class ended with either the teacher eliciting the answers or providing them himself. In contrast to the other two classes, group work played less of a primary role here. In addition, when students worked in groups in this class it was usually in pairs,

whereas in Bob's and Sharon's classes students tended to often be asked to work in groups of more than two students.

Sharon characterized herself by implementing a comparatively high number of tasks in one-hour lessons (a average of four —double the number of tasks in Mark's). In part, this quick pace could be kept up because of the high number of one-stage tasks. Tasks would be brought to an end without thorough reporting or correction stages. Another characteristic feature in her lessons was that tasks were usually thematically related, although this feature is not reflected in the table. One day the topic was "personality," on another "giving advice," on another "eccentricity" etc. And then all or a number of tasks in the lesson would turn around that topic. An additional trace of that trend to thematize lessons was shown one day when I was going to take a questionnaire for students on learning strategies. Sharon asked me if I could prepare some task so that the whole lesson would revolve around the topic of the questionnaire. Neither of the other two teachers integrated the questionnaires into their lessons on the day they were distributed. A third feature of Sharon's teaching is the wide variety of tasks that were implemented, mostly skill-oriented (note the few number of language exercises) and with a strong emphasis on group work.

From this "very sketchy" description of the tasks Bob, Mark and Sharon implemented, major differences across teachers have come out, mainly in the length of tasks, the amount of attention to form and in the role of group work. It is clear from here that these three teachers implemented tasks differently. What is yet to be

seen is if there will also be major differences in these teachers' structuring of tasks. The remainder of the sections in this chapter will provide the answer to that.

4.2. THE MATCH BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN PROCEDURAL STRUCTURING

This first section looks at the degree of effectiveness of teachers' directions. The teacher(s) that seem to give less efficient directions are compared with those who have fewer problems, the objective being to see what the latter teacher(s) do that the former do not.

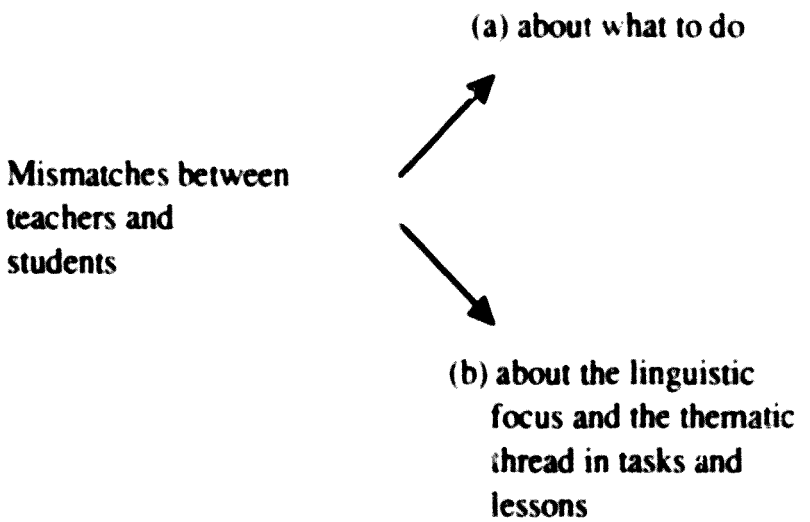
When the teachers provided procedural structuring they often took some aspects of the tasks for granted which they did not mention to students during the preparatory segment. They assumed that students would make the necessary inferences to fill in their instructions. These inferences included (1) what to do, (2) the linguistic objective behind a task, when there was one, and the topic in receptive tasks. And students used several sources to get this "missing" but usually retrievable information: the format of the exercise—if it was a writing exercise, the position of the teacher in the room, the familiarity of the class with a certain type of task, other tasks that preceded the present one, and their experience as students, among others. All these sources carried information for students to "decipher" tasks and in the three classes these inferences were apparently made regularly so that there was not usually an apparent mismatch between the teachers' idea of the task and the corresponding studen interpretations.

Nevertheless, there were occasions in the data where the procedural structuring given in the preparatory segment had to be or should have been complemented in subsequent stages of the task because information that the teacher expected students to have inferred was not. This lack of inference could be identified in the

data: (a) when students verbalized a lack of full understanding of the task[2], (b) when the teacher perceived the lack of inference himself and added procedural information and (c) when I observed students carrying out a task in a way that did not match the information provided by the teacher in the preparatory segment. The description of those cases of mismatch in the interpretation of procedure will be dealt with in two parts (see Figure 2): First I will describe misinterpretations about what the students had to do (4.2.1.) and then I will describe misinterpretations about the linguistic focus and the topic of tasks (4.2.2).

Figure 2

Types of mismatches in procedural structuring



[2] In contrast, students' questions that sought mere repetition of what had been mentioned in the preparatory segment were not analyzed in this section, because it was felt that the problem most likely was the learners' (see 5.1. and 5.2.).

4.2.1. Mismatches about what to do

Students from the three classes at some point or other gave signs that they were not fully clear about what was expected of them. In 13/5 469, Mark told students to prepare a role-play and assumed they would write it during this preparation. When he saw students were not writing it, he had to tell them to do so outside the preparatory segment. Mark had made an assumption about what students would do that was not fulfilled. The same happened in excerpt 1, Sharon expected students to be imaginative in a word association game but by looking at the students' performance in that task, one realizes that they were not aware of that. In the wrap-up segment Sharon concluded:

• excerpt 1

T OK. All right. We'll finish there. You- what you said was in the house again. We could have gone sort of like mirror, reflection, scene, wind,
LL Oh! / Oh. / ((Chuckles))
T And it could have been so romantic, you know.
[House, door, windows, table. Yes. ((Claps once))
LL [((Chuckles))

(31/5 568)

Similarly, on an occasion where students had to match a list of descriptions about ways of listening with a list of purposes in listening, a student asked the teacher if it was possible to have more than one answer for each description (field note, 11/11 p. 29). This information Bob had not given in the preparatory segment because he probably counted on students being aware of that. In general, mismatches like these about what to do were not a common element in the three classes under observation, but they seem to have been more outstanding in Mark's class for a number of reasons:

(a) Recurrent causes for the misinterpretations occurring in Mark's class could be identified. No recurrent causes could be identified in Sharon's and Bob's class.

(b) Students in Mark's class sometimes complained about the way this teacher structured tasks. Students in Sharon's and Bob's class never did that.

(c) Sharon used other devices to give procedural information to students with certain regularity. Mark made no use of these other devices.

The above three points will be further developed and illustrated.

(a) Recurrent causes

The following causes could be identified in Mark's data:

(a1) the teacher providing misleading procedural structuring;

(a2) the teacher providing procedural structuring with delay; and

(a3) the teacher applying rules inconsistently.

(a1) Misleading procedural information

There were times when Mark addressed the students' attention towards an aspect of the task that proved to be an obstacle in the understanding of the instructions. For example, at the beginning of 4/12, Mark announced that students would have to write a composition about Marco Polo for homework and that they were going to get the information from different sources. Students showed concern about the composition on five occasions at different times during the lesson, times where the teacher and students were engaged in tasks that had little to do directly with the composition. The teacher's lack of predisposition to answer

questions on specifics about the composition make it clear that there was a mismatch between the teacher's intention through the announcement of the composition and the students' interpretation of the announcement, as excerpt 2 shows.

• excerpt 2[3]

M Mark, how many word words?
T You are not writing the composition yet. I'll tell you later. *Now* all you have to do is get the inform*ation*. I'll tell you at the end of the class . . . how many words. All right?

((Students start to get on task)) (.04)

M-T [(I don't know how many words)
T [Three thousand.
M [X
T [Three thousand.
M (Three thousand)
T Only.

(4/12 062 and 064)

By making the announcement about the composition, Mark probably just intended to introduce a number of thematically-related tasks and to let students know that they would be using the information from the different tasks later on. The students, on the other hand, showed an excessive concern about the assignment exclusively, as can be seen in excerpt 2 as well as on three other occasions during that lesson.

(a2) Late procedural information

These were times when the teacher delayed giving information about the nature of the task within the preparatory segment. This happened on occasions when the material being used as a basis for the task was produced by Mark on the blackboard. On those occasions the teacher used not to give the directions about the

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[3] Turns have been double-indented to indicate side-talk.

task until students had copied the text from the blackboard. For example, in excerpt 3 Mark said:

• excerpt 3

T I want you to draw on a piece of paper or in your notebooks two . . . rectangular squares. OK? . . . Quite big.

(23/3 665)

But the teacher was asking students to draw the squares without mentioning what they would use them for. As a result, at least two students did not draw the square the size it should have been drawn. When Mark did tell students what the square was for (see excerpt 4 lines 1-2), students reacted with a chain of collective and individual complaints in side-talk (see underlining):

• excerpt 4

T-L/G? No. It's not sufficient because you need- you are going to put information in the squares.
LL Ah!
L-L No ho sabiem.
L-L Hauguera avisat!
L-L (Si ja ho ha dit big.)

(23/2 669)

On a similar occasion Mark started writing an exercise for students to do on the blackboard without telling them anything about the task. Mark just said:

• excerpt 5

T Right. Now . . . Let's change this a bit. Now look.

(4/12 415)

And then he started writing on the blackboard for almost six minutes with the understanding that what he was writing was for students to copy. This lack of information for such a long time (the teacher was making up the text on the spot) caused some students to make comments that show that they were copying without any understanding. One student was heard saying to another "Saps que estic copiant i no sé de què va?." Later on, there was some evidence

that a student had copied the exercise wrongly because she had not seen that the text had been written in two columns:

• excerpt 6

F Al copiarlo no ha visto la (línea) de en medio.

(4/12 475)

(a3) Inconsistent participation rules

These were times when what was unclear or infringed were the participation rules because students must not have perceived a consistency in their implementation. On one occasion, a student did not know whether or not she was allowed to use Spanish to answer the teacher's question (23/3 623). In 13/5 (078), a student started a correction stage by reading the sentences from the language exercise in full (not just the answers), while the teacher expected the student just to give the answers (without reading complete sentences). Another example comes from the several occasions Mark responded to students' questions on grammar by telling them that was not the time for questions, thus postponing the answer. In excerpt 7, a student wanted to know whether "he tried to put" was correct (line 2), but Mark postponed the explanation.

• excerpt 7

L3 He tried putting out the fire but it was impossible.
L To [put.
T [To put . . . Any problems I will answer at the end. OK. Now (let's) just correct first. L4.

(4/5 048)

Sometimes the teacher even seemed to get a little annoyed, as in excerpt 8:

• excerpt 8

T By is correct.
L12 Why?
T Because it is.

T They do this by reading. ((Reading from the text)) Let me— OK L12 if you don't understand when we've corrected, I will explain.

(13/5 088)

All the above incidents seem to come from the apparent inconsistency in the application of some participation rules. In 23/3 623, the student's doubt about whether she could respond with a translation may be explained because earlier in that class another student was not allowed to use the L1 in response to a similar type of teacher question. In 13/5 078, the student's behavior (reading whole sentences) is also understandable if we take into account that exactly the same type of exercise was corrected in its full form by the teacher in the preceding lesson. This inconsistency is also found regarding the rule that questions should not be posed until a task was corrected. The rule was valid in the correction of some tasks but not others, which probably was what caused confusion[4].

To sum up, three recurrent sources of disorientation in Mark's students about what they had to do have been presented. No similar recurrent patterns nor others could be identified in Sharon's and Bob's classes.

(b) Students' complaints

Another aspect that differentiates Mark's from Sharon's and Bob's classes is that the lack of clarity during procedural structuring from the students point of view was never made explicit through

[4] The fact that students kept seeking explanations to their questions even after the teacher had made it clear that they should not pose questions up until the wrap-up segment may also show that some students may have felt this rule/procedure (withholding students' questions) to be unnatural.

complaints in Sharon's and Bob's classes. By contrast, Mark's students occasionally reacted with a complaint (see excerpt 4).

(c) No use of alternative devices

Sharon sometimes complemented her initial instructions during the preparatory segment with other devices. She used these complementary devices in tasks where the teacher addressed the whole class. An examination of Sharon's complementary structuring follows.

There were times when Sharon's preparatory segment was quite brief. This brevity seemed to be quite purposeful since it was during the carrying out of the task that through different indirect means she would orient the task towards where she wanted it to go. These means were: (c1) giving feedback, (c2) narrowing down questions and (c3) providing a model. The following are illustrations of Sharon putting into practice these three means.

(c1) Giving feedback

In excerpt 9 Sharon's procedural structuring was quite general:

• excerpt 9

T All right, now.
L XX
LL [((Laughter))
T [We're gonna play word association with the word food. Right? Word association. We've played word association before here in class. Yeah? ((Writes the word food on the blackboard)) Give me an idea. Word association with food.

(31/3 004)

She did not explain whether students had to come up with just food products or whether they could make free associations. The instructions above were followed by a sequence of interactions

where the teacher indirectly showed (not told) students more precisely "where I want to go." In excerpt 10, she gave negative feedback when a student gave an answer that was outside the teacher's "plans" for the task (see underlining):

• excerpt 10

(1)	L	Cheese.
	T	Cheese. OK. ((Writes the word cheese on the blackboard)) A word association with cheese.
	Lx	Mouse.
(5)	L	Mice (w.p.)[5]
	Lx	[Mouse.
	L	[Mice, mice (w.p.).
	T	Actually, it's not (where I want to go). It's not where I want to go. OK. [((Laughs)) No, I accept their reason but no=
(10)	C	[((Laughter))
	T	=e:::h no. Not what I want to do there. OK, let's try again.

(31/3 006)

Note that the teacher said she rejected the word "mouse" but did not explicitly say why. It seemed that it was the teacher's intention to have students guess what she wanted through a process of trial and error ("Let's try again"). One even gets a feeling of playfulness (see the laughter from Sharon and the students, lines 9 and 10) as if this was a type of game.

On another occasion of a word game too, she would give positive feedback when a student came up with one word that fitted perfectly with her "plans:"

• excerpt 11[6]

F	Mirror	
T	Good, good, good. Get on.	M-L7 ¿Qué ha dicho? L7-M Mirror.

(31/3 562)

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[5] The initials "w.p." enclosed in parenthesis stand for wrong pronunciation of the word that precedes them.

[6] A Transcription with two columns has been used to distinguish public talk from side-talk when the two coexisted or when two simultaneous conversations in side-talk were recorded.

(c2) Narrowing down questions

Sharon also "helped" students to come up with the "right" answers by posing questions that lowered the openness of the task as in the following excerpt, also coming from the word association game on food. In excerpt 10, Sharon's request had been: "A word association with food" (lines 2-3). In excerpt 12, she was going to be more specific:

• excerpt 12

T =e:::h no. Not what I want to do there. OK, let's try again. So you X cheese. What type of X is cheese? What type of food?

(31/3 006)

(c3) Providing a model

The third means of showing students the "direction" of the task was to give the answer herself, thus providing a model for students. This was the case in 7/4 task 1, a task where the teacher wanted students to give definitions but did not tell them so explicitly during the preparatory segment. When Sharon saw that students were not coming up with the definition of the word "strong-willed," she volunteered it herself (see underlining):

• excerpt 13

T What do you think it means? (.04) What do you think it means?
L6 ¿Lo repites otra vez?
T What does strong mean?
L Strong?
T Aha, strong. All right. So something strong. Do you remember the word willing?
LL ((XX))
T We did- we've had it a couple of times in class, yeah? We talked about will and willing, aha? . . . If you are strong-willed, it is your spirit, yeah? strong-willed and you have strong spirit . . . Mhm? Strong-willed. (.07).

(7/4 077)

The effectiveness of these three means (c1, c2 and c3) varied. Sometimes they sufficed, sometimes not. For example, in the task

about the word association game on food (in excerpts 9, 10 and 12), these techniques were successful. After four exchanges between the teacher and students, Sharon felt that students were ready to go on with the task with no "procedural scaffolding" and she said:

- excerpt 14

T OK. You get the- you understand the idea of what- give me another.

(31/3 013)

From now on the teacher would not provide the scaffolding she had been providing any more because Sharon thought that students knew "where she wanted to go" by now. And students' participation from then on proved they did.

On other occasions, these indirect techniques were not enough and Sharon sometimes had to resort to giving direct direction. This was the case in 7/4 task 1, the task where students had to give definitions. The indirect clues there proved inefficient. First, Sharon used modelling (see excerpt 13). However, in the next exchange students were still taking their time responding to the teacher's request (see excerpt 15 lines 1-2). In seeing this lack of student response, she narrowed down the request by posing a more guided question: instead of asking "What does talkative mean?" she asked "What does a talkative person do?" (line 2). Still, L7 gave a "wrong" answer since she came up with a synonym (line 3) (the teacher wanted definitions, though). Sharon repeated her question again (line 4) and finally got the response she was looking for:

- excerpt 15

(1) T What does it mean? . . . What does it mean? What's talkative? What is it- who- what does a talkative person do?
L7 Extrovert.
T They're extrovert. But more than extrovert, what do they do?
(5) LL They talk a lot, exactly. ((Chuckles))

(7/4 077)

But even then, not all students had caught on that the teacher only wanted definitions. In the following exchange students came up with an antonym, again an "unwanted" answer (see excerpt 16). Up to then Sharon had geared the students towards giving definitions in indirect ways (modelling and narrowing down of questions). This time, however, the teacher "gave up" and directly told students that she wanted definitions (see underlining).

• excerpt 16

T	What does it mean?
LL	XXX/XXX
T	You are trying to tell me that selfish is the opposite of generous.
L	Yeah. ((Chuckles))
T	Yeah. OK. Fine, that's fine.
L7	X. ((Laughing))
T	What- OK, but can you give me a definition of it?

(7/4 08')

In the excerpt above the task was finally readdressed and ended up being performed according to the teacher's expectations. This was not always the case. It seems that depending on the importance of the tasks these were or were not readdressed. The task above (7/4 task 1) may have been readdressed because it was a task upon which the rest of the tasks in the lesson would be built. It was part of the teacher's plan. It was a word association with food and later on the teacher wanted students to write a recipe. So it was important to stick to vocabulary on food. In contrast, 31/3 task 3 (a task that was not readdressed) was a gap filler, a game that was played to "wait" for the time to end the lesson, a task that the teacher seemed to have decided on on the spot. That the task did not take the direction the teacher wanted would not have any consequences, as can be told from excerpt 1 where both the teacher

and students laughed when Sharon told them the task had not gone where she wanted to.

4.2.2. Mismatches about the linguistic focus and the topic of the task

There were cases where Mark and Sharon did not explicitly identify what the language focus of a task was or did not anticipate the topic of a task for students. These omissions seem to come out of an assumption that students could infer these two aspects of tasks. But there were times in the data where some students did not make these inferences. By contrast, Bob also skipped at times that information during the preparatory segment but a close analysis of his teaching reveals that those absences were intended. First I will present examples from Mark and Sharon where instructions about the grammar focus and the topic proved problematic. Then I will describe these same unproblematic aspects in Bob.

Both Mark and Sharon at some point set students to do tasks with a focus on form but did so without drawing students' attention to it. It is possible that, partly because of that, students sometimes performed poorly and at others failed to use the grammar item embedded in the task. One example of each kind will be presented.

Excerpt 17 reproduces the procedural structuring given by the teacher in introducing a grammar exercise from the textbook. It needs to be observed that Mark did not even mention that was an exercise on aspect, let alone which verb forms were to be used:

• excerpt 17

T So first ((Simultaneously making noise with an ooject)), first, the first thing I want you to do is do the grammar exercise. OK? All right? So you do this in pairs.

(4/12 059)

By contrast, the written instructions that preceded that grammar exercise from the textbook did specify that students had to decide between the progressive and perfect aspect:

Put in the correct tense (simple past, past progressive or past perfect)
(CAMEC p. 31)

The omission, on the part of the teacher, of the verb forms students had to choose from might have contributed to some students' poor performances: When the exercise was corrected students had the tendency of using the simple past instead of the past perfect. This poor performance made the teacher decide to change his initial plans for that lesson and have students do another grammar exercise practicing the same language items. I wonder if students' overuse of the simple past might have been influenced by the fact that they were not told they could use the past perfect. It is possible that some students did not read the written instructions from the textbook and were not aware that they could have made use of three verb forms.

A similar phenomenon occurred in 8/4 task 2, an oral exchange. Sharon directed students to use a number of model sentences supplied by the textbook all of which included frequency adverbs. The teacher, however, did not draw students attention to them nor tell them that that was what she meant them to practice, as can be gathered from the procedural structuring provided in the preparatory segment (see excerpt 18):

• excerpt 18

T OK. Page 81. [(.09) All right.
C [(Getting to the page)).
T . . . OK? . . . Eh, if you got a problem, who do you talk to? Who do you go and talk to? Yeah? . . . If you have a look here, hm? here are some examples.
L12 ((Comes in))
T Hi, (XX L12 in). Would you go and sit sort of next to L2 or somewhere around there?
L12 ((Sits down))
T XX brilliant, thanks. Aha. Aha, so who do you often talk to?, Who would you never talk to? Here are some sentences, just to give you a guide. Yes? You talk about it with a partner, which is going to be two, two, three, two three. Come here. Who would you go and talk to when you got a problem and why? Yeah? And here is just some sentences to guide you. OK? . . . X?
L Mhm.
T X? Off you go.

(8/4 062)

Nevertheless, it is clear that the practice of frequency adverbs was an objective because later on in the wrap-up segment, Sharon drew students' attention to them. In contrast to this tacitness as regards the grammar focus, the corresponding instructions from the textbook made the linguistic focus evident (see underlining), which the teacher did not draw the students' attention to:

> Grammar: frequency adverbs. Do you often ask other people for advice? Who do you ask? Say how often you ask some of the following people for advice: your father, your mother, your husband/wife, your boyfriend/girlfriend, your friends, your boss, your teacher, other people. Use the words and expressions in the box. Examples:
>
> "I often ask my wife for advice."
> "I never ask people for advice."
> "I sometimes ask my mother for advice."
> "I have often asked friends for advice."
> "I would never ask my father for advice."
> ---
> always usually very often often
> quite often sometimes occasionally
> hardly ever never
> ---

CAMEC p. 81

Not making students aware of the frequency adverbs before they practiced them needn't have been a problem in itself; It would just

be a way of dealing with the presentation of grammar. However, it was going to be a problem if students did not include frequency adverbs when they talked about "who you would go and talk to when you got a problem," which was what happened to the pair of students that were recorded (8/4 09-102). Probably if students had been made aware of the fact that the teacher would be focusing on that grammatical area later on and that that was a linguistic objective behind the task, students would have tried harder to include frequency adverbs in their talk. In their conversation the absence of frequency adverbs seems to indicate that these students were simply unaware that they had to practice frequency adverbs.

Another problem that there seemed to be in Sharon's class had to do with the fact that she did not make the theme of lessons explicit during the preparatory segments, hoping that students would see these thematic connections between tasks as the lesson progressed. The truth is that students repeatedly seemed to fail to make these connections. Then the teacher would make them overt but only after students had shown to be experiencing some difficulty during the performance of the task at hand. Excerpt 19 comes from a whole lesson devoted to personality; however, Sharon never made that announcement. That is why in a task where the teacher had written several adjectives on personality on the blackboard and students had to think about their pronunciation and meaning, L5 wanted to check whether there was a thematic thread in the list of words (surprisingly the question was posed 3'44'' after the start of the performance stage):

- excerpt 19

L5 Stubborn is about personality?

T Yeah. They're all about personality. Sorry, I should have told that. Yeah, they are all about personality.

(7/4 039)

Knowing that all the words belonged to one same semantic field was something that would probably decrease the difficulty of the task.

A similar incident took place in 8/4 task 3 from a lesson devoted to advice, but again without Sharon having announced that. The task was introduced by saying to students that they would be listening to eight sentences. Students needed to count the number of words in each sentence and through an example Sharon showed that contractions counted as two words. In the previous task students had been talking to each other about who they usually talked to to seek for advice but the teacher did not mention that the sentences in the listening were also going to be about the topic of advice. Furthermore, the example sentence given before the start of the task had nothing to do with advice. It was only after having released students and after having played the first sentence on the recording that Sharon added that information—probably after perceiving that students were finding that first sentence difficult (see underlining):

• excerpt 20

R Unit nineteen, lesson B exercise four. One. Why don't you stop seeing him?
C (.15 to write the sentence down))
T Repeat. Don't copy. Try and work individually. You know there are seven words. You know it must make sense. And just as another help, what type of sen- , what are we doing today? What are we doing? What's the focus of today's class? . . . What's the word on the blackboard? . . . Advice, so these sentences are related to advice. OK? That'll help you a lot.

(8/4 172)

Making this connection obvious was meant to make the task easier, to permit students to make more informed inferences to decipher

ne sentences as Sharon herself said at the end of the excerpt: "That will help you a lot."

In contrast to these omissions from Mark and Sharon, Bob seemed to be more in control of his. There are two reasons that explain this:

- In his interactions with groups during the performance stages, Bob complemented his procedural structuring from the preparatory segment.
- Some of the omissions were purposeful to test if students where using the language he had in mind.

During performance stages, Bob used to go from group to group and through questions or feedback he used to make students aware of aspects of the task that he had not specified during the preparatory segment. For example, in the preparatory segment of task 1 on 26/3 Bob did not mention what language items students were expected to be using in the problem-solving task being introduced. However, when he went from group to group listening to and interacting with the students, he systematically commented on the use students were making of the future, the future being on the teacher's agenda for that day.

- excerpts 21 and 22

Teacher addressing L8, L10 and L7
T Remem- remember it's future because it's tomorrow
L10 Ah.
T So we will have to put. Yeah? Because the dinner is tomorrow evening.
(26/3 076)

Teacher addressing L1, L2 and L11
T You're you're changing from can and could all the time, yeah? Ehm, think about that. Can, you are referring to present, future? (26/3 176)

The second characteristic from Bob's preparatory segments was that sometimes the omissions in the identification of linguistic focus were purposeful. This phenomenon happened especially in problem-solving tasks. It was frequent for this teacher to leave out the linguistic focus of a problem-solving task from the procedural structuring in the preparatory segment, purposefully leaving students to figure out what linguistic items each problem-solving task veiled. In fact, in excerpt 23 he explicitly said that to a student in reference to a composition Bob had just assigned (see underlining):

• excerpt 23

L12 What we must write X?
T Sorry?
L12 What we must use?
T No, I'm not going to tell you what to use. I want to see what you use.
LL ((Chuckles))
T I want to see what you're doing. That's why I'm not telling you XX.

(30/4 640)

This question came from a student who had recently joined this class and was probably not used to the teacher not making explicit "what we must use" right from the start.

These omissions from Bob are understandable, if we take into account that he was devoting much effort in this class to consolidation and fluency rather than the introduction of new content, as is evident from what he said in excerpt 24:

• excerpt 24

T What I really want to say to you is that we've been learning grammar and our grammar is like existing in isolation from the way we speak, yeah?

.
.
.

T So there are some places that you'd use some of this sort of grammar that we've been thinking about. Now then, e;h we'll be doing some more of these situations next week

> and thinking again about where you can use some of the grammar that we've looked at when you're speaking.
> (26/3 509 and 596)

Bob's comments in excerpt 24 come from the wrap-up segment of a problem-solving task where the teacher expected students to use modal verbs like "may," "might," "should," "must," and "can't" and they did not. The teacher had not mentioned these expectations of his at the start of the task because he wanted to see if students would use these verbs "unprompted." Nevertheless, in all other similar tasks with an omission of the grammar focus in the preparatory segment, students always showed an awareness of those forms that Bob would later on make explicit, which shows this practice of his was quite successful.

To recapitulate, this section was divided into two broad parts. One concerned with the efficacy of teacher's explanations about what students were expected to do. The other concerned the efficacy of making students aware of what linguistic focus or theme a task entailed.

Upon examination of the three teachers, Mark differentiated himself because of the problems he had in putting across what students had to do. Some of these problems had to do with synchronization. Sometimes he informed students about aspects of a task too early and that disconcerted them. At other times, he informed students about the procedure with some delay and students showed annoyance then. Another constant in this class was that students had to learn to wait. They had to wait until the teacher had written full exercises on the blackboard to know what it was all about. And they had to wait to make questions after

exercises had been corrected. This latter rule seemed to clash somewhat with students' tendency to want questions answered on the spot.

As regards the identification of the linguistic focus of the task or its topic, both Mark and Sharon had a tendency to sometimes assume that students would pick up these aspects of tasks without drawing attention to them. The assumptions sometimes proved wrong. In contrast, Bob's students were not usually unaware of the linguistic focus of tasks even at times when the teacher did not include that information in the preparatory segment.

4.3. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS IN PROCEDURAL STRUCTURING

This section starts with a definition of the terms and a complete list of the specific directions and descriptions identified in the data. Next, two types of events are differentiated (proactive and reactive) and what draws teachers to give them is investigated. Following this, the reader will find a table with the frequency counts per teacher of the use of specific directions and descriptions, complemented with an examination of what factors characterize their use. The last part of this section deals with the way directions and descriptions are delivered to students.

Teachers sometimes gave specific accounts about the actions students were expected to take with a detail or specificity that was not usually found in directions where teachers limited themselves to just giving the basic information about what needed to be done. Excerpt 25 is one example of a specific direction from Mark in a task where students had to interview each other. The teacher told them what they had to do if communication between the interviewer and interviewee broke down:

- excerpt 25[7]

T Now- you are now going to try and ask as many people as possible. (...) And also when you ask, remember don't please don't do this, don't say: Do you (like)- and show them the questions. Read them. If you don't understand: Could you repeat that? What does X mean? et cetera et cetera. OK?

(1/4 848)

Similarly, teachers sometimes explained a covert feature of the structure of the task or of its evaluation (in case it was a task

---

[7] Specific instructions and descriptions are underlined in these excerpts.

related to the exam). These were sorts of "tricks" that students would otherwise usually discover only after extended exposure to the task in question. Excerpt 26 is an instance of a specific description of a task where Mark shared with students two pieces of tacit knowledge about a reading task consisting of crossing out extra words:

- excerpt 26

T In these exercises the word is usually very obvious that it's wrong. Secondly eh you don't have two so close together.
(11/5 276)

The specificity that is found in this type of directions and descriptions is not usually present in the written instructions that precede exercises in textbooks. To confirm this, we will look at the written instructions that preceded the two tasks from which the two extracts above have been taken. In the written instructions about the task on the interviews (from excerpt 25) there was no mention of the use of clarification requests in case of a communication problem:

> Go round the class asking your questions. Speak to as many people as possible. Don't forget to note each person's answers.
> CAMEC p. 93

The written instructions in the reading task (excerpt 26) did not mention, either, how close extra words were from each other and how flagrant the extra words were:

> Read the following text and underline the 40 words which have been added to it. You must not include in the 40 any word which is optional, but only those words which make no sense at all in the context.
> Anthology p. 88

The information given in specific directions and descriptions, the teacher usually took from his own repertoire of knowledge as a practitioner and from his cumulative contact with the group of

students being taught. Tables 5 and 6 show the contents of all the specific instructions and descriptions that were identified in tasks developing productive and receptive skills respectively.

Table 5

Contents of specific directions and descriptions in productive skills

---

- being dramatic or imaginative
- being spontaneous
- listening to interlocutors attentively
- emphasizing communication over accuracy
- using clarification requests
- anticipating questions from interlocutors
- keeping notes
- stressing students' use of the L2 in class
- not worrying about mistakes
- keeping a record of mistakes

Table 6

Contents of specific directions and descriptions in receptive skills and language exercises

---

- getting the general idea
- extracting specific information
- self-monitoring
- stressing exchange of ideas in groups
- emphasizing communication over accuracy
- using context at the sentence level
- using second language knowledge to infer meaning
- skipping problems
- inferencing of word formation through analogy
- concentrating oneself
- avoiding discouraging oneself
- stressing use of the L2 to communicate with each other
- selecting words that one wants to learn
- experimenting

- using one's intuition
- raising awareness of importance of getting general idea
- raising awareness of limitations of the context in the classroom
- raising awareness of how teacher talks differently from native speakers
- raising awareness of tacit features in tasks

In the transcripts, most of the instances of specific directions and descriptions were given before a task was performed, mostly during the preparatory segment and to a much lesser extent, during presentation stages on procedure, which are like an extended preparatory segment[8]. However, specificity was also given during the performance, reporting and correction stages or after a task had been reported or corrected (that is, in the wrap-up segment) (see Table 7).

One may wonder what caused teachers to give specific directions in some tasks and not in others. The motivations for this will be discussed in the next few paragraphs. On occasions, what motivated this detail in instructions was an awareness on the part of the teacher that the type of activity that he expected from students was "marked," and because of this "markedness" he had to make it explicit to the students. This is most clear in excerpt 27 when Sharon told her students "not to read the paper" when in fact what she intended her students to do was a type of reading (scanning, a marked behavior) that did not consist of decoding (word-by-word reading, probably regarded as an unmarked

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[8] When teachers went into extended detail about the procedure to carry out a task, I considered those explanations stages in themselves (referred to as "presentation stages on procedure"). Three such stages were identified in the data.

behavior), which is what she probably meant when she used the word "read:"

• excerpt 27

T And we are going to be working in about groups of three and here are the questions. And the idea is not to read the paper. ((Clicks her tongue)) The idea is to be the first group to correctly answer all these questions, which means looking quickly, finding the information and going.

(25/3 257)

In cases like this, the teachers anticipated some students doing a task in a way that was not appropriate and prevented this unwanted behavior by making the expected behavior explicit.

Table 7[9]

Location of specific directions and descriptions

	Teacher			
Location	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Presentation stage on procedure	1	3	—	4
Preparatory segment	7	7	10	24
Performance, reporting or correction stage	4	4	5	13
Wrap-up segment	—	4	—	4

[9]Repetitions have been counted. That is why the total number of references is higher here than in Tables 8 and 9, where repetitions have not been recorded.

On other occasions, the motivation to give detail came from an awareness of the difficulty a task may pose to students. In that case, specific directions were meant to help students to overcome some difficulty or to get the most out of their performances. For example, both Bob (26/3 task 1 and 1/4 task 1) and Mark (13/5 task 3) advised their respective students to keep notes as an aid in the preparation for subsequent oral reports. Similarly, in excerpt 28 Bob advised his students to anticipate questions students might come up with during an oral report when preparing for it:

• excerpt 28

T So let's spend five minutes and try and finish by about a quarter past. Remember your plans, have a look at them, think about the rationale behind your plan. Mhm? I'd like you to think and why you put different people, or will put different people in different places, OK? Reasons are very important because when you come to the front and say: We will put this person here and this person here, . . . it's a good idea to justify that, to have a reason. If not the other people can ask you: Well, why will you put this person here and this person here? We should be thinking questions, OK? So I'd like you to spend five minutes preparing the justification for your plan, OK?

(26/3 032)

At times, the teacher actually commented on a problematic feature of a task before giving detailed directions, as in excerpt 29 where, after commenting about the length of the listening (see bold type), Mark told students they needed to listen for specific information:

• excerpt 29

T So you listen to the description of the house and you decide which room is which. Which is the kitchen, which is the [bedroom,=
LL [Ah.
T =[which is the dining-room, OK? which is the [study. All right?
LL [Ah [Ah, XX. / XX. / XX.
R Unit twenty one.
T I'll play this once. **It's quite long.** OK? So listen for the information. You don't need to understand everything. Just the information about the rooms.

(23/3 977)

In the above case and in most others the teacher's detailed instructions were a product of his anticipation of some difficulty. At other times, the comment was a reaction to students experiencing or having experienced some difficulty. So in 11/5 task 3, Mark went into detail about how to perform a reading task (crossing out extra words), after they had corrected it and after students had told him that they found that type of task difficult. In excerpt 30, the students' wrong performances prompted Sharon to repeatedly remind her students that they needed to use the context of sentences to identify words in a dictation. This is one of the six reminders Sharon gave there during the performance stage:

• excerpt 30

L6 I write: I don't think, but I read I listen I don't (w.p.)?
T OK. But what we're doing here, we've talked about it before, is one thing what you think you hear and possibly you do because in English we *don't stress every sound* ((Clapping four times)). (...) So OK, you might think you hear that but that's why you must use what's in here ((Pointing to her forehead)), yeah? of what's possible.

(8/4 212)

In excerpt 31, the students' display of lack of enthusiasm (probably motivated by the task difficulty) seemed to have contributed to the teacher providing a specific direction, where the teacher allowed students to skip words if they ran into difficulty:

• excerpt 31

T In pairs, (.02) in pairs (.02) you are going . . . to look at these words and decide which is the stressed syllable.
LL Oh.
T Oh!
LL Oh!! / ((Chuckles))
T And which sound it is, OK? . . . (Sorry), if you can't do it, you have no idea, leave it, do the next one. Try some. And then when you've been trying for five, ten minutes, we'll play the tape and (you'll) listen.

(1/4 136)

The teachers' references to specific descriptions of tasks (as opposed to specific directions) always came about during correction stages and as reactions. In excerpt 26, a mistake in the design of a task was what prompted one such comment from Mark. In 18/5 task 1, Bob said that simpler answers were always preferred in structural conversion tasks, as a reaction to students coming up with two possible structures to complete the following sentence:

"Let's have a party to celebrate," she said.
She suggested .....

On another occasion (see excerpt 32), after students had answered the questions from a listening (in preparation for the exam) and while they were being given the correct answers, Bob commented that students could get a guidance as to how long the answers should be by looking at how many points were given to each question:

• excerpt 32

T And in the exam you will actually see next to each question how many points for each question, which will give you an idea of how long your answers should be. OK?

(19/5 530)

Finally there was one occasion where the information was given because a student asked for it. In excerpt 33, while Bob was explaining at length what the listening comprehension in the exam consisted of, one student asked:

• excerpt 33

L13 One one question.
T Yeah.
L13 Do we have to write sentences or names or . . . ?
T Do you have to write sentences? Well, this is really- good point. This is really a test of listening. So first of all (.02) you must communicate the idea to the person who's going to read it, to the teacher.

(19/5 370)

In Table 8, the reader will find the distribution of specific directions and descriptions in receptive and productive tasks by teacher. This count excluded repetitions that reinforced messages already introduced earlier in the lesson or on a previous lesson in carrying out the same task. The table shows that Bob, Mark and Sharon made eleven, fourteen and fifteen such references respectively with a slightly higher number of references for receptive skills, especially in the case of Sharon. Taking into account that Mark was recorded for more hours than Bob and Sharon, one concludes that this teacher made the least use of specific directions.

Table 8

Number of specific directions and descriptions per teacher and type of task

	Teacher			
Type of task	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Receptive	7	8	9	24
Productive	4	7	5	16
Total	11	15	14	40

There is yet another relevant factor when it comes to seeing how much of a habit each teacher had in making these specific references. And this has to do with whether tasks primarily

prepared for the final exam or not (see Table 9). Twelve out of the fifteen references by Mark were related to the exam. Bob's mentionings of specific directions were more evenly distributed: six references related to the exam versus five unrelated. There were no references related to the exam by Sharon. So it seems that for Mark the pressure of the exam determined his being more specific in telling his students what was expected of them. On the other hand, Bob and, to a larger extent, Sharon included these type of comments irrespective of whether tasks were related to the exam or not.

Table 9

Number of specific directions and descriptions in tasks related and unrelated to exam practice

	Teacher			
Type of task	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Related to exam	6	12	—	18
Unrelated to exam	5	3	14	22

A feature shared by the talk of the three teachers when giving specific directions and descriptions was their brevity. There was only one intervention from Mark (11/5 task 3) that stood out from the others in that he took thirty-eight turns and it lasted for seven minutes and forty seconds. The rest were usually a few

propositions long (from one to five) and did not require the students' verbal participation, as the reader will have observed from the excerpts presented so far. In part, the shortness of the references was due to the fact that teachers usually told students what should be done without demonstrating it through examples.

The extent to which students understood teachers when being specific about instructions is unknown to us. A couple of observations on my part make me suspect that there were times when students did not fully understand what the teachers were saying. For example, on 12/2 Sharon asked students to use their intuition to perform a task and repeatedly used the word "feeling" in her explanation—"get your feeling out," "is my feeling English?" etc. Students on that day never asked what the word feeling meant. To my surprise, most of those students turned out not to know what the word meant when "feeling" appeared in one of the items of a questionnaire they were asked to fill out in May.

Another related observation is that Bob at times talked to students using terms and concepts that are quite specific to the field of ESL, which students may not have fully grasped. One such example is this: "As teachers we are trying to simulate other contexts but the class is too restrictive to reproduce real life situations" (field note, 11/11 p. 30).

The extent to which students carried out tasks following the guidelines the teacher gave is touched upon in 5.3.. However, it should be interesting to note here that I observed a time where the implementation of the task did not favor the activation of the specific direction the teacher had given in the preparatory segment. On 22/1, Mark told students to do a quick reading of a text but he

gave them enough time to read the text carefully, which was what students ended up doing (field note, p. 30). This shows that giving specific directions may not be enough, and that the implementation of the task seems to be as important.

To recapitulate, when teachers introduced tasks they sometimes added information that was not made explicit in the corresponding task in the textbook. In general, specific directions and descriptions were meant to help students perform tasks. Sharon saw these specific directions as techniques she gave students to help them survive, to give them confidence so that they could actually say far more and understand far more than they thought they could. Above all, through these techniques she wanted to show them that they could survive (interview pp. 13 and 15). The number of these references per teacher differed, with Bob and Sharon making the most references. Mark gave specific directions less often and mainly in tasks related to the exam. However, the number of references per lesson was still relatively brief and little verbal participation from students was required in the three classes.

4.4. FOSTERING INTERACTION IN GROUPS DURING PROCEDURAL STRUCTURING

This section looks at two instances of specific directions in closer detail: stressing students' use of the L2 to communicate with each other and encouraging the exchange of ideas in groups. These two points from Tables 5 and 6 in 4.3. were selected for further analysis because they were pervasive in almost every task and because of the sharp difference in behavior and attitudes of the teachers towards these two issues.

Even though the three teachers used to put students into groups to carry out the overwhelming majority of tasks, not all the three teachers communicated the same importance to students working together. Sharon and Bob were more concerned with the quality of students' interactions during those periods of time in this configuration than Mark was. This concern was evident during the teachers' interviews. Sharon was an enthusiast of cooperative learning and even said that she missed a measure of the ability to work with others in English in the final exams of the school:

> If someone, even if their English is rubbish, if they've learned to work cooperatively with each other, I'd argue that although their language is not sufficient to pass their exam as such they would have benefited a lot in terms of education. . . . But that's not evaluated in any way.
> (interview, p. 9)

In talking specifically about how he had adapted to the students in his class, Bob said that he was concentrating on group work as a result of a concern about students becoming more confident:

> At the beginning I found that the only way of presenting material was very much teacher-led whereas now I'm concentrating more on fluency activities, with an emphasis on practice in small groups.
> (interview pp. 4-5)

So both Sharon and Bob where concerned with group dynamics, the former as a belief of hers and the latter out of an adaptation of his teaching to the students in the class. These concerns permeated in many ways during the lessons, including what the teacher said in the preparatory segments.

Comparing tasks of a very similar nature (form-oriented tasks) across teachers, I found that Sharon and Bob presented them in a subtly different way from Mark. Besides asking students to go into groups, Sharon and Bob, slightly emphasized that they were expected to work as a group not just in groups. These two teachers also expressed their interest in the interaction entailed in the carrying out of a task. They encouraged discussion and exchange of ideas during group work. Here are some illustrations during the procedural structuring of several tasks where the group orientation of these two teachers is made evident (see underlining):

• excerpt 34

T I'd like you to definitely work in groups of three and I'd like you to talk about it.

(Bob, 11/3 003)

• excerpt 35

T Well, go into the group you want to go into. OK? But make sure you work as a group, all right?

(Bob, 11/3 045)

• excerpt 36

T-G Have you got any vocabulary problems or no?
F Yes.
T All right. Then start looking at some vocabulary and guessing what it means. Yes? Yeah?
F Yeah.
T And discussing what you think it means.

(Sharon, 11/3 448)

• excerpt 37

T First of all is it present, is it past, is it present perfect? Secondly

> , before you disappear from me, secondly . . . have a look, first what tenses, why. Talk about it. Think about it.
>
> (Sharon, 25/3 537)

In contrast to Sharon and Bob, Mark limited himself to asking students to pair up and communicated an interest in the product rather than in the process of interaction students would engage in during group work. To put it simply, Mark seemed to be interested in the answers, and Mark and Sharon in the process of finding them.

These two positions seem to be closely related to the attitudes the three teachers had towards the use of English in class. From day one, I immediately perceived a different treatment between the use of English in Sharon's and Bob's classes on the one hand, and in Mark's class on the other, as the very first page of my field notes reflects,

> In comparison with Sharon and Bob there is no reinforcement or reminder here [in Mark's class] that they [students] need to speak in English. Some students even speak to Mark in Spanish.
>
> (field note, 30/10, p. 1)

Four months later I was still impressed about the different use of English in the three classes where students had theoretically the same level[10]:

> As the year progresses I see more and more of a difference between Mark's class, and Sharon's or Bob's. In Mark's class students use very little English, practically none to talk to each other and sometimes they even talk in public in Spanish. On the other hand, I see that students in Sharon's class use English sometimes when they finish th

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[10] An intervening factor to explain why students in Mark's class used English less often might be the fact that most of them had started learning English within the last three years, while most of the students in Sharon's and Bob's classes started studying English in secondary education. The fact that the students in Sharon's and Bob's classes were probably consolidating their English (and not learning anew) might have contributed to their more frequent use of the L2 in class. A student from Sharon's class summarized her experience in that class like this: "I finished COU with the same level than now. I haven't learned new things but I have remembered them" (field note, 13/5 p. 65).

> assigned task to communicate with each other. This difference is not surprising considering she constantly reminds students of this need to stay in English. (field note, 23/3 p. 50)

Sharon's and Bob's interest in students' interaction during group work matches these teachers' expectations that students should interact with each other in the L2 in order to get an agreement, to deliberate etc. Mark, in contrast, did not believe students were ready to interact in the L2 (field note, 4/11 p. 10). That belief would in part explain why he expressed no interest in group interaction. The comparison of two very similar situations taking place in both Bob's and Mark's classes gives a very good illustration of these two positions regarding the use of the L1 or L2. Bob's class was being introduced to a task to prepare for the exam and he pressed students to use English arguing that there was little time left for the exam:

- excerpt 38

T I think you are all doing it. I think you've got to remember that we've got the exam in about two or three weeks. Speak English. You need to speak in English everyday, yeah?
(18/5 037)

In contrast, Mark was also going to start a task in preparation for the final exam and he specifically told students to use the L1, arguing that in the exam they would be allowed to prepare that task in the L1 (13/5 443). Bob was trying to make the most of students' time in class to get them to speak as much English as possible, even though that task was not a speaking task (it was a language exercise). In contrast, Mark saw the task solely as a preparation for the exam, even though his task was primarily designed to speak (it was a role-play).

In short, there seemed to be a sharp difference between these teachers concepts of what students could learn out of tasks. Sharon and Mark's stress on group interaction in the L2 revealed that these teachers thought that all tasks had a potential for the development of oral skills, no matter whether the tasks were primarily designed for that purpose or not (i.e., language exercises, comprehension of texts, written production tasks)[11]. On the other hand, for Mark the potential for learning of tasks was compartmentalized. Speaking tasks like discussions and role-plays were the only ones presented to students as places where they were to practice their oral skills. No oral practice was expected from tasks that had not been primarily designed for that purpose. They were not places to practice speaking.

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[11] This emphasis on communication in the L2 at all times and places in class seems to have gotten the expected results in Sharon's class. By the end of the year she asked students what they had learnt and several students mentioned speaking as the skill where they had made most progress in: "Perhaps in vocabulary and to communicate with other people this class has been very interesting," "In COU you only learn structures, vocabulary and now with these structures and vocabulary you have to talk with other persons" (field note, 13/5 p. 65).

4.5. CHANCES FOR STUDENT DECISION-MAKING IN PROCEDURAL STRUCTURING

The question in this section consists in seeing to what extent students were given a chance to have a say in the lesson's agenda. This time the examination of the data will be presented as a general description with no classifications or tables with frequency counts.

The analysis of the data showed that none of these three teachers systematically structured for students' participation in the process of classroom instruction. In the preparatory segments of tasks, teachers presented tasks as finished plans to be implemented. This happened in tasks and homework assignments that were implemented as planned as well as in those that were decided on on the spot. Students were not usually given the chance to choose what tasks to do, or what grammar areas to focus on, and only occasionally were they free to choose what to read or talk about (especially in Sharon's class).

In the data there were three occasions where one of the teachers seemed to be opening up for students to make a decision. However, a closer examination of these three cases shows that they may not be genuine invitations for decision-making on the part of the teachers or that they are limited invitations as regards to what students can decide upon.

In excerpt 39, Bob requested the students' opinion about doing a listening. L4 suggested a dictation (line 5), a suggestion that was accepted by Bob. However, the listening was still done when the teacher planned to. So L4's suggestion did not persuade the teacher enough to drop the listening and do the dictation first.

• excerpt 39

(1) T What I was thinking of doing today was ehm we'll spend half the class looking at structural conversions again and then what about doing a listening? Because we haven't done a listening, have we?
(5) L4 [And a dictation.
LL [XX./XX.
T And a dictation as well. Wow! Well, no, we'll do a dictation tomorrow, OK?
(10) F OK.
T And that will sort of prepare and have you XX re..y for the dictation on Thursday yeah? . . . and the listening, yeah?

(19/5 005)

In excerpt 40, Mark was trying to give some extra homework for students in the face of the proximity of the exam and he asked about the students' availability. L5 must have interpreted the teacher's question as an invitation for ideas on how to make the most of time. But his suggestion on lines 9-10 was ignored by the teacher, who did not really respond to L5's suggestion and turned to the preparatory segment of the following task (lines 17-19), thus leaving no space for further discussion.

• excerpt 40

(1) T If . . . I give you . . . exercises to do this weekend,=
L5 This weekend or?
L2 This weekend?
T =will you do them?
(5) LL Yes.
.
.
.
L5 One one suggestion. Can you do the solutions of some and we
(10) can . . . =
L2-L5 =Però millor que ho=
L5 [=so that we can see
L [Millor fer-ho X.
L2 [Millor que ho facis i li dones amb ell.
(15) L5 Yes but . . .
L (Si no ho fem ara) XXX.
T No. I prefer L5- for example it would be useful to do reading in pairs in the class. The problem is we haven't got much time. So I prefer now for example to do a dictation . . . Right?

(11/5 811)

These examples show that the few times when a teacher asked for the students' opinions about what to do, the plans were already made by the teacher. They rather seemed to be seeking the students' approval of the teacher's plans. Maybe the questions were not so much product of the teacher's willingness to modify his agenda in hearing the students' opinions but indications of a willingness to disguise the asymmetry of power in those classrooms, to avoid implementing tasks or homework in a direct manner. It could be possible that the motivations behind these questions were similar to those that unconsciously took the teacher to make use of the first person plural marker in the openings of tasks or the motivations that took the teacher to first word directions tentatively ("If possible, try without a dictionary") and immediately after, word them more directly ("Do it without a dictionary" Mark, 11/5 828).

To summarize, the three teachers took the role of planners fully and did not share this planning with students. Occasionally, it apparently seemed that students were asked to have a say but these were probably devices used by teachers to avoid displays of power differences.

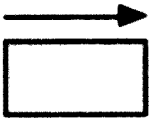
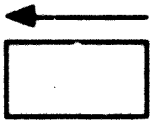
4.6. PROCEDURAL STRUCTURING ACROSS TASKS AND LESSONS

The first part of this section is devoted to explaining the terms "review" and "preview." Then there follows a quantitative analysis of the teachers' use of these two practices, complemented by a qualitative analysis of the same data. Towards the end of the section explanatory factors for the different use of reviews and previews among teachers are sought.

Teachers generally provide procedural structuring in reference to immediate tasks. That has been what I have analyzed so far. What not all teachers necessarily do is anticipate or draw connections with subsequent and previous tasks or learning objectives. Each time a teacher in the data anticipated academic activity I called that a preview. Previews can anticipate academic activity within a lesson or across lessons. Each time a teacher in the data drew connections with previous academic work I called that a review. Reviews can look back at what has been done within a lesson or can look back at past lessons (yesterday's lesson, last week's lesson). Figure 3 shows some of these concepts through symbols. Each box represents a lesson and the box with dots stands for the lesson where the preview or review was actually uttered. On the right of the symbols, there are illustrations from an imaginary teacher.

Figure 3

Types of previews and reviews

Preview within a lesson		Today we will first do a dictation and then I will give you some time to continue reading your books.
Preview across lessons		We will continue looking at gerunds and infinitives next week.
Review within a lesson		Today we have learnt how to apologize.
Review across lessons		This month we have worked on your listening skills quite a lot. I wonder if you've noticed any progress.

Previews and reviews are most likely to be communicated at the beginnings and ends of lessons before the preparatory segment of the first task and after the wrap-up segment of the last task. However, they may also be communicated in between tasks.

An analysis of the previews and reviews (see Table 10) communicated by Bob, Mark and Sharon shows that there was no occurrence from any of the three teachers of a review within a lesson. And that Bob provided more structuring across tasks and lessons than Mark and Sharon. However, the distinction in the use

of previews and reviews between the three teachers does not come so much from the number of events of each type from each teacher, but rather from a qualitative analysis of each event and its context. First I will describe previews and reviews by Bob and then I will deal with those by Mark and Sharon together.

Table 10

Number of previews and reviews per teacher

	Teacher		
Type	Bob	Mark	Sharon
Preview within a lesson	1	3	2
Review within a lesson	—	—	—
Preview across lessons	5	3	1
Review across lessons	4	1	2
	10	7	5

Bob did not usually start a lesson abruptly with the first task. He usually started lessons with reviews that connected the present with the immediately preceding lesson. He did this when tasks had not been finished from the previous day and were retaken then.

Excerpt 41 was uttered at the very beginning of a lesson starting with a language exercise on infinitives and gerunds. In the review, Bob reminded students of the continuity of the linguistic area under study.

• excerpt 41[12]: review across lessons

T OK. Remember we'd been looking at e:m gerunds and infinitives, yeah? You remember that, yeah? And today what I want to do with you is this exercise on page fifty-five, all right?

(11/3 003)

Excerpt 42 was uttered at the beginning of a lesson that continued a problem-solving task started the previous day:

• excerpt 42: review across lessons

T Right, yesterday we were looking at a problem, yeah? Eh the problem is in a town ca::lled what?
LL Anglebury.
T Anglebury, yeah. And what was the problem in Anglebury?
LL Traffic.
LL Traffic.
T Hey?
T Traffic. That's right, yeah. Too much traffic or too many traffic?
LL Too much.
T Too much. That's it. Goo::d! Yeah, OK.

(1/4 035)

Bob also used to end lessons by telling students what they would be doing the following class if it was somehow related to what they had done on that day. Most of the times this preview was embedded in homework assignments (excerpt 43), but not always (excerpt 44). In excerpt 43 the teacher gave students a language exercise before the lesson ended. In excerpt 44 a problem-solving task was being concluded before the end of the lesson.

• excerpt 43: preview across lessons

T Right. So if you could do that exercise for tomorrow, I'd be a happy man because I'd like to look at that exercise tomorrow so that we can finish with gerunds and infinitives.

(11/3 555)

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[12] Previews and reviews have been underlined.

• excerpt 44: preview across lessons

T Now then, e:h we'll be doing some more of these situations next week and thinking again about where you can use some of the grammar that we've looked at when you're speaking. OK. Right, so, we'll stop there for today then. (.02) Good afternoon! and welcome to the show.

(26/3 596)

As regards reviews and previews within a lesson, Table 10 shows that Bob only gave one. But that is understandable considering that four out of the six lessons recorded were one-task lessons, thus with no chance of previews or reviews within lessons. But from the only two lessons consisting of more than one task, there is evidence that on one of them Bob provided a preview (see excerpt 45):

• excerpt 45: preview within a lesson

T Right. What I was- can you just listen for a moment. What I was thinking of doing today was ehm we'll spend half the class looking at structural conversions again and then what about doing a listening?

(19/5 005)

The beginning of the other lesson with more than one task (30/4) could not be recorded, so I ignore if there was a preview as well.

Mark and Sharon differentiated themselves from Bob in that they did not usually give previews and reviews under normal circumstances. Mark provided one review across lessons. The only two reviews across lessons from Sharon had to do with the students' familiarity with a task (excerpt 46).

• excerpt 46: review across lessons

T All right, now.
L XX
LL [((Laughter))

T [We're gonna play word association with the word food. Right? Word association. We've played word association before here in class. Yeah?

(31/3 001)

Generally speaking, these two teachers started the first task of lessons abruptly. Sharon sometimes preceded her introduction to the first task of the lesson with a signal for students to "switch" to English and then plunged into the task with no other preambles, as in excerpt 47.

• excerpt 47

T OK. All right. ((Claps once)) And change and change language. Ah, sh, sh, sh. Jordi come on. Let's go. Let's go. Right. ((Claps once)) Have you got your books with you?

(Sharon, 5/3 005)

Mark would usually start the lesson by giving compositions back to students and leaving some time for them to ask him questions on a one-to-one basis. After that period, sometimes there was some informal talk. However, there were usually no reviews or previews before the start of the first task.

Most of Mark's and Sharon's previews across and within lessons were given under unusual circumstances. One of the previews Mark gave within a lesson (4/12 046) was presented as such in the textbook, which makes me wonder if he would have given that preview had it not appeared in the textbook. On another occasion the preview was given in talking about the little time there was left before the exam and that scarcity of time made the teacher plan ahead (also an unusual circumstance). Then there were three instances from Mark and Sharon of previews given as a result of a change of plans because something unexpected happened (another unusual circumstance). On 31/4 the announcement about spending the remainder of the lesson on vocabulary was given only after

Sharon found out that the video was not working. Mark's announcement that students would have to write a composition about Marco Polo in two weeks was given when the teacher realized they were not ready yet to write that composition for next week as he had planned.

In short, students in Bob's class had a sense of continuity due to the presence of previews and reviews across lessons. Nevertheless, some of the previews this teacher gave were embedded in assignments of homework and it is not clear whether the primary purpose of these announcements was to press students to see the need to do homework (see 4.9.) or it was to inform them or both. In contrast, in Sharon's and Mark's classes there was less explicitation of the continuity across lessons and between tasks within a lesson. Lessons started abruptly with few links made as to what had been done previously and few announcements about the present lesson. These two teachers moved from task to task with little anticipation about what the link between tasks in a lesson was, in spite of the fact that these teachers usually implemented several tasks per lesson.

This lack of previews within a lesson sometimes caused students to perform wrongly. For example on 31/3, the lesson around vocabulary on food, if Sharon had made that explicit from the very beginning (i.e., that all the lesson would revolve around food), the student coming up with the word "mouse" in the task about a semantic map on food would probably not have happened (see excerpt 10).

The presence of procedural structuring across lessons in Bob's class and its absence in Mark's and Sharon's classes may be due to

the different nature of the tasks and how they were implemented. Bob implemented longer tasks or organized tasks in such a way that they took longer. Tasks usually took over more than one period of class time, making the relationship between lessons stronger, thus the frequent presence of procedural structuring across lessons. Mark and Sharon implemented shorter tasks or they were implemented so that they lasted shorter. This fact could cause relationships between lessons to be weaker than in Bob's class and thus the scarcity of procedural structuring across lessons, even though I have evidence that at least Sharon planned her classes in units larger than lessons (interview p. 5).

In this section I have looked at how much of a habit each teacher had of (especially) starting and finishing lessons with previews and reviews across and within lessons. While a quantitative analysis did not show drastic differences between teachers, a qualitative reexamination of the data did. Bob came out as the teacher who gave previews and reviews on a common basis. Mark and Sharon also gave previews and reviews but mostly under special circumstances.

4.7. LINGUISTIC STRUCTURING

The purpose of this section is to look at the linguistic structuring within the preparatory and wrap-up segments of tasks. The term linguistic structuring refers to instruction on the study of language that is relevant to the whole task and not just a part of it. In the transcripts the teachers gave or elicited rules, examples or definitions in the areas of grammar, functions, vocabulary and pronunciation in order to facilitate the quality of the performance of the task that was being introduced or enrich the students' formal knowledge from a task that had just been carried out.

This section will start with an identification of the types of linguistic structuring found in the data. A description of the amount of linguistic structuring provided by teacher will follow. The next focus of attention will be the location of such structuring (in the preparatory or wrap-up segments). Finally a description of the participation structure will bring this topic to a close.

The following types of linguistic structuring were identified from the data[13]:

- appeal to students' affect/opinions: the teacher asked students how they felt about a linguistic area (e.g., whether they found it difficult, whether they were bored or tired)

- expansion: the teacher went into detail about a linguistic area which was new to students.

- general evaluation: the teacher told students how they were doing as regards the linguistic focus of a task.

- generation of examples or modelling: the teacher asked students to generate examples, thus applying in a

[13] Examples from the data of each type of linguistic structuring will be interspersed throughout this section.

spontaneous way the linguistic knowledge students had practiced in carrying out a task. In modelling the teacher started a task (with a focus on form) with the students either by doing the first items of an exercise for the students or eliciting the answers from them.

- question time: the teacher asked students if they had questions about the linguistic focus of a task. The length of this type of elaboration varied depending on how many students had questions and the length of the teacher's responses.

- quick correction: the teacher selected a few linguistic problems and he either gave or elicited the correct versions.

- synthesis or revision of rules: the teacher went over the main rules in a synthetic way without going into detail. This type of structuring took place when the linguistic information had already been mentioned during the performance of a task or when it was not the first time that linguistic area was being mentioned in class.

Out of these seven types of linguistic structuring two of them are metastatements (appeal to affect/opinions and general evaluation).

Table 11 shows the amount of linguistic structuring per type and teacher. The pedagogical event is the unit used to describe each time a teacher provides linguistic structuring. Mark included the most number of events (eighteen). Bob and Sharon included events on linguistic structuring on fewer occasions (thirteen and five respectively). However, taking into account the number of recorded teaching hours, the teacher with more events is Bob not Mark. Bob enacted thirteen events in five hours. The proportion is lower in Mark (eighteen events in nine and a half hours) and even lower in Sharon (five events in five hours).

Bob was also the teacher with a more balanced use of metastatements versus the other types of linguistic structuring. Mark's and Sharon's metastatements were sparse and non-existent

respectively. Theoretically the inclusion of these metastatements can be useful. Asking students about how they feel about the language that they are learning (appeals to affect/opinion) should be valuable feedback for the teacher. In the data, however, these appeals to affect were sometimes dealt with quite superficially and may have had more of a psychological effect rather than be a meaningful source of information for the teacher. As regards general evaluation (the other type of metastatement), it seems that students should have found it useful to know how well or badly they were doing, in order to put more effort where it was most needed. Bob took evaluations more seriously than appeals for affect.

Table 11

Number of events in linguistic structuring per type and teacher

	Type of event							
Teacher	Affect	Expan.	Evalua.	Model.	Quest.	Correct.	Synth.	Total
Bob	2	—	3	2	—	2	4	13
Mark	2	5	—	1	7	1	2	18
Sharon	—	2	—	—	1	—	2	5

One determining factor for the provision of linguistic structuring in the data seemed to be the nature of tasks, more

concretely the degree of orientation to form or skill[14]. The teacher with a higher number of tasks that were skill-oriented (twenty-one out of a total of twenty-five tasks), Sharon, provided linguistic structuring less often, as one would have imagined. The two teachers (Bob and Mark) with a higher number of tasks with an orientation to form or a combined orientation to form and skill provided more linguistic structuring (see Table 12).

Table 12

Types of tasks per teacher

	Teacher		
Type of task	Bob	Mark	Sharon
Skill-oriented	—	7	21
Form-oriented	3	16	—
Skill-oriented with formal guidelines	6	2	4

[14] Three main types of tasks were identified as regards their attention to form or content. There were tasks that were form-oriented with an emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, functions or pronunciation. In form-oriented tasks how something was said was much more important than what was said. Then there were skill-oriented tasks. These tasks emphasized the development of skills like listening, reading or fluency and what was said was more important than the formal errors students could make in producing language. Finally tasks with a combined focus on form and skill were identified. These were tasks with an orientation to the message together with a concern for form. These were tasks that offered a contextualized exposure to a language area and fostered spontaneous practice.

The nature of the tasks these teachers implemented as well as the amount of linguistic structuring provided was something teachers were aware of. For example, Sharon expressed that her teaching was geared to the development of fluency over accuracy on several occasions (field note 24/1 p. 46) and that was reflected in the small number of tasks with some orientation to form as well as in the small amount of linguistic structuring she provided. This is how she worded her views on grammar: "I can't myself survive happily in the class working entirely on the grammar structure. I see grammar as an appendix to language rather than language" (interview, p. 4). On the other hand, Bob, the teacher with a high amount of linguistic structuring, was aware of the need his students had for that type of scaffolding: "It takes the class time to get going and I find myself giving quite a lot of examples of what is expected from a grammar exercise, a role play, a dialogue. These examples have to be given to them before they feel confident enough to go ahead with that" (interview p. 1).

I will turn now to look at the location of the linguistic structuring. Linguistic structuring at the preparatory segment will be dealt with first, to later go on to look at its presence in the wrap-up segment.

The following are some illustrations of times when one of the three teachers enacted some linguistic preparation at the opening of a task. On one occasion, Mark would write the explanation of a linguistic point (passive construction with "need") on the blackboard:

• excerpt 48: expansion

T Now. If we look at the pictures we can see- ((Claps three times)). Listen. If we look at the pictures we can see that some things need doing. Some bricks need replacing for example. OK? Here we have=

. ((=T starts writing on blackboard the explanation for the
. grammar of the structure they will have to practice in this
. exercise. Once in a while he will say out loud what he writes but without looking at the students. He is going to do that for 3.00)).

(23/3 356)

On another occasion, Sharon elicited structures to express two functions (advice and suggestions) as a revision. Excerpt 49 comes from the beginning of a series of elicitation exchanges:

• excerpt 49: revision

T All right, OK . . . Advice. ((Writes on the bb for .08)) OK. If somebody comes to you and says, Oh I've got a terrible problem ((Acting out)). And you say, what different structures can you think of in English to give advice?
L2 If I were you,
T If I were you, ((Writing it))
((Revision continues))

(8/4 374)

Once Bob modelled the first two sentences in a grammar exercise on catenative verbs:

• excerpt 50: modelling

T All right. E:h . . . so let's all have a look. And we looked at number one yesterday. Maybe we shouldn't, and we said, to go or go? What did we decide in the end?
((Modelling continues))

(11/3 011)

After each of these events in excerpts 48, 49 and 50, students would be signalled to start the corresponding task ahead. In excerpt 48, Mark would ask students to write more sentences using "need" plus the -ing form. In excerpt 49, Sharon would ask students to do a role-play and practice giving advice and suggestions. And in excerpt 50, Bob asked students to finish the grammar exercise they had started together in their groups.

A general trend in the three teachers was the scarce number of preparatory segments including events of a linguistic nature (see Table 13). Mark included one such linguistic preparation on only five occasions, Bob on three and Sharon on just one. In part, this could have been due to the fact that some of the lessons were recorded towards the end of the school year. By then teachers may have been dedicating themselves to revision (not to the introduction of linguistic content). Also, in the transcripts recorded in May some lessons included tasks that prepared students directly for the final exam and no linguistic structuring was going to be provided on the day of the final exam!

Table 13

Location of events in linguistic structuring

	Teacher			
Location	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Prep. segment	3	5	1	9
Wrap-up segment	10	13	4	27

But the temporal factor only accounts for a partial explanation in this scarcity of events of a linguistic nature in the preparatory segment. A complementary explanation is that students were getting a focus on the language with more frequency at three other places outside the preparatory segment:

(a) There were separate tasks or tasks including presentation stages wholly devoted to providing the focus on language necessary to perform (a) subsequent task(s) or stages;

(b) There were times when the teacher drew attention to the language focus of the task in the midst of a performance, reporting or correction stage;

(c) There were also wrap-up segments that included retrospective attention to the language.

I will briefly comment on items (a) and (b), to go on into more detail in item (c).

(a) Tasks and stages devoted to explicit presentation of language properties

Mark and Sharon devoted whole tasks or stages (two each) to do this type of preparation. For example, in 23/3 task 6, Mark selected a number of "difficult" words from a listening that they would do right after eliciting the definitions from the students. The length of these interactions was one of the guiding criteria in considering stretches of conversation like this with a primary linguistic input as tasks or stages in themselves and not to include them within the preparatory segment of the subsequent task. A similar example comes from Sharon: She devoted a whole presentation stage to explaining an impersonal passive construction at length (lasting for four minutes and thirty-four seconds) and right after she asked students to apply that grammar to the subsequent performance stage, asking students to write sentences using that newly introduced structure.

(b) Linguistic structuring during the task

Teachers also fitted some linguistic structuring while students were working in groups, when students were reporting to the whole class or when an exercise was being corrected. These types of events with a focus on form are to be distinguished from mere feedback in that they went beyond the explanation of one mistake or the answer to one question from a student about some aspect of the language. For example in 30/4 (396), a student's doubt between the words "suitcase" and "case" took Bob together with a group of students to go over the meaning of the following other words "trip, journey, bag and briefcase" during a performance stage for one minute and fifty-eight seconds. In 11/3 (409) Bob took two minutes and thirty-three seconds of class time to explain the meaning of the word "urge," a word that came up while they were correcting a grammar exercise. These were "linguistic digressions" where the teacher did not limit himself to answering or correcting a specific mistake but elaborated on it. In 23/3 (498), Mark took four minutes thirty-nine seconds to explain why "the teachers need disappearing" was not good English. And in 4/5 (075) he spent seven minutes and fifty-nine seconds to explain the difference between "try" followed by an infinitive or a gerund in a correction stage.

The total number of linguistic events during the performance, reporting and correction stages has not been recorded because not all of these stages were always fully transcribed. However, what is important about them is not so much their frequency but that their presence together with the small number of linguistic events in the preparatory segment shows a tendency on the part of the teachers to give linguistic structuring as immediate, on-the-spot responses to

real "problems" during the carrying out of a task and an avoidance to talk about the language in an anticipatory manner in the preparatory segment.

(c) Linguistic structuring in the wrap-up segment

Giving or eliciting linguistic information when the task had just been performed was a commoner practice for the three teachers than giving this information in the preparatory segment (see Table 13). The proportion of events in the preparatory segment versus those in the wrap-up segment is the following: Bob, three versus ten; Mark, five versus thirteen; and Sharon, one versus four.

For example, in an oral exchange task where students needed to produce sentences of the type "I often ask my wife for advice," "I never ask people for advice," Sharon concluded the task with an event where she identified frequency adverbs and talked about their position in the sentence (i.e., an example of an expansion). It should be noted that this was the first time that day she drew any attention to that area of grammar (8/4 108).

Another illustration is presented in excerpt 51. After students had completed a problem-solving task, Bob asked about how students felt about "must" (i.e., an example of an appeal to students' affect, lines 1-4), gave an overview of the grammar students had been using (i.e., an example of synthesis, lines 5-11 and 21-24) and asked for examples (i.e., generation of examples, lines 11-20):

• excerpt 51: appeal to affect, synthesis and generation of examples

(1) T All right, fine, OK. So . . . eh how do you feel about must?
(.02)
L2 Saturated. ((Chuckling))
T Saturated, yeah? You've had two days of must, yeah? So what's
(5) the opposite of must?
(.02)
L11 Opposite.

L2 What opposite?
T Exactly L2. What opposite depends on the function we're talking
(10) about, yeah? Now, that's very important you all understand that. Must connects, there's the idea of an obligation. Give me an example of an obligation.
(.02)
Mx You must [drive=
(15) My [You must drive.
Mx =on the . . .
T Oh god! [Yeah, all right, yeah, OK.
C [((Laughing))
T [You must drive on the right when you (are in Spain), yeah.
(20) C [((Murmur))
T And then the negative there is mustn't, yeah? You mustn't drive on the left. And it can also express the idea of deduction that you deduce some things. So you've got must, must have, can't, can't have. OK. What we are doing we're gonna stop there.

(30/4 601)

In 23/3 task 1, after correcting an exercise on "should" (i.e. "you shouldn't have drunk so much beer"), Mark concluded it with an explanation on the difference between the use of "so" and "such," which lasted for three minutes and thirty-three seconds (i.e., an example of an expansion).

Excerpt 52 is an example from Bob of a quick correction (lines 3-16) and a general evaluation (lines 1-2) given when it was the time to stop the lesson after students had been reporting a problem-solving task in small groups:

• excerpt 52: correction, gen. evaluation.

(1) T Right. Sh:::, sh:::::, sh:::::. Three o'clock now. Right. First of all, I just got another thing to mention. You are not doing badly on the conditionals, eh? . . . *With plans*, do you make plans or what do you do with plans? . . . Make or do?
(5) LL Make.
T Make, you make plans. That means you construct plans. What-how do you say realizar plans? (.02) Is it do or make or another word?
L Another word.
(10) T It's another word, yeah.
LL ((Chuckles))
T Carry out. ((Writes the word down on bb))
L1 (Carry out plans) ((Self talk))
T Carry out plans. This is the word. Probably it's not a word you
(15) will know. All right, we'll stop there and I'll see you tomorrow. Bye, bye.
LL Bye bye ((Chuckling)) / See you.

(1/4 436)

The following excerpt is an example from Sharon of question time. In 25/3 (235) after she explained the passive infinitive, she asked students if they had any questions:

- excerpt 53: question time

T All right. Let's leave that for a moment. (Let me just check) ((Self talk)) Well. Any problems? Any questions on that one? . . . No? . . . Yeah? No no questions, no problems. The only thing you've got to be care-, ah you've got a question.

L7 Somebody eh can to use this eh talking about a thing?

(.02)

T E:h you mean like the chair? The chair is said to be dangerous. Yes, they could. It's unusual. Yes, but I mean, in theo-, grammatically you can. Yes.

L7 Talking about an animal.

T Yes. Aha. (The crocodile is said to be) ((Self talk)). Yeah. You can do that. That's fine. Yes. It could be- ((Sighs)). Yeah, yeah yeah. So perhaps you could use it in a scientific sense that we don't- that we are studying an animal and we don't really know very much about it, but in old books they say certain things. Yeah, it could be used. Yeah? Any any other questions? . . . No? . . . All right.

(25/3 235)

The higher number of events in the wrap-up segment (in opposition to the ones during the preparatory segment) seems to point at the three teachers' tendency not to deal with the study of language proactively but retrospectively (in the wrap-up segment). An illuminating illustration of this is a task where Mark started writing the rules on when to use the simple past, past perfect and progressive on the blackboard right after the preparatory segment, that is, after he had sent students off to do a grammar exercise on these verb forms (4/12 task 1). Then he did not draw the students' attention to these written explanations until they were correcting the exercise to explain the wrong sentences students would come up with.

I do not possess the type of data that would allow me to describe how students felt about this "delay" of focus on form. I do

not know whether they would have preferred to have this information available to them at the start of the task (in the preparatory segment) or just felt comfortable with this practice. To be able to know this, I would have needed to analyze closely students performing tasks and probably have asked students directly in interviews, and I did not do this. Nevertheless, in the transcripts there is no real evidence of students systematically requesting linguistic structuring in the preparatory segment. This does not necessarily mean that they did not need it, though. Maybe the usually short duration of the preparatory segment did not give students enough time to find out in advance what kind of linguistic problems they would have later on. Curiously, in a task where the preparatory segment was longer than usual, students requested some linguistic structuring. That happened in Sharon's class (7/4 task 2) where students were asked to copy a list of words from the blackboard and were not told what to do with those words until later. While they were copying, several students asked the teacher the meaning of several words.

Similarly, I do not know either to what an extent teachers were aware of this recurrent pattern in their practice and if so, what rationale there was behind it.

In general, however, I would say that this retrospective approach in drawing students' attention to form was not a problem, taking into account that as an observer I did not informally notice students experiencing major difficulties in performing tasks. It is true that in the data several instances were captured of students' apparently asking for help with the language from the teacher or students and of comments of the type "No entenc res aquí," "Ah horror (...) I don't know vocabulary" to peers apparently showing

they were experiencing problems with the language. But these were probably comments coming from weak students in want of help with the language from peers (see 5.2.). What is more, the withholding of information on the target language during the preparatory segment may have had the positive effect of encouraging "tutoring" between students.

As regards the differences across teachers, Mark stood out from the other two teachers in two respects. He included the most number of elaborations of the expansion and question time type, which interestingly Bob made no use of. The reader will remember from section 4.2.1. that Mark followed quite rigid rules in the correction of most tasks. He wanted students not to ask questions while a task was being corrected because he preferred them to keep questions for the wrap-up segment. This explains the higher number of question time events in this class. In the same way, Mark tended not to initiate detailed explanations during the correction of exercises even if he perceived the need for an explanation. He postponed these explanations until the wrap-up segment as well, thus the frequent number of expansions by this teacher. In short, the higher number events in the wrap-up segment was partly influenced by whether the teacher allowed students to ask questions and whether the teacher intertwined linguistic structuring during the performance, reporting or correction stages.

Mark also stood out from Sharon and Bob in the participation mode during linguistic structuring. On the one hand, Sharon and Bob usually elicited the information from students and then built on it. They interpolated questions with frequency in their events. Sharon

was quite articulate when she explained how she dealt with grammar and how she was bothered by students who were not participative:

> I don't really like it explaining grammar as such. I like to sort of put things up on the board and get them to try to tell me what the rules are. If I compare that to my other third level class down in the other faculty where that type of teaching is a disaster, it's like talking to a brick wall and half the time I don't know if they understand what I'm saying to them or whether they don't because I just have blank faces. I don't even get the nod of the head.
>
> (interview, pp. 1-2)

An example of her interactive style comes from 8/4 (108) where Sharon asked her students the following questions during an expansion event about frequency adverbs:

> Can you see some adverbs?
> What position in the sentence does the adverb have?
> What type of adverb is carefully, gently?

On the other hand, Mark tended to give all the information to the students (often turning his back to them and just using the blackboard) without counting on their participation in the process of his explanations (for example, see excerpt 48). His events during linguistic structuring tended to be monologues, expositions without questions. Unlike Sharon and Bob, Mark did not usually include questions when explaining grammar either in the preparatory or in the wrap-up segments, as the following example from Mark illustrates. In excerpt 54 while a reading comprehension was being corrected, a student asked why "do this by reading" was grammatical. After correcting the whole reading Mark went back to "do this by reading" and noted down the explanation by writing it on the blackboard for a total of one minute and fifty-six seconds.

- excerpt 54: expansion

T Let's look at this thing.
. ((The teacher starts writing on the blackboard for 1.28))

.
.
T This construction by and gerund here, you have some examples we haven't seen them before . . . OK?
. ((Students are given .28 to copy. The teacher writes on the
. blackboard part of this time))
.
T OK? This was in line four first paragraph. (.04) OK?
(13/5 task 2)

In excerpt 54, Mark did not go back to the student who had originally asked the question. Probably the fact that Mark often used the blackboard as the medium of communication for linguistic structuring contributed to its being so little interactive.

Mark seemed to bring prepared, "packaged" grammar explanations that he would deliver quite automatically without caring to fit into a student's specific question or mistake. For example, during the question time event of a grammar exercise, students were requested to only give the number of the sentence they had a question about (they were not told to ask a specific question). After each student identified the problematic sentence, the teacher would come up with a "generic" explanation, hoping that what the teacher explained matched the students' taken-for-granted question (field note, 18/5 p. 53).

This unidirectional style sometimes proved inefficient. To show that, an example from a grammar explanation outside the preparatory or wrap-up segments will be presented because it is representative of how Mark dealt with grammar. On 29/1, a group of three students were engaged in a written production task and when Mark approached they asked him a grammar question. The teacher started writing the explanation on a piece of paper on their desk and later on continued writing on the blackboard, without exchanging any words with the students. The failure to get the explanation across was made evident when Mark left and a student

said: "Què té que veure això amb el que volem dir?," showing that that student had totally missed the teacher's explanation (field note, 29/1 p. 40).

Mark's unidirectional style in dealing with grammar in the preparatory and wrap-up segments (as well as during tasks) seems to stem from an insecurity with that area of teaching. This conclusion on my part is supported by two other observations about how Mark dealt with grammar. At the beginning of every lesson in Mark's class, there was the routine of correcting the exercises from the practice book that the teacher had assigned the previous week. Usually these were exercises with a focus on form, and the level of difficult and complexity of these exercises at that level three is not high. Nevertheless, one day the corrections were cancelled because Mark had forgotten his notes. This incident confirms this teacher's overreliance on his prepared grammar notes that he used to reproduce in class quite literally (field note, 11/11 p. 9).

Another observation is in order. Mark's implementation of tasks from commercial materials tended to close down the interaction on grammar that the material intended. On one occasion, a handout was given to students with grammar exercises that they would do in class. Those exercises included grammar discovery questions for students to infer grammar rules. However, these questions were overlooked when the handout was done in class (field note 11/11 p. 23). All these observations seem to confirm the thesis that Mark must have felt uncomfortable dealing with grammar and he probably controlled this insecurity by bringing prepared explanations to class and by implementing tasks in such a way that he usually was the initiator of the explanations.

To summarize, I started this section by identifying seven ways of providing linguistic structuring. They showed that teachers had a wide repertoire of ways to provide language awareness at the preparatory and especially the wrap-up segments. However, the three teachers differed as to the amount of this structuring provided in their lessons. The nature of the task (whether it was skill-oriented or form-oriented) as well as the amount of linguistic structuring allowed during the carrying out of the task seemed to influence the amount of structuring in the segments. In any case, all teachers showed a tendency to provide linguistic structuring in the wrap-up segment rather than in the preparatory segment. Finally, Mark stood out from the other two teachers in how he implemented these linguistic events. Evidence from how he dealt with grammar in the preparatory and wrap-up segments as well as at other times in the lessons revealed that this teacher felt insecure with grammar and that that affected the participation structure during linguistic structuring.

4.8. TOPIC STRUCTURING

During the preparatory and wrap-up segments sometimes the talk revolved around the topic of the task or around a task-related topic. This talk is referred to as topic structuring in the present study and the pedagogical event will be the unit used to refer to each teacher's intervention in topic structuring.

This section is organized in the following way. First an identification of the types of topic structuring will be presented. Then there is an analysis of the different use of topic structuring by the three teachers. The third and last part describes a number of interactional features in these events.

In the data four types of events in topic structuring were identified: (a) warm-ups, (b) suspense builders, (c) quick reports and (d) reactions.

(a) Warm-ups

Warm-ups consisted of relating the topic of the task to personal experiences, opinions or facts about the world. They usually took place at the very beginning of the preparatory segment and seemed to function as a type of warm-up before procedural structuring was given and the task got going. This is why this practice is referred to here as "warm-up."

An illustration of a warm-up is found in excerpt 55. at the very beginning of the task where students would later be asked to read the front page of a newspaper. During the warm-up, Sharon gave her opinion about the newspaper, she asked about the students' personal experiences and finally gave some factual information about the newspaper itself (see underlining).

• excerpt 55

T Right, let's change for the time being. And eh I brought a newspaper into class. I've only brought one. It isn't brilliant. Do you ever read this newspaper? ((Showing it))
C Uh? / No.
T Uh? No. X. OK. Aha? You can buy it easily on the Ramblas aha? And it's The European. It used to be owned by Maxwell, yeah? [before he died ((Chuckles)).
L [(Yes)
T And what I've got is- I've photocopied just the first page, yeah? ((Looking for the photocopies in her bag))

(25/3 242)

Right after giving the above information on Maxwell, Sharon was trying to find the photocopies of the newspaper in her bag and then she introduced the task per se. One could think that in this case the warm-up was given to kill time while the teacher found the material. This seems not to be true since similar warm-ups are found with certain frequency in her transcripts. On the contrary, giving the warm-up before the material was distributed or before students were asked to go to a certain page in the textbook was a common practice of Sharon's, probably a strategic device to get the students' attention more efficiently.

Two of the warm-ups identified in the data from Sharon's class distinguished themselves from the rest because they included a game-like component. They took the students to guess the topic of the task through clues Sharon gave in a process of trial and error. Excerpt 56 comes from the beginning of the preparatory segment of a task. Through the warm-up, Sharon intended to elicit the word "gazpacho," for which students were later going to write a recipe:

• excerpt 56

T All right. What I want you to do now- XX tell me, what do you think . . . No I'm not talking about Catalunya. I'm talking about somebody in England, in Britain who's never been to Spain, doesn't understand about Catalunya. What do you think the typical foods are going to be for that person in Britain ((Makes a noise with her hands)) in Spain, as here? They live in Britain,

don't know very much about the culture here, don't know very much about the life here, but they are going to think of different foods. Like for example, if I ask anybody here what the typical food is in England, they go: Bacon and eggs.
L7 ((Laughter))
T O:r roast beef. Yeah? I mean, those for people here, ring! England? Eggs and bacon. Yeah? So what do you think somebody in England would think as typical here in Spain?
L-L Paella.
LL Paella. / Paella.
T Paella? Anything else?
L Potatoes.
T Potatoes? No.
LL Gazpacho. / Gazpacho. / Gazpacho.
T Ah.
L Gazpacho.
T Gazpacho. Yes.
LL ((Chuckles))

(31/3 223)

As regards the content of the warm-ups in the data they usually consisted of the teacher asking or giving factual information and asking students' about their experiences. The teacher's personal information was usually given under special circumstances only. Two out of the three times when a teacher gave personal information, he did so after giving the instructions and after perceiving some problems in getting students' answers or in getting students on task. The next two excerpts are a good illustration of the contexts that caused the teacher to give personal information. In 7/4 task 3, the students in Sharon's class had been talking in pairs about their best friend. When the teacher tried to elicit that information in the reporting stage (see excerpt 57), a two- and then a six-second silence followed the teacher's elicitations, showing some resistance on the part of the students to answering:

• excerpt 57[15]

T [OK, all right. Come back to me. Come back to me. (02) (All=
C [_____
T [right) ((Self talk)) OK. So what for you . . . is the most=

[15] A continuous line preceded by square brackets means there is background noise at a time that attention is required from the whole class.

C [_____
T =important thing in a in a good relationship? (.02) Go on, expose your hearts [and souls to me. Aha?
LL [((Laughter))
T What for you is the most important thing in a good relationship, aha? I'm talking about with anyone. I don't just mean sort of boyfriend, girlfriend, I mean friend, I mean with anyone. What is the most important thing for you in a relationship? (.06)

(7/4 448)

In excerpt 58 (which is the continuation of excerpt 57), the teacher then resorted to giving information of her own, to "expose her heart and soul" to her students first (see underlining). This proved to work because after telling about what she valued most in a relationship, a student (L1) "exposed his heart" to the class.

• excerpt 58

T (All right, all right) ((Self-talk)). I suppose for me, I suppose things like honesty, honesty is very important for me, yes? Honesty in spirit not necessarily honesty with money. Well, yes that as well.
L ((Chuckles))
T But the the person is honest, yeah? What what what about you? Anything else? Anything else that you consider very important?
L1 Strong-willed (w.p.)?

(7/4 448)

(b) Suspense builders

Through suspense builders, teachers intended to make students feel excited about how the task at hand would evolve. There were suspense builders of two types. One type always involved a task that made use of a narrative text and students through elicitation sequences were made to either anticipate some aspect of the plot or identify themselves with the characters in the story, as the following excerpt from Bob illustrates,

• excerpt 59

T *So* do you want to know what happened to Lavinia in the end?
L (XX)
T Do you remember Lavinia? ((Chuckles)) At the end of the story where was she?

LL In her house. / At her house. / XX.
T In her house. That's right yeah . . . E:h, and what happened when she entered the house?
L7 There was somebody=
T =There was somebody in the house. *Where the lights on?*
LL No.
T No, they weren't . . . X I'll tell you tomorrow what happened then.
L OK.
T Right. See you. ((Chuckles))

(11/3 557)

In the excerpt above the suspense builder was uttered in the wrap-up segment at the end of the lesson in view of a task that would be retaken in the following lesson. Other suspense builders took place at the end of one task and built suspense over the following task that would take place in the same lesson.

Through the other type of suspense builder, suspense was aroused around what one or more students in the class would say in the performance of a task. The following excerpt comes from the preparatory segment of a reporting stage in a task where students had prepared role-plays:

• excerpt 60

T Now we will see if it is possible that L5 can introduce the independence of Catalonia in the conversation about learning English.
LL ((Chuckles))
T OK now I want you to (.02) listen carefully.

(Mark 13/5 680)

Suspense builders of this type had a clear function of attracting the students' attention and producing laughter in class.

(c) Quick reports

Instead of devoting a whole stage to making public what students had talked or written about, through quick reports teachers just selected a few students and asked them one or more questions about what they had talked about during the performance stage. Of course, quick reports always occurred in the

wrap-up segment, not in the preparatory segment and in skill-oriented tasks (in opposition to form-oriented tasks). Excerpt 61 is an illustration of a quick report from Sharon's class where two students were asked to talk about whether they had enjoyed learning English and what they had learned:

• excerpt 61

T Come back to me. Come back to me . . . All right . . . Come on, tell me. Have you enjoyed English?
M-L No. ((Whispering))
LL Yes. / ((Chuckles)) / Ah yes.
T All right. You can be honest. (You don't have to say) the teacher wants to say yes.
L9 ((Chuckles))
T No. Have you enjoyed English? And Why? Give me a reason, not just yes. You say yes, L14.
LL ((Chuckles))
T ((Chuckles)) Why . . . What have you enjoyed?
L14 (.05) Because there are a lot of people.=
LL =((Laughter))
T Important, important. Tell me, tell me. Important. A lot of people, you make friends.=
L14 =Yes. You can talk about something of the faculty.
T Aha.
L14 And some activity that I enjoyed like watching eh Mr Bean=
LL [((Laughter))
T [((Laughter))
L14 =aventuras.
L9 [Adventures.
T [Adventures.
L14 Adventures.
T Aha. The adventures of Mr. Bean. Mhm.
L14 And another activities eh some some some plays.
T OK. All right. Fine. ((Writes on blackboard))

.
.
.

T OK. Anybody else? Anybody else enjoyed English? Or no?
LL ((Chuckles))
F Yes.
T L8, what do you think? You haven't, you haven't enjoyed English?
LL ((Chuckles))
T You always sit in class with XX.
LL ((Chuckles))
T Why not? What don't you like about English? What haven't you enjoyed?
L8 Because it is not my language.
T Aha. So how do you feel about English? (.02) That's right. It's not your language. OK . . . So how does that make you feel?

L8 (.03) I don't- I can't express=
T =You can't express yourself. (.02) You can . . . You just expressed to me that you don't like English because you can't express yourself.
LL ((Chuckles))
T ((Chuckles)) OK. All right. So X different feels differently. OK. Right.

(13/5 63)

It will be observed that both L14 and L8 did not get to say much, especially L8 who did not finish his utterance (see underlining).

(d) Reactions

These were times where some reaction was made explicit or sought over the content of what students had said during a performance or reporting stage. In excerpt 62, Sharon gave her opinion about what she had heard students say in a task where students had to talk about themselves and their personalities:

• excerpt 62

T OK. All right. Come back to me. All right. It was quite interesting looking to see how you see yourselves and how I see you. I mean, I know I don't know you very well, aha because I I know you but don't know you because I'm a teacher and you are students and bla bla bla. It's quite interesting to see what you think of yourselves.

(7/4 403)

Having said this, Sharon concluded the wrap-up segment and went on to introduce the next task.

On other occasions, the teacher opened up a time for students and himself to disagree or react to what a student or a group of students had said in a reporting stage. This is the case of excerpt 63 in Bob's class:

• excerpt 63

T *Right*. Can you see any problems with it? (.02) No? Does it look OK? . . . Yeah? (.03) Yeah. It looks OK to me. Yeah, I can't really see any problem with it. So, all right, fine. Very good L4. Thank you very much. OK sit down. All right.

(26/3 422)

In the excerpt above neither the teacher nor the students had anything to add, but this was not always the case in the data.

The different use of topic structuring by each teacher will be the next topic in this section. A look at Table 14 shows that Sharon included sixteen such events and Bob and Mark just two each. These differences have a number of causes: the different nature of the tasks, the presence or absence of reporting stages and the teachers' styles.

Table 14

Number of events in topic structuring per teacher and type

	Teacher			
Type	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Warm-ups	—	—	9	9
Suspense builders	1	1	2	4
Quick reports	—	—	4	4
Reactions	1	1	1	3
All types	2	2	16	20

As regards the nature of tasks, Mark had fewer tasks with an orientation towards skill or a combined orientation to skill (eighteen out of twenty-five). Since the bulk of Mark's tasks were oriented to form, it makes sense that he had few events in topic structuring. On the other hand, Sharon's higher number of events must have been influenced by the high number of skill-oriented tasks (twenty-one out of twenty-five). Secondly, there were several tasks implemented by Bob and Mark (two and nine respectively) that were directly meant to prepare students for the final exam and they were performed in class the way they would be done on the exam. (And in the exam the examiner would not provide any topic structuring!). Thirdly, the fact that four of the nine tasks implemented by Bob were tasks continuing from previous lessons could also be a determining factor in explaining the low number of these events in his preparatory and wrap-up segments.

The second factor, the presence or absence of reporting stages, explains only why there were no quick reports in the wrap-up segment in Bob's class. All of Bob's tasks with some skill orientation followed the performance stage with a reporting stage where students presented thoroughly what they had prepared and "rehearsed" earlier. Sharon's performance stages were rarely followed by a thorough reporting stage, thus the presence of this shorter version of a reporting stage, the quick report.

Besides the two external factors pointed out above, one important factor to explain the uneven number of events in topic structuring should be sought in the teaching styles of Bob, Mark and Sharon. There were tasks in Bob's and Mark's lessons that could

have included these type of events (because of their similarity to Sharon's tasks) and they did not. For example, Mark's lesson on Marco Polo would have led well to the introduction of some contextual information, especially if we take into account that Mark had a degree in History. However, Mark never did a warm-up in that lesson, he presented the task right away with no preambles. Another instance is found in Mark's 1/4 task 1, a very similar task to Sharon's 7/4 task 1. Here students were asked to go over a list of words on personality and to focus on pronunciation. Mark started the preparatory segment directly providing procedural structuring. Instead, Sharon first tried to relate an aspect of the topic of the lesson with the students' personal knowledge ("who would you classify as talkative in the group here?") before she went on with the procedure for the task.

An index of Sharon's awareness for topic is found in wrap-up segments without a quick report. In those cases she justified its absence, as in excerpt 64. This was a task where groups of students had been giving their opinions over controversial issues about friendship, marriage and homosexual relationships among others and Sharon said:

• excerpt 64

T OK (.02) All right, let's finish there, yeah? call it a day. All right? OK.
L (XX)
T I know, I'm not going to bring it to an end because it's also a personal discussion, it's going in different directions, I'm not going to bring it to an end, to a close. Take it as ended.

(7/4 568)

Sharon's awareness for the topic, however, was also evident outside the preparatory and wrap-up segments. Sometimes topic structuring was absent in her tasks partly because a different

device to introduce topic had been used previously. Sharon would devote complete tasks whose main purpose seemed to be the implicit introduction of the topic of the lesson (that is, whole tasks structuring the topic for subsequent tasks). For example, a common procedure of hers was to start a lesson having students guess a word from a number of dashes on the blackboard. The topic of the lesson would then revolve around that word. Another procedure used at the beginning of the lesson consisted of having students talk for a short time about a topic that would subsequently be central to the whole lesson.

In short, Sharon not only provided topic structuring more often than the other two teachers. She also used alternative indirect devices with the intention of informing students about what the topic of the lesson would be.

At first sight, topic structuring seems to be promising from the point of view of both cognition and language development. As regards cognition, relating the topic of the task with students' lives and their world knowledge could be a good activator to prepare learners for a task. As regards language development, these events have features that could be beneficial. They are NNS-NS conversations that include questions from the part of the NS and the talk is about real topics. However, a close look at the teachers' interventions will show that the amount of information that was exchanged was not much and that the student's participation was quite restricted. A number of reasons have led me to reach these conclusions:

- First, the teacher's questions were not usually nominated and students tended to give short responses in chorus (just one or

two words). Sometimes even a non-linguistic or paralinguistic response sufficed. Also, students rarely initiated expansions of topics that the teacher introduced. That is to say, students tended to limit themselves to answering the teacher's questions with the shortest possible answers.

- Secondly, when students gave a response, the teacher's next turn did not usually pursue to develop the students' utterance. For example in 25/3 (012) Sharon asked students if they knew any eccentric people. After students said they did, the teacher never asked any student to go into further detail. Sharon just went on with procedural structuring. The same occurred in excerpt 55 where Sharon asked students if they ever read The European. Some students said they did not. Instead of asking them why they did not read it, she just moved on to say where they could buy it, who owned the newspaper and so on.
- Thirdly, the pace of these warm-ups was quick. When the students did not respond, the teacher just moved on. In excerpt 65, Sharon did not leave any pauses for students to come up with an answer. Instead her question looked more like a rhetorical question:

• excerpt 65

T Has anybody ever heard of Ray Bradbury?
LL Eh?
T Eh? Eh? What? Ray Bradbury. Ray Bradbury? OK. He's a writer or possibly he was a writer.

(5/3 018)

In excerpt 66, the absence of a response to one question in a warm-up took Sharon to give up (lines 17 and 19) and start with procedural structuring:

• excerpt 66

T OK. Next question. Next year, are you going to study- X are you probably going to study English or not?
LL Yes.
T Yeah, most of you usually say yes now. OK. What would you change how you study English in any way? Any ways that you approach, that you look at English, would you change anything? (.02) Can you change anything? (.02) I'm not communicating, am I?
LL ((Chuckles))
T Right. OK. Let's go back.
F XX
T Yeah? I'm communicating half. OK . . . Change the question. Ehm next year what can you do to help yourself learn English more? (.03) All right. OK. This is where I expected to get a silence.
LL ((Chuckles))
T OK.
LL ((Chuckles)) / ((Murmur)
T All right, I want you to think about how you have studied English this year. (.06) And I want you to think these questions. ((Showing transparency and writing on the blackboard for .27))

(13/5 102)

One of Sharon's concerns seemed to be on keeping a quick pace, not to get stuck and on this occasion that meant dropping the warm-up.

- Fourth, events in procedural structuring lasted for a short time, so little information could be exchanged or provided. For example, the length of warm-ups ranged from seven seconds to a minute and eleven seconds. The two warm-ups where students guessed the topic of the task were longer (more than a minute) while the others where shorter, with an average length of twenty-six seconds.

These four reasons above lead me to believe that through topic structuring teachers were not primarily attempting to engage students cognitively or nurture students' conversational skills. Instead, the motivation seemed to be primarily psychological. Rather, topic structuring responded to an attempt from the teachers to get the students' attention or motivation. That would explain why

the teachers sometimes seemed to be more interested in getting ahead, in moving on rather than in the actual information the students could contribute to or in the amount of information teachers could put forward. Students seemed to be aware of this too because they sometimes did not take the teacher's questions too seriously as in excerpt 67 (see underlining):

• excerpt 67

T	All right. Eccentric. What does eccentric mean? do you know?
M	No.
LL	((Laughter)) / XX.
T	((Laughs)) No, come on. What- what do you think it- what does eccentric mean? Any id-?
L2	Strange person? O:r
T	Exactly. Aha, strange person, an eccentric person. Have you ever seen or do you know any eccentric people?
F	Yes.
T	((Laughs)) [Oh! Emma with those eyes. Yes ((Loud laughter)).
LL	[((Laughter))
L	XX (school).

(25/3 012)

As can be gathered from the excerpt above, the students were not the only ones that attempted to be funny during topic structuring. The teacher also made such displays of humor (see bold type).

To conclude, Sharon was the only teacher who made frequent use of topic structuring through a range of four types of teaching practices. The reasons for this difference between teachers comes mainly from Sharon's teaching style as well as her concern for skill-oriented tasks, a concern that pervaded other aspects of her teaching. Something that caught my attention in her use of topic structuring was that she frequently asked personal questions of the students but she hardly ever volunteered personal information. Nor did students ever ask her any personal questions. Another issue

that was examined here is the function of these events. Based on evidence about how interaction was handled, it seems that topic structuring had the function of getting students' attention rather than getting students to really learn new things or share information with the class.

4.9. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUCTURING

The beginning of this section on psychological structuring defines the term and provides a list with the contents of all the events identified in the data. Following is an analysis of the factors outside the teacher that seem to attract this type of structuring. From then until the end of the section, the writing turns about the teachers' styles as regards this topic.

At times teachers presented tasks without any psychological structuring, that is, without including any pedagogical events intended to motivate students, like for example when Sharon limited herself to giving a matter-of-fact presentation:

• excerpt 68

T Right. OK. (It's a mess that board but never mind) ((Self talk)). Em, we've got ((Writes on the blackboard for .07)). Write four more sentences for me . . . Aha? in this form ((Pointing to model sentence on bb)) in this form. (.02) Write them individually. Write them individually. Write them individually . . . Well individually, you can talk to each other and discuss it, that's fine.

(25/3 task 4)

At other times teachers did include some motivating pedagogical events, like in excerpt 69, where Bob seemed to present a grammar exercise as challenging by telling students that the sentences they needed to complete were not easy. This is what he said at the end of the preparatory segment after he had gone over the first sentence with the students[16]:

• excerpt 69

T <u>Really easy, yeah? The others are not so easy</u>. OK? ((Chuckling)) So what I want you to do in your groups now is decide, is it a gerund?, is it an infinitive? Then decide, can you make a rule

---

[16] Pedagogical events in psychological structuring are underlined in this section.

about the use of the gerund or infinitive from those examples?
(11/5 task 1)

In the excerpt above, Bob's motivating pedagogical event referred to an aspect of the task (the grammar). Other motivating events from this or the other teachers dealt with other aspects of the language (e.g., with vocabulary being familiar), a specific instruction (e.g., a way of doing a task being important) or the use of English in class (e.g., saying the teacher will be happy if students keep to English) and so on. There were also motivating events referring to a task as a whole (e.g., a type of oral dictation being familiar to students, the importance of a homework assignment in view of what the teacher planned to do in subsequent lessons etc.). In excerpt 70 there is one motivating event referring to the task as a whole, uttered when Sharon presented an oral dictation:

- excerpt 70

T All right, OK . . . We're going to listen to . . . (How many sentences. Just a minute) ((Self talk)), we are going to listen to eight sentences and you have to tell me how many words there are in each sentence, yeah? We've done this before.
(8/4 task 3)

Both types of motivating events, those making reference to an aspect of the task as well as those making reference to a task as a whole, have been included in this section without distinction.

Most of the motivating events the three teachers uttered were mentioned during the preparatory segment or when the teacher gave a homework assignment (which, in some way is a preparatory segment as well) (see Table 15). But teachers also uttered motivating events addressed to the whole class at other times in the lesson and they have also been included in this section. For example, Bob told his students that they had two minutes before an oral presentation started while students were in the performance

stage, in a way pressing students to speed up. An example of a motivating event in the wrap-up segment is found in excerpt 71, where Mark showed certain empathy towards students in reference to a task that they had just corrected:

• excerpt 71

T So, it's difficult but if you think about it I think it's possible.
(11/5 task 3)

Table 15

Location of events in psychological structuring per teacher

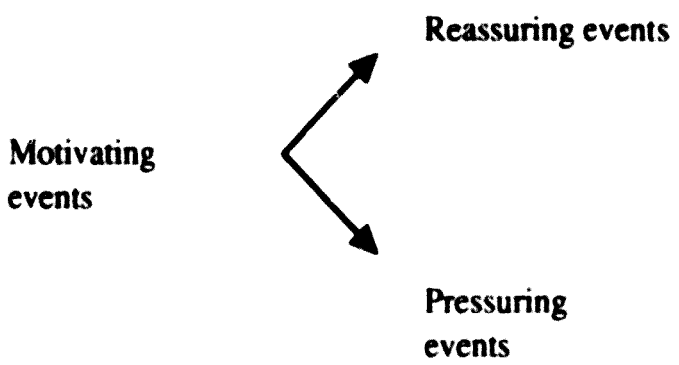
	Teacher			
Location	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
In preparatory segment	8	6	7	21
Outside preparatory segment	3	5	1	9
In assigning of homework	9	7	—	16
All locations	20	18	8	46

A total number of forty-six motivating events from the three teachers were identified. They could be divided into two main groups (see Figure 4). There were those intending to give

reassurance to students, to motivate them through positive thinking. There were others intending to put pressure on students, to motivate them to be alert.

Figure 4

Types of events in psychological structuring



As regards pedagogical events giving reassurance, one or more teachers included utterances with the following content:

- telling students not to worry,
- showing empathy towards them, and
- mentioning lack of difficulty or familiarity.

As regards pressuring events, teachers talked about the following:

- mentioning difficulty and/or describing something as difficult,
- telling students they were obliged to do as they were told,
- mentioning importance or usefulness,
- describing negative consequences of not doing something as

the teacher proposed,

- mentioning proximity to the final exam or some type of test,
- reminding students of time limits, with the implication that some students may need to speed up,
- anticipating the positive effects on the teacher or the examiner if students did as the teacher told them,
- relating a task or a homework assignment to subsequent tasks or learning objectives, with the implication that it was important to do the task, and
- stressing that students would need to take an active part in a subsequent reporting stage.

Out of the nine types of pressuring statements, the first five are probably more coercive than the last four.

Three factors characterized the presence of both reassuring and pressuring events irrespective of teachers. That is to say, teachers tended to provide psychological structuring: (a) when tasks were related to exams, (b) when teachers gave homework assignments and (c) when they gave specific instructions.

As to exams, even though Bob and Mark implemented more tasks which were not related to exams (six and nineteen respectively) than tasks related to exams (four and ten respectively), the presentation of the latter was accompanied by a proportionately relevant number of motivating events (see Table 16). Bob and Mark, on one and seven occasions respectively, tried to give confidence to students for different parts of the school's final exam (through reassuring events). Mark's statements, especially, were geared to give confidence to students by, for example, showing empathy towards them, by telling them not to panic if they

did not recognize all the words in the reading passage of the exam, and above all by stressing that some parts of the exam had been practiced in different ways throughout the academic year or that they were not complicated. Pressuring events were also used in tasks related to the exam. Most of Bob's events related to the exam were of the pressuring type (9 events) and only three out of a total of ten events in Mark's class.

Table 16

Number of events in psychological structuring related and unrelated to the final exam

	Teacher			
Type of task	Bob	Mark	Sharon	All teachers
Tasks related to final exam	7	10	—	17
Tasks unrelated to final exam	13	8	8	29

Regarding homework assignments, out of the nine homework assignments given by Bob and Mark, all except one were accompanied by motivating events. Sharon gave no homework assignments in the lessons recorded, which explains the absence of motivating events in Table 15. There were nine events by Bob (out of a total of twenty) and seven by Mark (out of a total of eighteen). Here is the homework assignment with most motivating events from Bob:

• excerpt 72

T And that's what I want you to do, eh? because tomorrow we are gonna look at this exercise. ((Showing handout)) Remember I said on Thursday? Yeah.
LL (XX)
T I know, I know, I know. You have to sit at home with your hand on one side of the page and lift it up and have a look at it et cetera. I know it's boring but we got to do it, eh? *And there's one-* so could you do that exercise for tomorrow? And there's one other thing I want you to do, right? ((Writes assignment on bb for .07)) (Or no, no, we won't do it) ((Self talk)) ((Erases what he has written)) (OK yeah) ((Self talk)). Right. So if you could do that exercise for tomorrow, I'd be a happy man because I'd like to look at that exercise tomorrow so that we can finish gerunds and infinitives.

(11/5 548)

First Bob told them that the homework would be corrected in the next lesson, probably implying that they really needed to look at it at home. Then he sympathized with students when he recognized, probably jokingly, that the homework was boring. But then he added what came down to saying that students were obliged to do it, that there was no way out. Towards the end of the excerpt he said that completing the homework would get his recognition (i.e., pleasing him). Finally besides repeating how homework would be related to subsequent tasks, he also mentioned how the homework linked with his learning objectives (i.e., finishing with infinitives and gerunds). In all, there are a total of four motivating events: one giving reassurance and the other three putting some pressure.

Presentations of homework like this from Bob and Mark seem to respond to these two teachers' perceptions of the need to "advertise" homework so that it got done, through both reassurance and pressure. This need is further supported by the fact that the language of directives used by Bob for homework was more markedly tentative and less assertive than the directives used in

presenting regular tasks. So instead of using the imperative or verbs like "want" (often used in presenting regular tasks), he used modals, conditional clauses and markers of courtesy like "please" when presenting homework assignments, as can be observed in the following excerpts (see underlining):

- excerpts 73, 74 and 75

T If you could do that exercise tomorrow, I'd be a happy man. (11/3 555)

T I'd like you eh (.02) if you would please do number . . . one- (30/4 614)

T I'd like you, if you could, to finish as many as possible. (19/5 135)

Teacher's beliefs could influence the use of psychological structuring in homework assignments. The frequent use Mark made of these type of pedagogical events could respond to the high priority he gave to students' work outside the classroom. In the interview, when he was asked about what he most valued in students he said: "Come to class, do the homework, study after class. That's the first thing. Once you got that other ideas can be introduced such as learner training. But if they don't do the basics, other things don't help" (interview, p. 2).

I will now turn to the psychological structuring done when giving specific instructions. Nineteen out of the forty-six motivating events were given in tasks where the teacher had provided students with specific instructions as well. In a way, this coupling of specific instructions and motivating events makes sense since both of them were mentioned when the teacher perceived there could be or there was some difficulty or chances for students to work inappropriately or below their capabilities. However, the content of

Sharon's and Mark's motivating events here differed from Bob's. In view of some difficulty in a task, Sharon and Mark would accompany proposals of specific instructions to overcome this difficulty solely with statements of reassurance. In this way, "obstacles" were neutralized or softened. So, for example in introducing a reading task where students would be told to get the general idea and to use two guessing strategies, Sharon told them:

- excerpt 76

T There's a few problems with vocabulary, yeah? just a few. But don't worry about them.

(5/3 395)

It should be observed in the above excerpt that even when Sharon mentioned the "obstacle" ("There's a few problems with vocabulary, yeah?), she made use of downtoners ("a few problems . . . just a few"), thus making the "obstacle" look surmountable. In excerpt 77, Sharon also pointed out an encouraging factor (see underlining) in a pronunciation task before asking students to use a guessing strategy:

- excerpt 77

T OK. All right. Eh d- go through the words. I want you to think. E:h (.02) how you pronounce them?, how do you think you pronounce them. Yeah?, where's the stress, how do you pronounce them, importantly what do they mean, yeah? So possibly, I think you probably know a lot of them, yeah? And if you can't get, if you don't know, try and guess. Do they remind you of any words that you do know, yeah. And try to guess what they are. All right. ((Claps once)) You two and you've got two there. Off you go.

(7/4 003)

This approach of Sharon and Mark seemed to aim at minimizing difficulty both at the level of procedure (through specific instructions) and affect (through psychological structuring).

In contrast to Sharon and Mark's "soothing" approaches, Bob's was of a different nature. He motivated students by magnifying

problems and by having students see the need to follow his specific instructions. Behind this approach there seemed to be a belief that students would work best or could be motivated when put under some pressure, like for example by showing them what could go wrong. This approach was evident in excerpt 78. The specific instructions in the preparatory segment of that excerpt consisted of having students anticipate questions and write notes in preparation for an oral presentation. In an attempt to have students see the need to follow these instructions, the "stage" was set by introducing two motivating events. Bob first mentioned how important it was for students to back up their decisions with rationales (a reassuring event). Later on, he went on to explain what could happen if the presentation was not good (a pressuring event). This last event he elaborated on again towards the end of his turn. In excerpt 78, specific instructions are indicated in bold type so that the reader notices the intertwining of these type of pedagogical events with specific instructions.

- excerpt 78

T Remember your plans, have a look at them, think about the rationale behind your plan. Mhm? I'd like you to think and why you put different people, or will put different people in different places, OK? Reasons are very important because when you come to the front and say: We will put this person here and this person here, . . . it's a good idea to justify that, to have a reason. If not the other people can ask you: Well, why will you put this person here and this person here? **We should be thinking questions, OK**? So I'd like you to spend five minutes preparing the justification for your plan, OK? **Now you can make a list maybe of number one, two, three, four, five to help you while you are speaking** because when you come out here in front of everybody, everybody looks very different and, and it's horrible and it makes you very nervous and you forget what you were going to say, OK? **So it might be a good idea just to write down one or two things**. OK? Five minutes eh? Let's go. Tick tock tick tock tick tock. Come on. Let's make this fast, eh?

(26/3 task 1)

The same tactic consisting of presenting a potentially gloomy performance while at the same time giving specific instructions is found again in excerpt 79, where Bob presented a problem-solving task like this:

• excerpt 79

T E:h, ehm what ! want each group to do now, is to exchange their ideas about the problem *and* produce a definitive plan . . . This plan you will present to another group, OK? as . . . your definitive plan. So, what's important about your plan is that the other group can understand you. **So you must write on a piece of paper . . . five or six points about the plan and present that to the other group very very clearly** . . If it's not clear the other groups will not understand you. And usually when people don't understand each other in the English class, they say: Ah.

LL ((Chuckles))

T Yeah? ((Chuckling)) **So make sure they understand you because I'd like to talk about it.**

(1/4 task 1)

In the excerpt above, Bob wanted students to give a clear presentation and jot down some notes to aid them during the reporting stage. He made students see the need to do these two actions by attaching importance to the first one (a reassuring event) and by giving them a vivid and humorous portrayal of the embarrassment they would experience if the quality of the report was not good (a pressuring event). Like in excerpt 78, the pedagogical events offer supportive arguments to encourage students to follow the teacher's specific instructions.

These two approaches, that of Sharon and Mark on the one hand, and that of Bob on the other, were not only visible in giving specific instructions, but also in the unbalanced proportion of total number of reassuring events versus pressuring events given by Bob and Mark (see Table 17).

Table 17

Number of events giving reassurance versus those applying pressure

	Teacher		
Type of event	Bob	Mark	Sharon
Reassuring events	2	11	3
Pressuring events	18	7	5

While Bob gave two reassuring versus eighteen pressuring events, Mark gave eleven reassuring versus seven pressuring events. But even the pressuring events given by Mark and Sharon were communicated in such a way that their impact was softened or somehow counteracted. So for example, even though in excerpt 80 Sharon presented a word game as difficult and challenging, she justified it (the justification has been bold typed):

- excerpt 80

T Six letters is meant to take you a long time and last **time you did it very well and you got it in about three minutes**. So eh go. A word. I don't want letters, I want a word. (.02) It's difficult, I hope.

(8/4 004)

I will turn now to one last aspect as regards psychological structuring, and that is the total number of events by teacher and its relation with the teacher's beliefs and expectations. Table 15 shows that Bob and Mark provided psychological structuring with

more frequency than Sharon. Twenty events were identified from Bob, eighteen from Mark and just eight from Sharon. Bob gave comparatively more psychological structuring than Mark if we take into account the number of recorded lessons. While Bob's twenty events were identified in only five hours of recorded data, Mark's eighteen events were identified in almost double that time (nine hours and twenty-nine minutes). Part of this difference between Bob and Mark, on the one hand, and Sharon, on the other, can be attributed to the fact that there were no homework assignments or exam-related tasks in Sharon's lessons.

An explanatory factor for both Bob's pressuring manner as well as Sharon's scarcity of events seems to be outside the nature of the task; in how each teacher perceived his class and in his beliefs about teaching. In the interviews there is evidence that Sharon and Bobhad opposite perceptions of their classes. Sharon used the following adjectives to describe her students: "lively," "open," "experimental," "adventurous," "lively," "fun loving," "inquisitive." She said of them, "They are a good class. They are an easy class to teach. Relatively they are not passive" (interview, p. 16). All these features that she saw in her students and that she liked might explain why she made little use of psychological structuring and why, when she did, it was in a constructive way (through reassuring statements). Sharon contrasted these students of hers at the School of Physics with another class of the same level she had at another School whose students she saw as less motivated and not as "fun loving:"

> I do things that work that really work well in Physics. There's a good feeling. I feel they are learning, it's going on. I would do the same thing at the other faculty and it's nothing. It's like they are dead tired like nothing's gone in, I'm not communicating.

(interview, p. 2)

> Give them authentic listenings like giving them authentic readings, my level three at Physics would not feel swamped. I mean I am not saying they would find it easy but they'd sort of get through and they wouldn't feel totally frustrated and totally X, whereas I have to grade everything so much more for my other third level class a lot a lot. I mean it's different most of them.
>
> (interview, p. 3)

In contrast, Bob described his students at the School of Economics as fairly passive and lacking confidence, especially in production tasks, which were the tasks where he did communicate a number of pressuring events:

> Their expectations as to what their role is in class is that they should be fairly passive, that the class is teacher-led. This is OK when we do presentations and control practice but it is a problem when we do production activities such as brainstorming or free practice.
>
> (interview, p. 1)

Bob also commented on the students' feeling inhibited to initiate turns in production activities:

> They are young. Most of them are around nineteen and I'm not sure what their previous language learning experience was but they certainly don't seem to accept the idea that they can jump in that readily.
>
> (interview, p. 2)

Similarly to Sharon, Bob also contrasted his class with another class of his (an intensive course), whose students were less passive, more responsive to him than those at Economics.

Bob's view of his students at Physics permeated lessons. On 7/11, he gave a lesson which intended to make students aware of the importance of listening outside class, and he encouraged them to buy a magazine called Speak Up for practice. His little faith in students and their motivation was evident when he came to me after class and told me that he only expected about two people to buy the magazine. His perception of students was also evident in his interactions with them, as is reflected in this field note from 11/11:

> I've noticed little faith in Bob from the comments he makes to students about their attitudes towards English, the time they are prepared to spend on English and the resonance of what they do in class in their learning.
>
> (field note, p. 26)

How much the use each teacher made of psychological structuring is influenced by the teacher's perceptions of the students is unknown, but the evidence given above shows it is to some extent. The teacher's personal style could be an additional factor. Generally speaking, Sharon seemed to project a positive outlook towards the learning of English. For example, Sharon frequently tried to point out that English grammar was easy. She often ended her explanations of specific grammar points by saying "Logical, no?." Maybe Sharon presented the learning of English as something uncomplicated and that general belief may be why she did not need to use psychological structuring to project motivation. She projected it through other means.

In contrast, Bob had the opposite tendency. he sometimes presented the learning of English as something difficult. For example, on 6/11 he based a whole lesson on the assumption that students found listening difficult and said as much to students. I wrote in my field notes: "Bob starts the lesson by saying that they will be 'investigating' the 'phenomenon' of why they find English listening so difficult" (6/11 p. 17). However, he never asked them if the difficulty was really felt by students. Again, Bob's use of pressuring statements could be one more sign of this general tendency in him to present learning English as a difficult endeavor. A further sign of this tendency to make English look difficult is evidenced by the use of sophisticated words as in the preceding field note ("investigating" and "phenomenon"), which could

indirectly be giving the impression that English is indeed very complex.

Returning to Bob, it would be misleading to take for granted that he presented all tasks in that same pressuring manner or that he kept that pressuring tone throughout lessons, because that was not true. The data shows that he tended to set a pressuring tone in the preparation segments of just some tasks (more particularly those involving speaking) but not in others. In addition, the pressuring tone was not sustained throughout the task. So for example, in 26/3 Bob presented task 1 with pressuring events, but he was very positive and constructive in his comments when some students presented the report in public, as can be gathered from excerpts 81 and 82, which took place at the end of two groups of students' presentations:

- excerpt 81

T It looks OK to me. Yeah, I can't really see any problem with it. So, all right, fine. Very good.

(26/3 426)

- excerpt 82

T Can you see any problems anybody?
C (.13)
T Right OK. Is it OK then? seems all right? Yeah.
T-L3&L4 Em do you think your plan is better?
L3 (XX)
T ((Laughs)) Yeah? ((Self talk)) Is it OK? . . . All right. Very good.

(26/3 509)

A similar change in tone (being strict first and later offering encouragement) was also observed between what Bob said during the preparatory segment and what happened later. Sometimes in the preparatory segment, Bob warned students that the reporting or correction stages were going to require quite active roles from

them (e.g., persuading other learners, giving justifications, leading a correction stage). But when these stages actually took place, this active behavior did not materialize to the extent that he had presented it. For example, in 18/5 task 1, where students had to do a conversion task, these were the guidelines students received in the preparatory segment:

- excerpt 83

T I want you to think about the ones which were difficult, the ones that you couldn't do. So that when we look at them now . . . we can stop at the ones you have difficulty with and you will know which ones you have problems with and we will (stop) and talk about them. I don't want this to be a session of me standing at the front saying number one, number two, number-.

(18/5 task 1)

When the task was actually corrected, it was the teacher who took the lead, not the students, as was anticipated in the preparatory segment. And they corrected all the sentences one by one, not just the ones students had found difficult, as the teacher had announced also in the preparatory segment. Probably these demanding presentations in the preparatory segment were geared to making students work intensively in the performance stage rather than being precise predictors of how the task would be corrected or reported. As far as this purpose goes, this aim did certainly materialize in 18/5 task 1, where the students who were recorded (L7 and L6) actually followed Bob's instructions (i.e., only looking at difficult sentences) as can be told from excerpt 84. The excerpt took place when the teacher approached L7 and L6 during the performance stage:

- excerpt 84

T Are there any that you have particular problems with?
L7 Number (.02) number (.04)
T [Just one?
L7 [Number seven, [number ten,
L6 [Number [number

T Number seven, number ten.

(18/5 089)

In the same way, another pair of students who were recorded during the performance stage of that task were also following the teacher's guidelines, by going over sentences and quickly discriminating those they had no problem with from those that presented some kind of difficulty.

So far the analysis has centered on psychological structuring addressed to the whole class. When looking at the motivating events addressed to individuals or groups of students, Bob differentiated himself from Mark and Sharon in that he showed to be a strong user of motivating events. These events have not been analyzed so far but will be briefly commented on now. Bob used some of the same types of motivating events that were identified on pages 202-203. For instance, in excerpt 85 he pressed a group of students by reminding them of the short time left to complete a task and he also stressed that what they were working at had to be ready to go "public:"

- excerpt 85[17]

T-G Have you got your definitive plan?
L3 No.
T You've got until half past to produce the definitive plan. Because what will happen you will go to another group and try to persuade the other group that your plan is better than theirs.

(1/4 131)

In addition, Bob was observed to use the following other devices to individual groups of students that neither him nor Mark or Sharon had used when addressing the whole class:

---

[17] Double indentation indicates the teacher is talking to a group of students or that students are talking to each other.

- Towards the beginning of performance stages, he would ask two or three groups of students working together if they would be ready to report in public. Knowing for sure that their group were one of the "chosen" groups to do the reporting seemed to motivate those students to work more intensely.
- After Bob had heard what a group of students were doing during the performance stage, he encouraged them to pursue on the same line:

• excerpt 86

T Good. All right. Good. So you're on the road.

(26/3 102)

- At times when the teacher had spent some time with a group during the performance stage, Bob purposefully left them after a question had been posed. He left the group to solve the "unanswered question" on their own. There was a time when he added that he would be going back to the group, which must have further motivated students. In excerpt 87, these two tactics were applied:

• excerpt 87

L3 I think eh they are eh transitive verbs . . Yeah?
T What verbs?
L3 Transitive.
T Transitive verbs.
(.03)
L2 No, this isn't transitive, talk and ask. No.
L3 [Ask a person.
T [Yeah. They are not always transitive verbs. For example want isn't always transitive, yeah? And I want to go, there is no object there. Yeah?
L3 X this talk and ask perhaps=
T =Go back to L1's idea maybe and talk about that for a bit. Because I think L1 and L14 you are talking about the same thing. Possibly you could explain your ideas to L2 and L3. See what they think. Just explain your ideas again and I'll come back in a minute. OK?

(11/4 114)

Fewer and less varied events and strategies could be identified in Mark's and Sharon's interactions with groups of students or individuals. However, since not much data was recorded of these interactions I prefer not to make comparisons between teachers through frequency counts.

In brief, the main point in this section on psychological structuring has been the identification of two styles: a reassuring and a pressuring style, both with the aim of motivating students. These styles seem to reflect the teaching beliefs of the practitioners as well as their perceptions of the students in each class. In addition, it has been found that the pressuring style displayed during the preparatory segment was not sustained throughout the task. As the task progressed, the teacher became "softer" with students.