The use of hedges in academic writing by EFL learners, organized by Ott Tavares Paulo & Bruna Milano

One of the chief academic writing skills is the ability to anticipate readers’ objections to the claim and respond to those with an appropriate degree of respect and conviction by employing hedging and boosting strategies (cf. Barton 1995; Booth et al. 2008). Proper balance between hedges and boosters is an important feature of academic prose and serves to indicate author’s willingness to sound polite, as well as persuasive (e.g. Myers 1989; Hyland 1996, 1998). The acquisition of this valuable skill may be problematic for native English novice academic writers and even more so for learners of English as a Foreign Language, who have been reported to struggle with features of ‘non-nativeness’ in their writing, even at the advanced stages of proficiency (see e.g. Gilquin & Paquot 2008; Granger 1998; Lorenz 1998). More specifically, learners were found to use a more limited set of hedging and boosting devices than English native speakers, and to experience particular difficulties in adding an appropriate degree of tentativeness to their claims (e.g. Hinkel 2005; Hyland & Milton 1997; McEnery & Kifle 2002). Learner corpus studies investigating hedging in L2 writing are still scarce and tend to focus on individual genres (e.g. argumentative essays), rather than providing a comparative analysis of the phenomenon across various text types. Meanwhile, a variationist view on the use of hedging in L2 writing, considering a possible influence of variables such as genre, topic, task prompt, setting, etc. may reveal patterns of systematicity behind learners’ choices, which might otherwise go unnoticed.

This study focuses on the use of hedging (and boosting) devices by German learners and native English novice academic writers in acknowledging and responding to readers’ objections to a claim in structures such as “[One could assume/Of course/This may be...]. But [it should be kept in mind that/I think/sometimes...]”. The structures will be analysed in two text types, namely argumentative essays and term papers, and the contribution addresses the following research questions:

1. Which hedging strategies are employed by German L2 writers when acknowledging and responding to readers’ objections in argumentative essays and term papers?
2. Are there genre-induced differences as to the use of hedges (possibly in interplay with boosters) by German learners?
3. Are there differences as to the use of hedging devices by L2 versus L1 novice academic writers?

The analysis draws on the German components of two types of learner corpora, i.e. the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE; Granger et al. 2009) and the subcorpus of term papers of the Corpus of Academic Learner English (CALE; Callies & Zaytseva 2013), a Language-for-Specific-Purposes learner corpus. Additionally, a comparable selection of native-speaker texts will be examined.

Margaret Zellers & David House

Parallels between hand gestures and acoustic prosodic features in turn-taking
(Contribution to Prosodic constructions in dialog, organized by Ward Nigel, Richard Ogden, Oliver Niebuhr & Nancy Hedberg)

In order to ensure smooth turn-taking between conversational participants (cf. Sacks et al. 1974), interlocutors must have ways of providing information to one another about whether they have finished speaking or intend to continue. Among features that have been identified as playing a role in signaling turn transition are syntactic/semantic completion (e.g. Schaffer 1983; Auer 1996), intonational features (e.g. Local et al. 1986; Selting 1996; Caspers 2003), phonation quality/spectral characteristics (e.g. Ogden 2001; Kane et al. 2014), and eye gaze (e.g. Edlund et al. 2007; Edlund & Beskow 2009). Research in this area has increasingly recognized that multiple features of interlocutors’ speech contribute to turn-taking simultaneously, and recent studies involving large corpora of data (e.g. Koiso et al. 1998; Gravano & Hirschberg 2009, 2011; Hjalmarsson 2011) report a hierarchy of various acoustic features correlated with turn transition or turn hold. Furthermore, the prosodic cues which have priority when it comes to signaling turn transition appear to vary from language to language; while many English varieties make heavy use of intonational cues (cf. studies above; Zellers 2014), perception of turn change or hold in Central Swedish appears to be more dependent upon the presence or absence of final lengthening in syllables preceding silent pauses (Zellers 2013, submitted).

We will discuss data addressing Swedish speakers’ use of hand gestures in conjunction with turn change or turn hold in unrestricted, spontaneous dialog (Spontal corpus, Edlund et al. 2010). As has been reported by other researchers (e.g. Streeck & Hartge 1992; Mondada 2007), we find that our speakers’ gestures end before the end of speech in cases of turn change, while they may extend well beyond the end of a given speech chunk in the case of turn hold. The structure of the gesture itself appears to be constrained by turn transition characteristics as well, with gestures preceding turn change obligatorily ending in a “retraction” or release segment (cf. Kendon 1980; McNeill 2010). Furthermore, in our preliminary analysis we find a parallel between the durational features of the spoken turns and the gesture...
Swedish speakers tend to produce normal final lengthening in syntactically complete pre-pausal turn-hold locations, while not producing final lengthening in pre-pausal turn change locations (Zellers submitted). Similarly, the final segments of gestures in the vicinity of a turn change location in our data are relatively shorter in duration than final gesture segments in the vicinity of turn hold locations. It is possible that the acoustic lengthening and gesture lengthening may be complementary, where the presence of one may provide a sufficient cue to turn hold even in the absence of the other. This parallelism in duration variation between acoustic prosodic features and gesture gives strong support for considering hand gestures as part of the prosodic system, particularly in the context of discourse-level information such as maintaining smooth turn transition.

Alan Zemel

“Are you following me?": Response tokens as occasioned occurrences during extended tellings in psychotherapy (Contribution to The work of understanding in education, organized by Gosen Myrte & Tom Koole)

Practitioners recognize that psychotherapy sessions are learning environments in which therapists learn about their clients and clients learn how to identify and manage their troubles (Buttny 1996, Buttny 2004). Learning and instruction is often embedded in therapeutic interactions (Zemel, 2014). Therapists and clients routinely use various speech and gestural tokens to perform a variety of instruction-related actions: to display agreement, to initiate repair, to indicate a changes of cognitive state, to prompt the continuation of talk-in-progress, and so on.

A considerable body of research has examined the work response tokens perform in ordinary conversation (see, for example, Schegloff 1982; Jefferson 1983; Beach 1993; Gardner 2001; Jefferson 2002; McCarthy 2003; Gardner 2005, Gardner 2007; Gardner & Levy 2010), in storytelling (Norrick 2000; Sacks 1992a, Sacks 1992b; Stivers 2008), in classroom interactions (Koole, 2010; Mehan, 1979) and in psychotherapeutic interactions (Jones & Beach 1995; Fitzgerald & Leudar 2010). In much of this research, response tokens are examined for the work they do in relation to subsequent talk; very little attention has been give to what occasions the production of response tokens in various conversational settings (see Koole 2010 for response tokens elicited in classroom settings).

Elicitation of response tokens permits a speaker to monitor recipients’ incremental understandings of extended tellings. Response tokens are treated as actions token-producers elect to perform to display alignment, affiliation, prompt for continuation of the telling, initiate repair, and so on, to assure the progressivity of the ongoing talk. When response tokens are produced as second-position actions in token elicitation sequences, they permit the speaker to determine if and how recipients are “following” the telling at speaker-selected occasions during the talk. As interactional sequences embedded in the larger enterprise of an extended telling, such token elicitation/production sequences allow for the progressivity of the telling under way.

Psychotherapy sessions frequently involve client-produced extended tellings in which clients inform therapists of circumstances they deem relevant to therapy. Therapist understanding of client experiences is essential to the therapeutic process. During these extended tellings, therapists orient to the tellings in various ways, including producing various kinds of response tokens (cf. Fitzgerald & Leudar 2010; Fitzgerald 2013; Jones & Beach 1995; Leudar, Sharrock, Hayes, & Truc kle 2008). In this paper, I examine the organization of response token elicitation/production sequences embedded within extended client tellings during therapy sessions for how they contribute to the progressivity of talk and therapy.

In the following example, C elicits response tokens from T by including references to prior talk with T (lines 8-11) and by continuing a head-shake while making sustained eye contact until a receipt token is produced (lines 13-16). T’s response includes the coordinated production of head nods with verbal response tokens. Different response elicitations appear to elicit different responding actions from therapists. In this paper, I examine the work such elicitation/production sequences do during therapy. The data consist of approximately 60 hours of audio/video recordings of talk between clients and therapists during Intensive Integrated Reprocessing therapy sessions conducted in 2011.

Data appendix not shown due to lack of space

Deniz Zeyrek, Isin Demirsahin, Ayisigi B. Sevdik-Calli & Murathan Kurfali

Annotating implicit discourse connectives in Turkish: The challenge of corrective discourse relations (Contribution to Discourse connectives across languages and modes: Challenges for discourse annotation, organized by Zufferey Sandrine, Liesbeth Degand & Daniel Hardt)