Eniko Csomay

Department of Linguistics, San Diego State University

ecsomay@mail.sdsu.edu

Interactivity in university classrooms: a corpus-based perspective

In previous corpus-based studies of spoken discourse interactivity has been explored through patterns of grammar (e.g., Biber 1988, 1995; Biber et al. 1999), or through patterns of turn-taking (e.g., in university class sessions, cf., Csomay 2002, Simpson 2003). In these studies, interactivity is identified in full-length texts lacking descriptions of intra-textual variation of interactivity. In order to analyze patterns of variation in interactivity <u>within</u> texts, features of interactivity need to be examined in smaller units of analysis.

This study takes a corpus-based approach to explore patterns of interaction in within lexically coherent units in classroom talk. 196 university class sessions (about 1.4 million words) are used in the analysis. First, the university class sessions were automatically segmented into nearly 6000 Vocabulary-based Discourse Units (VBDUs) (Biber et al., 2003), using a modified version of Hearst's (1997) TextTiler. Second, applying multi-dimensional analytical methods (Biber 1988), three dimensions of linguistic variation were found in these lexically coherent units: Contextual, directive orientation versus Conceptual, informational focus; Personalized framing; Dialogue versus Teacher monologue. Finally, the third dimension, Dialogue versus Teacher monologue was analyzed in detail, exploring ways in which the intra-textual patterns of interactivity relate to the varying communicative purposes of the lexically coherent and grammatically characterized units of analysis. Pedagogical implications are also discussed.