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going to find our issues.		Init	Question
34. What are our issues? All right – <u>issues</u> .			
37. T: Yeah	K1	FUG	Evaluation Accept
39. T: Author and authority! That's a key issue!	K1	Resp FUG	Answer Evaluation Acc
41. T: Contingency and generalizability	K1	Resp	Answer
43. T: local?	K1	Resp	Answer
45. T: Global and Local!	K1	FUG	Evaluation Praise
47. T: This is good! We're good!	K1	FUG	Comment Opinion
49. T: (laughs) Yeah, I do that well. That's right . . . one of my better qualities	K1	AKI	Fact
55. T: Is that even a word, generalizability?	K1	Init	Question
59. T: Oh, I try to stay away from Don when he starts talking like that.	K1	FUG	Comment Connection

## CLASSROOM INTERACTION & INSTRUMENTAL TEXTS

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### Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore from a discourse point of view, the structure of some written instructions of some exercises that were utilized in the course *Linguistics and the English Teacher*. Instructions become "instrumental texts" according to Dendrinos (1992: 43) since they are "texts whose function is to provide the learner with information concerning the teaching and learning matter and with instructions regarding what to do with". Also, this paper is intended to be an exercise of reflection about the nature of the written instructions used in class which we use every day in class.

We, as teachers, are familiarized enough with instructions. They appear everywhere from textbooks to daily classroom activities. They are characteristic of the pedagogical discourse. It would be difficult not to relate teaching with these instrumental texts. For example, in Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) describes communication that is carried out in the classroom (see Malamah – Thomas 1991). Within the categories mentioned by Flanders that comprise such classroom observation instruments, category number six, there is reference to the following teacher talk "Giving directions: Directions, commands, or

orders with which a pupil is expected to comply" (Malama -Thomas 1991: 21).

When those instructions are written, they are written only following the pattern of what an instruction is like according to the experience as teachers. This makes sense because according to Kress' arguments the function of a writer is "not a creator of text, but an assembler of text. That is, out of her or his experience of other texts, she or he creates a new text which meets the demands of a particular social occasion" (1989: 47).

The relevance of this study is to examine in a closer view some of the written instructions used by graduate students in their leadership of one 40-minute class segment in the sessions of *Linguistics and the English Teacher* in Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Considering the following: "the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use". As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs (Brown and Yule 1993: 1). Hence, instructions as instrumental texts are examined under the perspective of Dendrinos (1992).

#### Instructions as Instrumental Texts

It is in fact, the instrumental texts of the textbook that basically position learners as social beings. Those texts define learners relation with the object of instruction, and more generally with the object of knowledge, as well as their relations with the members of the classroom as social setting (Dendrinos 1992 : 68).

The selected samples fit in what Dendrinos (1992) calls instrumental texts, that is, "the texts whose function is to provide the learner with information concerning the teaching/learning matter and with instructions regarding what to do with it"(1992: 43). They have, according to her, besides the linguistics properties, some characteristics, and these samples are no exception. First, they are formed mainly by action verbs such as "listen, answer, respond and by mental verbs notice, identify, think".

Instructions are presented in order to make it easier for the direct addressee, the learner. However, the teacher works as a mediator between the text and the learner. According to this, Dendrinos mentions, "study of classroom practices indicates that frequently the teacher intervenes to translate, interpret, restate, paraphrase the text; so as

to facilitate the accomplishment of the required action" (1992:66). From that evidence it seems, even it sounds dramatic, that instrumental texts are addressed to the teacher instead of the learner. Hence it could be a paradox that those texts whose purpose is to give instructions about what to do, frequently need clarifications or explanations, besides regarding the EFL class, that in addition the learner has to face the handicap of the language barrier itself.

The quintessential characteristic of the instrumental text is the use of strong directives which command learners to do something, even if they are willing or not, capable or not, motivated or not; they have to obey, to respond to this authoritative discourse (Dendrinos 1992: 53). The samples that were selected as instrumental texts are characterized by commands. Tokatlidou (1986: quoted by Dendrinos 1992: 51) discusses the issue of unequal power distribution in the school classroom, and claims that textbooks use language of authority, even more than teachers do. Thus, it is very common to see verbs in imperative form in the textbooks. In the chosen samples these verbs forms can be found: Respond... answer... listen... think...which indicates that the authority statements are presented not only due to the linguistic form, the imperative, but also because of the context they are inserted in. It depends on the institutional development that characterized the school or the classroom wherein those instrumental texts are present. They are a sample of the power relations that exist in the scholastic environment, as Giroux (1983 :205) states "the production of school knowledge and meanings are determined by broader relations".

The power relation has to do with control, which can be variable, according to Bernstein (1990:36 quoted by Dendrinos 1992). He explains this control by designating it according to its framing which relates to "the principle regulating the communicative practices of the social relations between transmitters and acquirers". When there are variations in framing, there are changes or variations in principles of communication. Framing may be strong or weak, Bernstein states, and explains that where framing is strong, characteristics of the communicative context are explicitly administered by the transmitter but, when it is weak, they are managed, to some extent, by the acquirer. Regarding that the elements which form the pedagogical communicative context, as described by Bernstein, include features such as selection, organization, pacing, criteria of the communicators and the organization of the physical location, then we realize that when framing is strong the

transmitter has complete control over them, but when it is weak the acquirer has certain control over the, pedagogical performance including organization and pacing (see Dendrinis 1992 :57).

According to Bernstein's concepts, through the selected samples of instrumental texts, different degrees in framing can be recognized. The control exercised in the instructions has some variations. However, most of them show a strong framing.

#### Sample 1

Listen to four segments from four different songs. Try to identify the accents.

#### Sample 2

Please identify with (M) the conversation between two men and with (W) the conversation between two women. Give two reasons for your choice.

In this case the control of the transmitter over the acquirer (learner) is complete, since the control over the organization is specific about what the learner has to do. Also, exclusively the transmitter who will assess the performance of the learner determines the object of knowledge.

By contrast in

#### Sample 3

There are examples showing change because of the "gender-neutral". Let's think of more examples, and talk about that as a group.

Here, learners have to some extent the control over the selection of the knowledge, in this case the learner has the option to think and decide what to do with his own answers. Thus the learner has a choice of controlling the knowledge. The text gives the learner an opportunity to answer according to her/his knowledge of the world and it is an opportunity wherein the learner is not constrained in the performance of the activity.

To conclude, the samples include those characteristics that, to a significant extent, construct the instrumental text(s) employed in the activities of the discussion sessions; that is, "the language used to give learners necessary information and instructions that aim at their accomplishing a verbal or non-verbal action", as it is defined by Dendrinis (1992 :50). These characteristics, among other aspects, are the source of the authoritative function they have and that translate, by means of certain discourse, the values and ideologies of the educational system that underlie the discourse and social practices of daily classroom life. Understanding that ideology, according to Giroux (1983), refers to "the way in which meanings and ideas are produced, mediated, and embodied in forms of knowledge, cultural experience, social practices and cultural artifacts".

By contrast, if we observe other instrumental texts (instructions) from other contexts besides those from school, we can notice that, at a superficial level, they are similar. For example, the following instructions were taken from a different source in order to detect similarities and differences between these and those presented in the samples taken from classroom activity (see sample 5 in appendix).

#### Sample 5

Read garment labels and follow directions.

Plug cord into a standard outlet and move Temperature Selector to desired setting in a Steam area (from 4 to 7) on the dial.

When these instrumental texts are compared with those from the sample, we can detect similarities in the recurrent use of strong directives by means of imperative verb form, so they are at the same "grammaticosyntactic level" as Dendrinis says. Nevertheless their pragmatic value is different. Considering that pragmatics refers to "the study of how the meaning of discourse is created in particular contexts for particular senders and receivers" (Cook 1993: 157). We can detect in instrumental texts (instructions) from the selected activities for the discussion sessions that the imperative verb form is a command to all learners. They are ordered to achieve an action, though they may not be interested, willing, or able to. Both teacher and activities (from a

textbook or an exercise) are authorized to impose assignments upon them (Dendrinos 1992: 53).

Conversely, the imperative verb form used in those instrumental texts (instructions), which are from different contexts, except those from school, operates as recommendation to the interested reader, (Dendrinos 1992: 53-4) see appendix.

#### Sample 5

Allow the iron to preheat 1 or 2 minutes. Steam button should be in upper position.

The meaning of this command becomes a recommendation. As we can notice this instrumental text shares some of the linguistics forms of some instructions from the activities of the Linguistics sessions. Nevertheless it is obvious that their pragmatic value, in other words, their pragmatic meaning is different. One is a strong directive and the other is a recommendation. Keeping in mind the following: "Thus, meaning in pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of language, whereas meaning in semantics is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers" (Leech 1991:6).

For instance, we have that the underlying pragmatic meaning of

#### Sample 4

Rank the following in order of importance first to you, and then to the teacher

is different from

#### Sample 5

Read garments labels and follow directions

Both instrumental texts use the imperative verb form, but in the former one, this use implies an order, a command. While on the contrary, in the latter instrumental text the use of the imperative verb

form denotes a recommendation, and as the text is written in bold letters, instead of being a strong directive, it is a very important recommendation. The pragmatic meaning of the first instrumental text is "you must read and decide the order" you know that you do not have any choice; you have to do the task, under the condition given by the teacher or the instrumental text itself. Oppositely, in the second instrumental text the pragmatic meaning is that of "you are advised to follow these directions in order to keep your clothes in good conditions". "Following this direction is a matter of convenience for you".

This indicates that the similarity between those different instrumental texts is only superficial. As it has been explained they have different communicative purposes.

In addition we can observe the following texts.

#### Sample 1

Did you notice any particularities in word choice, syntax, or other, characteristic to each variety?

#### Sample 1

Listen again and compare the ways the highlighted words are pronounced by different performers.

Both samples belong to the instructions used in the discussion sessions they present different linguistic forms. While the first one is a question, the imperative form embodies the second one. Hence, what is the communicative purpose of each? The same. Both, question and imperative, command to the reader (the learner) to obey. The authority of the imperative form is also implied in the question. See the following instructions,

#### Sample 2

Can you identify which of your own attitudes correspond the most with three of these differences and under which circumstances? Could you identify three that do not correspond to Tannen's observations and specify why?

As Holmes (1983: 102-3) pointed out, an interrogative clause is to be interpreted as a command to do "if it contains one of the modals *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*, and sometimes *going to*". Also, when the subject of the clause is the addressee, and when the predicate describes an action that is physically possible at the time of the utterance. Similarly, we have another form of command that is present in the instructions of the activities, that is, the use of Let + first person plural -*Let's*, which would suggest solidarity, however in a classroom, the use of such forms are not suggestions, but strong directives.

### Sample 3

There are examples showing change because of the "gender-neutral". Let's think of more examples, and talk about that as a group.

By contrast, the communicative purpose of the instrumental texts in samples that were not taken from a textbook or school exercises, their pragmatic meaning is that of recommending, instead of ordering, by given as much detailed information as possible by means of strategies proposed by Dendrinos (1992: 55). Some examples are presented as follows:

Illustration

### Sample 5

Plug cord into a standard outlet and move Temperature Selector to desired setting in the Steam area (from 4 to 7) on the dial.

Foreseeing difficulty

### Sample 5

If you are unsure of the fiber content of a garment, test a small area (a seam or inside hem) before ironing.

Providing alternatives

### Sample 5

When in doubt, start with low heat. If wrinkles remain, gradually increase heat to find the best setting for good results without damaging the fabric.

It is important to keep in mind that in these instrumental texts the performance of the actors will not be assessed or evaluated by anybody. When they fail carrying out the instructions, themselves will assess them, and they can evaluate the instructions as inadequate. In this case, some alternatives are presented e.g. call your local service manager.

On the other hand, in the school context, the teacher or the textbook, in this case the exercises, which are the authority, will decide what are the possible actors' needs. This authority decides what is needed "to know" or "to learn" and assumptions about how the learner acquires knowledge will be the basis on what learners are asked to perform. So, we have that the language of authority that embodies the textbook/activities instrumental texts, comes not only from the linguistic forms, but also from other aspects not present in these texts.

Hence, we have observed that all different instrumental texts -those used in school texts and in other contexts, acquire their meaning not because of their linguistic forms that they share, rather as a result of the context wherein they occur. Considering context as not only the aspects of physical or social settings, but also as "any background knowledge assumed to be shared by *s* (speaker) and *h* (hearer) and which contributes to *h's* interpretations of what means by a given utterance" as it is considered by Leech (1991).

Taking this into account, we have that the strong directives which characterize the instrumental texts (instructions) from textbooks or, as it is in this case, activities provided by the "teacher/graduate student" are interpreted as commands, because of the power relations that are assumed between the teacher and the learner and between the textbook/activities provided by the teacher and the learner. These assumptions are taken for granted, related to the authoritative position of the school as institution. Within this context the teacher as well as the textbook/activities given by the teacher -consequently the instrumental texts- play their roles.

At school, besides the position of authority, is that of erudite, who knows what is convenient to those who are ignorant and must follow what it is indicated. It is a relationship between the "erudite" and the "ignorant" and each one assumes her/his position. That is why the

participants of this event, the instrumental texts, the teacher as mediator of them (Williams and Burden 1997:40) and the learner interpret in a natural way the strong directives of instrumental texts. Learners do not have options; they have to follow what those instrumental texts indicate. However, I want to underline that the strong directives, and the authority meaning that embodies the instrumental texts of any textbook/activity given by the teacher –their presence, absence or degree of influence- will depend to great extent on the classroom daily activities and thus the institution's own dynamics.

### Conclusion

I have examined a selected sample of the written instructions utilized in the activities of the discussion sessions of the course of *Linguistics and the English Teacher* of summer I, 2001, wherein I detected that the authority of textbook/instructions' activities is due to the authority of the institution, that is the school, more than the instructions themselves "...asking, be it for action or information, is generally a position of power, as too is giving information –except where it has been asked for" (Fairclough 1989 :126). In English textbooks/activities instructions, we have seen diverse written forms of directives –the imperative and the polite imperative, as it is named by Hatch (1992: 122), who adds, when "we make a request, we expect that request to be complied with", and "the greater the risk of refusal, the more indirective the directive will be", as we observe in the selected instrumental texts taken from the Linguistic class activities (Where the instructor is not the instructor, but instead, is a classmate).

Considering the similarity (the use of the imperative verb form) and the differences (use of clarification, illustration, providing alternatives, among others) found between the selected instructions from the class exercises and those from other contexts, I interpreted the pragmatic meaning of the class instructions as that of a strong directive which command learners to obey based rather on the relation of power that exist between teacher/textbook (in this case the exercises) and learner than on the linguistic properties that embodied instructions in the scholar environment. In contrast I demonstrated that the pragmatic value of the outside school instructions is more oriented toward a recommendation than a strong directive. Thus, "similar grammatical

forms have different code significations in different contexts; code markers are context specific" (Bernstein 1990: 119).

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## Appendix

### Selected Samples for the purpose of this study

1.

Activity:

Identifying English Varieties (British, American, Australian, European)

1) **Listen** to four segments from four different songs. Try to identify the accents.

2) **Listen** again and compare the ways the highlighted words are pronounced by different performers.

3) **Did you notice** any particularities in word choice, syntax, or other, characteristic to each variety?

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2.

Can you identify which of your own attitudes correspond the most with three of these differences and under which circumstances? Could you identify three that do not correspond to Tannen's observations and specify why?

Please identify with (M) the conversation between two men and with (W) the conversation between two women. Give two reasons for your choice

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3.

Can you think of any examples of language change which are "emotionally charged" for you? **Think** about some of the areas in relation to your own attitudes to language change.

There are examples showing change because of the "gender-neutral". Let's **think** of more examples, and talk about that as a group.

4.

...in this piece of writing, we will write and share personal reflections on our previous experience within different contexts where we have been readers and writers : for example, in our homes, in our schools, in our religious affiliations, ...etc.

Please respond to the writings of the members of your group. In responding to your peer's writing, answer the following questions :

What do you like about your peer's writing?

What questions would you have about his/her paper?

What polishing do you feel your peer's paper needs before it is finished?

If you are using another approach, would you tell us the characteristics of your approach and why you prefer using it. Thanks

Would you please take some time to answer the following questionnaires to be as a start for our Monday discussion on the importance of metacognitive awareness on the part of learners

What does good writing mean to you?

What do you do when you face trouble writing?

Rank the following in order of importance first to you, and then to the teacher.

Directions: Following are statements related to teachers' perspectives with regard to the implementation of Journal Writing in their classes. Please indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by writing the answer on the blank in front of the item.

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5.

Iron instructions