A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF ELICITING ACTS IN
AMERICAN AND TURKISH MBA SEMINARS AND LECTURES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Linguistics

by
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Summer 2011
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

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June 16th, 2011
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, Margaret Cecelia Manley De Lorme and Francis John De Lorme, whose belief in the importance of education and in doing a job well have guided me throughout my life.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Comparative Examination of Eliciting Acts in American and Turkish MBA Seminars and Lectures

by

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Master of Arts in Linguistics
San Diego State University, 2011

In the wake of waves of international students entering American and British universities, starting in the 1980s, it became apparent that research into actual academic discourse was needed so that more effective TEFL and EAP programs could be designed. Many publications followed focusing on academic writing but little research was done on academic speaking, a skill critical for success in Western universities, particularly in business programs, which are highly interactive. Even less research has been done on oral communication in MBA seminars, and to this researcher’s knowledge no studies have examined the oral discourse of Turkish students studying in American MBA programs. This study aims to fill that gap by comparing and contrasting the questions asked by two groups of American native English speaking MBA students at universities in the United States with each other, as well as with a group of native Turkish speaking students enrolled in a joint American/Turkish Executive MBA (EMBA) program. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from audio and video recordings of Question and Answer sessions following a guest presentation in two American MBA programs, as well as audio and video recordings of questions asked by Turkish E-MBA students. These data were analyzed for (1) the number of words in each question, (2) the presence of a metastatement, (3) the presence of grounding, (4) the number of reformulations within an elicit, (5) the tone of the question, (6) the use of fillers, i.e., like, uh, and, umm, and finally, (7) the presence of a communication breakdown. The purpose of the study was to ascertain if there were any differences in the elicits made by the American and Turkish MBA students, and if so, if those differences caused any communication breakdowns between the student and the American guest presenter or professor. The findings of this study were: (1) the private, East coast university MBA students’ questions were less embellished, more succinct and direct than those of the public, West coast MBA students’ questions; (2) the elicits of the native Turkish speaking students in the joint U.S./Turkish E-MBA program were even less embellished, more succinct and direct than the American native English speaking MBA students at the private, East coast university. The study results show that the succinctness and directness of the Turkish students’ elicits did not cause any communication breakdowns or hinder their ability to communicate effectively with an American professor. The implications of this study suggest that the actual oral communication norms practiced by business professionals, as well as other professionals, e.g., lawyers, engineers, and doctors, need to be at the core of TEFL and EAP courses.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Ghada Osman, my thesis advisor, whose encouragement, counsel, and careful editing of my drafts helped keep me focused and added immeasurably to the quality of the final document.

I would like to thank the following people whose generous cooperation made this thesis possible. Professor George Belch agreed to let me tape two of his classes at San Diego State University, and Professor Mark A. Cohen gave me access to tapes of his class, made by Chris Bellerjeau, at Columbia University. Dr. Sedat Aybar granted permission for taping to be done of an E-MBA class taught by Professor Mark Conrad at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, Turkey. That was ably done by Mehmet Ö zgür Yaran over a two-day period.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A seemingly routine assignment in a graduate level course in the Applied Linguistics program at San Diego State University in San Diego, California to read “Aspects of Impoverished Discourse in Academic Speaking: Implications for Pedagogy from a Mini-Corpus” by Helen Basturkmen (1998) was instead seminal; it set in motion a process that eventually led to the article becoming the focus of my master’s thesis.

In this article Basturkmen reported the results of her study which compared the composition of questions asked by native speakers (NSs) of English in a British university Master of Business Administration (MBA) class with those asked by non-native speakers (NNSs) of English in a Turkish university MBA class during the question and answer sessions following presentations by an esteemed local business person. The data for the study came from university archived recordings; analysis of the data focused on the use of metastatements, the length of the initiating elicit, the use of reformulations, and the use of grounding in the elicit, specifically whether hypothesizing or giving reasons were used.

An initial reading of the report left me disturbed by its lack of scientific rigor. This is manifested in the lopsided presentation of data, mischaracterization of data, contradictory statements, uneven application of defined terms, and the absence of relevant information. Another major problem with the study is the definition of expert users of English based on data obtained exclusively from British students. Finally, Basturkmen failed to examine differences in questioning styles across academic disciplines, in particular how real-life
business exchanges influence academic exchanges in MBA programs. The combined result of these inadequacies is that the report appears tendentious in favor of Basturkmen’s claim that the impoverished style of academic discourse by nonnative speakers of English as exemplified by short, abrupt elicits is a problem that “…may undermine their contributions to academic discussion…” and needs to be addressed by revising the curriculum of ESL/EFL materials that “…tend to exhort learners to make contributions to talk succinctly and directly” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 88). An examination of the exchanges that she used as evidence, does not, in my opinion, support her conclusion.

An example of mischaracterization of data is found in extract 3, (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 86), in which she appears to have ignored the fact that the Turkish student’s second turn in which he embellished his first short elicit was due to the visiting professor’s inability to hear him/her, not to a communication breakdown caused by the Turkish student’s short, direct question. In repeating his question the student expanded on the initial query, even giving examples. Oddly, Ms. Basturkmen (1998) appears to have mischaracterized the actual data when she stated that the guest speaker’s command, “Speak Up” (p. 86) was a reaction to an “…abrupt elicit [that] fails to give the interlocutor enough to go on” (p. 85), rather than being prompted by the presenter’s not having heard the student’s question. Another example of what seems to me to be a blatant mischaracterization of the actual recording is in her explanation of Extract 2 (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 84-85). She said that, “Extract 2 shows an abrupt turn at exchange initiation which led to the presenter seeking clarification”.

Extract 2 (text from Turkey)

S Did you do anything special to sell your computers in Turkey compared to the European situation?

P No like voltage and cycles like //
I do not see any evidence of the presenter “seeking clarification”. Instead, the student, realizing that the presenter was addressing a technical aspect, rather than a marketing strategy, interrupted the presenter and elaborated upon his question.

In addition to distortion of data, Basturkmen also appears to contradict herself. For example, her main point is that NNSs use short, abrupt elicits compared to native speakers. Yet, in the last paragraph of page 85 she states that the NNS in Extract 3 does “…extend[ing] it, offering options until a response seems forthcoming” (Basturkmen 1998).

Furthermore, the application of her standard for reformulating elicits is uneven. In Extract 3, “Are you free in decision making or are you responsible to another center for example Greece or” Basturkmen labeled this as one elicit, yet it seems to me that it could be characterized as three elicits based on a comparison of it with Extract 4 (p. 86), described by Basturkmen (1998) as being composed of four elicits.

Extract 4 (text from UK)

S Yes eh your pan European advertising policy then (1) has it been to say to take say a video shot in UK and then dub it into various languages (2) is that it or (3) how is your strategy been (4) what have you actually done

P Right if we shot a film in UK and then tried to dub it into European languages that’s what...

Basturkmen (1998) also noted that the British students utilized reformulations, resulting in multiple elicits in much greater proportion than the NNSs: 7 versus 2 (p. 85). Yet, she did not consider Extract 2, represented above, as an example of a reformulation, even though the student’s clarification fit her definition of one: “…fine-tuning to reflect more precisely the
intention of the questioner….” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 85). It appears that this is yet again a distortion of the data in an attempt to make it fit her thesis.

Finally, her statement that “[t]he discourse of expert users of English shows a tendency for contributions which are full and multi-dimensional” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 88), is problematic because she is overgeneralizing, i.e., British academic culture equals academic culture. Are we to conclude that all expert users of English, defined by Basturkmen (1998) as native speakers, which by definition includes Americans, “…show a tendency for making contributions which are full and multi-dimensional”? Or, does she mean that native English speakers from Great Britain “…show a tendency for making contributions which are full and multi-dimensional” (Basturkmen, 1998)? I strongly suspect it is the latter. Concomitantly, one wonders why the nationality of the guest speaker has not been identified in the article; that is relevant to her conclusion.

If one examines the elicits that Basturkmen cites as examples of contributions which are full and multi-dimensional, one notes that they are full of solecisms, highly critical of the guest speaker, and attitudinally arrogant. The most egregious examples of these failings are evident in Extract 6.

Extract 6 (text from UK)

S1 Were you not re-inventing the wheel (1) if you’d looked at what they were doing (2) presumably you did look at what the opposition was doing (P Hm) how they were operating on a European basis (P Hm) and (3) if they were doing it on a European bias [sp] would that not have saved you some leg work (4) said they’re success

This extract was specifically quoted in the article as “…proffering a number of hypothetical propositions (numbered) with which the interlocutor can interact and base response on” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 87).
In the discussion of pedagogical implications from the study she declares that “…there is a place in instruction for practicing ‘saying more’ and making fuller turns to facilitate interaction” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 88). It seems to me that Extract 6 highlights the importance of the quality, not the quantity, of the discourse to academic success. We also do not know how the interlocutor/guest speaker responded to the elicit since Basturkmen does not provide that response. It is possible that the reaction to this extract would be different depending on whether the guest speaker was British or American.

The lack of the guest speaker’s response to the British student’s run-on elicit is an example of the lopsided presentation of data pervading the whole study. In the three examples of exchange initiation by Turkish students at Bilkent University, the response of the presenter is provided, whereas in the four examples of British students at Aston University in the United Kingdom, only one example of a student initiated elicit is followed by a presenter response. So the data is incomplete, making it impossible to assess whether the U.K. students’ elicits facilitated interaction or not.

The deficiencies in the reporting of this study preclude the validity of Dr. Basturkmen’s conclusion “…that NNSs may undermine their contributions to academic discussion by making them short and to the point” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 88). Troubled by what appeared to be flawed methodology/conclusions in Basturkmen’s study I determined to replicate her study, substituting British MBA students and British professors with American MBA students and American professors.

The present study expands upon the Basturkmen one by comparing the questions asked by two groups of American native English speaking MBA students at universities in the United States (versus Basturkmen’s one group of British students) with each other as well
as with a group of native Turkish speaking Executive MBA (EMBA) students at a university in Turkey. The students in this EMBA program are “…business professionals and managers on the fast track toward challenging managerial and global assignments” (Vergel, 2009). This study follows Basturkmen in analyzing the elicits for (1) the number of words in each question, (2) the presence of a metastatement, (3) the presence of grounding, and (4) the number of reformulations within an eliciting. The analysis in the present study extends beyond Basturkmen’s by examining (5) the tone of the question, (6) the use of fillers, i.e., like, uh, and, umm, and finally, (7) the presence of a communication breakdown.

**Review of the Literature**

In this section, I review the research on Academic Culture through a broad lens, and then narrow the focus to examine American, Turkish, and British academic cultures, and how they are reflected in each nation’s MBA programs. Next I will report on research into oral communication in the classroom, and finally discuss the recent literature on academic business discourse.

**Academic Culture**

Brick (2006) points out that “(a)cademic culture refers to the attitudes, values and ways of behaving that are shared by people who work or study in universities….” (p. 2). This basic definition was expanded upon by Cortazzi and Jin: “Taken-for-granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values and beliefs about what constitutes good learning, about how to teach or learn, whether and how to ask questions,….” (as cited in Uckun and Buchanan, 2009, p. 103.). These frameworks can be traced to the original universities: the University of Bologna in 1088 and the University of Paris in 1150. “These two universities provided alternative models of authority, Bologna as a ‘university of
students’ (the election of the rector of the older Scottish universities by their students is a relic of this), Paris as a ‘university of masters’” (Anderson, 2006, p. 1). This difference in power structure was coupled with a difference in purpose; Bologna stressed the practical side of education as exemplified by its faculties of law and medicine, “…while Paris, the model for Oxford and then Cambridge, was devoted primarily to philosophy and theology” (Anderson, 2006, p. 1).

The influence of these independent Church-run schools was widespread and enduring. As the establishment of universities expanded, regional political, economic, and social conditions affected their academic culture.

American Academic Culture and Turkish Academic Culture

American universities, and their concomitant academic culture, were shaped by continental traditions and native values. “The original colonial model, imported from England, was combined with the concept of the German research university idea of the 19th century and the American ideal of service to society to produce the modern American university” (Altbach, 2007, p. 122). Some practices of the modern American university resemble that archetype, the University of Bologna: for example, the rating of professors by their students. Additionally, the modern American university’s culture is imbued with the spirit of Jacksonian democracy, which “…sought to broaden the public’s participation in government” (ID0418977478, 2011). The shift to popular democracy, which abolished property ownership as a qualification for voting was an equalizing force in American society; it is manifested in American academic life by the active oral participation of students in class.

This has been amply documented by many researchers. In a comparison between East Asian schooling and schooling in the United States Robinson (1991) wrote, “…the U.S.
educated ESL teacher tends to stress eclecticism, student-centric instruction, active learning, verbal activity, and questions from and among students” (p. 157). Murphy’s 2005 claim that “American society values ‘talking’ as a learning mechanism” (as cited in Lee, 2009, p. 148), and Robinson’s (1991) conclusions, were substantiated by research done by Lee (2009), which again highlighted the importance of oral participation by students in American academic culture. The unanimous opinion of the six Korean graduate students studying in the United States, who were the study’s participants, was expressed by one of them as: “…many Americans seem to think of talking as a way to construct knowledge and the whole society seems to value it” (Lee, 2009, p. 148).

According to Shaw and Bailey (1990) the characteristic cultural features of classrooms in American universities consist of

…first, the great variety of behaviors that are observed (as opposed to classrooms in other cultures where behavior is much more restricted), and, second, the relative freedom that exists for a professor and a group of students to jointly negotiate the behavior patterns that will subsequently typify the conduct of the class (p. 318).

They also noted that asking questions during class by students and professors is a common occurrence in American university classrooms. All of these points were corroborated by Uckun and Buchanan in their 2009 comparative analysis of the methodology, classroom management, and examination and grading criteria of Turkish teachers and native American English-speaking teachers in two Turkish universities, Bilkent and Gaziantep, in which the medium of instruction is English.

In this study, which tabulated the Turkish student responses to a questionnaire, statistically significant differences were found between the Turkish and the American native English-speaking teachers. The main differences were that the American teachers were “more frequently” willing to negotiate with the students, utilize technology, concerned with
presenting an interesting lesson, and making the classes more student-centered by
encouraging questions and discussion, even making class participation part of their grade. In
addition, the students reported that the American teachers more frequently than the Turkish
teachers “ask higher order questions that promote analytical and evaluative thinking skills”
(Uckun & Buchanan, 2009, p. 109). An important difference was also found between the
types of answers expected on exams. The Americans valued “…clearly presented, well-
organized answers, look[ed] for skills of critical thinking…. not only…knowledge that is
taught and generally accepted, but also…well supported original idea[s]” (Uckun &
Buchanan, 2009, p. 111). The centrality of creativity and critical thinking to American
academic culture was corroborated by Knyshevytska and Hill in their 2007 article reporting
on the value of ESL teachers using a simulation to help international students adjust to
American academic culture.

The Turkish students in the Uckun and Buchanan (2009) study perceived their
Turkish teachers as “more frequently” talking much more than students and being less
understanding of the students’ experiences. On exams they were portrayed as being
concerned with “…see[ing] their own teachings expressed in similar words, and look[ed] to
see a standardized format in take-home exams” (Uckun & Buchanan, 2009, p. 111).

In summary, Uckun and Buchanan (2009) found that the American native English
speaking teachers valued negotiation, student engagement with the material as evidenced by
thoughtful comments and questions, critical thinking, and originality, whereas the Turkish
teachers valued memorization of their lectures and textbooks, as well as tidiness. It should
be noted that all of the Turkish teachers in Uckun and Buchanan’s study were from the
English Language & Literature Department at Gaziantep University where the majority of
the faculty do not have doctorate degrees and none have any foreign experience. Whereas
these teachers embody a traditional, conservative approach to education, they are not
representative of Turkey’s educational principles, as defined by the Ministry of Education,
which shall be discussed below.

It appears that features of American culture, e.g., democracy, casualness,
individualism, and creativity carried over into the academic culture of the American teachers’
classrooms in Uckun and Buchanan’s (2009) comparative study. Similarly, characteristics of
traditional Turkish culture, e.g., paternalism, and collectivism are apparent in the academic
culture of the Turkish teachers. How paternalism and collectivism is manifested in
traditional Turkish culture, even today, according to Kiziltepe, was described by Kagitcibasi
in 1991:

…Turkey is still a conservative Moslem country. Family ties are important, the
father is powerful, the mother is to be respected and the children are to obey their
parents. Generally speaking, teenagers are not expected to act or decide on their
own but to consult their parents on most matters even personal ones (as cited in
Kiziltepe, 2000, p. 152).

Within this cultural tradition lies the seed for the lack of some Turkish students’ oral
participation in university classes. Authoritarian cultural traditions frown upon independence
by children of all ages, thus discouraging the development of critical thinking skills, and their
expression within, not only the family, but also wider society, including academic
institutions. In this model, the teacher is the paternal, authority figure, the font of all
knowledge; thus to express an opinion contrary to what the teacher has just stated is
tantamount to questioning the foundation of society. Asking questions, which could expose
one’s ignorance of the subject at hand, could be detrimental to one’s standing in the
instructor’s eyes, and is a practice to be avoided. (cf., Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli’s 1996
study, whose findings present a challenge to “…the stereotypical image of the patriarchal Turkish society…” (p. 13).

An alternative to the cultural explanation given above, for the teacher-centered academic culture in Turkish schools, was advanced by Matt Porter (2010), A Fulbright Teaching Fellow in Turkey. “The system does not reward much outside of test scores, so students are often not enthusiastic about class participation, nevermind [sp] extracurricular work.” In a similar vein, Landau’s (1997) explanation for Turkish teachers not promoting classroom discussion and critical analysis focused on the realities of the Turkish education system, in which the classes are too large.

An interesting perspective on American academic culture and some Turkish students’ reticence in university classrooms was gathered by Tatar in his 2005 qualitative study, “Classroom Participation by International Students: The Case of Turkish Graduate Students.” He, like Robinson (1991), Murphy (2005), Lee (2009), Shaw and Bailey (1990), and Uckun and Buchanan (2009), noted that, “In many U.S. classrooms, active oral classroom participation is a skill that is strongly encouraged” (Tatar, 2005, p. 337). Tatar’s exploration of the differences between U.S. and Turkish academic cultures as perceived by the Turkish graduate students studying at a large mid-western research university and how that might affect the international students’ oral classroom participation yielded the following revealing response.

All participants shared general rules for oral classroom participation that valued silence over talk, as in Cem’s statement, “Maybe it is something that originates from our own culture. Listening is better than speaking; I mean we are listening-oriented people, not speaking” (Interview 2, October 4, 2002). These rules were (a) talking when you are knowledgeable enough, (b) talking too much could mean showing off, and (c) being selective about what to share (Tatar, 2005, p. 343).
The Turkish graduate students in this study also observed that some of the American students’ comments during classroom discussions did not further the learning experience, causing a degeneration from a scholarly experience into palaver, thus diminishing the potential power of the American ideal of learning through talking. Further, they noted that in some instances, democracy was not adhered to, as a few students often monopolized the exchange. That is an unfortunate situation of which many American students are also well aware and by which they are distressed.

Evidence of how the traditional paternalistic culture continues to operate at the highest levels of some Turkish universities came in a reply to an inquiry about what it was like to teach at Koç University, which was posted on The Chronicle of Higher Education’s Forum.

Another reason for expecting consistency is that the current President of Koç has been there for some time and personally approves each and every appointment. That’s not unusual in Turkey. Universities have a paternalistic culture in which the president usually has the right to intervene in any decision and not infrequently does (normative_, 2008).

Even though traditional culture persists in some regions and among some members of the population, Turkey’s educational goals are meant to counter traditional culture, which was seen by Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish republic in 1923, as an obstacle to national development. Turkey’s educational principles, as defined by the Ministry of Education are:

- Education shall be national,
- Education shall be Republican,
- Education shall be secular,
- Education shall have a scientific foundation,
- Education shall incorporate generality and equality,
- Education shall be functional and modern (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education, 2002, section 1).

The basis for these educational principles stems from Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’s determination to modernize the nation, “which for him meant westernization” (Landau, 1997, p. 3). To this end, John Dewey, the American education reformer, was invited by Ataturk in 1924 to come to Turkey. His visit was highly fruitful; it resulted in Ataturk establishing universal education “…and promot[ing] the modern teaching and learning methods in elementary education based largely on Dewey's ideas” (Encyclopedia of the Middle East, n.d.). In order to ensure that Turkey’s one university, established by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II in 1900, along the lines of German universities, would be in line with his vision of a secular nation, Ataturk fired almost all of the conservative faculty, hired German professors, many of whom were socialist refugees, and established innovative teaching and research standards (Landau, 1997).

In a reenactment of Ataturk’s decisive action, in 1980 the Turkish military took over the universities, purged the faculty, and placed the universities “…under the control of the Council of Higher Education or YÖK….This system, …has severely harmed university autonomy and academic freedoms…” (Tural, 2007, p. 66).

The academic culture in Turkish universities has been further affected by the loss of financial support from the state; one effect has been reduced teacher salaries, and a concomitant decline in prestige. Many of the faculty were forced to supplement their income by taking on more teaching positions or working for the private sector. Consequently, the instructors have less time to consult with students, and to engage in research. Coupled with increased demands for a university education as a path to upward mobility, and a lack of sufficient facilities, classrooms, as mentioned earlier, are overcrowded.
In the 1990s, in response to the increased demand for higher education, YÖK allowed the establishment of private, for-profit universities, funded by foundations headed usually by leading businessmen. Representatives of this new development in Turkish tertiary education are Koç University, Bilkent University, and Kadir Has University, which, through its partnership with Fordham University’s Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma, is featured in the present study. These private universities enjoy more academic freedom and pay higher salaries to the faculty than the state-run institutions.

These relatively recent changes in Turkish higher education have affected its academic culture in ways that some academicians see as positive, and others view very negatively. Qualitative research done by Tural among professors and research assistants in various academic fields at Ankara University showed that there were widely divergent opinions on what kind of an impact the changes since 1980 have had on university culture.

Examples of comments expressing support for the changes are:

…universities are transforming from being introverted institutes where students are learning everything by rote into extraverted institutes which support social projects….Turkey’s harmonization process with EU will improve the quality of research and education….a new individualist and competitive culture is in the making….despite the negative developments in the 1980s, universities started to open themselves up to society in the 1990s. Therefore as universities have become more democratic, the quality of research and teaching has increased….the University system is shifting from the continental European system towards the Anglo-Saxon model. Information and communication technologies have a positive impact on university life. Universities should become more entrepreneurial (Tural, 2007, p. 71).

Despite the seeming contradiction of “…Turkey’s harmonization process with EU…” and “The university system is shifting from the continental system towards the Anglo-Saxon model” (Tural, 2007, p. 71), these comments, which presented a positive picture of the changes since 1980 imply that the academic culture in Turkish universities is improving. That impression, however, was countered by other faculty voices expressing displeasure with
the market-oriented trend, privatization of universities, and increased openness. One

professor expounded,

There is an increase in the fees taken from the students, social services are no
longer free, temporary employment is being encouraged, new liberal slogans such
as vision, mission and performance criteria are becoming more and more popular
every day. Self-regulation and a culture of questioning have been replaced by an
endeavor to prove the productivity of universities to outside elements….a culture
of conflict based on hierarchical stature has become more evident (Tural, 2007, p.
72).

A fear that Turkey’s globalization policies were causing an attenuation of Turkish
sovereignty, felt by several of the interview participants, was expressed by one who
interpreted the requirement for having papers published in international publications and the
EU harmonization as “cultural imperialism” (Tural, 2007, p. 72). Another academic decried
the progressive deterioration of academic independence: “Universities are transforming into
a branch of the ruling power rather than being institutions that create knowledge for society
and educate people (Tural, 2007, p. 73).

British Academic Culture

In contrast to American society and its corresponding academic university culture,

Britain’s were stratified along class lines. Only the very wealthy elites attended the
universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In 1450 there were 3000 students, rising to 6000 or
2.5 per cent of the population in 1630; this exclusivity continued until 1962 when 8.5 percent
of the university age cohort was enrolled in higher education (Anderson, 2006). They
completed a humanistic program that included Aristotle’s Dialectics, music, the Latin and
Greek classics, astronomy, mathematics, and moral theology. Anderson described these
universities as “…finishing schools for the upper classes” (Anderson, 2006, p. 7), and
averred that, “Their national role in giving the governing elite a set of common experiences
and values was of lasting significance” (Anderson, 2006, p. 7, 8). Thus a British university education was characterized by conservative conformity, maintaining the privileges of the upper classes. This state of affairs continued even as the British Industrial Revolution transformed British society. The practical nature of the science that was propelling industrialization was far removed from the liberal university education featuring the study of ancient Latin and Greek. “Universities simply seemed irrelevant to industry or commerce, and if there were demands for new forms of education they could be satisfied in other and cheaper ways” (Anderson, 2006, p. 25).

The ramparts of British universities as bastions for wealthy male elites crumbled in the wake of The Robbins Report in 1963, which “…proclaimed that higher education places should be provided for ‘all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so’…” (Anderson, 2006, p. 131). The effect of this report was dramatic: the percentage of British students enrolled in higher education rose from 8.5 percent in 1962 to 45 percent in 2008/2009 (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2010).

In 1981, under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the cloistered world of Britain’s ivory towers received a startling jolt, similar to the systemic shock felt in 1980 in Turkish higher education. Specifically, “…universities were given a month to plan an 18 per cent cut in budgets over three years, and 3,000 posts were eliminated” (Pritchard, 2005, p. 449). Anderson (2006) argues that a confluence of factors prompted this action: the middle classes were entering the universities in increasing numbers, Britain’s economic decline, the anti-industrial mind-set of the elite university graduates, and “…envy and resentment among middle-class Conservative voters” (p. 164). He continued, “In this utilitarian perspective, not only were the universities turning out the wrong sort of graduates for a modern
economy….but their corporate and collegiate practices needed an infusion of managerial efficiency and market reality” (Anderson, 2006, p. 164). Pritchard (2005) captured the essence of the clash and its effect on academic culture when he wrote:

The dialectic between the liberal and the utilitarian has been a constant theme in the many structural and epistemological changes which have taken place within higher education, and in recent times the exposure of universities to market force mechanisms has posed a particular challenge to the values and ethos of those who work within them (p. 434).

Like Tural’s research among academics at Ankara University into their attitudes about reduced state funding and lack of academic freedom, Pritchard studied the influence of market force culture on British and German academics in 2005. The British academics, like many of the Turkish academics in Tural’s study, felt that they were over-worked and had suffered a loss of prestige. Eighty-six percent of them believed that their university’s functioning suffered due to a lack of funding, 70 percent felt that the university’s functioning suffered due to excessive state-sponsored interference, and 70 percent were opposed to privatizing universities (Pritchard, 2005, p. 438-439).

The sentiments expressed by the British academics in Tural’s study were echoed in 2008 by a German professor who taught German at King’s College in London in 2007. She decried the marketization of British universities, declaring that they had “…developed into education factories” (Richter, 2008). She raised an additional interesting point, i.e., how the treatment of students had changed since the 1980s. Her summary of the state of British universities follows.

Since the Thatcher era and increasingly with the Labour government, the workings of the academic machine have been characterized by three trends: firstly the growing under-financing of the universities, secondly, the pampering of the “customers”, i.e. the fee-paying students, regarded as the means to help the universities out of their financial misery, and thirdly the bureaucratic quality control of their personnel, known as micromanagement (Richter, 2008, para. 1).
A Comparison of British and American Academic Cultures

The academic curriculum for British students today is very different from the broad, scholastic, humanist program featured originally at the University of Paris and replicated at Oxford and Cambridge. Now, British undergraduates specialize in one subject, which means that they only take courses in that area. This course of study leads to a Single Honours Degree. In contrast, U.S. undergraduates are encouraged to pursue a humanist education whose aim is to produce a well-rounded individual. This difference and its implication for graduate study was described by Lock (1996) in background information for his article, “The Future of the MBA in the UK.”

Undergraduate degrees in the USA have been taken by a larger proportion of the population and are broader and more general, frequently with a strong liberal arts flavour. Professional or vocational specialization takes place at Master’s level (Parsons and Platt, 1973), unlike the specialized academic MAs and MScs following a first degree in a cognate area which are the core of British postgraduate tradition (p. 169).

The decrease in state funding for higher education in Turkey, Britain, and the United States, has caused universities to adopt a business model to balance their budgets. One of the strategies employed is the active wooing of international students to their campuses because they can charge them higher fees than their domestic students. The relatively recent influx of large numbers of international students at colleges and universities has opened up a new field of research for scholars, resulting in numerous reports on various aspects of the proliferation of cross-cultural educational experiences. These scholarly papers have been supplemented by personal student reports.

Two such narratives published in 2010 and 2009 in respectively, The Telegraph and The Times, describe the experiences of two British students who enrolled in elite, private American universities, one at Yale, on the East Coast, the other at Stanford, on the West
Coast (Roth, 2010; Rumbelow, 2009). These students’ accounts highlight the differences in contemporary British and American academic culture and also illuminate an academic culture subset, i.e., the prevailing philosophy of particular institutions.

Both of the British students’ accounts of their American educational experience mentioned that the workload of American students is considerably greater than that of British students, due to large reading lists, and the concomitant monitoring of student preparation through a combination of class participation and mid-term and final exams. Conversely, Britain students only take exams at the end of their university studies, which typically last for three years. These divergent assessment styles were also attested to by Hurn (2011).

Generally, less weight is given to continuous assessment in the form of course work and written assignments in the British system than in the American, where as much as 50 per cent of the final grade for a course may be assessed on the basis of course work rather than assessments done under examination conditions (p. 43).

The greater productivity of American students was cited in a House of Commons select committee on universities report in August 2009. “It created a storm by claiming that layabout British students do about half the amount of academic work of their American counterparts” (Rumbelow, 2009).

The less monitored, more independent character of British academic life is meant to provide students with time to pursue intellectual topics in depth at the library. In reality, much of that free time, according to both British students, is spent drinking. “My British friends’ university experiences seemed to consist largely of smoking, drinking, and trying, with varying degrees of success, to score” (Roth, 2010). Similarly, in a report written for international students thinking of attending a British university, the drinking culture at these universities is given prominence.
Drinking is a way of student life on a level that you would not experience in other cultures. If you are from the USA or a Muslim country, this will be quite a shock. Student life somewhat revolves around drinking. Activity groups such as sporting groups and all other types of student interest groups usually have a Social Drinking Session or Pub Crawl at the beginning of the year and a Ball or party at the end. Cheap drink flows (HowTo.co.uk, 2009, par. 6).

Rumbelow (2009) contrasted the party culture endemic at British universities with the serious, purposeful atmosphere she found at Stanford.

My fellow students came to class not late, hungover and chatting about bands; but fiddling with their car keys and worrying about their résumés. They had second jobs to keep up with the fees – and parents who had worked all their lives to give them this honour, or scholarships they did not want to blow away. They needed a good job to pay all this back and didn’t have time to mess around.

As mentioned earlier, academic cultures at American colleges and universities may diverge to a greater or lesser extent, depending upon various factors including the socio-economic make-up of the student body, the geographic location of the school, as well as the founder’s vision for the school. Although there are certainly sports teams and other extracurricular activities available at Stanford, according to Rumbelow (2009), the British student who attended Stanford, they were overshadowed by “…the culture of the enormous business school that dominated.”

Yale, the other elite American university featured in the newspaper accounts, exhibits an academic culture that is less narrowly focused than Stanford’s. Here, diversity in all aspects of university life: students, course offerings, and the wide range of extracurricular activities was remarked upon by the British student.

Students rush from play rehearsals to sports practices to improv comedy performances to volunteer charity work….There’s a larger sense at American universities – particularly the more elite schools – that the whole idea is to have experiences, both in the classroom and outside it, that broaden and enrich one’s life, before the grind of adult existence kicks in (Roth, 2011).
Although there are differences in British and American academic culture, as described above, many commonalities are to be found as well. Both place “…high value on individual performance and achievement” (Hurn, 2011, p. 43), which is manifested through oral participation by students in class. “The British and American approach is to encourage active participation, to challenge and to invite discussion, even on potentially controversial issues….In both cultures the education system encourages questioning and the expression of personal opinions” (Hurn, 2011, p. 43).

**American MBA Culture**

The Master of Business Administration degree program originated in America. Its roots can be traced to West Point; indeed “…much of the language and culture of military education still inhabit (and perhaps inhibit) the research archives and jargon of business schools. For example, the field of business policy has direct ties to military strategy” (Lorenzi, 2004, p. 178). The next locus for management education was the Pennsylvania Railroad, which facilitated America’s westward expansion. Finally, the exigencies of industrialization led to “…the establishment of the first business school at Wharton in 1881” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 28). This was followed by the establishment of business schools at Harvard and Stanford.

Active learning, questions from and among students, class participation as part of the grade, the development of analytical and critical thinking skills, and the ability to articulate well-supported ideas (all attributes of American academic culture that were discussed above) are intrinsic to the Harvard case method, developed in the 1920s and patterned after the case method of the Harvard Law School. It is used by MBA instructors “…to teach problem solving about actual business situations depicted in a case…in effect bringing practical
business learning inside the classroom through highly interactive discussion focused on analyzing a single case” (Forman & Rymer, 1999, p. 374). The oral case analysis by the students illustrates Murphy’s (2005) claim (noted above) that “American society values ‘talking’ as a learning mechanism” (as cited in Lee, 2009, p. 148). Using the case method “…students practiced problem-solving skills at real companies through discussion and, as a result, were expected to become practical problem solvers able to act as managers in the workplace” (Forman & Rymer, 1999, p. 378).

The democratic nature of American academic culture that was observed by the Turkish students in Uckun and Buchanan’s 2009 study discussed above is a central feature of MBA classrooms during the oral analysis of a case. “Indeed, the oral analysis in class discussion is characterized as a democratic event in which the instructor serves as a facilitator and equal partner with all the students” (Forman & Rymer, 1999, p. 379).

What do students think about the aforementioned characteristics of American business culture? The results of a study by Tootoonchi, Lyons, and Hagen (2002) exploring what MBA students in a North Carolina university felt were the most effective teaching methodologies, provided validation for American academic values. The four most effective teaching methodologies according to the MBA student study participants were: “1. Use of ‘real world’ examples: 80% 2. Use of open classroom discussion: 66.6% 3. Use of guest speakers (experts): 60% 4. Case studies: 46.6%” (Toootoonchi et al., 2002, p. 86).

**British MBA Culture**

British MBA programs were not established until the 1960s, although management training programs, taught at technical colleges were available prior to the 60s. The path towards a professionalization of business has been strewn with many obstacles. The long-
standing tradition of a humanist university education has informed the debate about whether or not MBA programs should be established in British universities. Cobban (1988) observed that “…vocational postgraduate study went against the grain of the traditional university in Britain, even though the medieval universities were strongly vocational” (as cited in Lock, 1996). However, according to Anderson (2006), it is true that the University of Bologna emphasized utilitarian disciplines such as medicine and law, but the University of Paris, which was the model for Oxford and Cambridge, was devoted primarily to the study of theology and philosophy.

Preconceptions and prejudices about business also diminished the appeal of a graduate business degree, according to Larson (2003):

…there was a supposed cultural rejection of making money for the sake of profit by those who aspired to the upper classes….many [had] the idea that management on a day-to-day basis amounted to little more than informed leadership. The British believed leadership to be a personality trait that could not be taught in a classroom (p. 2).

Another factor in the ambivalence Britons felt about the necessity of MBA programs, which was discussed previously, is that British undergraduate students, in contradistinction to American undergraduates, focus on one course of study, thus undergraduate students getting a Single Honours degree in business would have covered much of the material that is typically given in a graduate MBA program.

Despite these misgivings however, Britain’s moribund postwar economy, coupled with the loss of its empire, led to a reassessment of what type of graduates were needed to lead the nation out of the doldrums to its former position of prominence on the world stage. Larson (2003) explained that in 1957, when the U.S. was the world’s leading economy, a British nobleman, on a Ford grant, toured America and observed American business education. He then made the acquaintance of a Harvard MBA graduate, with whom he
“…formed the Foundation for Management Education to establish university-level management education in Britain like that in the United States” (Larson, 2003, p. 5). Their work in changing attitudes about business education and the continuing British economic decline led to the commissioning of the Robbins Report in 1960, which “…recommended the creation of two postgraduate business schools…” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 29). These followed the American model of a two-year degree program. An important rationalization for the report’s recommendation was the belief that the decline of Britain’s economy was due in part to the poor quality of its businessmen. The best students eschewed business. Thus, the call for the creation of professional graduate level business schools was intended in part to woo the best and the brightest to earn MBA degrees and take over the reins of the foundering economy and right it.

The Robbins Report was followed in 1962 by a report from the National Economic Development Council stating that “…there is a need in this country for at least one very high level new school or institute somewhat on the lines of the Harvard Business School or the School of Industrial Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology” (Larson, 2003, p. 7). A continuing lagging economy led to calls for more business schools.

Although there was widespread recognition among the highest ranks of British government and industry officials of the high quality of American MBA programs and their positive role in providing effective managers for the predominant American economy, it seems that crucial elements of the American model were not implemented in the newly established British MBA programs.

An examination of British MBA pedagogy highlights the difference between it and the predominant pedagogical method used in American MBA education, leading to the
suggestion that an increase in the number of MBA graduates was possibly a necessary but not sufficient remedy for the ills of the British economy. It seems that revising the teaching style would be beneficial, based upon the results of a qualitative study of MBA students in a British business school that was conducted by Currie and Knights (2003), similar to Tootoonchi, Lyons, and Hagen’s (2002) study of American MBA students. The British study aimed, in part, to ascertain what the program’s teaching pedagogy was, and what the students thought of it. “The dominant teaching pedagogy used on the TBS [Towerblock Business School] MBA programme is one where students are ‘lectured at’ and theories are imposed on the class without any critical discussion. Students resented this approach….” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 35). The students also reported that the courses were not integrated; Currie and Knights (2003) felt this was probably due to the professors’ lack of business experience. Furthermore, the emphasis on theory was at odds with what the students wanted: “Students expected the MBA to develop knowledge and skills in the individual student that were utilitarian and practical on the basis that they would contribute to organizational performance” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 36). Oral classroom participation by students, exposure to real business people and business situations, and the development of critical thinking skills (staples of American MBA programs) are what the British MBA students in this study wanted.

Janis Forman’s discussion of strategic reports and presentations for the capstone project of MBA students at the Anderson School at the University of California, Los Angeles, is a very good example of how that project meets the TBS MBA students’ expectations of their program.

The strategic report and presentation also represent the capstone integration of communication with other functions like finance, operations, management, and
marketing, that these assignments require students to apply their knowledge of all the business disciplines studied in the MBA program to serve the strategic goals of the firm. As such, these communications exemplify the kind of integration that Worley and Dyrud (2002) called for in MBA education, an emphasis that has characterized UCLA’s MBA Management Communication Program for more than two decades (Forman, 1989, 1999a, 1999b as cited in Forman, 2004, p. 282).

Lock touched upon the differences in the pedagogical style practiced in the British MBA program at Towerblock Business School and that inherent in the Harvard case method, employed at many American universities.

There has always been a debate in business education about the extent to which people ought to learn by doing as opposed to being explicitly taught....The key issue with a move to more process-oriented learning is how to ensure that all the core learning objectives for a generalist programme are met by all successful candidates (Lock, 1996, p. 177).

A more progressive position was taken by Currie & Knights (2003). The study’s researchers maintained that“...a changed relationship between the management teacher and student” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 31) is critical in order to infuse the current theoretical, teacher-centered pedagogy with a critical pedagogy. They argue for the oral participation of students in the MBA classroom, in which “... a discursive position is adopted where both teachers and students develop their knowledge and understanding of management through dialogue and debate” (Currie & Knights, 2003, p. 32). This pedagogy reflects a social shift in British university education culture from a privilege for a relatively small class of wealthy elites, to its democratization as increasing numbers of students from all strata of society enter universities.

Echoing Currie & Knights’ (2003) call for increased student participation in British MBA classrooms, but for a different reason, Northcott (2001) explained that due to globalization increasing numbers of L2 students will be studying at MBA programs. (It was not stated, but to be assumed that she was referring to such programs at British universities,
in which naturally the medium of instruction is English.) She made a compelling case for the need to upgrade the oral English communication skills of L2 MBA students so that they can actively participate in the program. “…in order to benefit from the international business expertise represented by the student body, classes must allow for participant input by taking on an interactive dimension” (Northcott, 2001, p. 16). In her study of five British MBA classes in which student oral participation is a feature recently introduced, she commented on the differing pedagogical styles in Britain’s and America’s MBA classes. Her comments, below, add weight to Currie and Knights’ (2003) study of TBS MBA students described earlier.

The traditional (to the UK at least) lecture monologue is being replaced by classroom dialogue….It is a teaching style more familiar to US academics and is characteristic of the US business school approach but often resisted by UK academic teaching staff (Northcott, 2001, p. 23).

A final point about the qualitative differences in British and American MBA programs was mentioned in an oblique fashion by Lock (1996). According to him, the dearth of faculty in British MBA programs who had MBA degrees affected the rigor of their programs. “A consequence of this is that UK programmes tend to be rather gentler to participants than their US counterparts (for example, see Cohen’s, 1973, and Robinson’s 1994, participant accounts Harvard and Stanford, respectively)” (Lock, 1996, p. 183).

**Turkish MBA Culture**

There is a dearth of literature on the academic culture of Turkish MBA programs. This may be because the culture of Turkish MBA programs is the same as American and British ones, due to the fact that a large percentage of the business faculties at Turkey’s universities earned their advanced degrees in either the US or Britain through the sponsorship of the Turkish government. This was done as part of a concerted effort to provide enough
qualified faculty for the new universities that were being established as demands for higher education increased in tandem with Turkey’s drive to modernize quickly along Western lines.

Indeed, many of the professors in the Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences at Kadir Has University, of which the Business Administration Department is a part, received their Master’s and Doctoral degrees from American and British universities. This is relevant because the Turkish student participants in the present study are enrolled in The Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma program offered by Fordham University, New York, N.Y., and Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey, which is taught by Fordham University faculty and Kadir Has University faculty. In fact, the recordings that were analyzed for this study were of a contract law course taught at Kadir Has University by a Fordham University professor.

**Oral Communication in the Classroom**

Abundant state funding of higher education in Britain and the US was a casualty of the worldwide economic recession of 1980 – 1983. It seems that the reduction in state funding of Turkish higher education was caused by “…the structural reform program of 1980, [in which] overall development strategy moved away from a highly regulated inward-looking economy with direct monetary controls toward an outward-oriented, open economy operating with a market-based approach” (Central Bank of Turkey, 2002). As was discussed earlier in the sections on British Academic Culture, and Turkish Academic Culture, the reduction in funding led to universities themselves employing market-based strategies to make up the shortfalls in their budgets. They soon discovered that MBA programs had a low overhead. Increasing globalization, the spread of English as the lingua franca of trade and
technology, and the liberalization of China’s economy created many opportunities for business ventures that needed managers. The American and British universities seized the moment, expanding and advertising their MBA programs widely in the hopes of enticing many international students, whom they could charge higher fees than those paid by domestic students to enroll in their programs. In fact, it was reported in a March 8, 2011 article on the website, *Canada Updates, Making Immigration Simpler*, that “[t]he foreign students studying in the UK universities pay nearly eight times higher than the amount paid by the UK undergraduates” (Christine M., 2011). It worked! And thus large numbers of L2 students arrived on Western campuses in the 80s and 90s.

The influx of international students was accompanied by a proliferation of scholarly articles on how best to prepare these students for graduate level work taught in English. McKenna (1987); Micheau and Billmyer (1987); Ferris and Tagg (1996); Basturkmen (1998, 1999, 2002); Furneaux (2002); and most recently, Crawford Camiciottoli (2010) addressed this issue. In an important study, Ferris and Tagg identified which listening and speaking tasks were required by different disciplines at four institutions of higher learning in California. The results indicated that business classes are the most interactive. In a breakdown by task it was found that

[b]usiness classes, followed by music classes, (with one exception) were more likely than engineering and science classes to have required class participation, regular in-class small-group work, graded assignments that necessitated collaboration with classmates (with native-speaking peers or other nonnative speakers, not specified by respondents), and assigned oral presentations (Ferris & Tagg, 1996, p. 44).

Jordan (1996) listed six typical oral activities in English as a Second Language environments. Among them are these two: asking questions in lectures, and participation in seminars/discussions (as cited in Furneaux, 2002). The present study analyzed speech acts in
these two environments. A note about what constitutes a seminar is in order. A useful definition was provided by Preshous (2001). He “…categorized [them] into 3 broad types: Type 1: Presentations followed by Question and Answer sessions; Type 2: Student-led discussion or debate; Type 3: Tutor-led discussion” (Preshous, 2001).

Despite the studies just mentioned that drew attention to the urgent need to design effective EAP programs, in particular, ones that covered oral and aural skills, to assist the growing numbers of international students at English medium universities, “…little research has been carried out on the speech events that occur in seminars based on actual data from the target situation” (Preshous, 2001), to facilitate that, and the few extant textbooks that deal with classroom speaking are of limited value. “…ESL texts in the United States that target oral academic communication (e.g., Scarcella, 1992; Steer, 1995; Hemmert & O’Connell, 1998; Hartmann & Blass, 2000) also tend to produce lists of expressions or functions without situating them within naturally occurring data and demonstrating how they work interactionally” (Waring, 2000, p. 4).

Indeed, it is true that there is not a large body of research on seminar discourse; nevertheless an important study was conducted in 1987 by two ESP teachers in a graduate business program. Convinced of the importance of sociocultural linguistic competence in addition to grammatical competence to the success of non-native speakers (NNS) of English in graduate business programs and in business careers, and due to the dearth of research in this sub-field, Micheau and Billmyer (1987) designed a research study to elicit information on the “rules of speaking” (p. 88) for business school classes. Videotapes of case discussions of NNS (Spanish, Japanese, Tagalog, Yoruba, and Malagasy) enrolled in an intensive ESP program for foreign business students at the University of Pennsylvania’s Lauder Institute,
were compared to audiotapes as well as observational notes, of case discussions of native
speakers at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. This revealed
that NSs and native English language professors in this American university engaged in fast-
paced, articulate discussions with minimal lecturer interference. These discourses featured
short, to the point comments by students that were frequently interrupted at appropriate
breaks in the comment by another student’s comment that added to, qualified or disagreed
with the previous speaker’s comment in a polite manner. Micheau and Billmyer (1987)
characterized this type of exchange as “latched utterance” (p. 91). In contrast, the NNSs case
discussions showed that they interrupted the speaker at inappropriate points and often by
overly indicating their desire to interject comments by saying, “Excuse me, excuse me”. Furthemore, the NNSs differed in their discourse strategies from NSs by being indirect,
speaking for a much longer period of time and by attempting to monopolize the discussion
through various strategies such as lengthy pauses, and increasing the tempo of their speech.
This type of discourse behavior is inappropriate to the American academic business cultural
environment which values fast-paced, high-quality, direct, cooperative exchanges. The
authors of this article concluded that their research findings provide a “…basis for the
redesign of the present curriculum…. [that features] increased use of case analysis and re-
viewing of videotaped group discussions to allow students to analyze their own interactional
patterns for effectiveness” (p. 94).

Following up on Micheau and Billmyer’s (1987) study into the “rules of speaking” in
actual graduate business classes, Dr. Helen Basturkmen, began doing research into questions,
often in business seminars. She has advocated for the use of authentic materials, e.g., audio
and text transcripts of actual seminar classes in English for Academic Purposes speaking
courses as they “…[offer] a rich source of insights, and a realistic model of interactive speaking” (Basturkmen, 2001, p. 10). That is true as long as the authentic materials selected are from a wide range of situations, convey accepted norms of respectful academic communication, and are representative of the discourse common to a particular discipline. Unfortunately, as noted in the Introduction to this study, Dr. Basturkmen’s presentation of interactions within MBA classes do not cover the full range of MBA programs; she only provides data from British programs, thus the EAP students are not provided with an exemplar of the type of communication that is emblematic of MBA classrooms. Furthermore, the examples she provides of question and answer interactions often do not reflect common norms of professional courtesy. The following example from a question and answer session following a guest speaker from the business community is illustrative. 

1 Actually you focused on the role of the company. Was actually the role developed with the European market in view or was it specifically developed first for the UK? (Basturkmen, 2001, p. 8). The use of the word Actually implies that the guest speaker has just misrepresented what his/her talk was about, either deliberately or because he/she forgot what it was about. Its use, besides being extremely disrespectful, conveys the sense that the student knows better than the guest speaker what the subject of the talk was. Incredibly arrogant! This is not a model for aspiring businessmen and women to emulate.

Business Discourse

There is widespread agreement on the components of successful business discourse (Kankaanranta, 2010; Mendelson, 1987; Ober, Zhao, Davis & Alexander, 1999; Scollon and Scollon, 1995; White, 2001); of which the basis is Grice’s Co-operative Principle: Make
your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice, cited in Finegan, 2008, p. 287). The understanding underlying conversations is “…people will cooperate in communicating with each other, and speakers rely on this cooperation to make conversation efficient (Finegan, 2008, p. 287). The four directives in the principle are known as the rules or maxims of conversation.

Stated as a set of imperatives, these maxims are presented in simplified form below.

1. **Quality**  
   Speak the truth, be sincere.

2. **Quantity**  
   Say neither more nor less than is necessary for the purpose at hand.

3. **Relation**  
   Be relevant.

4. **Manner**  
   Be clear, be perspicuous. (White, 2001, p. 63).

Breakdowns by the nine scholars cited above of what they believe are the essential components of successful business communication is remarkable for its unanimity (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mendelson</th>
<th>clarity and conciseness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scollon and Scollon</td>
<td>clarity, brevity, and sincerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>clarity, brevity, and sincerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ober, Zhao, Davis, &amp; Alexander</td>
<td>certainty = clarity + decisiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kankaanranta</td>
<td>clarity, brevity, directness, and politeness</td>
</tr>
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A statement by Rawleigh Warner, Jr., former chairman of Mobil Corporation, attests to the validity of the scholars’ choices:

Mobil interfaces with many different publics, both in this country and abroad. We engage in all phases of the oil business and in coal, chemicals, retail
merchandising, packaging, and real estate as well. We span a wide range of languages, laws, customs, cultures, in addition to numerous disciplines. This compels a common denominator of clear, unmistakable communication…clarity and brevity in speech and writing, along with careful reading and listening (Walton, 1989, p. 171 as cited in Ober et al., 1999, p. 283).

Interestingly, more than twenty years later, Mr. Warner’s statement still rings true. As globalization has intensified, the diversity of languages spoken by people conducting business together has increased exponentially creating a need for a common language. That language or lingua franca is English. The frenetic pace of business in the global village precludes the ability of business professionals to spend the time necessary to become fluent in English. And it is not seen as necessary by them -- their need is to be able to communicate successfully using the lexicon common to business worldwide. The recent development of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has filled this need. It is “used as a shared code between non-native English speakers…[and] reflects the various cultural background of its speakers” (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005 as cited in Kankaanranta, 2010).

A research project on communication know-how in global business, funded by the Academy of Finland investigated, among other things, the “…features that contribute to perceptions of communication being ‘successful’” (Kankaanranta, 2010). It was found that successful BELF communication was characterized by “clarity, brevity, directness and politeness” (Kankaanranta, 2010).

Kankaanranta’s (2010) paper reporting on that project was the only one to mention politeness (it most likely was assumed by the authors of the other articles on business communication that people operating in a professional sphere do so in a polite and respectful manner). One of the business professionals interviewed in this Finnish project described how
politeness was used in BELF: “First you say something nice, the[n] you give the facts, and then you close by saying something nice again” (Kankaanranta, 2010).

The preceding discussion, which highlighted consensus among business writers as to what constitutes successful business communication, that was importantly corroborated by a large study of global business professionals, suggests that MBA students should be made aware of the importance of the components of successful business communication. This can be done through MBA professors making available to students the surveys and transcripts of the interviews done for the BELF project, as well as inviting successful business leaders to speak about this critical topic to MBA students.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study attempts to address the following questions:

1. Do the elicits asked by the native American English speaking MBA students differ from each other, and from those of the native Turkish speaking E-MBA students?

2. Do the elicits asked by the native American English speaking MBA students differ from those of the British MBA students studied by Basturkmen in 1998?

3. Do the elicits asked by the native Turkish speaking E-MBA students in the present study differ from those of the Turkish students studied by Basturkmen in 1998?

Answers to these questions may reveal that what is believed by Ms. Basturkmen to be a desirable discourse style in a university business seminar is not perceived as advantageous to success in an American graduate business seminar, thus highlighting her confusion over applying typical British academic interactions as a universal standard for academic culture in English speaking universities.

My hypothesis is that American native speaker students’ style of questioning in a Master of Business Administration program is direct and succinct, i.e., similar to the Turkish
students (NNSs) at Bilkent University described by Helen Basturkmen in her 1998 study, and that it will not cause any conversation breakdowns.

**OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

The remaining chapters of the thesis cover the method of inquiry employed to address the research questions and analyses of university student questions. Chapter 2 introduces the participants, the type of data collected, the data collection and analysis procedures, as well as definitions of key analytical terms. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 present findings and analyses. Chapters 3 and 4 open with the transcription of a question and answer session following a presentation and then proceed to its analysis. Chapter 5 opens with a transcription of the questions and answers spoken over the course of a compressed four day course and then proceed to its analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings and a comparison of them with those of the 1999 Basturkmen study. Furthermore, this concluding chapter examines the implications of the study and posits possible areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

This chapter will cover the participants in the study, the type of data, and how it was collected. It will also include a description of the data analysis procedure, definition of key analytical terms and lastly, an explanation of what is not covered fully in the study.

PARTICIPANTS

The American native English speaking participants in the study were seventeen students enrolled in the Sports Business Management Master in Business Administration (MBA) Program at San Diego State University (SDSU), California, and two guest lecturers, as well as seventy-one MBA students at Columbia University (C.U.), New York, N.Y., and four guest lecturers.

Sixteen students enrolled in the Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma program offered by Fordham University, New York, N.Y. and Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey composed the native Turkish language students in the study. Since the courses in this nascent, exclusive program are taught in English, prospective students must obtain a minimum score of 100 out of a possible 120 on the Internet-Based TOEFL exam. This score is equivalent to the Certificate of Proficiency in English, the most advanced University of Cambridge ESOL exam. The American native English speaking lecturer to this class, a Fordham University faculty member, is the other study participant from the Turkish site.

In an attempt to ensure as diverse a study population as possible, I chose to include participants who would represent distinct social, economic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. SDSU is a public university located in the southern-most part of the West
coast of the United States, while Columbia University, a private university, is located in the northern section of the East coast of the United States. Fordham University is a private Jesuit school located in New York City, the United States; its partner, Kadir Has University, is a private institution of higher learning in Istanbul, Turkey, which due to its location on both sides of the Bosphorus Strait, straddles the continents of Europe and Asia.

It was my original intention to not only replicate the 1998 Basturkmen study, but to expand upon it. Its data was derived from students at two universities: Bilkent University in Turkey, a private institution, and Aston University in England, a public one. I wished to double the number of universities, therefore enlarging the data base in order to make my conclusions more generalizeable. My plan was to use 2010 data from students at Bilkent University as well as from another Turkish university and to draw upon data from two American universities: one a public university on the West coast, another a private university on the East coast.

Unfortunately Bilkent University would not grant me access to any tapings from their Master in Business Administration (MBA) classes. However, a lecturer in Bilkent University’s MBA program did provide me with answers to some questions that I e-mailed to him. These appear in the Appendix. A comparable Turkish university responded positively to my research assistance request and taped a class in their Master in Management program that is taught by an American professor; of the twenty-four students enrolled in this class, eight are Turkish: six males and two females. However, the transcribed data from this DVD could not be used because only the two female Turkish students were present on the day of the taping, and they did not ask any questions.
**DATA COLLECTION**

Two graduate business classes were audiotaped; four were also videotaped and available for viewing over the Internet. The audio/videotaping of the EMBA class in Turkey was put onto four DVDs and mailed to me, thus allowing access to them on my home computer. The recordings from Columbia University were made during the spring 2010 semester by the Multimedia Services Department of the Information Technology Group of the Columbia Business School and last for approximately forty-five minutes. The recordings from SDSU were made by me on October 14, and October 28, 2011 and last for approximately thirty-five minutes each. A total of four and a half hours of recordings were made in late December 2010 by the EMBA Program Coordinator at Kadir Has University.

The taped data from the American universities consists of question (Q.) and answer (A.) sessions following a guest presentation by a successful businessman/woman who is an American native English speaker, to graduate MBA classes. The data from Turkey consists of questions and answers culled from lectures to an E-MBA class on contract law that is interspersed with student questions. The Sports MBA class at SDSU consists of almost entirely American native English speaker students; only questions asked by American native English speaking students were analyzed. The Retailing Leadership class in the MBA program at Columbia University has some international students; however, again, great care was taken to only transcribe and analyze questions that were asked by American native English speaking students. The Contract Law class in the E-MBA program at Kadir Has University consists entirely of native Turkish students who are proficient in English.
DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the recordings was transcribed into Microsoft Word. I then performed seven types of analysis: the presence of a metastatement, the number of words in each question, the number of reformulations within an elicit, the presence of grounding, tone of the question, the use of fillers, i.e., like, uh, and, umm, and finally, the presence of a communication breakdown.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY ANALYTICAL TERMS

The following terms are used throughout the study:

**Elicit:** Elicit is the term used to express the functional nature of questions. It is “...an act functioning to request a response” (Basturkmen, 2002, p. 193). It describes the language used in exchange initiating turns. There are different kinds of elicits, distinguished by their purpose. This study limits itself to considering two kinds of elicits: elicit-inform, and elicit-confirm. An elicit-inform is a request for unknown information and is characterized by the use of Wh- words, including How, to preface the elicit. An example is: “*How do you spend the majority of your day?*” (see October 2010 SDSU Q. & A. session in Chapter 3 of this thesis). The second type of elicit, the elicit-confirm, is an utterance made with the intention of obtaining agreement or disagreement with the speaker’s words. For example: “*Ah, so, the conversion rate for that was really pretty high?*” (see October 2010 SDSU Q. & A. session in Chapter 3 of this thesis).

An elicit is most often used to gain a fuller, clearer understanding of something that has been said. Yet, the tone of the elicit is a crucial element in fostering successful communication. Morehead, Morehead and Morehead’s (2006) *The New American Webster*
Handy College Dictionary defines tone as: “7, prevailing character; style; temper; spirit; tenor.” Its relevance in academic settings was noted by Tracy (1997, p. 31):

A fierce pursuit of another’s claim could be seen as supporting intellectual standards and the group goal of advancing ideas, or it could be seen as self-aggrandizing intellectual display. Gentle nonthreatening questioning could display a commitment to community and a concern not to threaten another’s face, or it could be taken as letting poor scholarship go by and/or evidencing intellectual limitations of one or another party (as cited in Waring, 2000, p. 153).

Analogous to Tracy’s dichotomous explanation of qualitative differences in questioning during academic discussions is Basturkmen’s terminology of “strong” versus “weak” types of elicit-confirmation, as described in her 2002 article, “Student Questions in University Discussion Classes”. The example used to illustrate the “strong” type was taken from Basturkmen’s 1998 study “Aspects of Impoverished Discourse in Academic Speaking”:

“Were you not re-inventing the wheel if you’d looked at ----” (p. 87). Her characterization of this as “strong” seems to me to indicate an acceptance of this as a suitable type of elicit-confirmation in an academic discussion setting. Whereas the example strikes me as matching Tracy’s claim that such types of questions “…could be seen as self-aggrandizing intellectual display”, and an attack on the intelligence of the person the elicit is addressed to, thus in Tracy’s (1997) words, “…threaten[ing] another’s face” (as quoted in Waring, 2000, p. 153).

Waring (2000) does not view elicits as having a qualitative range of force but sees them as the “…one type of questioning that strikes the balance between intellectual standards and the concern for not threatening face by focusing on pursuing the precision of understanding within the context of collaborative talk” (p. 153).

Reformulations: Levinson (1983) defines reformulations as “…a self-repair by means of a paraphrase of the repairable item” (p. 329-330). Reformulations are done to clarify the question or statement made by the elicitor, to give the presenter some time to think of a
response, or as a means for the elicitor to suggest a response of their own. The example of an elicit with multiple reformulations given by Basturkmen (1998) is:

S   Yes eh your pan European advertising policy then (1) has it been to say to take say a video shot in UK and then dub it into various languages (2) is that it or (3) how is your strategy been (4) what have you actually done (p. 86).

The absence of reformulations within an elicit is the most salient criterion used by Basturkmen to define impoverished academic discourse.

**Grounding:** Grounding is the use of background information in the elicit. This consists of two types: (1) hypothetical situations expressed for example as “What if…”; and (2) displaying reasons, i.e., explaining why the turn initiator is making his/her comment. These two forms of grounding provide the person to whom the elicit is directed with additional, specific information to address, thus enriching the interaction. An example from the SDSU October, 2010 Q. & A. session in Chapter 3 of this thesis illustrates this strategy of “displaying reasons”: “Being a woman golfer, I'm just curious, like, what your target community is.”

**Metastatement:** A metastatement, as used in this study is a statement that (1) expresses what the person plans to talk about in the following statement or question or, (2) could give a brief summary of what has previously been said, as a preface to a question or opinion. Examples from the October, 2010 SDSU Q. & A. session in Chapter 3 of this thesis are: “I’ve a two-part question…”, “So, I’m a little curious about…..”, “You mentioned that the uh, television and print ads sometimes lead to, or a lot of times, lead to discussions on other mediums such as Facebook.”

**Fillers:** Analysis was done of the use of *like, uh,* and *um* by students in their questions. Known alternatively as hesitation disfluencies, fillers, or pause markers, they have traditionally been seen as undesirable, indicative of less complex thinking, poor
communication skills, and even moral turpitude. Lynch in 2002 quoted a communications professor excoriating the use of fillers.

It has become a way of speech because it is easy, it is the path of least resistance. I would even go so far as to say that there is a correlation in our culture between communication skills and character development (as cited in Fox Tree, 2007, p. 298).

Linguists have begun to question these assumptions and recent research has shown that fillers perform valuable communicative functions.

1. *like*

The relatively recent usage, primarily by young people, of *like* as a filler or particle, not as an adjective meaning ‘approximately’, or ‘similar to’, was characterized by Diamond, 2000, and Siegel, 2000 “…as a crutch for lexical indecision” (as cited in D’Arcy, 2005, Ph.D. abstract). In a similar vein, an alumni of Columbia University, while describing the regrettable “…inject[ion] of gratuitous doubt into their speech” by incoming freshmen through the turning of statements into questions, added as an aside that “(I hasten to add that from none of the students did I hear anything like, ‘I’ll major in, like, math’)” (Wallace, Winter 2010-11).

The increasing prevalence of *like* in speech has attracted the attention of the linguistic community. Andersen (1998), using data from the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language, described its use as a marker of “loose” language, i.e., that the information directly following it was not to be taken as an exact representation of reality. Fox Tree, in a 2006 study in which the use of *like* was analyzed in the retelling of stories by University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) undergraduates, referred to Andersen’s finding in her description of the UCSC students’ use of *like* as a “loose talk marker” (as cited in Fox Tree, 2007, p. 307).
…recycled likes occurred before elements of a story that could best be thought of as highlighting that the upcoming information is a loose rendering, such as the first telling ‘drive over like bumpy roads’, and second telling ‘drive over like unpaved roads’ (Fox Tree, 2007, p. 309).

In this example Fox Tree is arguing that the use of like is indicating that the words “bumpy” and “unpaved” are not, either the exact words used in the original story, or, that these words do not explicitly, exactly represent the reality of the situation.

Fox Tree (2007) asked another set of UCSC students about their use of um, uh, you know, and like. The overwhelming majority of them viewed like as meaningless and reported using it as a force of habit. However, a few students did describe it as having meaning; one student’s response, described by Fox Tree as “idiosyncratic” was: “…it is used to ‘add meaning’ to what they say” (Fox Tree, 2007, p. 302).

Support for this student’s minority opinion can be found in a study done by Dr. Robert Underhill of San Diego State University. He made a compelling case for the use of like to be understood as a marker for new, focused information, and therefore placed towards the end of a sentence (Underhill, 1988). The following two examples from this study persuasively buttress his argument: “Student coming in for help on a homework assignment: I had problems like on the second question.” “A student telling a classmate that class is cancelled: Did you like hear the news? Class is cancelled!” (Underhill, 1988, p. 238).

In light of Dr. Underhill’s research into the use of like by undergraduate students, a reexamination of Fox Tree’s data is in order. It would seem that what is salient here is not that ‘bumpy’ and ‘unpaved’ are two different words used to describe a road condition, i.e., “loose language”, not exact replications; but the fact that like precedes, in both retellings of the story, important information to the meaning of the story. Without hearing the entire story, one can only imagine that if the road had been ‘smooth’ and ‘paved’, it would not have
had any bearing upon the action in the story and would not have been commented upon, no
less highlighted by a prefatory like.

2. *uh* and *um*

*Uh* and *um* have traditionally been known as tokens, fillers or filled pauses that are a
signal of disfluency, used when a speaker needs time to search for the right word or idea in
order to continue communicating. This search for a word may entail trying to recall a low-
frequency content word as well as sifting through many lexical choices (Beattie &
Butterworth, 1979; Levelt, 1983; Maclay & Osgood, 1959; as cited in Corley & Stewart,
2008, p. 590). The intense mental activity involved in this search is termed “cognitive load”.

An arresting study by Schachter et al., (1991) on the use of fillers across academic disciplines
illustrates variations in cognitive load. They found that there were fewer disfluencies in the
natural sciences than in the humanities due “…to the fact that there were fewer linguistic
options in the sciences, causing lecturers to hesitate less as they selected appropriate terms”

Increased cognitive load as a predictor of heightened use of fillers in speech was
questioned in a study on lying versus truth-telling. Lying was described by the study’s
authors as activating multiple areas of the brain, thus representing a heavy cognitive load.
However, they found that “…instances of *um* occur less frequently and are of shorter
duration during lying compared to truth-telling” (Arciuli, Mallard & Villar, 2010, p. 397).
Pertinent to Arciuli, Mallard and Villar’s (2010) findings are studies done by Bortfeld et al.
(2001); and Merlo and Mansur (2004), showing that fillers occur “…when the topic is
unfamiliar” (as cited in Corley & Stewart, 2008, p. 590). It is possible that a person who is
lying has rehearsed what (s)he is going to say and thus is very familiar with the words and
the overall topic, thereby lightening significantly the cognitive load. Countering the
empirical results of Arciuli et al. (2010) that lying equals less use of fillers, is the popular perception reported by Fox Tree that “when speakers said um and paused, overhearers thought speakers…were less honest….” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 480).

Fillers have been described by Maclay and Osgood (1959) as “…a useful mechanism for holding the floor” (as cited in Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 480) as one searches for the word/s necessary to continue speaking. Clark advanced the proposal that uh and um signal different amounts of upcoming delay: uh signals a short delay and the utterance of um forewarns listeners of a lengthier upcoming delay (as cited in Fox Tree, 2001, p. 320). An example of a repair sequence using uh is: yel - uh - orange (Brennan & Schober, 2001, as cited in Corley & Stewart, 2008, p. 594). Two more examples, one using uh without a pause and another using it preceded and then followed by a pause are: “…they jump in and manually uh change things…..”, “(0.6) uh (0.8) you can’t generate new scenes…” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 484-485). Lastly, an example of um being used as a repair signal: “…and so (0.4) um (1.0) .h y-you get….” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 485).

A 1968 study by Martin and Strange declared that these disfluencies were “…potentially harmful to the comprehension process” (as cited in Barr & Seyfeddinipur, 2009, p. 441). Putting Barr & Seyfeddinipur’s (2009) hypothesis that fillers could inhibit comprehension to the test, Fox Tree (2001) designed a study to determine what effect, if any, the use of uh and um, with their concomitant varying rates of pausing, might have on listeners’ comprehension. He found “…that there was a significant difference in the participants’ speed at recognizing target words following uhs compared with their speed at recognizing the same words when the uhs had been excised, but there was no significant difference for the ums” (Fox Tree, 2001, p. 322). A replication of this study, done using
native Dutch speakers, produced the same results, i.e., participants recognized the target word faster after hearing an *uh*, than without it, and no effect was discerned for the use of *um*. The cross-linguistic nature of the study lends credibility to its conclusion.

Corroboration for Fox Tree’s (2001) results concerning *um* comes in the study done by Barr and Seyfeddinipur (2009). In what is known as the collateral signal account for language comprehension, they found that listeners expected to hear information that was new to the speaker at the end of an *um* followed by a pause. However, this did not affect their processing of that new articulation. “…this ‘anticipation without integration’ is consistent with recent findings that listeners can use information about a speaker’s perspective to anticipate what the speaker will refer to, but are unable to integrate this information into lexical processing” (Barr, 2008b as cited in Barr & Seyfeddinipur, 2009, p. 452).

As indicators of production trouble, the location of *uh* and *um* in speech should be random, since articulation difficulties could arise at any point in a narrative. Recent evidence of these fillers located in specific, well-defined environments, led Dr. Rendle-Short to propose that fillers can perform an additional communicative role: that of a discourse marker. In her 2004 study Rendle-Short showed that in Information Technology seminars in Australia, presenters used *uh* and *um* as discourse markers to structure their talks 87% of the time versus their use 13% of the time as indicators of production disfluency. Her analysis showed that they were “…found in quite specific, well-defined environments, and they display distinctive characteristics” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 486). [It should be pointed out that even though she claimed above that *uh* and *um* both can function as discourse markers, her analysis, which follows, focuses only on *um*, and her conclusion states, “Whereas both *um* and *uh* can occur in instances of repair, only *um* shows the underlying structure of the
academic seminar through its occurrence in specific, well-defined environments” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 495).]

The first of the three well-defined environments *um* was found in was at the beginning of a section, analogous to the beginning of a paragraph.

Discourse markers in this position display prosodic characteristics typical of talk at the beginning of a section; they often occur following a lengthy pause; they are often said more loudly than preceding talk; they may be said with raised pitch; they often have a distinctive intonation pattern; and they are often associated with non-verbal activities, such as putting slides on or off the overhead projector (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 487).

Her example for this is:

Pres: ↑ t! *um* : (1.0) ((stands and looks at OHT, hand on chin)) what I’ll cover (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 488).

This example illustrates many of the features described above: *um* is preceded by a lengthy (2.5) pause and then articulated with a raised pitch, the presenter looks at the overhead projector and then introduces the topic. Compare this to the example of a repair cited above where *um* is preceded by a 0.4 pause and followed by a 1.0 pause.

The second place *um* can be used as a discourse marker is “…immediately following the orientation phrase at the beginning of a new section of talk (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 491).

In the following example, line 2, and the first three words of line 3 contain the orientation phrase, which is directly followed by *um* said with rising intonation as a preface to an expansion of the orientation phrase.

2. ↑okay. So here’s the sort of just a quick example of what a *task* based changed space uh

3. might be like: *um* : suppose we had just a whole bunch of *x y pairs* : that we collected in (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 491).
Finally, *um* was found to be used “…to mark points on an overhead slide” (Rendle-Short, 2004, p. 492). Again it was said with rising intonation, and louder than the surrounding talk. These prosodic features are absent when *um* is used as a filler.

An explanation of the transcription conventions used by Dr. Rendle-Short (2004, p. 495), in the above examples is given here:

- ♦ rising shift in pitch
- t! dental click
- Sony rising intonation weaker than that indicated by a question mark
- **Um** bold type to emphasize important words

**DELIMITATIONS**

Since the focus of this study is the composition of the American and Turkish students’ questions and whether or not they successfully express their intent to the American native English speaking guest lecturer, the full answer to all questions posed is not given, with the exception of cases in which the question was not understood and thus produced a communication breakdown. In these cases the full response to the initiating elicit is given and then the follow-up reformulation elicit and subsequent response are given.
CHAPTER 3

CODED ◆ TRANSCRIPT OF THE Q. & A.
SESSIONS FOLLOWING GUEST PRESENTATIONS TO A SPORTS MBA CLASS DURING THE FALL 2010 SEMESTER AT SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Q./St.1) How do you spend the majority of your day? (9 words)
A: Good question. It really varies throughout where I am in the cycle. One thing about golf is it’s seasonal. (continues)

Q./St. 2) Um, I’ve a two part question. You talked about the, um, 3 pillars: the herd mentality, love for the game, and technology. Um, (1) do those have a kind of ranking in terms of standing behind one, more, versus the other? (2) And then, I guess, coming off that, if there is or isn’t, has that shifted ★ given the kind of pressures that the manufacturers are facing right now? (64 words)
A: Definitely /?/ Product, technology… that’s where the bulk of our spending goes to get the message out about our product. (continues)

Q./St. 3) Um, you mentioned the more, um, volume based athlete strategy over some other. What kind of qualities do you look for when you are looking for athletes to choose? (27 words)
A: Sure, um…. The only thing coming into play now is we are not just one driver. We have multiple sub brands; we have a burner brand, etc. We look for athletes that kind of demonstrate the qualities of the type of golfer that we would associate, like bombers – long
hitters. We look for athletes that would be good representatives of our brand, and then we try to set them in the equipment. *(continues)*

Q./St. 4) *Um,* is that campaign specifically targeted to men? ★ Being a woman golfer, I’m just curious, like, what your target community is. *(20 words)*

A: 80% of the golf market is men and most of the things that we do, for instance, that X golfer campaign. It doesn’t matter ability or gender, “I am a golfer” can apply to all. The concept of better technology can help your game is something that all athletes can benefit from. We have women’s versions – modified by certain things. We do not have specific campaigns targeted to women.

Q.5/St. 4) Why not? I’m just curious. *(5 words)*

† Please see the last page for explanations of the coding

A: It comes down to expense. Is it going to garner more women playing for the investment? Tailor Made is more of a performance brand. Often the women using our brand play the same equipment that men play. *(continues)*

(Q./St. 6) So going back to the strategy like Rebecca mentioned about sort of using more of like an army of athletes rather than focusing your resources on one or two marquis golfers. So when you guys got on board with /?/ a few years ago, *(1)* was that more of a strategy of like this was premeditated that the brand said from the beginning “this is what we are going to do”, or *(2)* that’s what we’re just going to embrace what we are, or *(3)* was that something that they set out to do from the beginning? *(93 words)*

A: No, it was definitely more set out. *(continues)*

Q./St. 7) You mentioned that *uh,* the television and print ads sometimes lead to, or a lot of times, lead to discussion on other mediums such as Facebook. *Uh* for a brand like
Tailor Made, *uh* (1) what do you, what do you think is the best medium to facilitate those discussions, and (2) why? (49 words)

A: Um, well I’d say that you need to, the advertising isn’t always, it’s on message, it gets our message out. And, and advertising in a way pushes your message. What’s happening now with the media, media, is that people are gathering information in so many different ways. (continues)

Q./St. 8) **Could you tell us** really a little bit more about how as an agency, you *like* tried to prove or show to clients how you helped their business grow? ★ I know *like* marketing is hard to measure. (37 words)

A: Yeah, you know, you know, this is one category that I’ve worked on. The only thing that matters in this category for our client is sales…. You need to isolate what the effect of advertising is on sales. (continues)

Q./St. 9) So you’re activating through television, print, and web. *Um,* ★ before you came in we talked about brand recall and brand recognition. So, are you doing anything at the point of purchase? (30 words)

A: Oh, absolutely, yeah. So I didn’t mean to convey that that’s all we’re activating through big part of what we do for activation for clubs is uh demo and trials. (continues)

Q./St. 10) So ★ if any of us wanted to get into this specific segment of marketing, 1) how, what would your advice be for getting us in like, *uh,/*/?/ wanting to be a part of brand management, or, *um*, things like that? (38 words)

A: Do you mean like on an agency side doing kind of brand strategy?

St. 10) Yes. (1 word)
A: Um, I think, you know the biggest thing is to get experience.  

Q./St. 11) **Can you talk** a little bit about (1) the strategy behind the project burner seeding program, and (2) kinda what that is?  (20 words)

A: Yes, so in project burner we had an iron.  

Q./St. 12) Aah, so, the conversion rate for that was really pretty high?  (10 words)

A: Yeah, most of the people that got a 3-6 iron bought the rest of the set.  

Q./St. 13) So for a campaign like that, ★ I mean obviously Tailor Made was confident enough that their irons were gonna make the people happy that were trying them. But (1) how – what kind of approach do you take to soliciting that kind of feedback?  Like, (2) did you censor any of these testimonials?  Like, (3) did you just let people post whatever and you kept it up there?  Or (4) was there any kind of thought about, only posting the good ones, or (5) being careful with what, how expressive you allowed people to be?  (89 words)

A: Well that’s a good question because it’s hard in this day and age for marketers to let go of people.  

Q./St. 14) **So, I’m a little curious about**, sort of, the positioning of your agency in-between the customer, and us, also your customers, (1) in terms of your company, in terms of do you do a lot of the market research and stuff and (2) how do you take it to the company? Or (3) does the company director of research bring it to you?  Like, (4) how much of that is on each end of everything?  (71 words)

A: Um, well… It’s kind of collaborative.  

Q./St. 15) ★ **Um**, with product life, life cycles getting a lot shorter – you know /?/ /?/ how do you kind of, *um*, you know, what’s a strategy to kind of get away from that marked down stigma that, at retail?  (36 words)
A: It’s a huge challenge. (continues)

Q./St. 16) How much of a relationship do you have, um, with the company when (1) you’re like, setting prices and (2) you’re setting discounts and promotions? (22 words)

A: That’s really mostly determined by Tailor Made, honestly, with prices. (continues)

Q./St. 17) Do you find a major roadblock in creating brand awareness for Aesics, is that fact that you mentioned about how they have two different logos, one that’s on the product, and then one that’s for the brand? (37 words)

A: Uh, not so much, because I think that linkage can be overcome with just consistent messaging. Again, Puma’s done it pretty well. (continues)

◊ EXPLANATION OF CODING SYMBOLS

Q./St. = Question/ Student

(≠ words) = number of words in the question

Words = Metastatement

Number) = number of reformulations within an elicit

★ = Grounding: support of elicits with background information, either by using hypothetical structures and/or displays of reasoning (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 86).

Word = Filler: like, uh, um

– = Breakdown in communication

/?/ = Indecipherable
ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS DURING FALL 2010 AT SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

The analysis looked at seven variables: (1) the presence of a metastatement, (2) the number of words in each question, (3) the number of reformulations within an elicit, (4) the presence of grounding, (5) the tone of the question, (6) the use of fillers, i.e., like, uh, and, umm, and finally, (7) the presence of a communication breakdown.

Presence of a Metastatement

Six of the seventeen questions were prefaced by metastatements; these are questions 2, 4, 5, 8, 11, and 14. Specifically they are: *I’ve a two-part question, I’m just curious, I’m just curious, Could you tell us, Can you talk, and So, I’m a little curious about….Question 2’s prefatory metastatement, I’ve a two-part question, which described the question about to be asked, was immediately followed by one that summarized a point in the guest lecturer’s presentation: You talked about the, umm, 3 pillars: the herd mentality, love for the game, and technology. Five other instances of summarizing metastatements are found in questions 3, 6, 7, 9, and 17. These are phrased as: You mentioned the um, more volume based athlete strategy over some other, So going back to the strategy like Rebecca mentioned about sort of using more of like an army of athletes rather than focusing your resources on one or two marquis golfers, You mentioned that the uh, television and print ads sometimes lead to, or a lot of times, lead to discussion on other mediums such as Facebook, So, you’re activating through television, print, and web and finally in question 17, you mentioned about how they have two different logos. These twelve instances of metastatements compute to 70 percent. It appears that American MBA students prefer to give the respondent advance notice about the
coming query, thus allowing the respondent time to organize his thoughts in preparation for delivering a satisfactory answer in a timely and coherent manner.

**Number of Words in Each Question/Exchange Initiation**

In counting the number of words in each Question/Exchange Initiation (Q./E. I.) I did not count *um, uh, or ah*. An examination of the seventeen questions asked by the students yielded a total of 657 words, which averages out to 38.6 words per question.

**Reformulations Within an Elicit**

Six of the seventeen Q./E. I.s contained reformulations, which amounts to 35 percent. Fifty percent of the elicits contained two reformulations per question. A typical example of this succinct style of questioning is found in question 7: *(1)* what do you think is the best medium to facilitate those discussions, and *(2)* why? In contrast to this example of brevity, question 13 illustrates extensive use of reformulations within an elicit: *But (1) how – what kind of approach do you take to soliciting that kind of feedback? Like, (2) did you censor any of these testimonials? Like, (3) did you just let people post whatever and you kept it up there? Or (4) was there any kind of thought about, only posting the good ones, or (5) being careful with what, how expressive you allowed people to be?* One can see that the second reformulation is a refinement of the first one, and that the third, fourth, and, fifth ones are refinements of the second one about “censorship” in general.

**Presence of Grounding**

Seven, or 41% of the SDSU students provided background information to their elicits, thus putting them in a particular context. This embellishment to the elicit gave the guest lecturer specific material to consider, thus aiding in replying in a thorough and targeted
fashion. Two kinds of grounding or proffering background information are: (1) hypothesizing; (2) giving a reason.

The use of hypothetical statements within a question is a kind of grounding that can be employed to again, furnish specific information for the responder to interact with. Question 10 represents a focused use of a hypothetical structure: So ★ if any of us wanted to get into this specific segment of marketing how, what would your advice be for getting us in like, uh, wanting to be a part of brand management, or, um, things like that?

The second question is a good example of the second type of grounding: giving a reason. And then, I guess, coming off that, if there is or isn’t, has that shifted ★ given the kind of pressures that the, uh, manufacturers are facing right now? Inclusion of given the kind of pressures that the, uh, manufacturers are facing right now? not only narrows the scope of the question, but also indicates to whoever is listening (the professor!) that the questioner is on top of the current business climate.

The fourth question is an example of a simpler, yet more personal reason being given to the guest presenter. Um, is that campaign specifically targeted to men? ★ Being a woman golfer, I’m just curious, like, what your target community is.

Of the seven examples of grounding in the SDSU students’ questions, six of them are examples of giving a reason; only one illustrates the use of a hypothetical structure. Does this indicate that California MBA students have their feet firmly planted on the ground, and are not prone to flights of fancy?

**Tone of the Question/Exchange Initiation**

As mentioned previously in Chapter II, the tone of the elicit is a crucial element in fostering successful communication. A close perusal of all of the questions posed by the
SDSU students revealed that all of them exhibited a respectful, professional tone towards the guest lecturer. In one case, in which the question could be seen as presupposing a lack of awareness on the part of the company that the lecturer worked for, the student questioner softened her remarks by interjecting, *I’m just curious, like.* The full question was quoted above in the *Presence of Grounding* section. Even though the student was not completely satisfied with the answer she received, her follow-up question again used the softening phrase, *I’m just curious.*

Another example of “…gentle nonthreatening questioning [that] could display a commitment to community and a concern not to threaten another’s face….” (Tracy, 1997, p.31, as cited in Waring, 2000, p. 153) is question 8: *Could you tell us really a little bit more about how as an agency, you like tried to prove or show to clients how you helped their business grow? I know like marketing is hard to measure.* Here, the student seems to be handing the lecturer something to grab onto in case she is not able to give a credible, quantitative answer to the question: *I know like marketing is hard to measure.*

**Use of Fillers**

1. *like*

   The use of *like* is ubiquitous throughout the elicits. There are ten instances of its use by students in their questions to the guest presenter. It seems to me, a native New Yorker, that the use of *like* is a peculiarly California term designed to convey a laid-back, cool, not overly intellectual, personal philosophy. Its use in the Q. & A. at SDSU in sunny San Diego, California, appears to have a softening effect on the students’ questions. Even though the students are highly intelligent graduate MBA students, they seem to not want to flaunt any knowledge they have, especially if it might threaten to place the guest lecturer at a
disadvantage or to lose face. So we can note how the insertion of *like* before the heart of the question in elicits 4, 8, 13, and 14 has the effect of breaking up the directness of the question, which possibly the students perceive as potentially threatening to the person being addressed, thus providing a laid-back, cool space to let the guest lecturer know that yes, the student would like the question to be answered, but *like*, there’s no pressure, man. Examples from the questions mentioned above are: Q. 4) *Being a woman golfer, I’m just curious, like, what your target community is.*  Q. 8) *Could you tell us really a little bit more about how as an agency, you like tried to prove or show to clients how you helped their business grow? I know like marketing is hard to measure.*  Q. 13) …*Like, did you censor any of these testimonials? Like, did you just let people post whatever and you kept it up there?*  Q. 14) … *Like, how much of that is on each end of everything?*

In question 4 the fact that the questioner is a woman is central to the question. She seems to be trying to determine if the advertising agency, which the guest presenter represents, bases its strategy on the assumption that all golfers are male, and if so she wants to bring to their attention the fact that there are many women golfers. Her query could have been expressed in a strident, confrontational manner; instead, the student diplomatically softens the tone of the query by following the essential phrase, *Being a woman golfer*…. with a mitigating phrase, *I’m just curious*….*, the word just serving to minimize the importance of the question, and then following this by another softening device that also marks the focus of the question, which is the insertion of the word *like*.

The student’s use of *like* in question 8 is used not only as a marker for the topic of the question, but, as we have seen previously, serves to break up the directness of the question as it is inserted between the subject “you” and the verb “tried to prove”. As in question 4, this
questioner could have asked his question in a much more direct fashion that would have put the guest presenter on the defensive, e.g., “How did you show your clients how you helped their businesses grow?” Finally, the last use of like in this query is employed as a softening device, in a phrase that is itself a softening phrase tacked on to take pressure off of the guest presenter: *I know like marketing is hard to measure.*

Questions 13 and 14 are the most direct questions asked by the SDSU students. Yet they manage to blunt the force of their inquiry by placing like before the body of the question as seen especially in question 13: *Like, did you censor any of these testimonials? Like, did you just let people post whatever and you kept it up there?* This question, besides being very succinct and direct also could be seen as an implied criticism of the advertising agency. It is possible that given the atmosphere of complete transparency now pervading the Web that the student felt there should not have been any censorship. Conversely, perhaps the student felt that it would have been wise from a business perspective to weed out damaging critiques. So the presenter was facing a tricky question, which it seems the student instinctively understood and thus tried to alleviate the presenter’s discomfort by prefacing his two part question with *like* in each instance.

In reexamining the data from the October 2010 tapings of the San Diego State University MBA students in light of the studies by Fox Tree and Underhill, I would make two observations: one, the fact that in both cases, California undergraduates were the study participants, indirectly supports my claim that the use of particle *like* is a predominantly California phenomenon; and two, that in addition to *like* being used as a softening device by the SDSU students in their questions to the guest presenter, it is also as Underhill asserts, marking the focus of the question. An example of that is aptly illustrated in question 17:
How much of a relationship do you have, um, with the company when you’re like, setting prices and you’re setting discounts and promotions?

2. *uh* and *um*

   a. *uh*

   There are only four instances of the use of *uh* in the questions asked by the SDSU students. Question 7 features three examples: *You mentioned that uh, the television and print ads sometimes lead to, or a lot of times, lead to discussion on other mediums such as Facebook.*. *Uh for a brand like Tailor Made, uh what do you, what do you think is the best medium to facilitate those discussions, and why?* The first *uh* is followed by a very slight pause, which could be an indicator of a production difficulty, i.e., the student had to search his memory for what the presenter had mentioned. This seems highly unlikely. The next two *uh*s are not followed by any pauses. It seems to me that the location of all three of these *uh*s corresponds to the criteria developed by Rendle-Short for *um* being used as a discourse marker. She specifically said that *uh* is not used as a discourse marker, (p. 495), but since her study analyzed the talk of a lecturer, her statement may not be generalizeable beyond that distinct situation. On the other hand, it is possible that her analysis is not transferable to the student questions that I am analyzing. Nevertheless, it does seem to me that there are traceable similarities between the uses of *uh* and *um* in her data and mine. An exploration of this follows.

   The first *uh* in question 7 of the SDSU data is at the beginning of the question introducing or orienting the topic of the question, the second one prefaces an expansion of the introductory phrase and leads into the heart of the question. This second *uh* is analogous to Rendle-Short’s use of *um* “…immediately following the orientation phrase at the beginning of a new section of talk (2004, p. 491). The final *uh* is being used, in my opinion,
as a discourse marker in so much as it introduces the actual question. Thus *uh* is used as a discourse marker by the San Diego State University MBA students 75 percent of the time. The fourth use of *uh* in the SDSU questions is in question 10: *So if any of us wanted to get into this specific segment of marketing, how, what would your advice be for getting us in like, uh, /?/ wanting to be a part of brand management, or, um, things like that?* In my opinion, this use of *uh*, is an example of a filled pause. The word spoken after *uh* was not enunciated clearly, which, besides making it impossible to transcribe, indicates to me, taken in concert with the final phrase, *things like that*, that the student was either unsure of what she wanted to ask or how to express her thoughts.

b. *um*

The questions posed by the MBA students at San Diego State University contain 11 instances of the use of *um*. I believe that ten of these (in questions 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 15, and 16) are being used as discourse markers because they occur in specific environments, not randomly. These well-defined environments, which were mentioned previously are at the beginning of a section of talk, immediately following the orientation phrase at the beginning of a new section of talk, and, when marking points on an overhead projector. Question 2 in the SDSU data is a good example of *um* being used as a discourse marker. Um, *I’ve a two part question, you talked about the, um, 3 pillars: the herd mentality, love for the game, and technology. Um, do those have a kind of ranking in terms of standing behind one, more, versus the other?* We can see that in this question *um* is being used initially to mark the beginning of the question, and the second and third instances of its use are in the second position described above, i.e., the section of talk immediately following the orientation phrase. Furthermore, in this question and the others enumerated above, most of these instances of use of *um* are accompanied by prosodic features that are absent in typical
examples of fillers being used as repair tokens. They are preceded by and followed by a slight pause, thus increasing their prominence. Also in question 16, the first *um* is said much louder than the words that follow it. Thus *um* was used as a discourse marker by the San Diego State University MBA students 91 percent of the time.

There is one question in which the use of *um* seems to me being used as a filler, a hesitation device, that is question 15: *Um, with product life, life cycles getting a lot shorter – you know /?/ /?/ how do you kind of, um, you know, what’s a strategy to kind of get away from that marked down stigma that, at retail?* The second *um* is preceded by a vague phrase, *kind of*, which is followed by a pause at the end of which *um* is articulated and then another pause occurs that is followed by another vague, filler phrase, *you know*. The *um* is also not placed at the beginning of a section of talk or a point, but in the middle of a question, thus not in a specific, well-defined environment but instead in a random position. All of these factors lend support to my contention that this second *um* in question 15 can be seen as a filler indicating production trouble.

Dr. Rendle-Short’s study of the use of *uh* and *um* by lecturers in computer seminars in Australia discovered that they were used as discourse markers 86.7% of the time, versus being used as repair devices 13.3% of the time. My study of the questions posed by SDSU MBA students shows usage of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers 83% of the time; these results are strikingly similar to those in Dr. Rendle-Short’s study.

**Presence of a Communication Breakdown**

There is one example of a communication breakdown or instance in which the person, in this case the guest lecturer, requested clarification of an elicit from the questioner. It came about at question 10. The full exchange follows.
Q./St. 10) So if any of us wanted to get into this specific segment of marketing, how, what would your advice be for getting us in like, uh, wanting to be a part of brand management, or, um, things like that?

A: Do you mean like on an agency side doing kind of brand strategy?

St. 10) Yes

A: Um, I think, you know the biggest thing is to get experience. (continues)

It seems to me that the question was understandable, indeed, quite pellucid up until the last, very vague part was added: or, um, things like that?
CHAPTER 4

CODED ◊ TRANSCRIPT OF THE Q. & A.

SESSIONS FOLLOWING GUEST PRESENTATIONS TO AN MBA CLASS DURING THE SPRING 2010 SEMESTER AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Q./St. 1: Could you give us an example of . . . of some of these zombies that you’re talking about? (16 words)

A.: They’re not on the list. Sears is one. (continues)

Q./St. 1: Sorry for the question then.

A.: No, it’s a great question. (continues)

Q./St. 2: Isn’t that a good thing, though, to have people focus on, the role of sustainability as it impacts the bottom line? (21 words)

A.: It is. (continues)

Q./St. 3: (1) Isn’t Walmart already doing things which seem similar, or (2) leading that sector with demanding their suppliers, that, that a certain kind of packaging requirement things like that? (27 words)

A.: You’ve been reading their press releases. (continues)

Q./St. 4: ★ Obviously retail’s got some growing pains over the next few years and there’s probably gonna be some shrinkages as consumer save rates go up and all these things. Not to be cheeky, but (1) how does that impact the kind of industries that have a symbiotic
relationship with retailing, (2) particularly consulting? (3) What what are you guys doing, to position yourself? (59 words)

A.: You can actually make as much consulting work in a business that is consolidating. (continues)

Q./St. 5: I’m just curious to hear (1) what you think about ★ social media and its rise as a of a um, method of advertising and (2) do you think that’s gonna replace some of these more traditional print advertisements, you know, as Twitter and Facebook? I’ve read a lot about these certain things. (49 words)

A.: Good question. I I think you cannot be in business today unless you understand the power of something like like Facebook. (continues)

★ Please see the last page for explanations of the coding.

Q./St. 6: ★ So, in the Apple /?/ it seems like there’s such a link between the products and the way that the stores are architected . . . are surprise . . .ha . . . um do you think there’s a trend toward that these days, like…? (the guest lecturer started answering the question as the student continued to frame it) (38 words)

A.: Well what’s happened is – it’s a good question - we get asked all the time “Make me an Apple store”. (continues)

Q./St. 7: Yeah, just wanted to follow up on what you said earlier, um, in advertisements, you know, assuming that it’s a branding ad, how do you make sure that the clever image connects with the brand? People retain, you know, just taking one out of your slides, I thought the brand ad was clever, but I can’t I don’t remember what brand it was. How do you turn that…? (the guest lecturer started answering the question as the student continued to frame it) (69 words)
A.: Well it happened to be part of an ongoing campaign . . . (continues)

Q./St. 8: ★ It seems like mobile devices are getting more and more pervasive in the way we shop, um, but store design, store design, has really not responded to that at all. What are your views on that? (35 words)

A.: You’re right; I think store design is way behind. (continues)

Q./St. 9: How, how does someone become a more creative thinker? (9 words)

A.: Um, that’s a wonderful question. (continues)

Q./St. 10: Um, I was just gonna ask, uh, ★ department stores, traditional department stores are obviously having a lot of difficulty and I was wondering um, (1) if you think that that’s trivial ya know like (2) if that has something to do with the fact that the physical design, is, obsolete anyway, and (3) if so, ya know, from a physical design standpoint what do you think department stores should be doing te? (66 words)

A.: Well that’s a good question. How many of you really do shop in department stores? (continues)

Q./St. 11: When you were talking about your early career at Bloomingdales uh you you went from making uh I think 55 dollars a week to um becoming President in in a very short time in in your narration. You mention that senior management, um, recognized talent in you. What do you think specifically they saw that that led you to to assume your later responsibilities? (60 words)

A.: I think it’s a great question. (continues)

Q./St. 12: Um, I had actually a very similar question: ★ As you look back over such a
successful long career is there anything you would say, ya know, ‘knowing what I know now I would have done this differently’, that might be good advice for some of us who are at the other end of our careers?  (54 words)

A.: Um, well, I, I think yes.  (continues)

Q./St. 13: What are your thoughts on Bloomingdales now related to the outlet arena?  (12 words)

A.: Bloomingdales and the outlet business.  (continues)

Q./St. 14: ⭐ So this topic of the internet is fairly interesting as its been fairly disrupt - disruptive technology not only to retail but also in the media space and print and being that luxury goods have a fairly close relationship with these magazines and and what what looks like some type of macro-trend away from you know the traditional magazine and advertising in magazines, how does that impact luxury goods and luxury retailing in the future?  (75 words)

A.: Well the /?/ has to decide how they are going to spend their dollars most effectively.  (continues)

Q./St. 15: Um, you mentioned that you’d invested in a few brands.  I guess (1) what are the key qualities you look for, um, say in a brand or the designer or the product and (2) if you want to invest in it?  (37 words)

A.: I try to look for, I continue to believe in the role of globalization in business.  (continues)

Q./St. 16: What do you feel distinguishes, um, Bloomingdales from other like bigger department stores that aren’t doing that well like Saks for example, if you could sum up what you think is?  (30 words)

A.: What was the question?  Somebody, I…. [He could not hear the student’s question].
Q./St. 16: Sorry, what do you feel distink... best distinguishes Bloomingdales from other department stores that haven’t been doing so well /?/?

A.: What best distinguishes Bloomingdale’s from other department stores? Well, I think it has a reputation for contemporary fashion. (continues)

Q./St. 17: Uh, to what extent is, uh, counterfeiting a threat to the, to your…? (the guest lecturer started answering the question as the student continued to frame it) (13 words)

A.: Yeah, the greatest form of flattery, I was told, I was told, when I did Obsession, you remember I was thirty years old….(continues)

★ EXPLANATION OF CODING SYMBOLS

Q./St. = Question/ Student

(# words) = number of words in the question

Words = Metastatement

Number) = number of reformulations within an elicit

★ = Grounding: support of elicits with background information, either by using hypothetical structures and/or displays of reasoning (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 86).

Word = Filler: like, uh, um

 banker = Breakdown in communication

/?/ = Indecipherable
ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS DURING SPRING 2010 AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, N. Y., U.S.A.

The analysis looked at seven variables: (1) the presence of a metastatement, (2) the number of words in each question, (3) the number of reformulations within an elicit, (4) the presence of grounding, (5) the tone of the question, (6) the use of fillers, i.e., *like*, *uh*, and, *umm*, and finally, (7) the presence of a communication breakdown.

**Presence of a Metastatement**

Four of the seventeen questions were prefaced by metastatements; these are questions 5, 7, 10, and 12. Specifically they are: *I'm just curious to hear, just wanted to follow up on what you said earlier, I was just gonna ask,* and, *I had actually a very similar question.* Within question 10 there is a second example of a metastatement describing the question about to be asked: *I was wondering.* The second type of metastatement, one which summarizes a point in the guest lecturer’s presentation appears in question 11: *When you were talking about your early career at Bloomingdales ah you you went from making ah ah I think 55 dollars a week to ah becoming President in in a very short time in in your narration.* A second example can be seen in question 15: *You mention that senior management, umm, recognized talent in you. You mentioned that you’d invested in a few brands.* These seven instances of metastatements compute to 41 percent. The Columbia University MBA students used less metastatements than the MBA students at SDSU, where the percentage was 70 percent. This suggests that the East coast students are more direct in their questioning than the West coast students.
Number of Words in Each Question/Exchange Initiation

In counting the number of words in each Question/Exchange Initiation (Q./E. I.) I did not count *um*, *uh*, or *ah*. An examination of the seventeen student questions yielded a total of 670 words, which averages out to 39.41 words per question. This result is very close to that of the SDSU students at 655 words, averaging out to 38.52 words per question.

Reformulations Within an Elicit

Five out of seventeen elicits contained reformulations. 60% used two reformulations per elicit, higher than the 57% reported use by the MBA students at SDSU. This is in line with the trend towards a more direct, efficient style of speech, exhibited by the use of metastatements, which shows more extensive use of them by students in California than in New York. Whereas two elicits at SDSU contained four, and five reformulations respectively, the highest number of reformulations within an elicit at C.U. was three; these represent 40% of the total reformulations. Representative of two reformulations within a single elicit, the majority, is question 5: *I’m just curious to hear* (1) *what you think about social media and its rise as a method of advertising and* (2) *do you think that’s gonna replace some of these more traditional print advertisements, you know as Twitter and Facebook?* Question 4 models a good use of a reformulation to narrow down the point queried, for the benefit of the interlocutor: (1) *how does that impact the kind of industries that have a symbiotic relationship with retailing*, (2) *particularly consulting?* (3) *What are you guys doing to position yourself?*

The five out of seventeen questions with reformulations computes to 29 percent. This contrasts with 41% at SDSU.
**Presence of Grounding**

Seven, or 41% of the C.U. students provided background information to their elicits, thus putting them in a particular context. As noted in Chapter III, this embellishment to the elicit provided the guest lecturer with specific material to consider, thereby allowing for a custom-tailored reply. In concordance with their colleagues at SDSU, of the seven examples of grounding by the Columbia University MBA students, six of them are examples of giving a reason, and only one illustrates the use of a hypothetical structure.

Providing a reason is one of the types of grounding that can be employed to enrich an elicit. The wording of question 8 portrays an awareness of the current economic difficulties department stores are facing, and puts forward a reason for that as a preface to the question. *It seems like mobile devices are getting more and more pervasive in the way we shop, um, but store design, store design, has really not responded to that at all. What are your views on that?*

The use of hypothetical statements within a question is a kind of grounding that can be employed to furnish specific information for the responder to interact with. A sample of an indirect, hypothetical question is noted in question 12, in which the student asks the former president of a prestigious department store if, with the benefit of hindsight, he would have done anything differently. *As you look back over such a successful long career is there anything you would say, ya know, ‘knowing what I know now I would have done this differently’, that might be good advice for some of us who are at the other end of our careers?*
Tone of the Question/Exchange Initiation

The tone of the Columbia University students’ questions was respectful, displaying an appreciation for the significant business successes of the guest presenters and a desire to learn from them. Indeed the questions were often complimentary: ...just taking one of your slides, I thought the brand ad was clever.... (Question 7), and ...As you look back over such a successful long career.... (Question 12).

One student even apologized for asking a question, please see question 1, which unbeknownst to him, would cause the guest some embarrassment because the “zombies” he had referred to in his presentation were actually some of his clients. Another student was sensitive to the possibility that his question could be construed as impolitic by highlighting the close connection between the guest presenter’s livelihood as a consultant to department stores, and the downturn in the economic fortunes of those stores. Obviously, retail’s got some growing pains over the next few years and there’s probably gonna be some shrinkages as consumer rates go up and all these thing. Not to be cheeky,¹ but how does that impact the kind of industries that have a symbiotic relationship with retailing, particularly consulting? What what are you guys doing, to position yourself? (Question 4).

Use of Fillers

1. like

In contradistinction to the omnipresence of “like” in the SDSU students’ questions (ten instances), it was only used once as a particle in the questions asked by the C.U. students. Um, I was just gonna ask, uh, department stores, traditional department stores are obviously having a lot of difficulty and I was wondering um, if you think that that’s trivial ya know like if that has something to do with the fact that the physical design, is, obsolete
anyway, and if so, ya know from a physical design standpoint what do you think department stores should be doing te?

This evidence lends credibility to my assertion in Chapter 3 that “like” is a California term designed to convey a laid-back, cool, not overly intellectual, personal philosophy. The absence of “like”, which can be perceived as softening the tone of a question, from the Columbia University MBA students’ questions is further proof that East Coast, private university, MBA students’ questions are less embellished, more succinct and direct than those of West Coast public university MBA students’ questions.

a.  *uh* and *um*

b.  *uh*

There are five instances of the use of *uh* in the questions asked by the MBA students at Columbia University. Of those five, the two in question 11 seem to exhibit the characteristics associated with disfluencies. *When you were talking about your early career at Bloomingdales uh you you went from making uh I think 55 dollars a week to um becoming President in in a very short time in in your narration.* The speaker spoke quickly, seemed nervous, and the *uh*s are followed by, in the first instance, repeated words, *you, you*, usually a sign of someone stalling while they think about how to proceed communicating, and in the second instance by the phrase, *I think*, which obviously indicates uncertainty. So I would classify these *uh*s as examples of repair devices.

The other three uses of *uh* are located in questions 10 and 17. The placement of *uh* at the beginning of the introductory phrase in question 10 is a very clear example of its use as a discourse marker. *Um, I was just gonna ask, uh, department stores, traditional department stores are obviously having a lot of difficulty and I was wondering…. The placement of *uh* also in question 17, in specific, well-defined environments shows how it was used to
structure the question. Thus, *uh* was used by the Columbia University MBA students as a discourse marker 60 percent of the time, whereas the San Diego University MBA students used it as a discourse marker 75 percent of the time.

c. *um*

The questions posed by the MBA students at C.U. contain twelve instances of the use of *um*. Of these, the one in question 5 appears to be an instance of it functioning as a filler, although its placement is a little odd. *I’m just curious to hear what you think about social media and its rise as a of a um, method of advertising…. Instead of coming before the disfluency, as a of a, it is articulated after those words and followed by a slight pause.*

The remaining eleven *ums* are, in my opinion, based on the criteria formulated by Dr. Rendle-Short, functioning as discourse markers to structure the question so that it is clearly understandable to the listener. All of these *ums*, in questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 16 are preceded and followed by slight pauses, although in question 15, there is a rather lengthy pause after the second *um*, thus making it salient. In those instances where they are the first thing uttered -- questions 10, 12, and 15 -- they are given greater prominence by their being spoken more loudly than the words in the rest of the question. Thus, *um* was used by the Columbia University MBA students as a discourse marker 92 percent of the time. Remarkably, the San Diego University MBA students used *um* as a discourse marker 91 percent of the time.

My study of the questions posed by the Columbia University MBA students shows usage of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers 76% of the time. This is slightly lower than the figure of 83% for the San Diego State University student’s use of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers.
Presence of a Communication Breakdown

There aren’t any examples of miscommunication due to the style of student questions. However, there was one instance, question 16, in which the guest presenter was not able to hear the student’s question and asked for it to be repeated.
Q.1/St. 1) Professor, does it mean that it, uh, off, as an offer, uh I I have a responsibility to ask, even ★ if I should uh like uh couldn’t see the mail, the business mail, I have the responsibility, I should call and ask even ★ if I, uh, didn’t see the mail? (45 words)

A: Yes. Yeah, I think that’s that’s one thing you would have a responsibility, or, if you were teed off, you could just simply say, “I need acceptance by the receipt to avoid this problem.” (continues)

Q.2/St. 2) Also, does this mean that ★ if that’s a franchise, like a franchise then, uh, CSIG would have liked to in /?/ ? (20)

A: I don’t think so. My honest opinion I don’t think it will apply in a franchise situation, because you’re dealing with individual people doing business in the state. (continues)

Q.3/St. 3) So they have no responsibility for their extension? (10 words)

A: Well, it’s hard to pin the responsibility.

Q.4/St. 3) That they are culpable for negligence? (6 words)

A: Very hard. That would be the best argument you can make. (continues)

Q.5/St. 4) And this is limited for (1) only some kind of competitions or (2) in her private life also (3) if she plays /?/ ? (20 words)

A: Well, you’ve got to put that down. You have to put that down. What is she supposed to wear when? (continues)
Q.6/St. 5) ★ /?/ /?/ wants to in order to raise a higher fee /?/ /?/. It can be a sponsorship fee, sponsorship fee does something which will lead (?) allow the contract. Let’s say second day of contract we will pay in cash to setup, let’s say twenty-five percent of this a month, and in a month they say one-hundred thousand dollars? (62 words)

A: You could do that. (continues)

Please see the last page for explanations of the coding

Q.7/St. 6) (1) In general terms or (2) do we have to prove? (9 words)

A: Usually the language that they use is if she’s exposed to scandal, ridicule, arrest and/or conviction, for acts that shock the community. (continues)

Q.8/St. 7) They terminate the contract? (4 words)

A: Yeah. They terminated the whole contract, and, but they did offer a substitute.

(continues)

Q.9/St. 8) Is there a time on this? (6 words)

A: There actually is not, there is no time. (continues)

Q.10/St. 9) Do you know the case about this? (7 words)

A: Yes I do. I would tell you there’s a case about this, because it’s gotten publicity in the United States.

Q.11/St. 10) (1) Do you think because the guy was carrying explosives and uh, (2) he could have just headed to the train with explosives? (20 words)

A: Uh, more fundamental than that.

Q.12/St. 11) Is there any difference between negligence and gross negligence? (9 words)

A: Yes there is and I will tell you quickly, I didn’t want to get into it in class, gross negligence is very badly defined, by many courts. (continues)
Q.13/St. 12) I want this to occur? (5 words)

A: I’ll give you an example of what I mean. In anger, I throw the computer because I’m angry at the computer. (continues)

Q.14/St. 13) Some rights…are you one of those rights they make you sign a form /?/ ? (15 words)

A: That’s right. Not only that, but anything. You run a marathon, you sign it out.

(continues)

Q.15/St. 14) ★ If it’s not written in the contract, your clause, general rule, does not protect the people in the United States? (20 words)

A: For what?

◆ EXPLANATION OF CODING SYMBOLS

Q./St. = Question/ Student

(# words) = number of words in the question

Words = Metastatement

Number) = number of reformulations within an elicit

★ = Grounding: support of elicits with background information, either by using hypothetical structures and/or displays of reasoning (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 86).

Word = Filler: like, uh, um

= Breakdown in communication

/??/ = Indecipherable
ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED IN AN E-MBA CLASS DURING FALL 2010 AT KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

The analysis looked at seven variables: (1) the presence of a metastatement, (2) the number of words in each question, (3) the number of reformulations within an elicit, (4) the presence of grounding, (5) the tone of the question, (6) the use of fillers, i.e., like, uh, and, umm, and finally, (7) the presence of a communication breakdown.

Presence of a Metastatement

There were not any metastatements used by the students in The Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma program offered by Fordham University, New York, N.Y. and Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey and the reason for that is most likely the type of format in which the questions were asked. The students in this program, of which they are the first cohort, are a select group of mature, working adults with backgrounds in finance, law, and entrepreneurship in Turkey who attend classes one weekend per month, beginning with a session Thursday evening and concluding at 6:00 Sunday evening. The classes are taught by Kadir Has and Fordham faculty at Kadir Has University. The Turkish data for this study derived from a taping of three sessions of a class taught on a weekend by a Fordham University faculty member. Thus the setting in which the questions are raised by the students is a lecture in which a large amount of material is presented in a relatively compressed period of time. This means that the students are only asking questions to clarify points made by the professor. They do not have the luxury of time in which to explore issues in depth, or more peripheral aspects of contract law with the professor.

The settings at San Diego State University and at Columbia University were distinct question and answer sessions following a guest presentation. The students had the time, and
were encouraged to ask as many, and as varied questions as they wished. An additional factor that differentiates the Kadir Has University setting from that of SDSU and C.U. is the age of the students. Direct observation of the students at San Diego State University while I taped, and indirect observation via video, of the Columbia U. and Kadir Has U. students, led me to conclude that those at SDSU were on average the youngest ones, followed by the Columbia students, with the Kadir Has U. students being the oldest. This impression was validated by the professors of the classes at SDSU and Columbia University, and by the International Programs Director in the Graduate School of Business Administration at Fordham University. The SDSU professor estimated that the average age of the students in his class was 26; the Columbia University professor estimated that the average age of his students was 27, and the average age of the students in the Kadir Has University E-MBA class was estimated at 31. This leads me to suggest that older students, averaging 31 years old, who are working professionals, are more direct in their style of questioning than younger students who may or may not be working. The differing amounts of metastatement usage in the three programs does seem to suggest a correlation between years of business experience and metastatement use. One can trace this connection by examining the percent of metastatements by MBA program: San Diego State University: 70%, Columbia University: 41%, and Kadir Has University: 0%.

**Number of Words in Each Question/Exchange Initiation**

The total number of words in the fifteen questions was 258. Each question contained an average of 17.2 words per sentence. The brevity of the questions asked by the Fordham University/Kadir Has University E-MBA students can be appreciated better by comparing
the average length of the questions asked at SDSU: 38.6, and at C.U.: 39.4 words per sentence.

**Reformulations Within an Elicit**

Three of the questions contained reformulations. These are in questions five, seven, and eleven. One can see that in question five the student is thinking about how the topic would affect a client in a wide variety of situations: *And this is limited for (1) only some kind of competitions or (2) in her private life also (3) if she plays /?/ if she plays also. Question seven is an excellent example of complexity expressed succinctly: (1) *In general terms or (2) do we have to prove? Question eleven portrays a reformulation that clarifies the question, directing the interlocutor to a specific point to be addressed in their answer: (1) *Do you think because the guy was carrying explosives and uh, (2) he could have just headed to the train with explosives?*

These three instances of reformulation compute out to 20 percent and can be put into context by noting that they measured 29 percent at Columbia University, and 35 percent at San Diego State University.

**Presence of Grounding**

As defined in Chapter II, grounding is the use of background information in an elicit. It can take two forms: displaying a reason for the query or presenting an hypothetical situation. In the Kadir Has University data, all instances of grounding are of the hypothetical type. This form, which exemplifies the third level of intellectual behavior: application, according to Bloom's taxonomy of levels of intellectual behavior in learning (Overbaugh & Schultz, n.d.), is present in four questions, or twenty-six percent of those asked by the Fordham University/Kadir Has University E-MBA students. 
Examples from the Kadir Has data that contain the hypothetical embellishments are in questions one, two, six, and fifteen. In the first question the student uses a worst case scenario to test the limits of what the professor has just said, and repeats it, just to make sure his question is clearly understood. *Professor, does it mean that it, uh, off, as an offer, uh I I have a responsibility to ask, even ★ if I should uh like uh couldn’t see the mail, the business mail, I have the responsibility, I should call and ask even ★ if I, uh, didn’t see the mail?* In question 2 a student grounds the hypothetical situation in a personally relevant business situation: *Also, does this mean that ★ if that’s a franchise, like a franchise then, uh, CSIG would have liked to in /?/ ?* The student asking question six set up a detailed hypothetical situation: *Let’s say second day of contract we will pay in cash to setup, let’s say twenty-five percent of this a month, and in a month they say one-hundred thousand dollars? And, finally, the last question makes the leap from a general, theoretical discussion to how U.S. citizens are practically affected. *If it’s not written in the contract, your clause, general rule, does not protect the people in the United States?*

**Tone of the Question/Exchange Initiation**

The tone of the K.H.U. students’ questions was respectful, continuing the pattern modeled by the students at SDSU and C.U. towards the presenter. For example, the very first question posed by a student addresses the visiting faculty member with the honorific title, *Professor* and then continues *does it mean that it…. The tone of all the questions was courteous, yet less deferential than the tone of the questions asked by the Columbia University students and even less deferential than that exhibited by the SDSU students’ elicits. That can most likely be explained by the greater level of self-confidence felt by the more mature students at Kadir Has University in relation to those at San Diego State*
University, as well as by the fact that since the Kadir Has students are working professionals they feel more on a par with their professor than the SDSU and C.U. students felt with the prominent guest business person visiting their classes. Also, since the questions are much shorter and more direct due to the constraints of the environment in which they are asked, there is less opportunity to display excessive politeness. Finally, the difference in the nature of the presenter affected the tone of the exchanges. The presenters at SDSU and C.U. were prominent guests to the MBA classes, while the presenter at the K.H. class was their professor, who was getting paid by them to teach them.

### Use of Fillers

1. *like*

   There are two instances of *like* in the Kadir Has questions located in questions one and two. In question 1 it is being used to mark new important information (Underhill, 1988) ★ *if I should uh like uh couldn’t see the mail, the /?/ mail….* In question 2 the student seems to be using *like* to emphasize the term “franchise” (Fox Tree, 2007), ★ *if that’s a franchise, like a franchise then,…*. Bucking the trend of having the lowest numbers for the items analyzed, although Kadir Has U. students only used *like* twice, the data analysis from Columbia University shows it only being used once.

   a. *uh* and *um*

   b. *uh*

   Whereas there were four instances of the use of *uh* at SDSU, all used as discourse markers, and five instances at C.U., three used as discourse markers, and two as repair devices, also known as signals of disfluency, there are seven cases in the data from Kadir Has University. Of those seven it appears to me that five of them are used as discourse markers,
and the remaining two are used as repair devices. As we shall see, the first student to ask a question used five *uhs*. *Professor, does it mean that it, uh, off, as an offer, uh I I have a responsibility to ask, even if I should uh like uh couldn’t see the mail, the business mail, I have the responsibility, I should call and ask even if I, uh, didn’t see the mail?* The first two uses of *uh* in this question are classic examples of a signal that the speaker is searching for a word or phrase. In the first example the filler is followed by a short pause and then the partial word *off*, and then it appears that the speaker located a more grammatical way to express his thought and we hear *as an offer*. The second example of *uh* being used a signal of disfluency is in the first line of the question immediately following the phrase *as an offer*. Here the filler is followed by a short pause and then the student repeats the word *I*, repetition of words being a signal of disfluency. The third, fourth, and fifth uses of *uh* fit the criterion for discourse markers enunciated by Rendle-Short in 2004. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Rendle-Short, in her study of Information Technology seminars in Australia, found that the fillers *uh* and *um* were often “…found in quite specific, well-defined environments.….” She described the second place they are found when functioning as discourse markers as “…immediately following the orientation phrase at the beginning of a new section of talk” (p. 491). One can see that in question 1 from the Kadir Has data, the third and fourth *uhs* frame the discourse marker *like*, (Underhill, 1988), which is used to highlight the important information *couldn’t see the mail*. So I would argue that the student’s use of three fillers is meant to alert the listener to pay attention because critical information will shortly follow. This new information is located directly after the orientation or introductory part of the question. It is setting a condition, narrowing the scope of the question, thus serving to direct the professor’s attention to what the student would like him to address. The final *uh* is again
used to make salient the elicit’s significant point. Both questions 2 and 12 contain examples of *uh* being used as a discourse marker, in the same well-defined environment, i.e., directly following the introductory phrase, as we saw in question 1. *Also, does this mean that if that’s a franchise, like a franchise then, uh, CSIG would have liked to in /?/ ?* Here, the student is specifying which franchise, a vital piece of new information. In question 11 one can clearly note again the ordered location of *uh*, right after the introductory or orientation phrase of the elicit and immediately before the new, limiting piece of information. *Do you think because the guy was carrying explosives and uh, he could have just headed to the train with explosives?*

My analysis of the questions posed by the Kadir Has University E-MBA students shows usage of *uh* as a discourse marker 71% of the time. At Columbia the figure was 60% and at SDSU 75%. In a comparison of the use of *uh* as a repair device between the students at Columbia and those at Kadir Has, it was found that fillers were used less frequently in non-native speech. This can be another manifestation of greater maturity and professional experience resulting in clearer articulation of one’s thoughts. However, in defense of the Columbia University MBA students, it should be noted that the two instances of *uh* being used as a repair device were made by the same student in one question.

It is possible that the data results could be skewed due to the fact that there were no instances of *um* in the Turkish students’ questions, and *um* was used often by the American students as a discourse marker: 92% of the time at Columbia University and 91% of the time at San Diego State University. As noted previously in Chapters 3 and 4, the combined use of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers by the SDSU students was 83%, compared with 76% at C.U.
Presence of a Communication Breakdown

There are no examples of miscommunication due to the style of student questions.

Note

It is instructive to compare the questions asked by the native Turkish speaking students in the Fordham University/Kadir Has University Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma program with that asked by a native Turkish speaking student in the Columbia University MBA program. St. Eh, ★ I am from Turkey and I know the parent company involved. So I my question is related to eh /?/ pricing also. Eh, (1) how much of your strategy going to, a more to an accessible price point is impacted by the parent company’s being more of a [yeah] a [it’s a good question] class retailer [yep] at niche [yep] market player and (2) how, eh, how independent you feel in terms of your setting your strategy [yes] and, (3) [yep] building your own business? (70 words)

Presence of a Metastatement

This young lady’s question contains a metastatement; none of the Fordham/Kadir Has E-MBA students’ questions did.

Number of Words in Each Question/Exchange Initiation

This student’s elicit contained 70 words, much longer than the average 17.2 words at Kadir Has. This difference is most likely caused by the difference in the settings: Columbia’s being a Q. & A. after a guest presentation, Kadir Has’s being an intensive one week-end per month class. The length of her question also greatly exceeded the average length of those asked at SDSU: 38.6, and at C.U.: 39.4 words per sentence.
Reformulations
There are three reformulations within this elicit. That is not wholly out of line with the number of reformulations exhibited by the Kadir Has students. The reformulations in this C.U. MBA student’s question seem to be trying to determine how constrained the presenter is by the parent company in setting what he sees as a good retail strategy. This is interesting considering that the student’s family may possibly own the parent company.

Presence of Grounding
This native Turkish speaking student’s question to a guest presenter at Columbia University in Spring, 2010 contains an example of the displaying reason type of grounding in distinction to the exclusive use of the hypothetical type by the native Turkish speaking students in the Fordham/Kadir Has E-MBA program. As in the difference in the number of words in these two groups of native Turkish speaking students, the reason for this variance is most likely explained by the unique environments in which the elicits were asked.

Use of Fillers
_Uh, or um_, is not used in this question; however, _eh_ is used four times in those specific, well-defined environments, discussed previously, that indicate it is being used as a discourse marker. The Kadir Has students’ use of _uh_ as a discourse marker was very high: 71% of the time. It appears that the propensity to use _uh_ and _eh_ as discourse markers is prevalent in the speech of native Turkish speaking students.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY
This comparative study investigated discourse patterns in Master of Business Administration (MBA) classrooms in the United States (U.S.) and Turkey to test the hypothesis that U.S. graduate students’ discourse is direct and succinct, i.e., similar to the Turkish students (NNSs) at Bilkent University described by Helen Basturkmen in her 1998 study, and that it will not cause any conversation breakdowns as Basturkmen asserted that “…particularly short, abrupt turns at exchange initiation often led to interactional difficulties” (p. 84).

The first question to be investigated consisted of two parts. The first part is concerned with the degree of similarity between the two groups of U.S. MBA students’ style of questioning a guest lecturer. Major findings were that the private, East coast Columbia University (CU) MBA students’ questions were less embellished, more succinct and direct than those of the public, West coast San Diego State University (SDSU) MBA students’ questions. MBA students at San Diego State University prefaced elicits with metastatements more often than the Columbia University MBA students. This suggests that the East coast students are more straightforward in their questioning than the West coast students. Analysis of reformulations revealed that more of the questions asked at SDSU featured these than those of the CU students; this is in line with the trend towards a more efficient style of speech by the students at Columbia University in New York, New York, the business capital of the world. The use of fillers shows differences in patterns of usage by the students on the
opposite coasts. In contradistinction to the omnipresence of “like” in the SDSU students’ questions (ten instances), it was only used once as a particle in the questions asked by the C.U. students. In a similar vein, *uh* was used as a discourse marker by the San Diego University MBA students more often than the Columbia University MBA students. The combined usage of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers was slightly higher at SDSU than at Columbia.

The comparison of discourse features between SDSU MBA students and CU MBA students found four instances of convergence. The average words per question by SDSU students and CU students were nearly the same as was their use of *um* as a discourse marker. The percentage of use of grounding and type of grounding by SDSU students and CU students was identical. The tone of the elicits asked by all of the MBA students at SDSU and CU was respectful; there were even instances of students using softening phrases, as well as compliments, and in one case an apology for asking a question that placed the guest speaker in an awkward position.

There was one example of a communication breakdown at SDSU during which the guest speaker asked for clarification of the meaning of a student’s question. There were not any examples of a communication breakdown at CU.

The second part of the first research question sought to determine if there were any similarities and/or differences between the American native English speaking MBA students’ elicits and those of the native Turkish speaking E-MBA students. The major finding of the analysis comparing the two groups of students’ elicits yielded the result that the students in The Global Executive MBA Dual Diploma program offered by Fordham University (FU), New York, N.Y. and Kadir Has University (KHU), Istanbul, Turkey, shows that their elicits
were even less embellished, more succinct and direct than the MBA students at Columbia University.

Their use of metastatments, reformulations, and grounding was much less than that of the students at SDSU and Columbia. Regarding the reformulations it should be noted that the FU/KHU E-MBA students all used the hypothetical form, which exemplifies the third level of intellectual behavior: application, according to Bloom's taxonomy of levels of intellectual behavior in learning (Overbaugh & Schultz, n.d.). In contrast the SDSU and CU students only used the hypothetical type of grounding in one out of seven cases.

I believe that part of the differential in the results for use of metastatments, reformulations, and grounding can be explained by the dissimilar classroom formats in which the questions were taped. The questions analyzed from the two American MBA programs were taped during question and answer sessions following a guest presentation, while the questions analyzed from the Kadir Has students were taped during classes for a course taught over the course of a long weekend. The dense, compressed nature of the lectures did not provide an atmosphere conducive to lengthy and complex elicits; the students tried to absorb as much information from the Fordham University professor as possible in the limited time they had, and thus only asked questions to clarify points made by him.

Evidence that culture was not a highly significant factor in the concise, focused questions asked by the FU/KHU students is suggested by a comparison of the question asked by a native Turkish speaking student in the Columbia University MBA program with those asked by the students at Kadir Has University. In the more relaxed environment of the question and answer session following a guest speaker, the Turkish student’s elicit, as described in the previous chapter, is long and complex.
An additional factor may have played a part in the differences in the elicits spoken by the KHU students and the SDSU and CU students: variant graduate business programs. American students are enrolled in MBA programs whereas the Turkish students are enrolled in an E-MBA program, which usually signifies older students who are working full-time and have more years of business experience in comparison to MBA students.

The respectful tone of the Turkish students’ questions mirrored that of the SDSU and CU students. There were two instances of the use of the filler *like*, similar to one instance at Columbia. I found it quite surprising that it was used at all; its appearance in the Turkish elicits is testament to the power of globalization. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, the relatively high usage of the filler *uh* as a discourse marker, in comparison to CU’s 60%, may be deceiving. It is possible that the data results could be skewed due to the fact that there were no instances of *um* in the Turkish students’ questions, and *um* was used often by the American students as a discourse marker: 92% of the time at Columbia University and 91% of the time at San Diego State University. As noted previously in Chapters 3 and 4, the combined use of *uh* and *um* as discourse markers by the SDSU students was 83%, compared with 76% at C.U. Therefore, a true reading of the data would compare the 83%, and 76% with the Turkish students’ use of fillers at 71%, thus confirming their overall position as registering the lowest numbers for all of the analyses. Again, like the students at CU, there were no instances of a communication breakdown between the professor and the students. Please see Table 2 for a breakdown of the data from all three institutions.

The second research question addressed in this study concerns the nature of the elicits asked by the native American English speaking MBA students in respect to those of the British MBA students studied by Basturkmen in 1998. Analysis of the two groups of MBA
Table 2. Comparison of Elicits at San Diego State University (SDSU), Columbia University (CU), and Fordham University/Kadir Has University (FU/KHU) in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SDSU</th>
<th>CU</th>
<th>FU/KHU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metastatements</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Words/Q.</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformulations</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Reason</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Hypothetical</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Like</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Discourse Marker)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) <em>Uh</em></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Discourse Marker)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) <em>Um</em></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Discourse Marker)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Breakdown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

students found that the British students employed metastatements in their elicits less than the Americans: 33⅓% versus 41% at Columbia and 70% at SDSU. In all other measures, the British students in the 1998 study registered higher numbers than the American students in 2010. Their questions were longer, averaging 41.8 words each, their use of reformulations
was greater at 47%, and their use of grounding, providing background information to their
elicits, was very high at 73%.

The second major finding concerning the differences between the American students
and the British ones was that the American students’ questions were always polite and
respectful, sometimes complimented the guest speaker, and were sensitive to the possibility
that their questions could cause the presenter to “lose face”. For example, the last part of the
following question asked by a student at SDSU provides an out for the guest if he is not
prepared to elaborate on his previous remarks concerning this topic. *Could you tell us really
a little bit more about how as an agency, you like tried to prove or show to clients how you
helped their business grow? I know like marketing is hard to measure.* These qualities,
exhibited in the questions asked by the American graduate students in California and New
York have also been found to be representative of Americans in general. The results of
several studies have challenged the common perceptions of Americans as blunt, direct and
insensitive. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) noted that

…cross-cultural studies on Japanese and Americans (Beebe and Takahashi 1989a
b, Takahashi and Beebe 1993) on various speech acts (correction, disagreement,
giving embarrassing information and chastisement) showed that in comparison to
the Japanese, Americans were more indirect and more polite (p. 3).

The 1996 paper, *Discourse of Power and Politeness Through the Act of
Disagreement*, documented Americans’ use of softening devices, such as an initial
“…positive remark alongside their disagreement/criticism….by 64% of higher status and
50% of lower status Americans” in order to “…sav[e] the face of the other” (Dogancay-
Aktuna & Kamisli, 1996, p. 13). These assistant professors of Applied Linguistics at
Bogazici University in Turkey drew attention to Beebe and Takahashi’s study to highlight
the need for more empirical studies on speech acts situated within “…sociocultural
contexts….” (p. 3) as a way of dispelling faulty characterizations of how language is used in diverse societies and thus providing valuable information to improve EAP courses focusing on oral communication (Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli, 1996).

The tone of the SDSU student’s question, shown above, is diametrically opposed to that of the questions asked by the British students in the 1998 Basturkmen study, in particular the one in Extract 6, which begins not with a positive remark, but excoriates the guest presenter with a remark that ridicules him. *Were you not reinventing the wheel*…(Basturkmen, 1998, p. 87).

The final major finding of the comparison between the American students’ questions and those of the British students in Basturkmen’s 1998 study is that out of thirty-four questions asked by the American MBA students there was only one that caused a communication breakdown with the American guest presenter. Yet, there were four instances out of fifteen questions asked by the British MBA students, as reported by Basturkmen, of communication breakdowns with the British guest presenter. This is noteworthy because the American students’ questions were shorter, used less reformulations, and less grounding than the British students, which, according to Basturkmen (1998), should have caused conversation breakdowns. See Table 3 for a graphic representation of the data.

The third point that was researched was whether the native Turkish speaking E-MBA students in the present study differ from those of the Turkish MBA students studied by Basturkmen in 1998. The data shows that in two of the points of analysis, the elicits of the Turkish students in the 1998 study were more similar to the British students in the same study than to the Turkish students in the present 2010 study. These are: (1) the use of metastatements matched at 33⅓%, versus 0 usage by the Fordham University/Kadir Has
Table 3. Comparison of Elicits at San Diego State University (SDSU), Columbia University (CU), in 2010, and Aston University in the UK in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SDSU</th>
<th>CU</th>
<th>Aston Univ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metastatements</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33⅓%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Words/Q.</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformulations</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Reason</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Hypothetical</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Breakdown</td>
<td>1/17 questions (6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4/15 questions (26%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University students; and (2) the number of words per question were close: 41.8 for the British and 35.8 for the Turks versus 17.2% for the FU/KHU students. But three points of analysis revealed parallelism between the Turkish MBA students at Bilkent University in the 1998 study and the Turkish E-MBA students at Kadir Has University in 2010. The three points are: (1) the use of reformulations was very close: 17% by the students in the 1998 study and 20% by the students in the 2010 study versus 47% by the British students; (2) the use of grounding in questions was also similar: 17% in 1998 and 26% in 2010 versus 73% by the British students; and finally (3) the tone of the questions by the Turkish students in 1998 and 2010 were equally polite and professional in distinction to those of the British students which were not.

There were no communication breakdowns between the Turkish E-MBA students at Kadir Has University and their American professor. Helen Basturkmen reported in her 1998
study that six out of the twelve questions asked by the Turkish MBA students at Bilkent University caused conversation breakdowns due to their impoverished style. However, I cannot find any evidence in her paper to support such an assertion. Please see this data displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of Elicits by Turkish Students at Bilkent University in 1998 and by Turkish students at Kadir Has University in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilkent U.</th>
<th>Kadir Has U.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metastatements</td>
<td>33½%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Words/Q.</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformulations</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Reason</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Hypothetical</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Breakdown</td>
<td>50% (?) (reported by Basturkmen)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was mentioned earlier, the likely explanation for the paucity of words in the Kadir Has University students’ questions contrasted with the other study participants’ questions is the differing settings in which they were asked: a weekend full of lectures in an E-MBA program versus the more relaxed setting of a Q. & A. session following a guest presentation to an MBA class. However, since the two groups of Turkish students (the MBA students from Bilkent University in 1998 in a Q. & A. session, and the 2010 E-MBA students from the Fordham University/Kadir Has University program in a regular classroom setting) had
the lowest and second lowest number of words per question of all the participant groups it is possible that culture was a contributing factor to their scores. The views expressed by Cem in Tatar’s exploration of the differences between U.S. and Turkish academic cultures as perceived by the Turkish graduate students studying in America seem to me to be pertinent to these two situations in English medium programs at Turkish universities.

All participants shared general rules for oral classroom participation that valued silence over talk, as in Cem’s statement, “Maybe it is something that originates from our own culture. Listening is better than speaking; I mean we are listening-oriented people, not speaking” (Interview 2, October 4, 2002). These rules were (a) talking when you are knowledgeable enough, (b) talking too much could mean showing off, and (c) being selective about what to share (Tatar, 2005, p. 343).

Cem’s statement puts the starkly different societal and academic cultural values between America and Turkey in sharp relief: silence versus talk. Considering the conditioning effect that growing up in a society that values silence must have on a student, it is astonishing that the number of words per question by Bilkent University students was so high at 35.8.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the lack of metastatement use by the students at Kadir Has University may indicate a connection between them and years of business experience. One can trace this connection by examining the percent of metastatements by MBA program: San Diego State University: 70%, Columbia University: 41%, and Kadir Has University: 0%.

It is possible that the low Turkish student rates of using grounding and reformulations in asking questions could be due to cultural influences. A finding by Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli, reported in their March 1996 paper, which, in part, “…compare[ed] and contrast[ed] the discourse strategies used by native speakers of Turkish and American English in the same speech event…” (Abstract), provides a possible explanation. They found that “the higher and the lower status Turks were direct and blunt while stating their disapproval of the plan” (Doganacay-Aktuna & Kamisli, 1996, p. 8). That directness and bluntness, in other words,
getting to the heart of the matter without beating around the bush, corresponds perfectly to sparse questions, devoid of extraneous material, such as reformulations and grounding.

I believe that another influence on the style of Turkish discourse can be traced to Ataturk’s desire to create a modern Turkish nation that espoused scientific principles. That entails following an orderly, rational thought process in order to produce something of practical use. To me, that implies a focused, stripped-down approach to life, totally at odds with Basukturkmen’s vision for oral academic exchanges.

Finally, it should be noted that at no time did the lack of metastatements, low word count, slight use of reformulations and grounding by the Kadir Has MBA students lead to “…interactional difficulties….” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 84) between them and their American native English speaking professor, nor “…undermine their contributions to academic discussion….” (Basturkmen, 1998, p. 88) And as discussed in the Introduction, it does not appear that the discourse of the Bilkent University students in Basturkmen’s 1998 study caused any conversation breakdowns. Indeed, the clarity, brevity, directness, and politeness characteristic of the Turkish students’ questions in 1998 and 2010, which embody Grice’s Co-operative Principle, are exactly how business professionals communicate.

**IMPLICATIONS**

There are several implications of these findings. One, rigorous scientific standards need to be adhered to in collecting data, analyzing it, and presenting it. Two, awareness of how listening to non-native speakers may trigger attitudes that could affect the objectivity of researchers should be imparted to them at the onset of research. Pertinent to this is Gail Robinson’s (1987) book chapter, “Culturally Diverse Speech Styles” as well as Sally

Teaching of English for Academic Purposes can benefit from this research in preparing course materials for second and foreign language learners. ESL/EFL students entering an American MBA program will profit from listening to the audio of the Q. & A. sessions, as well as the audio of the series of classroom lectures, by learning what really goes on in MBA classes, what are the cultural norms for oral participation in American MBA classrooms, and what they will be expected to be able to do in terms of class participation. In addition, the detailed analysis of academic speech events in graduate business seminars spanning three continents and three distinct cultures will be a rich source of information for scholars in this small but increasingly important field.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The applicability of this study is limited due to the slightly unequal nature of the Turkish student participants in the study. The Turkish students were enrolled in an Executive MBA program whereas the American students were enrolled in MBA programs. Furthermore, the taped sessions for the American students were of Q. & A. sessions following a presentation by a prominent local businessperson while the taped sessions of the Turkish students were of multiple classes for a course that were held over a long weekend. It would be valuable to be able to tape MBA classes in Turkey and compare them to the Turkish MBA students at Bilkent University in the 1998 Basturkmen study as was my original intention. It would also be interesting to investigate oral participation in many more countries and do comparative analyses between and among them as well as compare them to
the tapes of MBA classes at Columbia University and San Diego State University in the United States of America.

Research is needed into whether EAP courses and MBA programs have internalized the recent clarion calls for an increased emphasis to be placed on preparing students to be able to communicate articulately in the language of their profession, which stresses the need for clarity, brevity, directness and politeness. Investigations into the nascent field of BELF could prove fruitful in increasing our understanding of how the English language as the lingua franca of business and technology is evolving as it spreads along global pathways.
ENDNOTES

1 The use of the expression, “not to be cheeky”, by an American struck me as strangely anomalous since I associate the word “cheeky” with British English.

²A note about how the quantitative calculation was performed: um, uh, and eh were not tallied as words. A word that could not be heard clearly enough to transcribe, and that is coded as /?/, was counted as one word; words uttered at the end of a question that were talked over by the presenter starting to respond, were counted as two words.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED


WORKS CONSULTED


APPENDIX

E-MAIL EXCHANGE BETWEEN M. DE LORME SOLLITTO AND A BILKENT UNIVERSITY MBA PROFESSOR ON NOVEMBER 19, 2010
Question (1) Do you find that the Turkish MBA students have difficulty articulating their questions in a manner that allows them to be understandable to you?

Answer: Absolutely not. Their command of English is on par with mine (LOL).

Question (2) Do you find that they fail to give necessary, supporting information for their questions?

Answer: That is common to MBA’s that I teach on 4 continents because of mediocre-at-best management and teaching. I train my MBA to analyze case studies, write and speak professionally.

Question (3) Do you find their questions too short and direct?

Answer: Not any more so than MBA’s anywhere in the world.