THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTAIN PROSODIC FEATURES IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE TEACHER IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of the meaning and function of certain prosodic features used by teachers when interacting with students in the process of completing learning tasks. The results were obtained in a research study carried out in four classrooms of English as a foreign language (EFL), two each from Primary and two Secondary schools, where discourse generated in the teacher-student interaction was recorded and transcribed. The paper begins with some references to the literature on teacher's elicitations in classroom discourse. The research methodology is then described and the results are analysed and illustrated with extracts from the transcription. Four main types of elicitations have been identified where intonation seems to play an important role: Display or reference elicitations, clarification requests, comprehension checks and confirmation checks. Finally, conclusions drawn from the study are discussed.

RESUMEN

Este artículo proporciona un análisis del significado y función de ciertos rasgos prosódicos utilizados por profesores al interaccionar con alumnos mientras realizan tareas de aprendizaje. Los resultados proceden de un estudio llevado a cabo en cuatro aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera, dos de Educación Primaria y dos de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, en el que se grabó y transcribió el discurso generado en la interacción didáctica profesor-alumnos. En primer lugar, se hace referencia a bibliografía sobre preguntas del profesor en el discurso didáctico. A continuación, se describe el método seguido en la

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investigación y se analizan los resultados que se ilustran con extractos de la transcripción. Se han identificado cuatro tipos fundamentales de preguntas en las que la entonación parece jugar un papel importante: Preguntas de exhibición o referenciales, peticiones de aclaración, comprobaciones de la comprensión y peticiones de confirmación. Finalmente, se comentan las conclusiones derivadas del estudio.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette article nous rapporte une analyse du sens et de la fonction de certains traits prosodiques dont se sont servis les professeurs au moment de l'interaction avec des élèves pendant qu'ils réalisent des travaux d'apprentissage. Les résultats proviennent d'un étude mené à bien dans quatre cours d'anglais comme langue étrangère, deux en École Primaire et deux en Sécondaire Obligatoire, où on a enregistré et transcrit le discours entraîné de l'interaction didactique professeur-élèves. D'abord, on fait allusion à la bibliographie sur des questions du professeur dans le discour didactique. Ensuite, on décrit la méthode suivie pendant la recherche et on analyse les résultats qu'on montre avec des extraits de la transcription. On a identifié quatre types fondamentales de questions où l'intonation semble jouer un rôle important: Des questions d'exhibition ou de référence, demandes d'éclarcissement, constatations de la compréhension et demandes de confirmation. Finalement, on discute sur les conclusions qui se dérivent de l'étude.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the meaning and function of certain prosodic features used by teachers when interacting with students in the process of completing learning tasks. The study was carried out with four teachers of English as a foreign language –two primary and two secondary school teachers– in Spanish school settings.

Most of the interaction that takes place in the classroom is face-to-face conversation in which the interactants are constantly receiving clues from each other trying to negotiate meanings through turn-taking and the interpretation of non-verbal language. Taking that as a basis, it can be said that this study connects with the broad field of discourse analysis and, in particular, conversation analysis. Our focus will be on teacher-student interaction and, more precisely, on prosodic features embedded in the discourse generated by teachers when eliciting some sort of response from the students in classroom exchanges.

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The research data consist of audio recordings of teachers' lessons which have been transcribed, coded and enriched with further information collected through classroom observation. The main didactic functions identified in the use of prosodic features will be described and illustrated with extracts from the transcription. Special attention will be paid to the possibility of transferring the conclusions to every day teaching situations with the aim of providing teachers with suggestions that may help them to be aware of the fact that the use of certain prosodic features facilitate the process of meaning construction.

1. TEACHERS' ELICITATIONS IN DISCOURSE

The term *elicitation* is used in this study to refer to what other authors identify as *question*. Following Tsui's (1992, p. 2) reflections on these terms, it is clear that an analysis of the studies on *questions* shows that the term has been used as a semantic category sometimes, as an illocutionary act, and as a type of *request* or directive:

> "Sometimes an utterance is identified as a 'question' because it is interrogative in form and sometimes because it expects an answer or some verbal performance from the adressee. In other words, the term 'question' is sometimes taken as a syntactic category and sometimes a discourse category; as a result, the term remains vague and ill-defined".

The term *elicitation* was first introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, p. 28) to describe utterances in the classroom which elicit verbal response:

> "An elicitation is an act the function of which is to request a linguistic response –linguistic, although the response may be a non-verbal surrogate such as nod or raised hand–".

For research purposes, we have also identified and classified any utterance that demands a verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate as an *elicitation* in order to avoid problems in using syntactic criteria for some utterances and discourse criteria for others. The categories analysed here are among the subcategories of elicitation considered by Tsui: inform, confirm, agree, commit, repeat and clarify.

The focus of attention in this study is placed on the structure of participation when the teacher and students are engaged in task performance, i.e. the participants' rights and obligations, who can say something, when it should be said and who is the addressee, in the

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context of the classroom. Research carried out by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), and Mehan (1979) is relevant to set the frame as they identify a three-part sequence consisting of the initiation on the part of the teacher, the student's answer and the evaluation made by the teacher[1].

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, p. 6), after considering that human communication is complex, decided to investigate classroom discourse because it is generated in a clearly marked and closed social system in which talk usually follows institutionalized patterns and, thus, the structure can be easily identified:

> "With these and many other problems inherent in conversation we decided it would be more productive to begin again with a more simple type of spoken discourse, one which has much more overt structure, where one participant has acknowledged responsability for the direction of the discourse, for deciding who shall speak when, and for introducing and ending topics. We also wanted a situation where all participants were genuinely trying to communicate, and where potentially ambiguous utterances were likely to have one accepted meaning. We found the kind of situation we wanted in the classroom".

The description they make of classroom discourse is organized around *lessons*, made up of *transactions* which, in turn, include a series of *exchanges* that can be split into *moves* made of *acts*. A *transaction* is a piece of discourse whose beginning and ending are clearly defined by discourse markers. An *exchange* is made up of a sequence of inter-coherent *moves*. Examples of exchanges are the sequences **question-answer**, **elicitation-response**, or **initiation-response-feedback (reaction)** in the classroom. Mehan (1979) uses the terms **initiation-reply-evaluation**[2] to define the same sequence. Finally, a *move* is made of *acts*. An **initiation** *move* in the classroom might include acts such as addressing an individual student to ask him/her a question, while the **response** provided by the student might include acts such as showing hesitation or expressing an opinion, to which the teacher **reacts** by means of a statement or an utterance expressing agreement.

A special contribution made by Sinclair and Coulthard, as linguists interested in speech act theory, is the discussion about the relationship between form and function, i.e. how certain words or sentences have concrete interpretation in the classroom because of the participants' rights

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[1] The initials IRE are used to refer to the sequence *Initiation-Response-Evaluation*.

[2] Mehan (1979) uses the term *Reply* instead of *Response*.

and obligations. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Mehan (1979) have shown evidence that classroom discourse incorporates features such as giving directives, providing information and eliciting information. While providing information does not demand a particular verbal or non-verbal response, directives and elicitations do require the listener to produce some type of act, be it verbal or non-verbal. According to Mehan (1979, pp. 183-184), directives and elicitations differ in terms of the subsequent action that they demand:

> "Elicitations exchange academic information, both verbally and non verbally. Directives are requests for procedural actions such as sharpening pencils or arranging chairs".

Classroom discourse aimed at providing information and directions usually comes at the beginning and ending of the lesson, while discourse aimed at eliciting information usually appears at the instructional stage. Normally, each elicitation act constitutes a sequence made up of *initiation-response-evaluation*, where teacher-student-teacher seem to participate in that determined order.

The act of eliciting is one of the most frequent in classroom discourse. Mehan splits it up into the following categories:

- *Choice*, when the addressee (student) must choose a piece of information among the alternatives provided or answer a yes/no question to show agreement/disagreement.
- *Product*, when the person to respond must provide a factual answer.
- *Process*, when the listener is asked to give his/her opinion or interpret something.
- *Metaprocess*, when students are asked to reflect on the process they have followed to make links between elicitations and answers. In this type of elicitation, the students must express their reasoning process and provide the rule or procedure they have followed to give answers or recall them.

In *choice* elicitations (for example, questions with multiple choice answers), the answer is limited, while in **process** elicitations (opinion questions, factual questions to provide or show certain knowledge), the answer is open-ended as it is the case with *metaprocess* elicitations.

The following four remarks are relevant in Mehan's (1979, p. 75) study. Firstly, he presents the following model to describe the formal structure of a lesson:

Lesson ⇒ Opening Phase + Instructional Phase + Closing Phase Opening, Closing Phase ⇒ Directive + Informative Instructional Phase ⇒ TRS + TRS
TRS ⇒ Basic + Conditional Sequence (or Interactional Sequence) Instructional Sequence ⇒ Initiation + Reply + Evaluation

While the structure of a lesson belongs to the field of teachers' professional competence, students usually understand shorter episodes more easily, i.e. fragments from the lesson. Secondly, Mehan provides data on how frequently his discursive corpus, taken from nine lessons, fits the previous model and makes comments on the discourse generated in the class that does not fit the model. Thirdly, he adds non-verbal data from a wider unit that he calls TRS[3], in which the IRE sequences, described above in this section, are organized. These data are a combination of kinesic, verbal and paralinguistic behaviours. Finally, Mehan makes a follow-up of observed changes in the students' participation over time considering that the structure of participation is clearly defined for teachers since the very beginning, but it is not the case for students. This follow-up refers to the progression observed and the ways students try to respond to the teacher's questions more adequately. That way, students learn to talk within the described structure, guided by the meaning of signals sent by the teacher such as body language or intonation.

Despite the paucity of studies on the role of prosodic features in teachers' discourse (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Hewings, 1992, etc.) the present study will attempt to shed light on the meaning of these features as they occur in IRE sequences.

2. METHODOLOGY

The results presented in this paper are part of a broader investigation of the functions of teachers' discourse in EFL classrooms (Salaberri, 1999). The study was carried out with four teachers –two primary school teachers and two secondary school teachers– in authentic classroom situations. Twelve teaching sessions of one hour each were audio-recorded and then transcribed in order to analyse features such as types of ques-

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[3] This abbreviation stands for *Topically Related Set*.

tions, repetition, expansion, etc. Prosodic features were analysed from a qualitative perspective.

Given that intonation helps to interpret the pragmatic function of discourse utterances, a coding system has been used to mark sentence-final rising intonation, falling intonation that shows continuity, sentence-final falling intonation and marked prominence through tone or emphasis:

– Sentence-final rising intonation (not a question necessarily)	?
– Continuing intonation	,
– Sentence-final falling intonation	.
– Marked prominence through tone or width	(emphasis)
– Strong emphasis with falling intonation	!
– PROminent SYLLables	capitals

Other codes used in the transcription and helpful for the interpretation of exchanges are the following:

– Unidentified learner	L
– Identified learner	L1/L2...
– Learners	LL
– Teacher	T
– Class	C
– A turn that continues	=
– Seconds for pauses	(0.5)
– Comments from observer	(( ))
– Wrong pronunciationof the next word	(w.p.)

3. RESULTS

The results will be analysed in the light of the function of intonation in exchanges between teachers and students following the basic pattern teacher-student-teacher. Three types of elicitations have been identified where intonation seems to play an important role:

• Display or reference elicitations.
• Clarification requests.
• Comprehension checks.
• Confirmation checks.

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3.1. Display or reference elicitations

A significant number of teachers' utterances in the classroom are elicitations to invite the addressee to supply display information (already known by the teacher) or reference information (not known by the teacher). Once the addressee responds, teachers tend to provide feedback through evaluation of the students' responses. These exchanges frequently follow one of the following alternatives:

a) The teacher provides negative feedback, i.e. rejects the response.
b) The teacher provides positive feedback, i.e. accepts the response.
c) The teacher does not provide immediate feedback although s/he usually provides delayed feedback.

In this study, the students' responses have been classified into *correct* and *incorrect* according to the evaluation made by the teachers. In all cases, more correct answers than incorrect answers were provided by students.

a) In those cases where students provided incorrect answers, teachers *rejected them in some way* and reacted by doing one of the following:

1. Initiating another information exchange with either the same student or a different one. In this case, intonation is one of the features defining the teachers' expectations: falling intonation to address the student who has failed and rising intonation to start a new exchange with another student.
2. Asking a new question to the same student together with partial or total repetition + a rising intonation pattern seems to be the ideal formula to elicit successful responses from the students, as this combination of features signals to the student which element needs to be corrected.

> T: Vamos a ver on Saturday. A ver, e:r L16, what e:r is he doing on Saturday?
> L16: She is free.
> T: SHE?
> L16: He is free.
> T: He, he. Excellent! También puedo. Puedo elegir entre el martes y el sábado, por ahora. Bueno, what is Helen doing... on Tuesday?

(Appendix I-10, p. 588)

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In the extract above, the teacher partially repeats with rising intonation what the student has just uttered. This acts as a convention shared by the class and is interpreted as a need to replace the element that has been marked through intonation. In other terms, it is a signal for the student to pay attention to the marked element and not the ones placed before or after.

In contrast with the example above, other types of intonation encourage other types of responses on the part of the students. In the following extract, the teacher also partially repeats what the student has just uttered but, in this case, with neutral intonation:

L: Go to the home, go to the home.
T: Go, go, go to the home? GO...
L: [Home.
T: [Home, go home. O go back home, L4, you want to... go back home.

(Appendix I-9, p. 555)

The student understands that s/he must complete the sentence incorporating the adequate change. In this case, the focus of attention is placed on the sequence that follows the marked element.

It has been observed that, quite frequently, the teacher corrects the student directly using a rising tone which shows acceptance of the answer or acceptance of the fact that it was a mistake rather than a systematic error:

L5:   She's got blue, blue eyes and she's got a princess.
T: SHE IS a princess... OK. Más. He needs no more, no? Who is she? This is very difficult. L5.

(Appendix I-6, p. 512)

We can conclude that by using certain intonational patterns, the teacher is attempting to make the student aware of his/her own errors and to have the student correct them autonomously. These intonational patterns include the following:

• A rising tone on the incorrect word encourages the student's self-correction.
• A neutral tone lets the student think about possible errors and signals the part of the sentence where the incorrect element is placed.
• On the other hand, a rising tone signals a word that has been corrected by the teacher himself.

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b) The teacher uses falling intonation when *providing positive feedback* on the student's response:

T: What colour is the British flag? Come on!
L: Red =
T: Red.
L: = White and blue.
T: OK, GOOD! And, the second part of the answer, please? What... what number?

(Appendix I-1, p. 443)

In certain occasions, the acceptance of the response with falling intonation followed by a repetition of what the student has just uttered shows that the answer is acceptable but it could be improved:

L2:   But that's good. It's... very... (w.p.) exciting.
T: ExCIting. Wait a moment. Luego lo repetís si queréis. Cuando dice yes, but, that is ex, CI, ting ((teacher beating to mark syllabic rhythm)), no hay ningún problema de pronunciación, pero ¿Cómo lo decís? ((marked intonation with emphasis on the next utterance)) ¡Eso es lo bueno! ¿Cómo lo diríais?
LL: Yes! But that's...
T: ((intonation with high emphasis on the next utterance)) But that's exciting!...Can you repeat that, please? [Yes...
LL: [Yes! But that's exciting!
T: Exacto

(Appendix I-7, p. 526)

The teacher accepts the response initially with falling intonation. After observing that the student uttered a broken sentence, the teacher begins a pronunciation drill to address the issue of fluency. The student has incorrectly pronounced the word *exciting*, but the teacher insists that the problem is not at the segmental level, but at the prosodic level: stress, rhythm and intonation.

c) In the transcriptions, samples have been found of situations where the teacher repeats the student's response with a neutral tone and *without any special feedback*. This acts as a signal of acceptance while the teacher goes on to linking words that help the students to provide a sequence of information:

T: = And Britain, all right. E:r, can you name five parts of the body? (.02) Five parts of the body, L8?
L8:   Head, foot, hand a:nd, five?

T:	Yes, five.
L8:	(w.p.)Shoulder.
T:	SHOULDer... [SHOULDer...
L8	[Shoulder a:nd =
T:	[Stomach?
L8:	= [(w.p.)Stomach.
T:	STOmach... right. OK? Now, can you say the months of the year? (.03) *(emphasis)* Ohhhh! All together no, please, only one! The months of the year. Do you remember the song? ((The teacher starts singing a song)) Yes? The months of the year, L9.

(Appendix I-5, pp. 437-438)

3.2. Clarification requests

Teachers also modify form and content of their elecitations to make them more comprehensible to their students. This can be done through *comprehension checks, clarification requests* and *confirmation checks*[4]. The origin of the use of these terms can be found in Kearsley's (1976) analysis of questions in spoken discourse. He ellaborates a taxonomy of question functions, including *echoic* questions, which demand the repetition of an utterance or the confirmation that the intention and meaning of an utterance has been correctly interpreted. Later on, Long and Sato (1983, p. 275) split this category into the three types mentioned above:

> "A subdivision of Kearsley's category, *echoic*, into *comprehension checks, clarification requests*, and *confirmation checks* allowed distinctions to be made among acts whose function reflects (among other things) the direction of information-flow in preceding utterances and, indirectly, the degree to which conversation is negotiated through the modification of its interactional structure".

Clarification requests are used to ask the addressee to clarify what s/he has just expressed. This is usually done through yes/no questions, wh- questions, non-inverted questions with rising intonation and tag questions. Occassionally, certain forms other than questions are used for the same purpose, such as I don't understand or Try again.

In our study, teachers made use of various strategies to perform clarification requests. Sometimes, they employed expressions that directly

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[4] These are terms used by Long and Sato (1983).

demand repetition such as: Sorry? Can you repeat?, with a great many switches to L1: ¿Qué quieres decir? ¿Qué has dicho? ¿Cómo has dicho? ¿Ha dicho John? ¿Cómo?, or combinations of L1 and the foreign language: ¿Yes qué? ¿Has dicho he? ¿John qué? Other frequently used strategies include repetition with rising intonation on the element placed just before the word or words not understood and repetition with rising intonation on the utterance expressed by the student. Teachers tend to use the repetition of elements with rising intonation in order to ask students for clarification.

The following extract shows a clarification request made by the teacher through repetition with rising intonation of the word placed before the misunderstood item so that the student repeats it again.

> L2:   I didn't think so, think so. But it was very (w.p.) violent.
> T: Very... Was VEry?
> LL: Violent.
> T: Violent. Yeah!

(Appendix I-7, pp. 525-526)

It would be difficult to say from the previous exchange whether the teacher has misheard the word or identified an error while choosing to confirm it before adopting any type of action.

3.3.   Comprehension checks

Comprehension checks are used to establish whether a speaker's utterance has been understood by the listener or not. They usually take the form of tag questions, or the partial or total repetition of the speaker's utterance with rising intonation or questions such as *Do you understand?* which explicitely check whether the listener has understood.

In the present study, teachers tended to avoid the use of tag questions and, instead, the simply use *yes/ no* with rising intonation:

> T: = One, so you move only one square, yes? Yes. You put your counter in one, YES? Now, my pair, L13, throw your dice. *(emphasis)* ¡Jo:lines! Six. So, his counter... one, two, three, four, five and six. Can you name five colours?
> L13: Black, white, green... brown and pink.
> T: All right, he is good, NO? He is right. So, he goes on (.03) throwing the dice, no, to you, you, you throw the dice! (.06) Yes, pass. When you... you are in number six. When you guess (.07). When you arrive, when you arrive, you go on

> four squares. So, he said the five colours, and he is good, he is right. So, he counts, with his counter, with his blue counter, he says one, two, three and four, and he goes to number ten, YES? ¿Qué he dicho? (.02) A ver, L14.

(Appendix I-5, p. 500)

The teacher consistently avoids the use of tag question tags such as: *Don't you? Isn't he? Doesn't he?* in the previous extract and uses instead the words *yes/ no* with rising intonation. In this way, the teacher incorporates into the foreign language a form that is commonly used in L1.

3.4. Confirmation checks

Through confirmation checks both teachers and students check whether they correctly grasped the message sent by the interlocutor or not. They do this by repeating a word or sentence from the message with rising intonation. The teacher usually addresses particular students in the classroom for confirmation checks, those who have just expressed something. This is a good way to check to what extent the students are following the interactive exchange and providing coherent responses. Students seem to use this type of elicitation much more frequently than teachers.

Sometimes, confirmation checks constitute the first step for the teacher to correct the student's utterance or to encourage self-correction:

> T: She is free? Excellent! Very good. What about Friday? L5, what is Mary doing on Friday?
> L5: She is... restaurant.
> T: She is REStaurant?
> L: Going to. Going to the restaurant.

(Appendix I-10, pp. 585-586)

3.5. Other functions

a) It has been observed that the use of intonation signals what Sinclair and Brazil (1982, pp. 84-85) call a *sequence*:

> "Sequences, being optional, must be recognizable. Where a class has built up shared experience, the clues may be minimal, but the teacher is responsible for indicating what conversational patterns he wants to follow. And the creation of sequences increases the ability of students

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to predict what is going to happen, and to guess responses correctly. From the planning point of view this is the stage where the teacher will be planning, in terms of actual sentence patterns, how one form of initiation will provoke one form of response".

The use of rising intonation has been observed to signal a *side-sequence*[5] embedded in the main sequence:

> T: Carlos Sainz... and please, Sainz with capital letter, is dancing. Sabrina is singing. OK. Did you? (.05) What do you, ¿QUÉ quieres decir aquí? Did you...?
>
> L: Dress, [dress.
>
> T: [Dress. Dress... for. ¿Te vestiste? Para, ¿vale?... the Polivalente::: on Saturday? Polivalente's Spanish, so you write that. On Saturday?

(Appendix I-9, p. 551)

In the above extract, the teacher is checking a piece of written work from one of the students and is making comments about it in English, but s/he switches to L1 with marked rising intonation to ask about something s/he did not understand. This interruption to ask for clarification constitutes a side-sequence with respect to checking the piece of written work which is the main task. In this way, intonation and code-switching help to establish the frames for the two sequences.

b)   Falling tones are frequently found at the end of episodes. This constitutes a signal for students that a change in the activity is about to start. From a cognitive perspective, episodes help to recall and fix stages in task performance and are defined by the following features: introduction of a new action or event, change in the participants' organization, change in time or time markers and change in space organization.

In this study, the following prosodic aspects have been identified as signals of episodes:

• Intonation and stress act as markers that show changes in the activity, the participation structure, time and space.

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[5]   Coulthard (1975), Tsui (1994) and other authors discuss the terms used by Schegloff (1972) and Jefferson (1972) to refer to this concept. Schegloff uses the terms *insertion sequence* to describe a pair of adjacent turns in which another pair of turns is inserted. Jefferson proposes the terms *side sequence*, which refers to the insertion of a sequence made up of more than three turns into the main sequence.

- Prosodic markers seem to be easily identified by participants in the interaction and they allow for certain items to be memorised and recalled afterwards.

It has been found that the above prosodic features help to identify the following types of episodes:

1. To give instruction (giving explanations, provide models, etc.).
2. Shared instruction (activating previously acquired knowledge, demanding interaction/ exchanges, etc.).
3. Classroom management (participation structure, location, etc.).
4. Target task performance (spotting differences, acting out, etc.).
5. Final checking (checking results, dealing with problems and un-expected situations, etc.).
6. Control of discipline (calling attention, asking for silence, etc.).
7. Others (aside sequences, round up for next lesson, asking for materials, etc.).

c) A number of utterances in the extracts analysed above contain *code-switching*. Each of these utterances forms a discourse unit so that elements from the two different languages, English and Spanish in this case, are joined together prosodically as observed by Myers-Scotton (1993) citing Romaine (1989, p. 111): *"In code-switched discourse, the items in question form part of the same speech act. They are tied together prosodically as well as by semantic and syntactic relations equivalent to those that join passages in a single speech act".*

CONCLUSIONS

The combined use of elicitations and the total or partial repetition of the student's answer plus intonation has proved to be an effective way to let the students perceive their errors and encourage self-correction without the direct intervention of the teacher. Generally speaking, rising tones show that the response is incorrect and that some modification needs to be incorporated. On the other hand, falling tones usually show acceptance of the response. A neutral tone is a signal of no evaluation on the part of the teacher, which is understood as acceptance of the response, at least partially.

Clarification requests usually take the form of yes/no questions, wh-questions, non-inverted questions with rising intonation and tag questions. It has been observed that teachers tend to ask for clarification

before correcting the students or encouraging self-correction. Comprehension checks usually take the form of tag questions, partial or total repetition of the speaker's utterance with rising intonation and *yes/no* with rising intonation. Confirmation checks are usually conveyed through the repetition with rising intonation of a word or sentence uttered by the student. Other functions of intonation include the signalling of side-sequences, episodes and code-switching.

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