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DIALOGUE STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LECTURES AND THEIR PROSODIC REALISATION

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Abstract

The article reports on the study of dialogue strategies and their prosodic realisation in English lectures and highlights the interactional dimension of academic discourse. There are three dimensions in the study: rhetorical, phonetic and pedagogical. It is aimed at examining the most frequently used dialogue strategies in lectures with regard to the rhetorical factors and establishing the tendencies in their prosodic realisation. From the pedagogical perspective the study is meant to demonstrate how the interactional aspect of academic discourse contributes to its educational value. One of the perspectives of the study is to demonstrate how dialogue strategies function in lectures and what prosodic means contribute to the speaker-audience interaction and, ultimately, to the educational value of academic discourse. Basing on the observations made in the course of the analysis (rhetorical, auditory and acoustic) of the samples of English lectures the authors demonstrate that extensive use of dialogue strategies is aimed at minimizing the negative effects of reduced attention span and promoting students' involvement. The authors argue that focus on interaction in academic discourse results in the increase of conversational elements in lectures, which ultimately may affect their rhetorical and phonostylistic status. In pedagogical terms the paper may be useful for developing teacher trainees' expertise in the delivery of lectures and classroom interaction, which is a significant component of their professional training.

Keywords: Dialogue strategies, lecture, interaction, prosody, rhetoric.

1. Introduction

A lecture as a traditional form of instruction is a genre of professional public speech, a monologue delivered by one person and addressed to a group of people, "one to many" form of communication. At the same time, it is viewed as a two-sided interaction, involving both the speaker and the audience. The key concepts of contemporary rhetoric, that refer to effective speaker-audience interaction are identification, empathy, harmony, rapport, dialogue. "Harmonious (effective) speech communication can be possible only on the basis of the dialogue between all its participants" (Mikhalskaya, 1996, p. 80).

It should be noted, though, that in this context "dialogue" is viewed in a broad sense and refers to the general orientation of the speech towards the active interaction with the listeners. In a narrow sense "dialogue" presupposes the actual verbal input of the participants, turn taking in verbal interaction. While monologue is the text of a single speaker, dialogue is a jointly constructed text of multiple speakers (Wichmann, 2000).

Complex interaction of monologue and dialogue in academic public speaking is our primary concern in this study. Admittedly, these two forms of communication are inseparably connected in the present day discourse: "Monologue does not exist without dialogue and dialogue does not exist without monologue. Basing on the formula "speech is dialogical", according to the current research, it is true to say that "monologue is dialogical, while dialogue is monological" (Bloch, 2020, p. 176).

As regards lecturing, the balance between monologuing and dialoguing appears to be changing due to the challenges lecturers are faced with, in particular, loss of contact with the listeners due to the inattention. Attention span during lectures (the amount of time the students can concentrate on the lecture) is not easy to measure (there exist various methods of measuring it leading sometimes to contradictory findings), but most specialists agree that the average attention span of students is 10-15 minutes (Bradbury, 2016).

Two opposing interpretations can be traced in the professional community of educationalists and specialists in public speaking. The first is that the decline in students' attention during lectures gives grounds for labeling traditional academic lectures ineffective and suggesting reducing them to 15 minutes or even excluding them from the university curriculum. Other researchers argue that "the greatest variability in student inattention arises from the difference between teachers and not the teaching format itself" (Bradbury, 2016, p. 509).

The second opinion is shared by specialists in rhetoric (Collins, 2012; Crystal, 2016), who claim that since motives of the listeners should not necessarily comply with the objectives of the speaker, inattention on the part of the students should be treated as a natural phenomenon, which the lecturer should be aware of. "So, if this is the normal state of affairs when listening to a presentation, the wise public speaker will take steps to minimize the effects of inattention. The really eloquent speaker is the one who makes the task of listening as easy as possible. And that means being aware of the factors that promote inattention" (Crystal, 2016, pp. 66-67). In other words, it is the responsibility of the lecturer to structure the speech so that to overcome communication barriers and to get the message across to the listeners.

It follows from this that adapting to the situation of reduced attention span the lecturer has to expand the range of contact strategies, dialogue strategies in particular, introducing more radical ways of "fighting for contact".

The studies of university classroom discourse demonstrate the salience of non-informational and subjective aspects of discourse (Barbieri, 2015), however the correlation of the informational and interactional aspects of academic discourse has not been investigated systematically.

2. Problem Statement

There are three dimensions in the present study: rhetorical, phonetic and pedagogical. It is aimed at examining the most frequently used dialogue strategies in lectures with regard to the rhetorical factors and establishing the tendencies in their prosodic realisation. Though the significance of prosodic means in university and school classroom discourse is generally acknowledged, the current research focuses mainly on the role of prosodic cues in conveying information (Henry et al., 2017; Nesi, 2001), while the interactional potential of prosody has so far been overlooked.

Our basic assumption is that extensive use of dialogue strategies in lectures, determined by the students' reduced attention span, influences the rhetorical and phonostylistic status of the academic public presentation. From the pedagogical perspective the study is meant to demonstrate how the interactional aspect of academic discourse contributes to its educational value.

3. Research Questions

The study examines the following research questions:

1. Dialogue strategies are widely used in lectures to minimize the effect of reduced attention span.

2. The choice of dialogue strategies depends on the speech situation and the individual style of the speaker.

3. The elements of dialogue incorporated into the public monologue are characterised by specific prosodic realisation.

4. Extensive use of dialogue strategies leads to the increase of "conversational elements" in the lecture, which is reflected in its prosodic organization.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study of dialogue strategies in academic lectures is based on the assumption that rhetorical discourse is a dynamic two-sided process, based on the active participation of the speaker and the listeners. In this perspective the purpose of the study is to demonstrate how dialogue strategies function in lectures and what prosodic means contribute to the speaker-audience interaction and, ultimately, to the educational value of academic discourse.

5. Research Methods

The present study is based on the analysis of sample lectures from the corpus, collected by the members of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Moscow Pedagogical State University, both for pedagogical and research purposes (MPSU Corpus of Spoken English, 2018). The lectures, devoted to the problems of cross-cultural communication, foreign language teaching, linguistics, accents, education, social and cultural

problems, were video and audio recorded at the moment of their presentation. For this study we selected 18 lectures delivered by British lecturers (12 men and 6 women).

The approach used in this research was multidisciplinary and combined the rhetorical analysis and phonetic analysis. Alongside with quantitative analysis aimed at establishing the frequency of dialogue strategies in lectures, we used the contextual analysis of rhetorical discourse. It should be noted, that for the study of rhetorical discourse aggregation of data and quantitative analysis are not sufficient, because they can limit our understanding of the interaction process. Multidisciplinary perspective leads to a more insightful analysis of prosodic variation in public speeches. Following Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2017), prosody is studied in interactional perspective, i.e. the interpretation of prosodic features is given with regard to their functions as well as the contextual and situational factors.

The phonetic analysis combined auditory (perception) analysis and acoustic analysis. The first type of analysis consisted in recording the "auditory impression" of the speech segments and providing their intonation notation. Acoustic analysis (Speech Analyzer (v. 3.0.1) was aimed at providing measurements of the prosodic parameters (pitch, duration and intensity) in the segments of speech and verifying the data obtained in the course of perception analysis. The functional interpretation of the data obtained in the course of the phonetic analysis was aimed at revealing the main tendencies in the prosodic realisation of dialogue strategies.

6. Findings

The first step in this study was to establish the most frequently used strategies aimed at promoting "dialogue" interaction of the lecturer and the audience. They can be organised into two groups: traditional rhetorical contact strategies and strategies used as "attention boosters". The first group comprises such strategies as questions to the audience, rhetorical questions, question and answer technique, direct address to the audience, imperatives, etc. The second group includes storytelling, involving the listeners in discussion, interactive activities. Admittedly, there are some overlaps, as one and the same strategy can be placed in each of the groups.

Dialogue strategies will be described with regard to their prosodic realisation, which is viewed as highly relevant for speaker-audience interaction.

Question techniques in speaker-audience interaction

Traditionally, the most straightforward technique, that lecturers use to provide smooth interaction with the listeners is the use of questions. For the most part the presence of questions in public speeches serves as an imitation of actual dialogue, because no verbal input on the part of the listeners is expected. However, the observations the analysis of the sample lectures demonstrates that there is a tendency for the speaker to use various types of questions to initiate the actual dialogue interaction with members of the audience. Though the choice of a particular type of question (direct question to the audience, rhetorical question or question-answer technique) depends on the speakers' preferences, their individual style, the size of the audience and other factors, the sample lectures from our corpus show that the most frequently used type is the question-answer, which is either an imitation of dialogue or in many cases elicits a genuine verbal or non-verbal reaction of the listeners.

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As regards the rhetorical questions, their functions consist in conveying important information, attracting the listeners' attention to the key points of the lecture as well as maintaining contact. The main cue of the rhetorical nature of the question is the use of falling nuclear tones in the final intonation group. Since the Low Fall expresses finality and is generally used to convey new information, the listeners identify the question as requiring no answer. Rhetorical questions are often accompanied by increased duration of pauses (both preceding and following it) and the change of speech rate (in most cases it is slower in the questions than in the preceding text). These prosodic means serve as a signal that the listeners are given some extra time to consider the problem, however, no answers are expected.

//⌐→What is ⎮ accent?// ⤵Why do 'accents ⎮matter?//(lento) (lecturer Tim Wilson, 2017, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

In contrast to rhetorical questions, question-answer technique is aimed at eliciting the reaction of the audience. Closed (predominantly yes-no) questions make it possible for the listeners to participate.

Do you →read ⎯novels? ||Do you ⌐→read 'long 'classical ⎯novels?/// ⎮No, you ⎮don't|| (lecturer Ewan Keller 2018, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

After listening to the answers coming from the audience, the lecturer pronounces some of them. The intention of the speaker is identified by the listeners due to the prosodic cues. If no answer is expected and the speaker answers his own question, there are no marked changes in the prosody: the pitch range, tempo, loudness remain the same as in the preceding verbal context. The pause between the question and answer is very short. The change of prosodic parameters (higher key, slower tempo, increased loudness) in the question and increased duration of the pause following it indicate that the feed-back from the audience in the form of verbal input is encouraged. The stimulus in the form of question and the reaction of the listeners can be viewed as a case of speaker-audience dialogue interaction.

Interestingly, dialogue interaction may sometimes go beyond one stimulus and one response:

Lecturer: So when Jane Austen wrote «Emma»...| Has anybody read «Emma»?| Have you read any Jane Austen?|

Students: Yes.|

Lecturer: Good to hear it. || I think it's tremendous fun.|| (Lecturer Tim Wilson, 2017, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

What we observe in this examples is that the question-answer technique, which is a classical rhetorical device, imitating the dialogue between the speaker and the audience, turns into genuine two-sided interaction. The speaker does not routinely repeat the responses of the listeners, as is the case in question-answer, but gives his own reaction to these responses. Since turn-taking actually takes place, it can be called dialogue interaction.

Another strategy lecturers frequently resort to is "chains of questions".

Daniel >Craig. || Where's Daniel >Craig from?| ⎮Anybody? |Someone's got a secret Wiki>pedia?| Do you →think he has >RP?|| (allegro) (Lecturer Brian Small, 2016, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

Fast tempo, short or very short pauses between the questions, recurrent intonation patterns (Mid level Head + Mid Level Tone; Mid-Level Head +Low Rise) create the effect of rhetorical pressure: the lecturer demonstrates that he wants immediate response from the students.

Questions are also used routinely to monitor the reaction of the audience.

And personally I hope what we've just discussed might be useful. || In fact, I think it really matters in classroom instruction. || All ⁄ right?|| (Lecturer Margaret Cartwright, 2016, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

The "routine" character of such questions is conveyed by specific intonation: fast tempo, Low pitch level, narrow range. There is a marked contrast of these prosodic parameters and the prosodic characteristics of the preceding or following sentences. By using Low Key the speaker indicates that these elements are redundant, they can be removed from the text without affecting its meaning. In fact, questions of this type perform the function of discourse markers, typical of the lecture genre and "interactively oriented towards the listener" (Deroey, 2015).

Summing up these observations, we can trace the following tendency: the main prosodic cue that suggest that the listeners should participate in dialogue interaction is the use of Rising tones in questions, which, in fact are "default" tones used "when the speaker is inviting the listener to participate – that is there is openness in the conversation rather than closing it off with a falling intonation. Rising tones are therefore associated with more speech to come, whether this is from the speaker or the listener" (Setter, 2019, p.78).

The relevant conclusion to draw from this overview is that questions of various types are widely used in lectures, either imitating dialogue interaction or promoting the actual dialogue between the discourse participants. Prosody being a significant cue to the particular function of the question in rhetorical discourse.

Embedded dialogues as components of storytelling in speaker-audience interaction

The study demonstrated that storytelling is one of the most frequently used strategies aimed at increasing students' involvement and minimizing the negative effects of reduced attention span.

Among other things, stories increase the rhetorical potential of the public speech, since a multi-generic text is a more complicated communicative phenomenon, characterised by greater expressiveness. The change of register (the shift from academic style to conversational style) also contributes to effective interaction (Freydina, 2019). Stories are generally quite informal and possess a number of features, typical of conversational style, which is manifested on the prosodic level.

It should be mentioned, that though stories are structured as conversational monologues, the need for dialogue interaction is reflected in the incorporation of imaginary dialogues into the narrative. Elements of "dialogue in the monologue" is a rhetorical strategy, aimed at building rapport, introducing identification and "linguistic empathy" (Crystal, 2016, p. 124).

In such cases we observe the change of the form of communication, which is generally accompanied by the change of register (or tenor shift) (Freydina, 2016). Stories with embedded dialogues contribute to a more effective speaker-audience interaction by reducing the effect of inattention, especially if the story contains humour and irony.

Embedded dialogues are instances of informal conversation, familiar to the listeners. They automatically create affinity between the participants and indicate that the discourse has a friendly, open, informal character. At the same time the resources of direct speech, reported speech and free indirect speech used in embedded dialogues with their syntactic, lexical and phonetic specific features make the presentation more expressive.

The functions of stories with embedded dialogues can be illustrated by the fragment below: the story is based on the speaker's personal experience and contains self-irony.

And when I speak about accents, | I always think of the way Emily Bronte| tried to reproduce a broad Yorkshire accent in her novels. || And it's almost impossible to read. || It's like reading those parts of Tolstoy| which are in French. ||| My mother gave me a translation of Tolstoy's «War and peace» when I was a child. | I was about seven, I think. || And I did try reading it. || And I was at a loss. | So I said to my mother: |"You said I should read it, | but how can I? | I don't understand a word" ||. And she said| "I thought you were a clever boy. | Try harder"|| "And I said |"Well, I am trying".|| And it went on and on| before she remembered |how much of this text was in French.|| (Lecturer Tim Wilson, 2017, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

As regards the prosodic realisation of embedded dialogues, we can observe a number of features, typical of conversational style: short intonation groups, medium and narrow pitch ranges, frequent use of such terminal tones as Mid Level Tones, Low Falls, Fall-Rises and such pre-nuclear patterns, as Low Level Head, Mid Level Head, Falling Head, fast tempo, hesitation pauses. However, alongside with these prosodic characteristics there are some prosodic markers of the "artificial" nature of such dialogues. In fact, dialogues are generally quite expressive, because they contain the imitation of different manners of speaking. Citing the speech of dialogue participants, the speaker may intentionally exaggerate some vocal features, especially when he wants to create a humorous effect. It is reflected in the change of pitch range, the use of emphatic nuclear tones (High Fall, Rise-Fall-Rise), the change of speech rate, the increased duration of pauses, the use of emphatic pauses, the change of voice qualities. Besides imitating the style of informal everyday discourse, embedded dialogues introduce an element of performance, which contributes to speaker-audience interaction. On the whole, the prosodic realisation of stories and "dialogues in the monologue" reflects both the speaker's involvement and the conversational character of discourse.

Though the prosodic characteristics of stories can be similar to those, typical of everyday spontaneous conversation, it should be noted that there is also marked difference due to the greater control of the vocal delivery, which is reflected in very distinct enunciation, absence of sound modifications observed in rapid colloquial speech, controlled loudness and tempo.

The most frequent dialogue strategies and the tendencies in their prosodic realisation can be seen in Table 1.

Table 01. Dialogues strategies

Dialogue Strategies	Prosodic Devices
Rhetorical questions	increased length of pauses, preceding or following the question, decrease of tempo, Falling terminal tones
Question-answer	high key, decrease of tempo, increased loudness, increased length of pauses, Rising or Mid-level terminal tones
Chains of questions	fast tempo, short or very short pauses between the questions, recurrent intonation patterns
Routine questions	fast tempo, Low Key

The comparative analysis of the prosodic parameters of the textual units that contain embedded dialogues or stories and the fragments of the lectures, aimed at conveying information, demonstrates marked differences, which can be described as prosodic contrasts.

Prosodic contrasts as a means of speaker-audience interaction

Both classical rhetoric and "new rhetoric" maintain that the variation of prosodic means is an integral component of eloquence which, following Crystal (2016), stands for the kind of delivery, that is both "impressive and natural".

With regard to the goals of this research our primary concern was the identification of the prosodic features that contribute primarily to speaker-audience interaction, or "dialogue". Admittedly, in a broad sense all the prosodic means ultimately serve the purpose of conveying the message to the listeners. But drawing on the findings made in this study we can single out the combination of prosodic parameters associated specifically with the interactional dimension of academic discourse. The phenomenon, which is highly relevant for this purpose, is the prosodic contrast, i.e. a marked change of one or several prosodic parameters intentionally used by the speaker and perceived by the listeners as an interaction cue.

Prosodic contrasts, which occur within a phrase, a phonopassage or a whole text, can perform various functions: they are used to emphasise the informational value of a textual unit, they can serve as markers of the speaker's emotional involvement, they also reflect the changes of speaking style. Admittedly, prosodic prominence, given to some parts of the text, reflects the cognitive and psychological mechanisms of conveying information and at the same time it contributes to more effective speaker-audience interaction by making the speech more expressive.

And what really matters| is that people | students| ask questions |or they have their own ideas | and they want to share them.|| <u>That's some encouragement.</u>|| (lecturer James Bradford, 2017, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English).

In the fragment above we can observe a typical case of prosodic contrast between the intonation group, containing the speaker's comment (*That's some encouragement*), which is realised as Low Key information (low pitch level, narrow pitch range, faster tempo, reduced loudness) and the preceding intonation groups. The preceding intonation groups, that contain important information, are characterised by higher pitch level, wide pitch range, slow tempo, increased loudness; the use of the High Falls and Sliding Head also contribute to the effect of prosodic prominence.

One of the sources of prosodic contrasts is the degree of the speaker's involvement, which is frequently increased when he conveys important information or personal information. The speaker's active involvement in discourse leads to greater prosodic variation in the parts of the text that possess informational value, which gives them additional emotional colouring and increases their expressiveness.

I did a lot of work in education| and I did a lot of work in art| and I enjoy both. || And I've been asking myself. || Art, education. |We have to join them.|| How could we join them together?||| <u>And that's what I've been trying to do for the last ten years</u>|| (lecturer Tim Wilson, 2016, MPSU Corpus of Spoken English,).

We can observe the contrast between the prosodic parameters at the beginning of the phonopassage, in which the lecturer conveys personal information, and more "neutral" prosodic realisation of the final phrase, which contains additional information.

In functional terms prosodic contrasts serve as a powerful contact device. It is generally acknowledged that the marked change of the acoustic signal (increase or decrease of speech rate or loudness, increase of the length of pauses) can activate the attention of the listeners and enhance speaker-audience interaction.

Prosodic contrasts associated with the two dimensions of lecturing: instruction (conveying information) and interaction are presented in Table 2.

Table 02. Prosodic contrasts in speaker-audience interaction

Rhetorical Features and Prosodic Parameters	Informational Dimension	Interactional Dimension
Manner of delivery	Speaking impressively	Speaking naturally
Style	Academic	Elements of conversational style
Key	High, medium	Low, medium
Pitch ranges	Mostly broad and medium, varied (7-25 semintones)	Medium, narrow (5-16 semitones)
Nuclear tones	High Fall, Fall-Rise, Rise-Fall-Rise, Low Rise in non-final intonation group	Mid Level Tone, Low Fall, Fall-Rises, Mid Fall, Low Rise
Pre-nuclear patterns	High Level Head, Falling Head, Stepping Head, Sliding Head	Low Level Head, Mid Level Head, Falling Head
Rate of speech	varies from medium to slow (185 – 250 msec)	varies from fast to medium (130-220 msec)
Pauses	syntactic pauses (250 - 1400 msec); the duration of emphatic pauses varies from 200 to 1600 msec.	syntactic pauses (200-600 msec); emphatic pauses (250 - 800 msec); hesitation pauses (vocalised and non-vocalised) duration varies from 200 to 1600 msec

It should be noted that the prosodic parameters presented above reflect the general tendencies: there are significant differences in the prosodic realisation of each particular lecture determined by the speakers' individual style. We should also take into account that the present day phonetic research shows considerable differences across speakers in the use of pitch accents and the functions they express (Grice et al., 2017; Shevchenko, 2016).

In addition, the informational and interactional components are so closely linked, that it is not always possible to make unambiguous attributions.

However, the prevalence of informal speaker-audience interaction accompanied by the marked "conversational" component could be traced in about 70% of the lectures, the balanced combination of formal and informal interaction characterised 25% of the lectures and 5% of the sample lectures are characterised by the formal manner and the predominance of the informational component.

7. Conclusion

The expansion of the interactional dimension in lectures is reflected in extensive use of dialogue strategies aimed at involving the students in educational discourse.

Prosody serves as a cue to speaker-audience dialogue interaction. The elements of dialogue incorporated into the public monologue are characterised by specific prosodic realisation, achieved by the variations of prosodic parameters (pitch, rate of speech and pauses). Prosodic contrasts associated with the two aspects of lectures: instruction (conveying information) and interaction, possess a high rhetorical potential.

The incorporation of dialoguing into the public monologue appears to be a tendency traced in the present day discourse in the sphere of education and reflecting its complex character. So far it has not affected the rhetorical status of the lecture as a genre of professional public speech, however the increase of the interactional component and conversational elements may serve as a signal that such processes are already underway.

The observations made here may be relevant for teaching the skills of professional public speaking to Russian teacher trainees.

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