

INTERNAL MEETINGS: THE PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING
IN WORKPLACE DISCOURSE

by

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A thesis submitted to the
University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2011

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Abstract

Drawing on a longitudinal, year-long observation of business meetings involving three managerial teams in a large Chamber of Commerce in the UK and on analyses of authentic audio data, the thesis investigates how decision-making is enacted in meetings discourse in the context of organisational change. The thesis argues that by mapping three selected discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – and by interpreting their respective roles and interrelations, it is possible to assess how, through talk, decisions are developed and implemented in meetings. The practices have long been of interest to conversation analysts; however, the examination of their sequential organisation in multi-party meetings interactions and their combined impact on decision-making is innovative and original to this thesis.

The study takes a systematic, conversation-analytical approach to the examination of the transcribed data. At the textual level of the analysis, the thesis develops a number of models with which to both map and interpret the behaviour and influences of the practices on decision-making. Most importantly, it identifies the significance of expanded stretches of talk delivered by meetings participants – defined as long turns, and documents the link between decision-making and the recurrence and clustering of the three practices in or around these long turns. The findings assert that by combining the three practices speakers are able to maintain their turn and, as a result, create the time to develop incrementally a coherent argument and announce decisions. The thesis therefore expands the role of Explanations and reinforces the communicative roles of Accounts and Formulations established in the groundbreaking work of Scott and Lyman (1968) and Heritage and Watson (1979), respectively. Overall, the research undertaken offers new insight into how such practices behave in multi-party meetings interactions to assist the decision-making process during times of organisational change.

To my parents, Helena and Josef Vladařovi

Acknowledgements

My very special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Almut Koester, who has always been supportive of this project yet constructively critical of my writing, provided me with both challenging inspiration and helpful guidance, and granted me space and friendship when I needed time for my thoughts to consolidate.

Secondly, my thanks go to the target organisation that hosted me for one year in its various departments. Without the open-mindedness of its senior managers and the wholeheartedly helpful response of all staff participating in the research, this project would not have been possible.

To Paddy Long, who has been a good friend over many years and who kindly and patiently proofread earlier versions of this work.

To Kathy Craze, Cathryn Overall, and Naďa Telínová, who stood at the beginning of this research odyssey and supported me all the way through to its completion. They, in fact, embody the special warm-heartedness I also experienced during my time at Birmingham; although that shall remain collective and anonymous at this point, it links to real people who have all made a difference to my life and to whom go my warmest thanks.

My sincere gratitude goes to 51 Spring Lane, whose inhabitants kindly shared with me their shelter and boundless enthusiasm for our joint gardening project. Especially, thank you to Billy, for all our talks and for the moments of working frenzy and the feeling of ultimate joy of work done.

Finally, to my husband Jiří, who was there for me almost at the end of one journey and has given a beginning to a new one.

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List of Abbreviations

A	Accounts
A (MPO)	Account (Managing potential for objections)
A (MRO)	Account (Mitigating requests or objections)
A (REF)	Account (Referencing decisions)
BL	Business Link
BNC	British National Corpus
CA	Conversational Analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DA	Discourse Analysis
E	Explanations
EAF	Explanations, Accounts and Formulations
E (EXP)	Explanation (Expert opinion)
E (REP)	Explanation (Reporting)
E (SOF)	Explanation (Statement of fact)
F (FP)	Formulation (Formulation proposal)
F (FPD)	Formulation (Formulation proposal – decision)
F (SC)	Formulation (Sense construction)
IPO	Input Process Output
IT	Information Technology
ITA	International Trade Advisers' Team
ITUG	IT User Group
RDA	Regional Development Agency
REG	Regeneration
R2I	Route to Investment
SME's	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises
SMT	Senior Management Team Meeting
SOM	Senior (Operations) Manager
T	Turn
T50	T followed with a number indicates the turn number in a meeting

INTRODUCTION

The current study explores the language of decision-making in meetings and aims to make a case as to why three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – are critical elements of discourse in meetings in order for organisations to make, then implement decisions, that is, to transform “talk into action” (Boden, 1994). The examination of the practices centres on Workplace Discourse research and overlays this with existing business models of decision-making and change management. The analyses undertaken draw on authentic audio data (60 hours) recorded longitudinally over the period of one year at managerial meetings in a large Chamber of Commerce in the UK.

The analytical approach to examining decision-making through the lens of three selected practices is, to the best of my knowledge, original. In particular, it raises two questions: firstly, whether it is possible to arrive at an understanding of decision-making in meetings through restricting the examination to three practices and, secondly, why it should be the interrelation among Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations that develops discursively the process of decision-making in meetings. At this juncture, it therefore appears legitimate to introduce the rationale for proposing this research direction.

The initial point to be made is that institutional interactions have been observed generally to feature a reduced number of discursive practices deployed with the purpose of achieving work goals (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 109). For example, institutionalised questioning and its management has been established across different workplace contexts including classroom interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), courtrooms (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1992), news interviews (Heritage, 1985), and mediation (Greatbatch and Dingwall, 1989). In institutional settings, research into the asymmetries of conversation has confirmed an underlying, strategically motivated patterning of spoken interaction. Its reasons may be attributed to the inherent orientation of participants towards achieving workplace goals and of balancing discrepancies in experience, knowledge, and power through talk.¹

¹ See Heritage (2004: 110-115) for an extensive discussion of the distinctiveness of institutional discourse.

In business meetings, the outcome-driven purpose of the meeting and the focus on solving problems also results in the reduction of discursive practices utilised.² The orientation of participants to keep to the point derives from their understanding that they are required to engage in organisational life, are expected to contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, and to behave in a particular manner. This participation is sustained through talk during which the meeting members either consciously or subconsciously favour the use of those practices that will be judged by their peers to be acceptable or helpful to their collaborative talk. These expectations thus make the reduction of the number of practices employed by participants legitimate and inevitable.

Secondly, the decision to focus the analysis on examining the inter-reaction among the three practices was motivated by the researcher's observations of business meetings, appreciation of the existing body of literature on Conversation Analysis (CA) and Harold Garfinkel's work in the field of ethnomethodology and sense construction through talk. CA research has identified discursive practices contributing to the structuring and maintenance of conversation in various settings; this includes the description of the influential roles and usage of Accounts and Formulations. Harold Garfinkel, on the other hand, contributed significantly to explaining how individuals understand social order and take part in human interaction. Specifically, Garfinkel (1967) asserts that even if individuals wished to participate in human action or with institutions, they are not able to do so unless they can "make shared sense of their circumstances and act on the shared sense they make" (Heritage, 2010: 49). Participants therefore, depending on the context of their common action, use "shared methods of practical reasoning" to arrive at this sense; only then have they the grounding on which they are able to take action (Garfinkel, 1967).

Garfinkel's insight is most inspiring in considering this natural conversational behaviour, and the desire of individuals to be continually involved in making sense of what is occurring. In respect of organisational decision-making, it inevitably stimulates interaction and dialogue, allowing meetings participants to acquire a shared sense of their individual and others' roles, the meeting's purpose, and the context in which this is taking place. The repeated use of Explanations, Accounts and Formulations in meetings discourse is thus not unexpected as all of the three discursive practices have

² The relationship between the meeting's purpose and the type of decision-making exhibited is further discussed in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

the qualities enabling participants to build a shared sense of understanding of the issues at hand and to advance discursively the business objectives of the meeting. Methodologically, Conversation Analysis enabled the identification of the practices underpinning decision-making as it was observed in the meetings interactions. Garfinkel's thinking then informed the exploration of how they combined in meetings to create a "shared sense" which enabled participants to perform their professional roles in the workplace.

Aim of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is to view decision-making from a linguistic perspective and, specifically, to seek to understand and explain how the process is performed by work teams in internal meetings during times of organisational change. The research proposition through which the analysis was undertaken may be summarised as follows:

Decision-making is central to organisational action – and to organisational change in particular. In meetings, decision-making is enacted through communication in which certain practices are more conducive than are others to the process. Decisions are not always reached in meetings. Yet, due to the incremental construction of decision-making in organisations, the process of decision-making itself is advanced in meetings even if decisions are lacking. Current theory of change management also stresses the importance of communication at times of change, describing it as a critical ingredient of driving through change. Therefore, when meetings discourse and interactions are recorded and transcribed, a pool of research data is created that may be subjected to a range of analyses to investigate what is actually occurring through talk. A linguistic analysis of the data transcribed enables the identification and understanding of conversational practices employed in the decision-making process. By establishing the parameters of an informed use of these practices, it becomes possible then to consider how the findings could be applied within a workplace to aid the meeting participants' understanding of how discursively to manage the decision-making process in meetings at times of organisational change.

Research Questions

The thesis has approached the research task through the examination of the following two questions:

1. Why were three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – so heavily employed in the meetings talk performed by the teams at times of organisational change?
2. How, when, and where were Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations employed in meetings, and how did they contribute to the process of the team decision-making?

Positioning of the Thesis

At the turn of the millennium, Garnett and Kouzmin (2000) published an article in which they predicted that wealth in the new millennium would grow predominantly in non-financial ways and that communication would be the key instrument in its formation. The stress on the importance of communication and that this will facilitate wealth generation might then perhaps be seen as a radical idea, particularly by economies traditionally thriving on automotive and manufacturing industries. Over a decade later, in 2011, economic data from the UK Office for National Statistics, however, demonstrated a sustained, year-on-year growth in non-traditional business sectors. Specifically, in 1995 the service industries sector in the UK accounted for two thirds of GDP, rising to 70% in the year 2000³, and is currently estimated at around 80% of GDP. In monetary terms, in 2000 the GDP was calculated at £0.976 trillion, which has grown to £1.392 trillion at current values.⁴

Communication lies at the heart of all organisations as they seek to develop both products and services and to engage with their customers, suppliers and employees. How communication is undertaken both externally and within organisations is therefore no longer perceived as an element merely facilitative to the undertaking of the core company business. It is now understood as being directly linked to the generation of

³ The *UK Service Sector*, Report published by the Office for National Statistics, December 2000. Available from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_commerce/UK_Service_Sector.pdf, accessed 1 May 2011.

⁴ Office for National Statistics data: *Correction Notice: The Blue Book*. 2010 Edition, published 27 September 2010. Available from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_economy/bluebook2010.pdf, accessed 1 May 2011.

financial performance and profit. This trend, in turn, creates a growing demand for research projects addressing the issues of workplace communication. Organisations themselves are becoming increasingly interested in reviewing their communication practices, and thus call upon linguists to provide insights into these. Such demand is certainly most stimulating, since it drives research needs and trends and causes them to emerge from the needs and demands of the business communities by whom the findings will eventually be applied.

The current thesis places itself within the paradigm of applied linguistic research. It is empirical and interdisciplinary in its character, bridging discourse and organisational studies. Workplace discourse and its subsequent analysis are approached from the perspective of the twin notions as defined by Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2002: 277): “business discourse as *situated action* and of *language as work*” (italics in the original). The analysis provides a detailed picture of meetings communication at a large public-service organisation in the UK. It adopts a conversation-analytical approach to decision-making and situates this within the wider context of organisational change. The relationships and interactions among decision-making, transcribed data, and the discursive practices employed in the meetings are then examined.

Chapter Outline

The thesis consists of ten chapters. These draw on 60 hours of recorded meetings data of which eight hours were transcribed. The analysis examines the occurrence and role of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in constituting the decision-making process in business meetings. .

Chapters One and Two introduce the field of research, data, and the methodology adopted. **Chapter One** creates the point of intersection between two disciplines that inform the current thesis: Management Theory, and Applied Linguistics. It provides an overview of selected conceptual models of decision-making and change management, and explains why a conversation-analytical approach is appropriate to the analysis of decision-making in meetings. Subsequently, the Chapter reviews recent research undertaken in the area of business meetings and proposes why workplace and institutional discourse are receiving increasing attention within the linguistic and the business communities. The focus of the current study is then directed to

the examination of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations, three discursive practices that occurred repeatedly in the meetings examined.

Chapter Two sets out the research process, data, and methodology. The Chapter introduces the host organisation (a large UK Chamber of Commerce and Industry), and the three teams who participated in the research. It discusses the issues associated with longitudinal research, presents a novel perspective on the Observer's Paradox, outlines the process of data collection, and introduces the transcription procedure. The conceptual framework of the Input-Process-Output model is introduced; it deconstructs organisational decision-making into its individual components and determines the specific part of the decision process that may be informed by a linguistic analysis of meetings interactions. The methodological underpinning of the study is established *via* Conversation Analysis, and Ethnography as the intention was to examine decision-making as a process and how this was enacted through talk, and not to assess or evaluate the quality of decisions made.

The core of the study consists of six chapters reporting on the primary research undertaken. Chapters Three and Four define concepts and definitions central to the thesis. Chapter Five undertakes a pilot analysis, applying the tool of interactional matrices (macro- analysis) to the examination of the practices in the set of four meetings. . Chapter Six introduces a second, larger data set of meetings and a micro-analysis that enabled a fine-grained examination of the three discursive practices. Each practice is then reported in detail in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine. More specifically:

Chapter Three discusses the process of decision-making in natural meetings data, the types of meetings that take place in organisations, and the types of decisions occurring within these. The Chapter further formulates a definition of a business meeting and determines the criteria for identifying business decisions in the meetings transcripts. The three discursive practices are introduced in the context of the meetings data examined within which their relationship to decisions is also established. It is demonstrated that the constitution of a decision in discourse is highly sensitive to interpretation as not all decisions are actually formulated in meetings, nor are they equal in terms of their impact on the business process. An argument is therefore put forward to examine meetings longitudinally to ensure that the analysis is grounded appropriately within the organisational context and to focus on clarifying the role of the three discursive practices in constituting the decision-making process.

Chapter Four reviews the conceptual origins of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations, defines their textual boundaries in the meetings data, and determines how each of the practices impacted upon the decision-making process. In respect to multi-party meetings interactions, the Chapter makes a case for expanding the traditionally narrow focus of CA to examine short or tokenised exchanges of natural conversation and focuses the analysis on expanded stretches of talk delivered by meetings participants. Most importantly, the Chapter describes the unique properties of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations that meetings participants repeatedly drew on when they used these discursive practices to drive the decision-making process forward.

Chapter Five marks the start of the empirical part of the thesis. It carries out a pilot analysis of four meetings in which it establishes the nature of the impact made by Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations on the decision process. The analysis identifies the significance of long turns in business meetings, and documents the recurrence of the practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations and their clustering in or around these longer turns of the discourse. A proposition is made, and explored in the following four chapters, to seek whether there are recurrent patterns of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in business meetings, and whether the impact of these discursive practices – be it individually or when sequentially combined with the other two practices – could directly be linked to the decision-making activity performed in the meetings.

Chapter Six introduces Data Set Two consisting of a further six hours of transcribed meetings data. It applies the methodology of the macro- and micro-approaches to examining a longitudinal sample of data to identify and determine how the practices behave. The Chapter further establishes that the decision-making process is fluid and is not confined to a few turns in the meeting: it unfolds in time, and its interpretation requires analysing considerably long stretches of discourse. The Chapter thus paves the way for a detailed analysis of Data Set Two (reported on in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine).

Chapter Seven analyses the role of Explanations in driving the decision process in meetings. Although conventionally grouped with Accounts, the Chapter identifies that in meetings Explanations fulfil a number of different functions, establishing the two discursive practices of Accounts and Explanations to be complementary yet distinct.

This observation has to my knowledge never been made before, nor has it been pursued analytically. The micro-analysis investigates the function and positioning of Explanations in the long turns, and focuses on interpreting the capacity and inherent ability of Explanations to furnish factuality and relevance to the meetings. It observes that Explanations in meetings inform the participants of key information, establish a shared knowledge base, and create the opportunity for speakers to extend their turn and continue to progress their ideas towards forming proposals for action and decisions. The analysis further demonstrates the skill with which senior managers (SOMs) were able to integrate the practice together with Accounts and Formulations to form extensive turns directly driving or influencing decision-making in meetings.

Chapter Eight establishes the role performed by Accounts in meetings as being transcendent of their traditional function of addressing the issues of ‘face’ and justifying or excusing a course of action. Instead, Accounts are demonstrated repeatedly to ‘normalise’ the debate at hand and to take the position of an active agent in strengthening the potential of the decision-making process. This occurs due to Accounts’ building the argument in incremental steps and creating a new, discursively constructed, reality. Such ‘discursive incrementality’ of progressing the decision-making process is nurtured by the need of the meetings’ participants to evaluate Accounts, which, by implication, engages the individuals in a discussion either already centred on a decision or steering the meeting towards one. The findings of the micro-analysis subsequently propose two points of importance regarding the use of Accounts in decision-making situations. Firstly, the sequences of Explanation-Account and Account-Formulation were particularly effective in leading to proposals and decisions. Secondly, SOMs appeared to understand this combined effect of Accounts with the other two practices, and were therefore selective as regards their use of Accounts, ensuring that these were applied sequentially to create a coherent and logical argument through which the SOMs directed the team into a particular course of action. As a result, managers were observed to produce significantly longer turns during which the evaluative phase of the canonical “reproach-account-evaluation” sequence described was suspended.⁵ This finding is new and provides a fresh insight into the application of the groundbreaking concept of Accounts proposed by Scott and Lyman (1968).

⁵ The canonical form of accounting sequences has been recorded, for example, by Remler (1978), Schonbach (1980), and Cody and McLaughlin (1985) – all as quoted in Cody and McLaughlin (1988).

Chapter Nine firstly analyses Formulations as an individual practice, then focuses on interpreting their dynamic inter-relationships with Explanations and Accounts. The analysis confirms the original finding of Heritage and Watson (1979) that Formulations, as a discursive practice in their own right, perform a number of tasks that contribute to “sense making” in meetings. It was found that Formulations acted as in-meeting editors, deleting or retaining talk, summarising key points, and creating the potential for both proposals and decisions to flourish. The Chapter presents a new interpretation of the dynamic and fluid relationship between the roles of meeting participants as both news deliverers and news recipients. It illustrates how the three discursive practices combine to facilitate this; they enable the SOMs in particular to move seamlessly between both roles and as a consequence to claim and maintain their turn. Finally, the Chapter utilises the micro-analysis to demonstrate the complexity and the symbiotic relationship among the three practices. It identifies the specific types of patterning of the practices and explains how these enable the creation and maintenance of long turns which underpin the decision-making process.

Chapter Ten has a finalising role: it summarises the research undertaken and discusses the research findings and outcomes. Furthermore, it concludes by considering the application of the research and opens the thesis out into a discussion of wider themes potentially relevant to future linguistic studies undertaken within the business environment.

CHAPTER ONE

Organisational Decision-making and Workplace Discourse

Not only is communication absolutely essential to organization, but the availability of particular techniques of communication will in large part determine the way in which decision-making functions can and should be distributed throughout the organization.

Herbert A. Simon (1947/1997: 208)

Decision-making is, in an anatomical metaphor of organisational life and performance, the blood, and communication the haemoglobin, without which life-determining oxygenation would never be able to occur. In the physiology of the human body, these two components are crucial, as are the roles of communication and decision-making in the body of an organisation. One cannot function without the other, thus it is impossible to understand them separately either from one another or from other related and integrated processes. Together, they achieve the completion of a human and organisational life respectively; hence, it is therefore logical to study them together.

Humans differ and so do organisations. An array of specialist views is required in order to grasp the scope of the complexity of organisational life. In this study, it is proposed that by bringing the views together in an unparalleled fashion, novel and deeper understandings of the decision processes may be gained. The current thesis brings together findings from two complementary fields, management and organisational studies and linguistics, where the linguistic element is largely dominant. The present chapter nevertheless begins by offering profiles of selected historically important concepts in the theory of organisational decision-making, debates trends central to the current decision-making research, and forefronts the context of public organisations undergoing organisational change.

This dual approach to the examination of both management and organisational studies and linguistic practice enables a more holistic view of decision-making in meetings than is current. As the title suggests, there are three themes central to the present thesis: decision-making, workplace discourse and, by inference, internal meetings. The first chapter aims to bring these together by describing the point of intersection where management and organisational studies converge with communication. Given that it is here where the 'oxygenation' of the organisational action takes place in internal

meetings, an examination of communication practices employed in business meetings hence offers the potential of contributing new insights to the decision-making process. This cross-disciplinary approach is increasingly establishing itself as a new field of study subsumed under the label management communication.

Chapter One begins by introducing selected models of organisational decision-making and examining the role of communication within these. It first affirms why a descriptive approach to decision-making is necessary in order to embrace and interpret the situated character of the process. With communication figuring as one of the core decision-making constituents, the chapter then defines the scope and focus of the analysis undertaken in the current thesis.

1.1. Theories and Models of Organisational Decision-making

When Herbert Simon was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1978 for his pioneering research into the decision-making process within economic organisations, he was officially dubbed the ‘founding father’ of modern studies of organisations. At that time his doctoral dissertation and first book, *Administrative Behavior* (1947), had already been published in its third edition and recognised by the Royal Academy of Sciences as an epoch-making book. The fourth edition was launched on the fiftieth anniversary of the initial publication. Apart from a newly-written introduction and commentaries in which the author reflected upon the changes in work practice and advances in technology to have impacted on the world over that past half-century, the text of the original work was retained intact. It could be asked whether the reprint was simply a tribute to a famous American political scientist and polymath, or were Simon’s insights into decision-making really so ingenious and innovative to stand the test of time. The latter suggestion, in my opinion, prevails, and for two reasons in particular.

Firstly, as Simon points out in the 1997 Introduction, although advances in technology, rapid change, and turbulence characterise the face of the modern world, these have had little impact on the processes employed in making decisions in organisations. To support this perhaps obvious yet historically valid point, Simon uses a metaphor and likens human organisations to ancient armies:

Human organisations, quite large ones, have been with us for at least four thousand years. Although the physical technology a modern army employs is wholly different from the technology employed by armies of Nineveh or Egypt or X’ian, the processes people

used in these ancient armies to make decisions or to manage people appear to be quite familiar to us and largely unchanged over centuries.

(Simon 1997: vii)

When paraphrased: modern organisations, too, may be viewed as employing armies of workers who, in working for the ‘armies’ of the twenty-first century, utilise the latest technologies and techniques in their work; the process of decision-making they follow remains, however, the same as it has always been since records began.

Secondly, Simon consistently maintains that understanding decision-making processes provides the key to managing organisations. His interpretation of managing organisations surpasses the notion of scientific management as based on a rational analysis of work processes and established by Taylor, Fayol and Gulick, the first generation of organisational theorists. Simon emphasises the importance of human cognition and choice, and ranks the understanding of the vertical structure of decisional processes within an organisation as secondary. Simon (1997: 4) maintains that despite behaviour’s being “purposive in so far as it is guided by general goals and objectives”, decisions defined as rational choices of preferred behaviour do not in fact exist, because rationality is at all times limited. According to Simon (*ibid.*), decisions are always made with uncertainty since it is impossible to have complete information at any given time and to anticipate fully the consequences that will result. In Simon’s terms, “rationality is bounded” and all decisions are therefore inevitably a result of compromise.

Simon laid conceptual foundations for the theory of decision-making and human problem-solving. Studies in these fields have been pursued vigorously over the last fifty years, with one area of focus being to define a model of effective decision-making. It is therefore appropriate to acknowledge and assess the contribution of four other prominent theories of the decision process to have emerged from the management and organisational studies research. Individually, each provides a discrete approach to the analysis of decision-making in organisations, confirms how complex and in a way intangible are decisional processes, and recognises talk as being integral to the decision process.

1.1.1 Four Theories of Organisational Decision-making

The four theories outlined below describe decision-making as it occurs in organisations and all, independently, bear allegiance to the notion of bounded rationality coined by Simon. They comprise: Incrementalism (Lindblom, 1959; Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963), Garbage-can Theory (Cohen *et al.*, 1972; March and Olsen, 1976), Process Typologies (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1976; Hickson *et al.*, 1985), and Patterns of Implementation (Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Rosenfeld and Wilson, 1999; Hickson, Miller and Wilson, 2003). Prior to their introduction, however, the **systematic** or, as called elsewhere, the “**synoptic**” model of decision-making (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963) will be introduced first. This model is exclusively prescriptive in its approach to decision-making and it has traditionally served as a conceptual starting point for most debates regarding theories of organisational decision process. It is by way of comparison between the prescriptive conceptualisation of the decision process proposed by this model and the actual progression of decision-making in the real world, as discussed in the four theories below, that the relevance of alternative, inherently descriptive approaches to decision-making is to be best appreciated.

The **systematic** model of decision-making (Braybrooke and Lindblom, *ibid.*) is compellingly lucid and orderly. Essentially, it navigates decision makers through five stages, to which they are encouraged to add various feedback loops in order to increase the robustness and accuracy of the model. The stages prompt the following actions:

1. Identify the problem
2. Generate alternative solutions
3. Evaluate and choose from amongst the alternatives
4. Implement the chosen solution, and
5. Maintain the solution *via* monitoring, review and appraisal.

The model is linear, straightforward, and attractively lucid. It suggests that choices are rational and firmly anchored in a known value system; the final decision is deduced from a non-restricted set of alternatives.

In reality, however, decision-making in organisations does not occur rationally and logically, and individuals have been repeatedly observed to have the tendency “to make choices in ways that are markedly at variance with normative decision theory” (Harrison, 1995: 11). The systematic decision-making model may thus provide a solid

foundation for mathematical, statistical and computational calculations of human choice, yet it provides little insight into the non-quantitative, less controllable nature of decision-making. Incrementalism, Garbage-can Theory, Process Typologies, and Patterns of Implementation approach decision-making differently from the systematic model. Their consensual approach to the decision process may be summarised as follows:

Firstly, organisational decision-making cannot be approached prescriptively since it follows no formula. As Harrison (1995) affirms, there are three customarily quoted elements to decision-making – the actual decision-making process, the decision-maker and the decision itself – and all interplay with one another. As a consequence, the variables and weighting appropriate to each of the three parts are almost infinite and are therefore impossible to predict to any reliable degree.

Secondly, it is equally impossible to model the outcome or outcomes of organisational decision-making on the basis of past experience as *ceteris paribus* never applies. Additional constraints are inevitably at work, rendering it difficult to replicate past scenarios. These may include such elements as personnel, corporate objectives, time, money, personal expectations, interests, and needs. Past experience is relevant only as an underlying mechanism, yet neither in full nor without exception. That is why it may justifiably be claimed that future conditions are intrinsically unpredictable, despite the existence of models and experience.

The four decision-making models discussed below all acknowledge the complexity and variability of factors in the decision-making process. Each describes what occurs in meetings and contextualises that into a model. As a result each offers both an insight into certain aspects of the decision-making process, and an attempt to provide a system through which the process could be understood. They are, as theoretical concepts, relatively complex and thus do not lend themselves to being presented in an exhaustive manner here - nor should this be the objective. Each model is therefore outlined by means of a few summative statements and accompanied by a comment as to what, if at all, constitutes the role of meetings and organisational communication within these respective frameworks.

Theory One: Incrementalism

Incrementalism or, as it is popularly known, ‘the science of muddling through’ is a concept based on an analysis of U.S. executive bureaucracy and developed by Charles Lindblom (1959) to describe and evaluate decision-making processes in public policy. Lindblom suggests that administrators and social policy makers draw their decisions from a limited range of information and analysis. The model fundamentally disputes the relevance and applicability of the rational comprehensive method, instead presenting three observations that determine the process of incremental evaluation and margin-dependent choice.

In the first place, as Lindblom maintains (1959), citizens, congressmen and public administrators disagree on the critical values, their order of priority and the objectives. As a consequence, potential conflict is always within a whisker of erupting during the initial steps of negotiation. Secondly, in order for an objective decision to be made, it is important to know the worth of sacrificing one value for another value. This is, according to Lindblom (*ibid.*), impossible unless existing policies are investigated first because only these can benchmark and evaluate the value of a potential sacrifice. Finally, the “value problem is always a problem of adjustment at a margin” (Lindblom, 1959: 82). The margin may be stated only in reference to an already existing value system of a given situation or be created through a specific policy, thus the marginal value in the actual choice situation may never be formulated objectively. Therefore, complex decisions are never made “*ab nihilo* as when God created the world” (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963: 83); rather, they are based on a history of past actions, handled by means of “*successive limited comparison*” (Lindblom, 1959: 81; italics in the original).

As regards communication, Lindblom (1959) puts one organisationally important observation to the fore: the observation that building on what has gone before serves as an advantage to policy makers who are able to foresee, of their new incremental propositions, the probable consequences for a problem. This drawing on historical decisions, however, entails a danger: that of the stagnation of the thinking process where fresh ideas or non-traditional solutions may not be taken into account.

Theory Two: Garbage-can Theory

[A]n organization is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be an answer, and decision makers looking for work.

Cohen, March and Olsen (1972: 2)

Formulated by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) and fitting especially to public and educational organisations, the model describes these as ‘organised anarchies’ and characterises representative decision situations through three properties: *problematic preferences* (a loose collection of ideas as opposed to a coherent structure), *unclear technology* (operated by its members but often mindlessly, without the necessary understanding), and *fluid participation* (different members exhibit different levels of activity, and the level of their involvement fluctuates over time). The decision process is viewed as a garbage can [a waste paper basket or dustbin], represented, for example, by a meeting, into which organisational members dump problems as well as solutions as they generate them. The model disputes the efficiency of the decision process. Using a computer simulation proved that problems are more likely to be resolved in order of their appearance rather than of their importance, and that it is actually the length of the queue that determines the relative urgency and number of problems to be addressed.

Communication is implicit in the model as it is through talk that both solutions and problems are identified and put into the garbage can. As Cohen, March and Olsen (*ibid.*) point out, the time allocated to meetings in public organisations is relatively generous; there is therefore the potential for using such time inefficiently if meetings are unstructured or are not chaired well. Focus in meetings may be inappropriately directed at developing solutions and solving a minor or ‘pet’ problem rather than prioritising according to the level of importance for or impact on the organisation.

Theory Three: Process Typologies

By the 1970s, decision-making research adopted an ethnographic, organisation-based approach with an aim to map out decision processes as they occurred in selected industries. Process typologies specifically recognise the differences in the complexity between operational and strategic decisions. It was Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Theorer (1976) who for the first time asserted that although strategic decision processes are intrinsically unstructured, there exists a set of basic underlying principles through which

these can be described. The team set out to confirm their theorem through an analysis of 25 decision processes recorded from across 25 different Canadian firms and organisations. Mintzberg *et al.* (*ibid.*) concluded their research with a proposition claiming that although strategic “processes are complicated, there does appear to be an attempt by decision-makers at achieving some linear sequences” (Rosenfeld and Wilson, 1999: 188).

Hickson *et al.* (1985) significantly expanded the research into decision-making typologies. Hickson *et al.* (*ibid.*) undertook the largest study of strategic decision-making in the UK, spanning 150 cases of decision-making across a range of 30 different organisations. In 136 cases, they analysed the decision process against twelve variables and managed to distil the analysis into three distinct, empirically-derived types of organisational decision-making: *constricted processes*, *sporadic processes*, and *fluid processes*. The research determined that the processes are organised along the dimensions of discontinuity and dispersion. According to Hickson *et al.* (*ibid.*: 25), decision processes that score high on the discontinuity dimension are typically characterised by disparate resources of information, more serious sources of delays, and notable resistance by other parties in the decision-making arena. The variable of dispersion refers to how decision-making activity is distributed through managerial and administrative levels in relation to negotiation, information gathering, and the use of committees.

Communication in the model is described as interaction and is considered to be a very important aspect of the decision process. The model affirms, and this is in line with the study by Cyert, Simon and Trow (1956), that the largest share of man-hours in the decision process is spent on information gathering and on determining the consequences of the decision. In terms of the distribution of communication in time, the findings described by Bradford studies correlate with those of Witte (1972), who established that communication in the decision process follows a U-shaped curve and is more prevalent towards the beginning and end of the decision process. Hickson *et al.* (1985) further note that the amount of time given to informal and formal interaction and the scope for negotiation varies with each type of the decision process.

The research into process typologies is valuable as it establishes a number of implications for discourse analyses of the decision-making process. Firstly, it asserts that considerations need to be made as to the regard of the type of decision-making

examined. Secondly, it proposes that the assessment of strategic decision-making may be undertaken only over a longer period of time. Thirdly, it identifies the periods when demands on effective communication are the highest, i.e., the beginnings and endings of the process. Finally, through recognition of various decision processes the findings provide insights into the factors that will either determine or affect the type and pace of communication undertaken.

Theory Four: Patterns of Implementation

Surprising but true: Half the decisions in organisations fail.

Paul C. Nutt (1999: 75)

As Nutt (e.g., 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2008) repeatedly confirms through his extensive research into the effectiveness of managerial decision-making, a surprisingly high number of potentially sound decisions fail due to poor implementation. Studies carried out by Nutt (1999) over two decades on 356 decisions in medium and large organisations confirm that in two of every three decisions studied, managers employed tactics that were prone to failure. Patterns of implementation, the fourth and final theoretical strand presented, address this phenomenon and aim to circumvent it by identifying the factors determining the successful implementation of decisions (Rosenfeld and Wilson, 1999).

A subsequent and comprehensive study of patterns of implementation was undertaken by the research team led by Hickson, Miller and Wilson (2003). In an analysis of 55 cases of decision implementation, the researchers identified and scaled eight variables – familiarity, accessibility, specificity, resourcing, acceptability, receptivity, structural facilitation, and priority – that appeared to affect the success in the implementation phase of decisions. When operationalised against the dependent variable of achievement, only two variables correlated significantly. These were acceptability (how far those affected were in accord with what was done), and priority (how far implementation was made a priority ahead of other commitments).

The findings obtained by the research initiated the formulation of an experience-based and readiness-based approach to the implementation of decisions. The experience-based approach means that the management knows enough to be able to assess the aims, specify the action plan and resource it, i.e., planned implementation is given clear priority. The readiness-based approach occurs where “the climate is receptive but

experience relatively lacking”, which proves especially useful when novel decisions are implemented and the management does not quite “know what they are doing” (Hickson *et al.*, 2003: 1814). These approaches then prompt management to consider one or two ways of implementing decisions: a planned and a prioritised option (*ibid.*, 2003). According to the research, either option can lead to effective implementation but a combination of both is deemed to yield most success.

Further to generalise its findings, the study re-visited past research to compare decisions made in both service and manufacturing organisations and to correlate these with the approaches to implementation that had been developed. It was concluded, however, that there was no link between the type of decision-making (sporadic, fluid, and constricted – *see* Process Typologies, above) and the success of the implementation. The only definable and reliable pattern for a successful outcome was always a combination of the human element with the optimum decision and well-founded implementation. In other words, even the soundest implementation strategy would not make up for a bad decision; the success of implementation was always dependent also on the management of the decision process overall.

As regards organisational decision-making, the research thus supported its not being viable to adopt a universal pattern of implementation that would be applicable across diverse business sectors. Instead, the study stressed the importance of engaging the human element appropriately and sufficiently in the implementation phase of the decision process.⁶ Since it is in meetings where engagement is created through communication, observations arrived at by the analysis of the implementation patterns further affirm the indispensability of meetings within the decision-making process of an organisation.

In summary, each of the four theories provides an insight into how decision-making is undertaken in organisations and how managers can use this to understand the dynamics of the decision process. In addition, communication and engagement in decision-making are either acknowledged or upheld to constitute an integral part of the respective models. At no point, however, has there been any attempt to explore the impact that

⁶ This finding links directly to another study undertaken earlier by Rodrigues and Hickson (1995), who on a sample of 53 decision cases from British business and non-business organisations documented that, in non-business organisations especially, the success of the decision process is above all dependent upon the participation, engagement and agreement of the parties involved.

the use of language strategies might have on the outcomes of meetings talk and on the decision-making process.

1.1.2 Small Group Decision-making

Work groups are frequently referred to as the foundation stones of modern organisations (e.g., Brooks, 1999) or primary agents in achieving corporate strategy (e.g., Grant, 2005). Work groups make decisions, put forward recommendations and drive the organisational performance (Rosenfeld and Wilson, 1999). It is therefore here that the attention of the research should be directed.

Similarly to organisational decision-making, a comprehensive answer delineating the process and structure of effective group decision-making has yet to be provided. Interestingly, the findings advocated by organisational research mirror those of small-group decision-making. Spiral and multiple-sequence models have been argued as “normal” (Fisher, 1974; Fisher and Ellis, 1990), whereas the linear model of small-group decision-making has been deemed to be significantly detached from reality. This parallels the debate disputing the relevance of the systematic model of decision-making as presented above (*see* Section 1.1) and reinforces the claim that certain disjointedness or even anarchy seems to provide a more accurate representation of what is happening when groups meet and attempt to make decisions (Poole, 1981; 1983a; 1983b).

The assessment of the efficiency of group decision-making, nevertheless, presents a challenge. Although it has been generally described as being dependent on the task and the group’s ability to transform resources into outputs (Lee, Newman and Price, 1999), the measurement of various influences affecting the overall decision-making performance of a group has been debated extensively. These include, for example, the maturity of the group (e.g., models proposed by Tuckman, 1965; Bass and Ryterband, 1979; or Woodcock, 1979); conformity (e.g., the famous account of the Asch experiment, 1951) and ‘groupthink’ (as described by Janis, 1982), or the obedience of the group members to authority (e.g., as demonstrated in the Milgram studies, 1974). Overall, the findings indicate that without adopting a localised approach to the object of investigation, the efficiency and mechanisms of group decision-making performance are impossible to determine.

Discourse studies of group decision-making localise their analyses within the talk constituting the group decision-making process and they thus provide a novel, deeper view of how decisions are reached. In regard to small-group decision-making, this has been demonstrated, for example, by Marra (2003), who described the unruly progression of meetings, by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), who analysed the role of power in meetings, and by Handford (2007), who demonstrated how genre features of meetings correspond with the communicative goals pursued in meetings. The current thesis continues this research strand by seeking to establish the discursive construction of decision-making as it is accomplished in meetings.

The ensuing section completes the conceptual mapping of the researched area by clarifying the distinction between two related and often interchangeably used terms: decision-making and problem-solving.

1.1.3 Decision-making and Problem-solving

A case scenario:

A key performance target for one of the teams researched was to achieve 90% customer satisfaction and if achieved, the organisation would receive a significant financial performance bonus.

Current satisfaction (checked externally by an independent source) was running at 85%.

The team came together to:

- 1) Discuss and understand why this was so
- 2) Propose solutions to address the issue
- 3) Make decisions on the appropriate course of action to take
- 4) Agree how this would be implemented.

Decision-making and problem-solving are sometimes discussed as being merely two sides of the same coin. The scenario above summarises the purpose and an agenda of one of the meetings documented in the data. At this strategic meeting, the team had to review their performance in the presence of one of the company's senior executives, who came to meet the team to communicate a new organisational objective. The example illustrates where decision-making and problem-solving meet in a real business context. Points Two and Three mark the line between the intellectual activity of generating solutions, then the act of selecting one and committing to it human, financial and material resources.

Drawing on his own research, Hicks (2004) summarises the differences typically identified between problem-solving and decision-making as in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Problem-solving versus Decision-making (Adapted from: Hicks, 2004: 19)

Problem-solving	Decision-making
Identify and try to understand the problem	Identify the objectives (goals) of the decision
Collect relevant information and reflect on it	Find alternative ways of meeting these objectives
Generate some ideas	Determine evaluation criteria/techniques
Develop solutions	–
Select the optimum solution	Select the optimum course of action
Implement it	Implement it

As Hicks (*ibid.*) suggests, although in many ways similar, problem-solving is clearly seen as more of a mental and creative process, whereas decision-making is predominantly driven by judgement and action. This notion is also supported by a number of definitions (e.g., Costello and Zalkind, 1963; Ackoff, 1981; Kepner and Tregoe, 1981; Nolan, 1989), out of which Nolan’s definition is cited here as an example:

Decision-making ... consists of making the best choice from the known options whereas problem-solving is the process of creating the options and the greater the skill [we employ] in problem-solving, the easier the decision-making becomes.

(Nolan 1989: 14)

Hicks (2004), however, argues against this academically drawn line between problem-solving and decision-making as it is at odds with how the two processes operate in real life where they are very much inseparable from one another. Specifically, Hicks (*ibid.*) asserts that in real life problem-solving performs the role of a valuable precursor to the actual process of making a decision, which also seems to be the dominant view in the decision-making literature. Braverman pertinently summarises an identical observation as follows:

[D]ecision-making [often] involves problem-solving and ... problem-solving [often] leads to some decision. The process of selecting a particular course of action from a set of alternatives [may constitute] a problem ... decisions [may be] the end result of a problem-solving process. Problems [may] result from attempts to achieve the [objectives] of the organization. ... But solutions by themselves do not achieve [objectives]. ... Without a decision a problem solution [may be] worthless. Consequently, problem-solving and decision-making go hand-in-hand.

(Braverman, 1980: 19-20)

The seemingly clear boundaries between the two terms are, nevertheless, further blurred by Harrison (1995), who adopts a pragmatic, practice-based view on the debate and positions it within the day-to-day reality of business performance:

Decisions can be and are often made and implemented successfully in the absence of problems. Problems can and often are identified and solved in the absence of decisions.

(Harrison, 1995: 5)

As Harrison (*ibid.*) notes, although with varying levels of significance, some business activity is frequently pseudo-managerial; the executive power is used to place commands at times where no need for these exists; managers may divert organisational attention and resources to situations that could be fundamentally moot.⁷

In order to help managers identify correctly those situations where decision-making indeed has to be present and to assist them in selecting the optimum course of action, business decisions have been classified into categories. Three classifications are especially well known: those of Diesling, of Simon, and of Ansoff. Diesling (1958) divides managerial decision-making into “economic” and “social”: economic decisions can be dealt with rationally, whereas social decisions involve decisions about people and social relations; they are by nature intangible and as such cannot be made on a rational basis. Simon (1960, cited in Hicks, 2004) classifies decisions along a continuum running from “highly programmed” (routine decisions) to “highly non-programmed” (innovative decisions) that require a tailored approach. In contrast, Ansoff (1968) divides business decisions into “strategic” (long-term) decisions with high impact, “operating” (tactical), and “administrative” (functional).

In the current study, the observation of the teams’ decision-making and problem-solving identified that decisions made by the three groups examined most closely followed the processes as described by Ansoff. How these were recognised and responded to by the linguistic analysis undertaken is further described in Section 3.3.1.

1.1.4 Summary

Section 1.1 aimed to introduce the theory and thinking underpinning the organisational research into decision-making. It has explained why the rational model and its prescriptive nature have only a limited value in interpreting how decision-making actually happens in organisations. Key notions of Incrementalism, Garbage-can Theory, Process Typologies, and Patterns of Implementation, four influential concepts of organisational decision-making have been discussed to illustrate the multiple dimensions of the process under review. In contrast to the rational model, these are all

⁷ This argument in fact mirrors that presented in Section 1.1.1 – Garbage-can Theory – where resources may be misdirected.

descriptive of what is occurring in the process of organisational decision-making and seeking to aid understanding of the decision-making as it occurred. It has been demonstrated how meetings and group communication fit into the decision process, and that the talk in these meetings is an integral part of the decision-making and solution-generating processes. However, while the models acknowledge communication as being instrumental in organisational decision-making, they fail to provide insight into the discursive realisation of decision-making – the focus developed by the present thesis. .

The next section introduces the theme of organisational change. It discusses the impact of change on communication networks and practices employed in an organisation. Change is not in itself a theme central to the thesis. It, however, contextualises the environment within which the study takes place and is therefore considered in the analysis.

1.2. Organisational Change

In 2005, the Regional Development Agency indicated that it intended to change how government-funded business support was delivered in the region. Its strategy was to create a single central Business development support agency - Business Link - replacing the six sub-regional Business Links that had until then been located within the Chambers of Commerce across the region.

This had a dramatic impact on the host Chamber in respect of the losses of both influence and revenue. The service was going to be delivered by the new Business Link organisation. Moreover, the renewal of contracts was potentially on a competitive basis between the two organisations. For the host Chamber, there was a clear need to respond to the external demands for change.

The contextual brief above describes the general background to the communication realised in meetings recorded for this study between the years 2005 and 2006. It was the time when the host organisation was going through major re-structuring.

Organisational change assumes a fundamental and radical re-orientation in the way an organisation operates. It is a major, organisation-wide, and strategic process; as such, it places considerable demands on decision-making and communication. While numerous studies document the fact that managers and organisations generally perceive effective communication during an organisational change to be one of the key factors facilitating success (e.g., Murdoch, 1997; Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Beer and Nohria, 2000; Daly, Teague and Kitchen, 2003), organisational change and communication research have in fact predominantly been undertaken in isolation from one another. Analysts

specifically point out that although research into management and organisational studies often cross-references the link with related topics from organisational communication, the exploration of the nature and depth of the relationship is often lacking (Lewis, 2000).

The organisational change undergone by the host company presented a major focus of management time and attention, and was a critical driver in stimulating the need for effective decision-making and communication. It provided a further layer of management approaches and processes used by the organisation to plan and communicate change. This in turn generated workplace discourse usually carried out in small team meetings. It was therefore necessary to consider the resulting decisions and actions in this context of change.

Section 1.2 builds around two discussion points. Firstly, it compares the management and discourse view of organisational change and the role of communication in the process. Secondly, it discusses how insights into discourse can help organisations move through change.

1.2.1 Management and Discourse Interpretation of Organisational Change

If you want to truly understand something, try to change it.

(Kurt Lewin 1890-1947)

Management and Communication Studies approach organisational change differently. Management Studies conventionally drive and interpret change by defining future goals and processes, whereas Communication Studies assert that change already exists within an organisation and it is through “conversational shifts” (Ford, 1999) that it actually gets enacted. The present section introduces both views and explores the ways in which they address communication during organisational change.

The process of organisational change is typically characterised by novelty, complexity and open-endedness (Mintzberg, 1976). It is conceptually highly demanding: managing change successfully is not straightforward. In order to develop managerial understanding and awareness of the process, Management Studies supply an array of change management models and theories. These include, for example, ADKAR (Awareness Desire Knowledge Ability Reinforcement), the Six Changes Approach,

Business Process Re-engineering, the Kaizen model, and the Deming cycle PDSA (Plan Do Study Act) model. While some of these models are designed around people, teams and the human issues of change, others lay greater emphasis on the outcomes, tasks, and work processes. Their common aim is, nevertheless, identical: to provide a tool assisting managers in driving the change.

Force Field Analysis is a widely-recognised change management model designed by the American social psychologist Kurt Lewin, and serves as a good example of how such an approach to change is applied. Force Field Analysis encourages managers to use a conceptual change management model – a diagnostic diagram – through which it is possible to analyse the change forces and choose the best course of action for driving the change. According to the model, management action starts from the recognition that organisations always exist in a state of flux, and equilibrium occurs as a result of two opposing sets of forces: the driving forces promoting the change, and the restraining forces attempting to maintain the *status quo*. In order for any change to occur, the driving forces must overcome the restraining forces, thus shifting the equilibrium.

Managers take an active role in eliminating the forces inhibiting change and in increasing the role and impact of the forces driving the change. In Lewin's Force Field Analysis, the role of communication in the change process is neither overlooked nor downplayed; in most cases, it actually presents one of the key forces in the model. The Force Field Theory, however, fails to provide information regarding how communication is or should be conducted in the change process.

In contrast, Communication Studies approach change from an entirely different perspective. They assert that change is, in fact, a socially constructed reality in which the objective change is only what we say it is and what we experience it to be through social interaction (Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974; Watzlawick, 1984). This perception fundamentally shifts the efforts of change management from treating change as an imposed entity to, rather, an entity that evolves from resisting the unknown towards gradually accepting the new, never previously experienced, reality. This social constructionist view of change represents a radical move in the thinking and in the perception of an individual or a group, and is fundamentally different from that held by management studies.

Communication Studies emphasise the role of the manager in communicating the change because it is through talk that resistance and uncertainty – the two greatest

and most frequently cited inhibitors of a successful change – may be eliminated. Discourse research therefore addresses the actual communication practice during organisational change, when an increasing number of studies (e.g., Ford, 1999; Anderson, 2003; Elving, 2005; Suchan, 2006) confirm the view that an understanding of how to communicate and undertake workplace interactions effectively provides an extremely powerful tool for influencing the progression and the implementation of change.

In sum, both management and discourse interpretations of organisational change, within their respective remits, are clearly regarded as contributing to the understanding of the process of change management and of the importance of communication within this. It, however, appears necessary to establish more accurately the agency of communication and how this may positively impact on change management.

1.2.2 Communication and Decision-making during Organisational Change

The benefits of sustained communication during organisational change have been generally established, and claims such as “all organisational changes are facilitated through communication processes” (Lundberg, 1990: 6) are no longer perceived as ultra-radical. Studies have been undertaken to demonstrate that language provides the medium for constructing organisational reality and change (e.g., Heracleous and Barrett, 2001) and the benefits of recognising communication as an instrument for managing change have continuously been developed through field studies and experiments (e.g., Schweiger and Denisi, 1991; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Daly, Teague and Kitchen, 2003). Research is being undertaken in both management and discourse traditions with the two fields continually converging and mutually strengthening each other (e.g., Lundberg, 1990; Clampitt, DeKoch and Kashman, 2000; Frahm and Brown, 2005; Suchan, 2006).

In contrast, the link between communication and decision-making during organisational change has been explored only minimally. It is maintained here that the reason for this is due neither to the lack of rigour nor to some logical incongruity between the two. The answer to how communication influences decision-making during organisational change is believed to be more simple: strategic, operational, and administrative decision-making processes remain the same even during organisational change. Hence,

while communication is recognised to be facilitating the implementation of decisions, the role of talk in the decision-making process at times of change has been disregarded.

The contribution of discourse-oriented studies therefore does not rest in attempting to inform the decision-making research in terms of the type and number of decisions that should be made. Instead, linguistic research draws the link among communication, decision-making, and organisational change more comprehensively by situating the analysis in the rationality of the local context of change and interrelates this with “discourse, thought and action of organizational actors” (Heracleous, 2002: 255). Such an approach is perhaps more deductive, relying on the interpretation of the observed phenomena. In its research perspective, however, it surpasses the notion of discourse being merely informational as this approach systematically demonstrates the constructive role of discourse in forming the social and organisational reality (Heracleous and Tsoukas, 2002, cited in Heracleus, 2002).

The current thesis, for example, analyses three discursive practices that were heavily exploited in the meetings of three managerial teams during organisational change. Although the connection between decision-making and Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations has never been investigated, research examining the implementation of decisions at times of change has repeatedly pointed out that justifications (Accounts) are not only helpful in explaining the need for a change, but also that they are a way of giving direction to the decision-making process (Nutt, 1997; 1998). A further, related observation supporting the role of Explanations in affecting the reception of decisions communicated has been made by Clampitt *et al.* (2002). They (*ibid.*) promote the view that uncertainty and stress are more effectively reduced by timely and honest information than by information that is complete yet arrives with a delay.

Discourse and communication thus provide a richer portrayal of an organisation than that of ‘what people happen to talk about’. Discourse and communication are central to the understanding of how individuals interpret the meaning of change as they illuminate the actions individuals take in response to it. A deeper understanding of specific discourse practices employed in organisations during change, may thus “help change agents both understand the intricacies of the organizational setting as well as manage the change process” (Heracleous, 2002: 257). In the present analysis, these constitute the research focus, the investigation of which is constrained situationally by change

and undertaken in relation to the organisational action as it took place in business meetings.

1.2.3 Summary

The section has introduced a number of approaches to managing change from both management and communication perspectives. It has linked these to the decision-making process and and to three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – examined in the present thesis.

1.3. Workplace Discourse

Having acknowledged that discourse is implicit within the models of organisational decision-making, change management and team meetings, this section aims to move the focus to place the study within the existing workplace discourse research. This will complete the final element of the three interrelated themes on which the research is based and progress from the conceptual models and frameworks to the actual discourse through which change is enacted.

1.3.1 Boundaries of Workplace Discourse

The current study aims to provide an insight into workplace discourse. Specifically, it examines how decisions are arrived at through talk in the course of everyday workplace interaction enacted at the managerial level of a large public organisation, i.e., it investigates how talk is used to do work.

Discourse boundaries are not, however, always clear; boundaries among related discourse types are even less so. The transcript below will be used to illustrate the overlap among the categories of workplace, business, institutional, professional, and organisational discourse. It has been applied here in proposing an argument that the definition of the discourse type is perhaps less about the conflict between the eclectics and the purists problematising their area of scrutiny; it is more about understanding the scope of discourse to be researched, about establishing a suitable approach towards the analysis of the data, and about the application of the findings in the respective area of the research enquiry.

The Data Sample 1.3-1 (below)⁸ extracts a discussion during which the International Trade Advisers’ team is discussing a specific work process and is planning a future strategy – a type of talk legitimately classified in the context of this thesis as an example of *workplace discourse*:

Data Sample 1.3-1: We need to be much cannier next year

- ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair and International Trade Advisers Team, Senior Manager, <M> Max, <S> Sam and <R> Rachel – International Trade Advisers, <D> Dee – Director of a telemarketing company, external visitor
- 137 <M> Can I ask, when an appointment is agreed, [<D>Yeah?] is it then confirmed with an email?
- 138 <D> Yeah.
- 139 <M> with /?/
- 140 <D> And what we do is attach (28:00) uhm, you know the FAQs?
- 141 <M> [Yeah]
- 142 <S> [Yeah yeah]
- 143 <D> We attach [[that as well. Yeah.]]
- 144 <M> [[I know this one.]] Right. Ok.
- 145 <D> (28:05) (Dee making a note) (3. 5) Right. (1. 5) Ok. Is that ok? (p)
- 146 <J> We need to be much cannier next year, not just about the people who we see.(28:20) (2) It's- - we're fishing in an ever-decreasing pool, [<S>Mhm] if they reckon, there're four thousand, four to five thousand exporters in (city), ok? If we're seeing two hundred and fifty minimum companies a year, (0. 8) that are supposed to be a part of that four thousand, of which we must have seen already a thousand and something over the last couple of years, (39:40) (1. 5) [<S>Mhm] it's getting smaller and smaller. Now I don't believe for one minute there's four thousand exporters, I believe there are forty thousand, 'cause they haven't taken into account media, creative industries, [<S>Mhm] design, BPS and so on. [<S>Mhm mhm] But we need to get CANNIER, about how we do this. Are there other databases we can use, that are that are brighter, more intelligent, funnier, more frivolous than our own? (29:00)
- 147 <M><S> (laugh)
- 148 <D> (laughs) (joins in)
- 149 <R> (laughs)
- 150 <D> I wish I could say yes, but to be honest, we've bought data from so many different sources.

The extract, however, also has the potential to be representative of any other workplace discourse-related category. For example, the purpose of the meeting is to do business – to plan and agree a telemarketing campaign that was, in this case, to be carried out by an external company, here represented by Dee, its director. Under this consideration, the exchange can be described as “social action in business context” (Bargiela-Chiappini *et al.*, 2007: 3) and classified as *business discourse*. Under the label of *institutional discourse*, the exchange displays a clear “asymmetry in relationships” (Drew and Heritage, 1992), notable especially in turn T146 (highlighted), in which Joseph, the team’s Senior Manager (SOM), allows himself the space wittily to combine a metaphor with a proposition of a strategic future plan for the team. If the category of *professional discourse* were applied, the expert role of Dee in controlling the professional side of the interaction could then be forefronted as she is the only

⁸ A complete list of transcription conventions is provided in Appendix 2.2.

person in the group to possess professional telemarketing knowledge. Finally, if further subdivision were to make a valid contribution, a neutral category of *organisational discourse* could be introduced in order to label this example.

In sum, the language of meetings may, it is clear, be investigated from multiple perspectives within which the categories conventionally used to describe related discourse types inevitably overlap. In order to both delineate and fortify the individual discourse categories, researchers undertake occasional reviews of studies originating in the respective areas (e.g., Drew and Heritage, 1992; Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Koester, 2006; Bargiela-Chiappini *et al.*, 2007). Overall, specialised terminology aims to add greater clarity, rather than confusion, and has its purpose especially in cases where determining research focus and relevance are important.

In respect to this study, the label of 'workplace discourse' seems to be most appropriate. Decision-making is investigated from the point of everyday workplace practice. The analysis thus provides a view, for example, additional to studies positioning themselves in the area of professional discourse and examining the role of gender in conducting meetings (e.g., Holmes, 2006), or to studies undertaken under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis and investigating the inequalities and asymmetries associated with the ideology of the institutional language in different contexts (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Iedema, Degeling, Braithwaite and White, 2003; Berry, 2004). By formulating the overall orientation of the study, its research goals, and the methodological approach to the data, each of the studies establishes the fit between the research findings and its application, and thus overcomes the more academic dispute over the appropriateness of its boundaries. In effect, the recorded data always remain the same while the research questions influence the methodological choices of the transcription, analysis, and data presentation, and so they ultimately determine the boundaries of a particular discourse category.

The following section discusses the role of workplace discourse research and summarises the debate on relevant approaches to the analyses of discourse data.

1.3.2 Approaches to Analysing Spoken Workplace Discourse

In complex research environments, such as those presented by business organizations, a mono-method approach is at best narrow, and at worst inadequate.

(Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, 2001: 249)

The current section discusses the paradigm of the interdisciplinary approach to spoken workplace discourse and makes a case for adopting a combination of Conversation Analysis (CA) with an ethnographic approach to the analysis of decision-making in meetings. Traditional approaches to discourse are represented by Speech Act Theory, Conversation Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Ethnography, Pragmatics, and Variation Analysis, and have been comprehensively reviewed by, for example, Shiffrin (1994). Although they still constitute the core tools of discourse research, workplace discourse analyses are increasingly expected, firstly, to work with non-language data and, secondly, to interpret the results obtained through their analyses in the context of the wider environment. In other words, workplace discourse research is required to demonstrate its application and the benefits it can bring to the business and the workplace.

In order to obtain a view that is interdisciplinary in nature and serviceable to the business community, workplace discourse research is forced to use multiple methods of enquiry. The fact that current research into spoken business and workplace discourse indeed tends to pursue an applied purpose may be confirmed, for example, by studies undertaken over the past two decades. Some of these projects have been large-scale, such as the Language in the Workplace Project (2000) led by Janet Holmes in New Zealand, and have resulted in a change of workplace communication practice or have even assisted in the formulation of nation-wide communication workplace policies. In other instances, such as the study by Poncini (2004) of multilingual business meetings and Spencer-Oatey's (2000) work on intercultural negotiations and rapport management, the studies expanded workplace research beyond the categories of standard, mono-cultural research settings. In all instances, the studies were working with authentic data; and in all instances the studies were data- rather than theory-driven.

The necessity to produce findings directly transferable to the workplaces of their origins therefore seems to lie at the heart of multi-disciplinary discourse research. As Bargiela-Chiappini *et al.* (2007) point out, this in turn places new demands on the researchers, who, in order to interpret the data, are increasingly compelled to select and combine

a number of concepts, rather than using the same approach throughout. Whether this multi-method approach is taken to the detriment of the depth of the linguistic insights may be hard to establish. However, it is clear that the applied research objectives are setting in motion the wheels of the contemporary workplace discourse more readily than are the goals defined solely for the purposes of advancing theoretical enquiry.

Sarangi and Roberts (1999) note an identical trend. In an extension to the argument supporting the applied role of linguistic research, they warn against reducing the debate to the battle between voices advocating the irreducibility of the theoretical scrutiny, on the one hand, and those defending the practical use and relevance of workplace and institutional discourse research on the other. As the researchers (*ibid.*) argue, such polarisation takes away research opportunities of engaging in more integrated projects where discourse analysts can work alongside practitioners and in collaboration develop different methodologies. Such a loss, in turn, decreases the potential of the research to make a greater contribution to solving problems and to generating new knowledge.

How, then, is it best to approach the complex challenges presented to researchers in the domain of workplace discourse? One of the approaches considered as potentially suitable for the analysis of decision-making in meetings was Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA, as a methodology, offers a number of potentially relevant features: 1) it is interdisciplinary and attempts to combine a linguistic analysis with the wider context of social, political, and economic structures; 2) there is a growing volume of literature and reference material that could be drawn on, pioneered by the work of Norman Fairclough, Tuen A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak⁹; and 3) CDA considers the role of power in discourse. CDA thus presented an interesting research avenue into the analysis of decision-making.

It was, however, decided not to pursue the CDA route. Despite its possible advantages, CDA lacks a number of procedures that form the core of CA methodology and these were considered important in the analysis of spoken meetings data. Most importantly, it was the absence of the orientation to the natural, turn-by-turn unfolding of interaction and the understanding that may be gained from the sequential nature of talk. It was deemed more appropriate to analyse “the communicative competencies which people are using as they organise their talk collaboratively” than to “interpret participants’ conduct in terms of the analysts’ theoretical or political concerns” Schegloff (1991,

⁹ See Wooffitt (2005: 137-145) for a comprehensive overview.

1995, cited in Wooffitt, 2005: 145). In addition, there was a slight concern that by forming preconceptions regarding the communicative and political environment of the target organisation, CDA was not best placed to develop long-term research relationship. Koester (2004: 20-21) summarises this potential for conflict as follows:

Obtaining permission to gain access to an organization, and subsequently gathering information, involve building a relationship of trust with the members of the organisation with whom one is dealing (who usually wield a certain degree of power); and such a relationship is not compatible with an adversarial stance.

The strength of the relationship between the organisation and the researcher was nevertheless very important for the success of a longitudinal observation. The study took place over a year; unrestrained access was required and granted. As a consequence, the researcher was able to situate the analysis and the interpretation of the conversation data within the context of the target organisation.

The approach adopted in the current study has opted for a combination of conversational-analytic and ethnographic methods, as together they seemed to be exceptionally suitable for the analysis of decision-making in meetings. This was for two reasons in particular: firstly, since workplaces are conventionally recognised to be “held together by communicative practices” (Sarangi and Roberts, *ibid.*: 1), it is valid to examine the fine-grained character of conversations occurring within an organisation; secondly, decisions are always made in relation to time and to the surrounding environment, and an analysis of decision-making talk should therefore take the impact of context into account.

Combining CA with Ethnography then helps in resolving one of the toughest research decisions: to what depth and from which perspective the context would be considered. Although context is generally argued to be one of the most important facets of workplace discourse, the views as to how it should be approached vary substantially. The difficulty of involving context in an analysis of spoken data rests in the fact that context may be viewed from a whole expanse of levels, ranging from the narrow, local linguistic context to the wider socio-cultural context. Any of these levels may be potentially relevant to the respective analysis and this needs to be considered and defined when undertaking the examination of decision-making.¹⁰

¹⁰ The role of and approaches to context in workplace discourse have been comprehensively discussed by Koester (2006).

Pure Conversation Analysis traditionally takes a very narrow view of context. However, it does the variations in how people speak through a fine-grained examination of the unfolding interaction and by explaining the communication goals speakers pursue. These have been categorised as task-, rapport- and self-oriented goals (e.g., Lampi, 1986; Tracy and Coupland, 1990; Yläne-McEwen, 1996). Although all operate together in the real business environment, valuable insights into different aspects of workplace interaction may be derived from analyses focusing on one type of a goal at a time. For example, by prioritising task-orientation, the analysis may clarify which discursive practices are constitutive of the discourse leading to decision-making through talk.

Ethnographic research, on the other hand, enables reflection on the data within a particular workplace context, and thus informs the analysis with the sense and meaning of the decisions as these were constructed situationally and temporally. Relating the research to the actual organisational context thus grounds the research in that which Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 2) call the “ethics of practical relevance” – research motivated by and addressing the applied needs of a concrete organisation. Therefore by focusing the research on the examination of discourse in the context of operational meetings, it is possible to align the naturally occurring focus of a task-driven meeting with the fine-grained approach adopted by CA towards the analysis and interpretation of task-orientation in spoken discourse. Ultimately, findings of such research become more worthwhile as they increase the chance for introducing change into the target discourse community (*ibid.*).

In sum, the combination of CA and ethnographic research methods was invaluable in embracing the situated and sequentially constructed character of decision-making in business meetings. Although they arguably stand at opposing ends as to how they regard the wider context and its relevance to the interpretation of workplace interactions, when combined, CA and Ethnography actually make a very powerful and increasingly used research approach to workplace data (Koester, 2006). To what extent and in which manner they were applied in the present analysis is further explained in Section 2.3.

1.3.3 Research into Company Meetings

Meetings of all shapes and sizes, from impromptu chats in the corridor to weekly meetings or AGMs, serve one of the key purposes of social action – the purpose to interact face to face. The power of meetings to direct and influence organisational interaction has always granted meetings the attention of management, and has stimulated research into how meetings should be performed to the limit of their potential. The discourse of meetings has been researched from a variety of perspectives; although the aim of research has very much remained the same, the respective routes taken by researchers in order to provide more informed findings about the nature of the meetings interaction have changed greatly. This shift of focus dates back approximately to the 1980s, when meetings research moved from being predominantly prescriptive towards becoming more analytical, interpretative and grounded in natural data.

The study by Marian Williams (1988) presents one of the hallmarks that stimulated the transition to analyses of naturally occurring meetings. Williams (*ibid.*) documented that language of meetings as it was taught then in 30 widespread textbooks, had little in common with how native speakers actually used language in meetings or how they made it work for them. After its publication, the development of a clear-cut focus of the meetings research grounded in workplace and institutional contexts accelerated, and research on workplace and institutional discourse started to grow steadily along three main research themes, as proposed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 34-39):

1. Decision-making and problem-solving
2. Constitution of professional knowledge and credibility
3. ‘Becoming real’: Role-relationships, authority and identity

A number of studies have been undertaken to explore each area. For example, the theme of **decision-making and problem-solving** has been explored in studies investigating the complexities of how things get accomplished interactionally (e.g., Drew and Heritage, 1992; Boden, 1994), the interactive signalling of speakers who together solve problems and tasks (e.g., Willing, 1992), the transactional and relational goals in the genre of business meetings (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2004; Handford, 2007, 2010), participative decision-making (e.g., Yeung, 1997, 2004a, 2004b) or interactional style and strategies in meetings (e.g., Yamada, 1990; Rogerson-Revell, 1998).

The **constitution of professional knowledge and credibility** has been researched on the data of gate-keeping discourse (e.g., Yeung, 2004b), in meetings with multicultural participation (e.g., Poncini, 2004), in case presentations in medical settings (e.g., Atkinson, 1999; Erickson, 1999), in court representations (e.g., Cody and McLaughlin, 1985) or in telephone sales negotiations (e.g., Firth, 1995b).

Finally, the theme of **role-relationships, authority and identity** has been addressed by studies focusing on the analysis of power and politeness (e.g., Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), rapport building (e.g., Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2003), communication and social cohesion in the workplace (e.g., Pullin, 2007), the influence of relationship on the negotiation of discourse (e.g., Charles, 1994), the discursive realisation of status and dominance in meetings (e.g., Craig and Pitts, 1990; Sollit-Morris, 1997), the investigation of power in women's discourse in business settings (Cameron, 2000; 2001), the role of gender and discourse in management (e.g., Mullany, 2003) or the construction of identity and meaning in corporate discourse (e.g., Livesey, 2001; 2002).

The current study centres on how decision-making is achieved discursively. Specifically, it analyses decision-making by undertaking a systematic, longitudinal analysis of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations that were observed to be constitutive of the decision-making process in meetings and repeatedly appeared throughout the discourse. Although no other study of decision-making in meetings has yet pioneered this approach, the research undertaken, nevertheless, drew inspiration from and aimed to complement the existing body of knowledge acquired by discourse research.

Figure 2 below provides an overview of ten research projects, all of which either were inspirational for the study undertaken, or specifically addressed the issue of decision-making in meetings. The studies include: the Augmented Multi-party Interaction (AMI) project¹¹ and the Language in the Workplace (LPW) project¹², two large-scale, progressive projects analysing the language of meetings and offering a wide application for the research findings; the seminal research by Boden (1994) into the structure and

¹¹ The AMI project is hosted on a web-portal and may be accessed via <http://www.amiproject.org/ami-scientific-portal>, accessed 24 May 2011.

¹² The genesis of the LPW project and current research undertaken are published on the project web-portal and may be accessed via <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/lwp/index.aspx>, accessed 24 May 2011.

interactional character of everyday talk at work; research by Charles (1994) demonstrating the layered nature of the multi-party negotiations discourse; studies by Bilbow (1995) and Rogerson-Revell (1998) investigating the managerial discourse and speakers' interactive strategies and both grounded in the data set of Cathay Pacific Airways in Hong Kong; the thesis by Rogerson-Revell (1998) proposing a way of transferring the findings of her research to the language training context; studies by Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) and by Poncini (2002; 2004) providing intra-cultural perspectives on meetings; and finally, research undertaken by Marra (2003) explicitly addressing the topic of decision-making in meetings. Altogether, the projects provided the researcher with numerous insights into field work and raised her awareness of the rich set of analytical approaches available for the analysis of multi-party interactions.

Figure 2: Selected Research Projects into Company Meetings and Negotiations

Part 1/2

Author	Research project	Type of data	Time scale	Place	Research goals	Feature(s) of uniqueness
IDIAP Switzerland , University Edinburgh	AMI Project (Augmented Multi-party Interaction)	Targets computer-enhanced multimodal interaction 100 hours of meetings data, video recorded in controlled groups 2/3 simulated scenario meetings 1/3 naturally occurring speech	Phase 1: 2004-2007 Phase 2: to be continued as AMIDA Project	Switzerland, UK, Netherlands	To develop meeting browsers that improve work group effectiveness To index meetings for the properties that users find salient	Collaborative European project Created a large annotated database WIKI guidelines development Computer assisted speech segmentation Time annotation of speech sequences Release under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike Licence, i.e. a public resource
Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Harris, S.J.	The discourse of corporate meetings	Two telecommunications multinationals Recorded 8 British meetings (Quality Assurance Internal, Quality Reviews) and 4 Italian meetings (Business Action Team, Business Improvement Programme Meeting) Varied number of participants <3;19> Interviews with research participants	1991	UK and Italy	To provide an intra-cultural perspectives on meetings and carry out a cross-cultural analysis	Proposed a generic structure of corporate meetings Described their experience with the observer's paradox Provided a sample of the administered questionnaires
Bilbow, T	Analysis of chair-talk in business meetings	11 videotaped meetings 15 hours of transcribed spoken discourse Large British-controlled airline in Hong Kong Departmental management meetings (5), Coordination meetings (5) and brainstorming meetings (1) 10 members on average	1991-1995	Cathay Pacific Airways, Hong Kong	To investigate managerial discourse that occurs in business meetings Aspects considered: proportion of chair-talk, patterns of speech acts that commonly occur in chair talk, ways in which chairs convey command-oriented directive speech acts	Heavily hierarchical organisational structure yet existence of close-knit teams of similarly ranked staff working together to solve problems
Boden, D.	Organizations in action	Variety of workplace interactions (recorded): travel agencies, an investment banking house, a TV station, 2 hospitals, a university administration, meeting in the White House (1962)	1980s and 1962	U.S.	To present an empirical study of the structure and interactional importance of everyday talk in organisational settings	Service industry participants only Broad range of talk-based work activities
Charles, M.	Layered negotiations in business	7 negotiations events in English 1 in Finnish (transcribed) Interviews with the main negotiator of the seller party	1988-9 (winter-spring)	UK (Manch, Surrey and Birmingham area) and Finland (Kuopio)	Show the interdependencies between negotiation discourse and the business relationship	Choice of comparable events (as much similarity in the overall non-linguistic context) Focus on the organization of the negotiation events

Author	Research project	Type of data	Time scale	Place	Research goals	Feature(s) of uniqueness
Handford, M.	The Genre of The Business Meetings: A Corpus-based Study	Over 900,000 words of business discourse, CANBEC Corpus A range of companies, about half of the data from manufacturing industries 226 British and 35 non-British speakers; audio recorded	2007	UK	To explore whether business meetings could be categorised as a distinct genre	Systematic coding of the relationship of the speakers and of the meetings purpose Comparison of external and internal meetings Development of genre-based framework of meetings
Holmes, J. & Stubbe, M.	Language in the Workplace Project, Victoria University of Wellington	In total 2000 spoken interactions, 420 participants 14 workplaces 3 types of data: offices, factories and small businesses, larger meetings Recorded 80 meetings in 9 workplaces, (audio&video, collected written materials, e.g. agenda, reports, profiles)	1996 – 2001	New Zealand	To identify characteristics of effective communication in New Zealand workplaces To identify causes of miscommunication To disseminate the results of the analysis for the benefit of workplace practitioners	Scope and diversity (varied number of participants in meetings <2;18> and workplaces - from government policy units to private sector organizations) Participatory approach CED (Communication Evaluation Development)Three-phase structure of meetings
Marra, H.	Decisions in New Zealand Business Meetings: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Power at Work	Data part of LWP data set 2 project teams, maximum of 14 speakers Audio and video recorded, over a period of 6-10 weeks	2003	New Zealand	To investigate decisions made by middle managers in the meetings of New Zealand corporate organisations by following two projects teams in a series of meetings	Analysis of sociolinguistic features of corporate meetings discourse Proposition of a three-phase decision model
Poncini, G.	Investigating discourse at business meetings with multicultural participation	Italian SME manufacturing sports equipment Transcribed two half day meetings of international distributors	November 1996, June 1997 and June 1998	Italy (participants from Europe, Asia and North America)	To explore discourse and the business relationship at meetings attended by participants who come from a variety of cultures and use English as a common language	Departure from analyses of miscommunication Focus on strategies that seem to work at the meetings (examined against 4 analytical categories: personal pronouns, specialised lexis, evaluation, and frames and participation networks)
Rogerson-Revell	Interactive Style and Power at Work: An Analysis of Discourse in Intercultural Business Meetings	Two sets of meetings recorded in boardroom conditions in 1991 and 1992 Set 1 – audio recorded, Set 2 – video recorded About 8 hours of data	1998	Cathay Pacific Airways, Hong Kong	To investigate a series of intercultural management-level meetings at the headquarters of Cathay Pacific Airways. To identify variations in interactive style between participants and clarify the relationship between interactive style and attempts to influence others' behaviour To propose a training approach which could heighten awareness of stylistic variations in intercultural interactions	Detailed analysis of procedure-related and message-related strategies A taxonomy of interactive strategies Transfer of findings to the language training context

In conclusion, it is apparent that the current meetings discourse research repeatedly confirms the joint interests of both the business and linguistic communities in obtaining a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies used by participants in meetings. Research to date also confirms that many of these strategies are embedded in larger segments of talk. Large-scale research projects, such as AMI, attempt to handle these ‘extensive discourse chunks’ by developing computerised tools for their identification, including the identification of topic boundaries and decisions or sequences of intense discussions in the meeting talk. Hence, even though different studies venture to employ novel approaches, they still share a common research interest in studying the discursive strategies that are responsible for the development and progression of communication in meetings. This thesis shares that desire in its aim to understand how three discursive practices aid the decision-making processes in meetings.

1.3.4 Summary

This section has provided an overview of selected conceptual models of decision-making and change management, and placed talk as a theme common to all of them. It has also argued why a discourse approach to the analysis of decision-making is appropriate and explained why workplace and institutional discourse is receiving increasing attention within both the linguistic and the business communities. Section 1.2 described the wider environment within which the study of decision-making in meetings has been undertaken and established the necessity to take a multi-disciplinary approach due to the complexity as a theme of decision-making. Finally, Chapter One has narrowed down the focus of the current study to the examination of three communication practices: Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. These occurred repeatedly in the workplace discourse examined, and have thus provided the stimulus for the investigation under which the research shall be presented.

1.4. Conclusions

When Rex V. Brown (2006), an experienced decision analyst and policy maker, delivered his keynote address to the UNESCO Conference on “Creativity and Innovation in Decision-making and Decision Support”, he challenged the usefulness of current research into decision-making. Brown’s (*ibid.*) main point was that although considerable decision research is being performed, not much of it is actually aiding people to make optimal decisions – nor is it even being applied. The baseline idea advocated by Brown in respect of decision-making research is that which currently seems to pervade all disciplines: to increase the value of research by placing emphasis upon the usefulness of the investigated area and by ensuring that the findings of the research can be applied to organisations. . Parallel to Brown’s recommendations, the aim of Chapter One was to pave the way for research that will address the here-and-now of decision-making in business meetings. Specifically, it aims to help individuals understand how the decision process is conducted through talk and how they themselves can improve their ability to contribute to decision-making in meetings. .

CHAPTER TWO

Context, Data, and Methodology

Chapter Two sets out to meet three goals: firstly, to set the context for the study by providing background information introducing the host organisation; secondly, to provide an overview of the data recorded and transcribed, and thirdly, to outline the methodological framework within which the analysis has been undertaken.

2.1. Organisational Context

The organisational context provides the background to the research data and frames the subsequent analysis. Essentially, the current thesis examined communication longitudinally; all spoken data recorded were located within the corporate environment of a large Chamber of Commerce and Industry undergoing major organisational change. The change took place as a result of external stakeholders' changing the ways in which future business start-up and business support services would be delivered. The parameters of change in the public sector and the resultant team communication provided a rich source of data to investigate the decision-making performed in the meetings in times of change within an organisation.

2.1.1 The Organisation

The host Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a long-established, accredited member of the British Chamber of Commerce. Over the years it has provided a prominent independent business voice for the region in which it operates.

The Chamber is a company limited by guarantee, a not-for-profit organisation re-investing any financial surpluses for the benefit both of its members and of the city as a whole. Such status enables the Chamber to create an independent culture: it conducts its business differently from that of a private limited company, given that the Chamber is required neither to meet the demands of shareholders nor to generate for them high levels of financial return.

With almost 3,500 members representing over 170,000 employees, the Chamber offers support to businesses located in the region. Support is targeted at all

businesses, whether they be a small- to medium-sized enterprise or a company employing over 10,000 people. The Chamber membership represents a wide range of sectors of industry including professional, financial and manufacturing services, property and construction, retail and wholesale, and the creative arts and media. The Chamber is thus well placed to engage and cooperate with various employers.

The Chamber is also a key strategic player in working to regenerate the city. Over the past decade, the organisation has aided the economic as well as the social development in the region, assisting its population to gain equal access to the wealth brought by economic success. The Chamber, at times, therefore operates as a *quasi*-public sector organisation and contributes to the planning of many types of initiatives and programmes aimed at improving the productivity of the region.

The Chamber is a complex organisation with a number of specialist departments, each focusing on a specific area of the business. Often, it relies on cross-departmental co-operation in the delivery of services; furthermore, it requires high levels of 'back-office' support provided by a number of internal departments: Finance, Information Technology, Labour Market Information, Press and PR, Marketing, and Human Resources.

Typically, teams are of between ten and twenty members of staff, each with its own Senior Operations Manager (SOM). All teams employ a range of processes through which they control and manage their respective segments of the operation. This usually includes a weekly meeting where members of staff are brought up to date on key issues that may have an impact on the business. There are also a number of cross-team working groups, often focusing on a single issue or problem needing to be addressed, or where a change needs to be implemented. Again, these are led by an SOM, with representation from across the teams. Finally, there is a single Senior Management Meeting (SMT), consisting of ten SOMs, taking place on a weekly basis. Here, the CEO and his/her SOMs compile and discuss future strategy, gain an overview of the business performance and address areas of underperformance or concern.

For the purposes of the current research, three teams were selected for an examination of their talk during meetings. Two of these (Regeneration and International Trade) were externally-facing departments with a clear delivery remit,

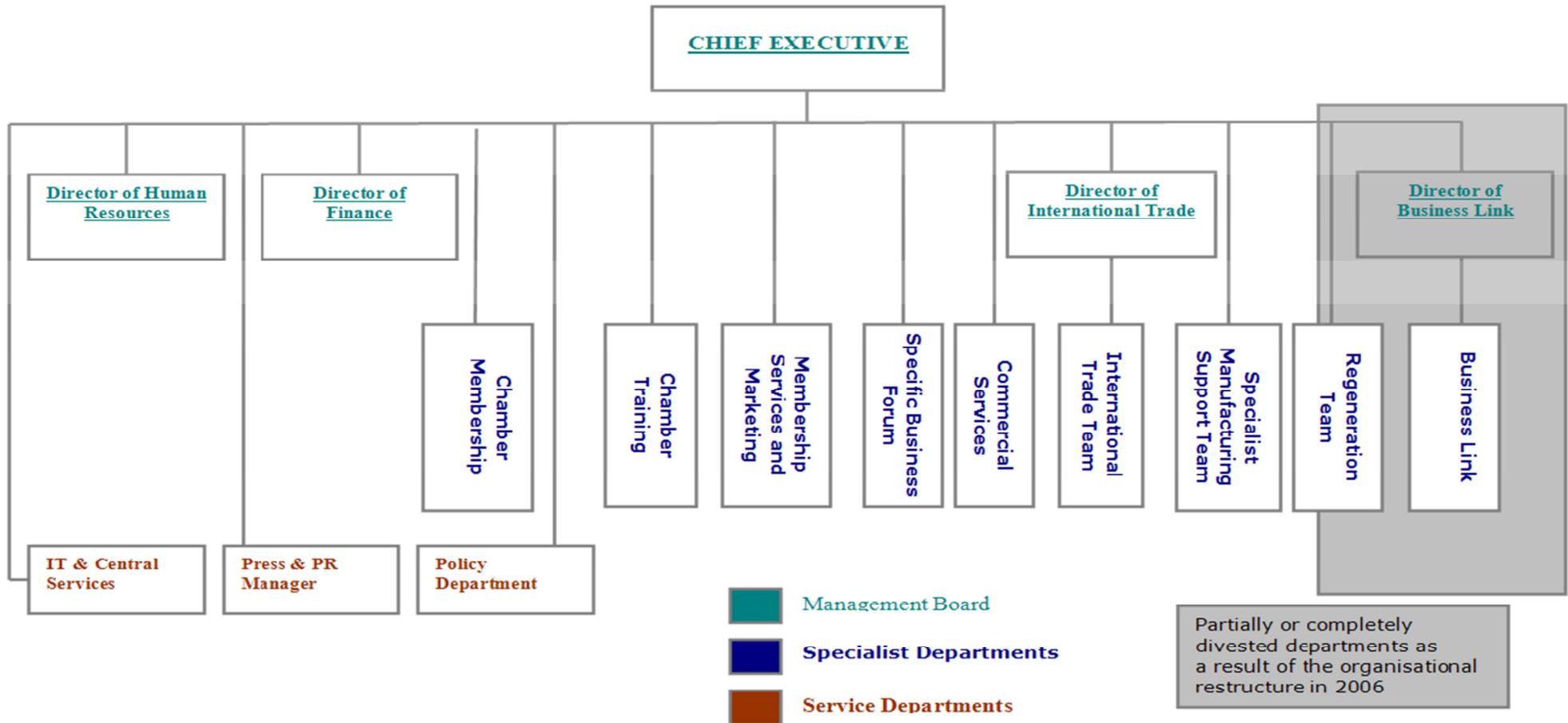
while the third (the IT user group) was an internal, cross-departmental working group looking at ways to improve IT services to the Chamber as a whole.

At the time of the research, the Chamber was undergoing a period of major change stemming from the restructuring of the delivery of publicly-funded business support services across the region. It entailed the relocation of the Business Link (BL) services (then delivered sub-regionally by six Chambers of Commerce) into a single regional body, with a concomitant and significant loss of staff, financial contribution, and influence.

The organisation chart presented in Figure 3 (below) outlines the organisational structure of the Chamber in April 2006 before the restructure. The organisational model is relatively flat, typically of functional management. The management board together with three service units including IT and Central Services, Press and PR, and the Policy Department support nine specialist, project-led teams: BL, Regeneration, a specialist manufacturing team (anonymised), International Trade, Commercial Services, a specific business forum (anonymised), Membership and Marketing, Chamber Training Limited, and Chamber Membership. Cross-departmental communication occurs along formalised lines, such as through standard in-company service protocols on the Intranet, or is transmitted *via* the respective departmental managers. BL, the divested part of the company, is marked in light grey, and is a part of the Regeneration team that delivered BL-funded business start-up programmes.

Figure 3: Chamber of Commerce Organisational Chart – April 2006

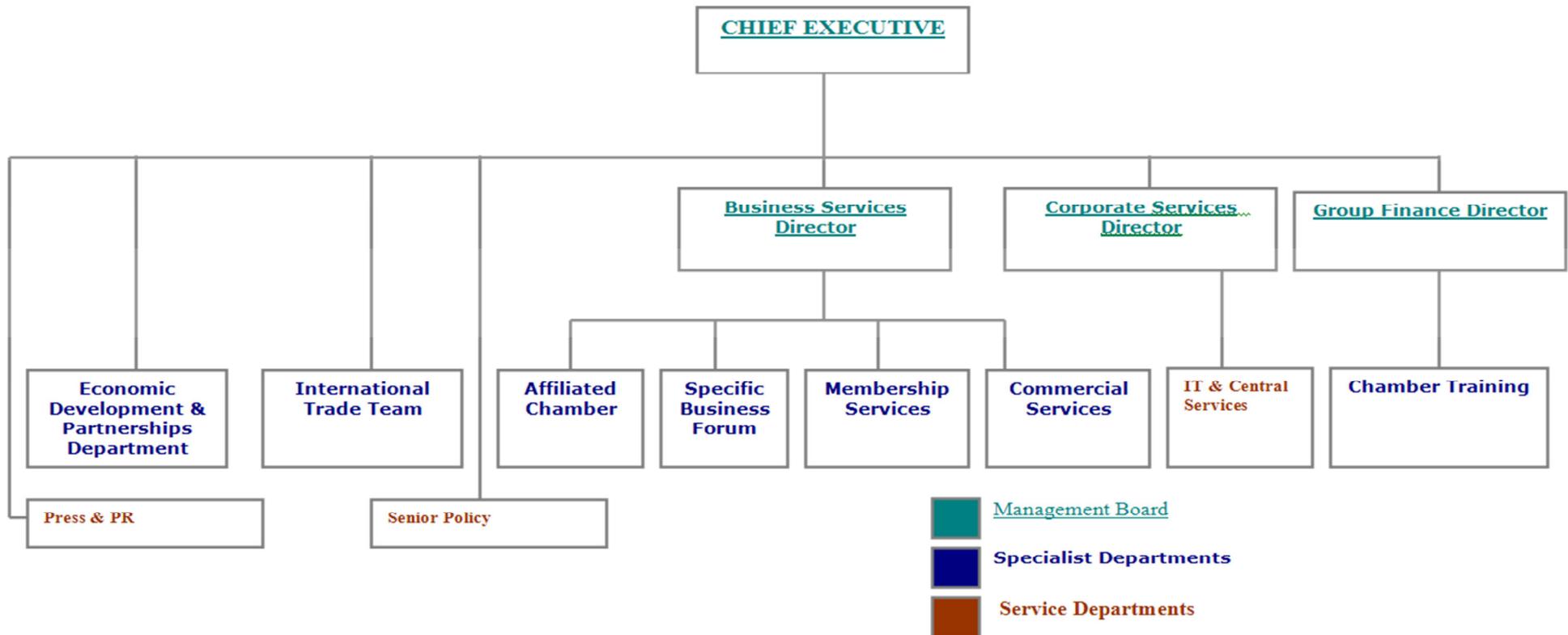
OVERALL CORPORATE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE in 2006 Before Restructure



Having undergone major re-organisation in 2006, the Chamber took this opportunity to restructure its management and operational teams. The BL services, including part of the Regeneration team, were transferred to the new Regional BL. The Regeneration and Specialist Manufacturing teams merged to form the Economic Development and Partnerships Department. A number of smaller teams were brought together; their lines of reporting changed from directly to the CEO to a director-management level. Figure 4 details these changes and depicts the current structure as it was constituted in April 2009.

Figure 4: Chamber of Commerce Organisational Chart – April 2009

CORPORATE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE in 2009 After Restructure



2.1.2 Team 1: Regeneration Team (REG)

The Regeneration (REG) team is responsible for the delivery of publicly-funded programmes that support individuals to set up in self-employment or else assist small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in improving their business performance, profitability, and long-term sustainability.

The team operates within the most deprived areas of the city, often facing high levels of multiple deprivation, unemployment, and poor housing, education, and skills. The team also engages with high numbers of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds and businesses, and has developed a wide range of specialisations in meeting the needs of these clients.

The team has fourteen staff, many at middle management grades given the complexity of the work they deliver. The team is led by a Senior Operations Manager (SOM) and operationally has two core functions:

1. The delivery of publicly-funded programmes to time, budget, and output with due regard for the complex funding, accounting, and reporting arrangements associated with the deployment and use of public funding;
2. The development of new business – usually through the submission of competitive tender applications as public bodies procure new service delivery – while maintaining strong working relationships with external stakeholders, funding bodies, and partners.

The key communication meeting is held weekly with up to eight members of the team attending. The meeting focuses on operational issues and future planning. The REG team was one of the departments most deeply affected by the change in the delivery arrangement of the Business Link (BL). The major changes included:

1. The functions undertaken by part of the team would be transferred to the new Regional BL. Under UK Law, the staff delivering these functions would be subject to Transfer of Undertakings Permanent Employees (TUPE) and move across to the new organisation;
2. A number of activities funded by the former BL would cease and as a result the posts responsible for delivering these services would become redundant;
3. There would be a potential loss of influence and power in respect of publicly-funded support as this remit would transfer to the new BL.

The effect was to reduce the team by six members of staff and to redefine the primary focus and role of the new team, particularly as it needed to create a new relationship with the emerging BL; the new team would seek to deliver services on its behalf. As a result, the team had to create new types of service delivery.

2.1.3 Team 2: International Trade Advisers' Team (ITA)

The International Trade Advisers' (ITA) team is responsible for supporting businesses within the city and the wider region to develop overseas markets both in Europe and within the global economy. This includes researching the marketplaces, from understanding the local regulations and business cultures through to the actual export of products and services, and managing the wide range of documentation and administration procedures underpinning these. The work is complex; the team of specialist ITAs, experts in particular areas of the world, advise local businesses on how to develop and export to the respective markets.

The team makes use of a wide range of public and private programmes as well as European and UK funding initiatives to achieve its aims. Regionally, the Regional Development Agency (RDA) oversees the work *via* the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) programme.

The team is led by an SOM and customarily holds weekly team meetings, in which participants bring all others up to date on key activities, discuss and highlight issues, then plan how to address these. Meetings tend to have from four to seven members attending.

The ITA team had already undergone a major change in 2004 due to the creation of the Department of Trade and Industry and the transfer of responsibility to the RDAs. The impact of the separation of the BL from the Chamber thus had relatively limited impact on the team's activities.

2.1.4 Team 3: The IT User Group (ITUG)

The IT User Group (ITUG) is a single-issue group whose members are drawn from across the Chamber's operational departments. It is responsible for addressing IT issues and the needs of the various delivery departments. The ITUG aims to facilitate

the exchange of information about the Chamber IT, its communication facilities, and its services between users and the IT department. The ITUG has the following remit:

1. To develop and maintain close liaison between the IT function and the user base;¹³
2. To encourage good IT practices and standards by users to maximise the efficient use of IT and communication facilities;
3. To make suggestions regarding IT improvements to customer services;
4. To provide the IT team with feedback on any changes to IT services;
5. To promote the exchange of IT information and expertise among users;
6. To provide a user perspective on issues referred to the group by the IT Steering Group.

Involvement in the group is open to all users of the Chamber IT services. Members are drawn from various business departments from across the organisation. The ITUG representation includes two IT team representatives (Head of IT and Business Applications Manager), and a single representative from each of the other eleven Chamber departments, including International Trade, Regeneration, and Finance (*see* Figure 4). The group meets on an eight-weekly basis in order to discuss the issues and needs identified by the individual departments, to plan how to address these and to incorporate them into the IT department's plan of work.

The ITUG was affected by the change: it was required to separate out Business Link (BL) and non-BL data, and IT functions. The group was also expected to provide new systems and processes to support the delivery of the new business to be created by the Regeneration team.

In summary, each team acted as a business unit, held operational meetings to address business issues, was chaired by an SOM, and was impacted – to a greater or lesser degree – by the external changes taking place at that time. Together, they offer a mature and structured team environment at an operations level in which to base the current research and undertake the analysis of talk in meetings. Fundamentally it was the purpose of operational meetings to talk about work and, where appropriate, make decisions to drive the work forward.

¹³ The IT function includes generic PC business functions, software licensing, email, Intranet, Extranet, specialist accounting functions, client database management, and all telephonic communications.

Next, discourse data acquired through observation of the three teams are introduced and discussed.

2.2. Data

This Section describes the process of accessing, gathering, collating, and handling the linguistic data. All choices made regarding the source, volume, and the methods of processing the data were part of the research ‘odyssey’, made in an effort to address the research questions through gathering sufficient and relevant evidence while keeping the results within manageable proportions. Typically of all research imposing a degree of selection, the choices have inevitably influenced the perspective taken on the interpretation of the data and possibly served to exclude other, equally valid, findings. An overview are reported in the four following sub-sections: data collection, the Observer’s Paradox, data specification, and transcription.

2.2.1 Data Collection

The organisation granted exclusive access to the author for her to undertake the research across three major operational departments. It took approximately six months to negotiate access to the host organisation and to establish a protocol of joint working. It was agreed that all data collected would be treated in the strictest confidentiality and be used solely for research purposes. All participants have therefore been anonymised. This entailed substituting real names with fictional identities, the editing of commercially sensitive data, and ensuring restricted access to the source data.

The data gathering took place during the period of one year and was conducted on the Chamber premises. It focused on three teams, and recorded the on-going dialogue and interactions that took place in their meetings. The environment in which the meetings were held was typical of boardroom style, with an agenda and action points. Meetings were chaired by the respective SOMs. The meetings were recorded on an iFP-999 digital player and transcribed with the assistance of audio editing software Cool Edit Pro and Sony Sound Forge 10.0. In total, over sixty hours of

spoken data were collected of which eight hours were transcribed and subjected to analysis.

The approach to the data collection firstly required choices to be made regarding the quantity and type of material to gather, in social research a process termed *data sampling*. Following McCarthy (1998), the choice was between two well-established approaches: the demographic approach, and the genre approach. The demographic approach targets a population of speakers who record their spoken output over a given period of time, whereas the genre approach additionally seeks to obtain information about the particular environments and contexts in which spoken language is produced. Historically, the demographic approach was, for example, successfully used between 1991 and 1994 for the design of a ten-million-word spoken corpus that complements the text-derived corpus of the British National Corpus (BNC).

The genre approach was applied for the first time in full at the construction of CANCODE (Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse English) between 1995 and 2000. Spoken data collected for CANCODE were organised according to communicative situations and coded for selected register features, such as the relationships between or among speakers. As McCarthy, one of the originators of the CANCODE project, maintains (1998: 8-9), CANCODE thus tried to “seek a balance between speaker, environment, context and recurrent features”.

Due to its situational focus and its ability to embrace the recurrence of linguistic features, the genre approach was also suited to the data collection method applied in the present study. Although the genre approach generates less comprehensive and less stratified data than does the demographic approach, it is nevertheless particularly apt in underpinning analyses of workplace talk as that presented here. Especially in the case of business meetings, the genre approach enables the identification of a basic “set of communicative purposes” across the meetings, and thus provides a clearer view of the context and of those features of talk that recur and, in one way or another, positively shape the interaction in a respective situation (McCarthy, 1998). This was exceptionally valuable to a project aimed at gaining an understanding of how decisions were constructed in meetings discourse in the context of organisational change.

In sum, the data collection highlighted a number of practical, ethical, and technical issues requiring extensive pre-negotiation, planning, and administration, and continual fieldwork.

2.2.2 The Observer's Paradox

One key issue to be considered is the impact of the Observer's Paradox on meetings participants and how to minimise its impact on the data collected. First described by William Labov (1972: 209) in his study of linguistic variation and change in vernacular speech, the Observer's Paradox rests on the following dilemma:

[T]he aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.

In other words, the Observer's Paradox raises questions about how social or linguistic research may indeed ethically and objectively obtain undistorted data. This section gives an account of how the Observer's Paradox operated in the meetings and discusses to what extent it has had an impact on the authenticity of the speech recorded in this project. Four examples of transcribed meetings data are used to illustrate the key points.

Where talk is being observed and recorded, both the recorder and the observer become parts of the context and thus may potentially shape the produced talk (Cameron, 2001). Data Sample 2.2-1 captures a discussion within the ITA Team, in which all participants explicitly refer to the dilemma posed by the Observer's Paradox. In the exchange, turns T35 to T66, frame the actual event. Dee, an external contractor, comes to discuss with the team the results of a recently completed telemarketing campaign. Turns T48 to T65 detail the actual discussion, in which turn T61 (highlighted) unreservedly dominates with a bold yet general statement of anxiety that speakers often experience when they are being recorded.

Data Sample 2.2-1: They try to catch you out!

ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair and International Trade Team Senior Manager, <S> Sam, <M> Max, <R> Rachel – International Trade Advisers, <Z> Zak – Junior Trainee, <D> Dee – Telemarketer, External Contractor

<S> Mhm, (0.5) yes, that certainly needs a bit of a thought, [doesn't it?]
(Dee walks in)

<J> [Well, here we are!] Wey hey, as they say! [<S> Mhm] Poo::h we haven't even got a glass of wine or a pint to celebrate or anything. Good morning!

<S> Hi! Hi Dee. (18:00)

<D> Hi! Hello.

<J> You're well?
 <D> Yes, I am.
 <J> Nice to see you.
 <S> We need another chair.
 <Z> Yeah, I'll bring another one.
 <J> You have- - You'll have a cup of coffee afterwards?
 <D> (nods) (laughs politely)
 <J> Too too much to- -
 <D> Hello. *pp* (notices the observer, they meet for the second time) (11) (Max brings in the chair, Dee sits down and takes out a notepad and a pen) (18:20)
 <J> Doo doodoo da da dooo! *ff* (sung, the door closes) You're being recorded Dee.
 <All> (laugh)*ff*
 <D> Ok.
 <J> We're teaching a (0.3) generation of business people (0.3) in Eastern Europe, Central Europe rather, [<S> Yes, heheh] how not to do it.
 <All> (laugh)
 <D> All right. Ok. I'm quite used to doing recording actually. [<S> That's ok.] I've been on the [/?/ all the time.]
 <S> (18:40) [We'd been- - we'd been recorded before you came in.]
 <D> [[(laughs)]]
 <M> [[/?/ here /?/ we're trying to convince- -]] (the phrase gets drowned in laughter)
 <S> We didn't just turn it on [when you came in]
 <D> [(laughs)]
 <R> We used to use it for different things /and to take orders/ *pp*
 <M> Yeah.
 <J> Did you? I'd get- - I get quite defensive, when someone says on the telephone, that this call may be recorded for training purposes, 'cause you think BOLLOCKS! [<S> Mhm, yeah <All> (laugh)] They are actually recording it, to try and catch you out!
 <All> (laugh)*ff* (19:00)
 <R> We used to record it in case- - in case they gave us the wrong registration, and we could say /ha ha, it was your fault, we're not replacing it/ free of charge
 <J> I should think not, NOTHING should be FREE of charge.
 <D, R> (laugh)*p*
 <J> Right, so how are we getting on, the floor madam is yours!

Notably, what the participants found unsettling was neither the presence of the researcher nor a subsequent analysis of their spoken contributions; the uneasiness about the recording stemmed from the fact that everything said was becoming a permanent record of the participants' communication practice at work. Such disclosure presented a significant challenge to the participants' perceived notions of accountability and potential for loss of confidentiality at a business or personal level.

Although the recording equipment has been considerably miniaturised, its small size still cannot eliminate the participants' potential uneasiness about the recording process. In order to minimise the impact of the recording on the group, the teams were encouraged not to feel controlled by the recorder: they could, if they wished, switch the recorder off at any point during the recording, or request a deletion of data retrospectively.

In the course of the whole data collection, the teams asked on a few occasions for the exclusion of a certain section of the recording from the analyses. This was when either organisationally-confidential or personally-sensitive discussions occurred. On the whole, the teams exhibited an exceptionally high degree of openness with regard to their work practice. This was attributed to the professional maturity of the organisation as well as to the length of the researcher's stay with the teams.

Arguably, in a workplace environment such as the Chamber, the effect of observation on the naturalness and authenticity of meetings data has proved to be relatively insignificant. Meetings were called to do business and not solely for the purpose of research. Hence, the concern that the meetings language would have been somehow 'performed' or simulated was minimally realised.

However, what emerged as a prominent effect of the Observer's Paradox were some of the changes in the communicative behaviour of the teams. Data Sample 2.2-2, Data Sample 2.2-3 and Data Sample 2.2-4 recorded with the REG team over a span of several months and presented chronologically below, all feature the impact of the Paradox on the data. Across the data, two types of behaviour were triggered by the Observer's Paradox: 1) Short-term, conventional tokens of non-standard behaviour, such as the use of noises to imitate the recording device – instances highlighted in grey, and 2) Longer-term, represented by the emergence of reflective behaviour of participants in how they conduct themselves – instances highlighted and described with yellow arrows.

Data Sample 2.2-2: The Big Brother, no swearing please!

REG05 <P> Peter – Chair and Regeneration Team Senior Manager, Ben, <R> Roxanne, <S> Samuel, <Ma> Maria, <M> Mike, <K> Kevin

1 <P> No swearing please.

2 <S> (laughs) (2)

3 <P> BEEP BEEP.

4 <all> (laugh)

5 <R> [No /sweetener/] (the meeting takes place over coffee)

6 <P> [AWM.] (0.3) Beep! (laughs) f

7 <P> Beep beep. (0.5) Uhm

8 <R> This is Big Brother. (laughs) p

9 <P> That's right. (0.3) You can go to the diary room please, Roxane. (reference to diary room in the Big Brother TV programme)

10 <R> (laughs) ff (00:20)

11 <P> Okey dokey. (1.5) Uhm. (0.5) BEEP. (0.3) Uhm, uhm I've managed to come down and forgot one of the things I need, well, I'll talk about some other stuff first, but (0.2) uhm SORRY. (0.2) Uhm, so I will talk about SMT in a minute, uhm (0.2) 'cause I haven't got the bits of paper and I never remember. But I can talk about other things, just quickly:. (00:40) With no Kevin or Mike? I mean- -

...

12 <P> (01:05) Let's tell you about the Enterprise weekend. It' in November, some time or another, with a particular focus on women and social enterprise, there there is- - within the week, there is a women's (01:20) enterprise day and there is there is also a day on social enterprise. Uhm (0.4) we- - It's about young people uhm (0.2) in enterprise, particularly enterprise week. Uhm (0.4) the: uhm the QUEENS OF ENTERPRISE in (place name) are leading on it , (01:40) [<All> (laugh)] (01:40) and (0.2) as obviously they would do being, you know, (0.2) the: NATURAL NATURAL NATURAL [<R> Natural leaders, <All> (laugh)] f NATURAL LEADERS ff [<R> Yeah]

13 <S> (laughs)

14 <R> [The knowledge base of enterprise in (place name)]

15 <P> [Do you think this will get picked up on the tape,] [<All> (laugh)] the sarcasm in my voice

16 <R> No names mentioned, you know that- -

17 <P> (coughs) (animated) ff (mentions the name)

18 <R> [The knowledge base of enterprise in (place name)] (02:00)



Data Sample 2.2-3: I think I got it right!

REG10 Ben - Chair, <R> Roxanne, <S> Samuel, <Ma> Maria, <M> Mike, <K> Kevin

1 <R, Ma> (discussing business assists)

2 Here you go guys. We're now recording! (0.2) Uh (0.2) I think I got it right. (laughs) p (00:04)

3 <S> (laughs) (4)

4 <R, Ma> (take no notice of the recorder and continue in their discussion of business assists) (followed by a small talk while coffee and tea are being poured)

5 <R> (01:34) Are you chairing, Ben?

6 No, why? I just I'm just writing- - I just like structuring my thoughts. That's all.

... (01:58)

7 We've never chaired any of these meetings before, so I don't know why we should just start now.

8 <all> (laugh)

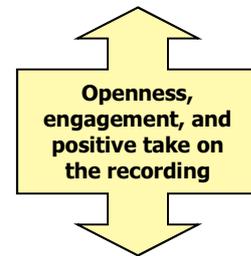
9 <Mi> True (laughs).



Data Sample 2.2-4: You are HER now? U:.....h!

REG16 <P> Peter – Chair and Regeneration Team Senior Manager, Ben, <R> Roxanne, <S> Samuel, <Ma> Maria, <M> Mike, <K> Kevin

- 1 <P> She is not here but you are just doing the taping anyway.
- 2 I am in charge. (laughs) (2)
- 3 <P> You are in charge? (0.4) You are HER now? U:.....H! (laughs) ff
- 4 <all> (laugh) ff
- 5 <P> You've let yourself go, (0.3) I don't wanna say. (laughs)
- 6 <all> (laugh) ff
- 7 <R> (laughs) ff She is- - she's gone back home, [hasn't she?]
- 8 [You are being recorded, Peter.] (laughs)
- 9 <P> (laughs) f
- 10 <R> You should let yourself go, /??/ very tall? (00:20) [Yeah (laughs)] You've been running a lot, haven't you?
- 11 You are being taped, you know. (laughs)
- 12 <R> Uh?
- 13 You are being taped (laughs)
- 14 <all> (laugh)
- 15 <S> (laughs) (4)
- 16 <R> Start again. (laughs) pp
- 17 <A> Rewind that. (laughs) pp
- 18 I am not touching that! I just know how to do this button and that button, [<Mi> (laughs)] that button and this button, and that's the end of it.
- 19 <S> (00:40) Can I do my thing again? (in-joke about making interference static noises used to deter electronic eavesdroppers)
- 20 <all> (laugh)
- 21 You're in a very playful mood today (laughs)
- 22 <S> I think it must be because last night went so bad.
- 23 Uh, it was good fun. It started off it started off really bad. You know, people came in to get dinner, and there were no big serving spoons, so we got them serving spoons, and there weren't any knives or forks.
- 24 <all> (laugh) (01:00)
- 25 So everyone was eating their supper with teaspoons.
- 26 <all> (laugh)



Many of the short-term changes in behaviour observed were typical of the Observer's Paradox and were expected to occur in the usual course of researching linguistic data. These included, for example, jokes and laughter evoked exclusively by the presence of the recorder (e.g., Data Sample 2.2-2- turns T3 and T4, and turns T8, T9 and T10), prolonged pauses used by the participants to formulate their thoughts (e.g., Data Sample 2.2-3 - turn T3) or indicating stiffness and embarrassment (e.g., Data Sample 2.2-4 – turn T15), and a decrease in the number of swear words (e.g., Data Sample 2.2-2 – turn T1). This was all very natural behaviour that has already been described in meetings, e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997). Due to its anecdotal character, behaviour of this kind usually had only a fleeting effect on the progress of the entire event.

However, as observation was conducted regularly over an extended period, a novel finding related to the Observer's Paradox emerged from the exercise. Conversely to the negative effect typically associated with the Observer's Paradox, the presence of the researcher at the meetings resulted in a number of positive, longer-term changes in the team's behaviour. The project stimulated the team's learning process, or rather the process of self-learning. As a result of increased awareness and of the team's reflection on their communicative practice, the team's behaviour started to change.

The initial occasional stiffness and embarrassment triggered by the recording environment quickly disappeared. The teams became enthused by the attention paid to them. Over the course of the study, the researcher observed the change in participants' behaviour as they became more analytical both of themselves as a team and of themselves as individuals. 'Communicating well' became a new standard. Although the researcher never interacted in the meetings nor ever indicated any evaluative comments, the attention given to the team increased the amount of attention they paid to their own communication skills, and boosted their motivation for development. The observation and recording of the meetings thus resulted in an effect that could be termed 'a paradoxical positive of the Observer's Paradox'.

Although Data Sample 2.2-3 and Data Sample 2.2-4 document only snippets of what was happening in the meetings, they both indicate the engagement and reflexivity of the team. It was precisely due to these that observation turned into a positive experience. For example, meetings sampled in Data Sample 2.2-3 and Data Sample 2.2-4 were recorded by the team themselves without the presence of the researcher. Data Sample 2.2-4 is particularly amusing since Ben, who is in charge of the recording, is teased by the team, who are pretending that he is the real (female) observer. Consider turns T3-T6 extracted in Data Sample 2.2-5 below.

Data Sample 2.2-5: You are HER now?

REG16 <P> Peter – Chair and Regeneration Team Senior Manager, Ben, <R> Roxanne, <S> Samuel, <Ma> Maria, <M> Mike, <K> Kevin
 3 <P> You are in charge? (0.4) You are HER now? U:::H! (laughs) ff
 4 <all> (laugh) ff
 5 <P> You've let yourself go, (0.3) I don't wanna say. (laughs)
 6 <all> (laugh) ff

On the other hand, Ben enjoys his role as 'the man in charge' and uses the recorder as his ally in defending good team communication practice. The exchange illustrates the relaxed attitude that evolved of the team to being recorded and yet, at the same time, it is obvious that they want to perform well as communicators.

Although these are selected examples, the longitudinal observation recorded this type of team interaction throughout the year. As a result of working with the researcher and of their motivation continually to develop, the REG team started to seek practical measures to aid their development. After about eight months of recording, the team asked for an audio copy of their meetings. The team decided to use the recordings of their past discussions to inform their future plans as the team was then formulating a new strategy and vision. The recordings of the team's weekly meetings provided evidence of the change process as it was experienced and handled by the team at the time of the company's restructure. Thus, the recordings outlived the research purpose and became a tool through which the team could actively reflect on their communication practice.

The audio data collected contain meetings recorded both with and without the researcher's being present on site. On comparison, no disparity in the observed phenomena has been identified between the two sets. The short-term and longer-term behavioural changes observed in the meetings data have been summarised in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Observer's Paradox – Short-term versus Long-term Behavioural Changes

Short-term - conventional	Longer-term – reflective
Situational jokes and teasing	Increased engagement in the discussions
Drop in swear words	Increased motivation to make a positive contribution
Prolonged pauses	Reflective discussions on the theme of good team communication practice
Overacting, e.g., deliberate whispering, mumbling or shouting of swear words directly to the recorder	Procedural changes in running the meetings (e.g., sharing the chairing responsibility, following an agenda, following up more systematically on the action points)
Use of the "off the record" expression as a side comment	Analysis of own communication skills
Treating the recorder as a meeting participant	Self-reflection and formulation of own recommendations

In sum, it may be argued that although the Observer's Paradox cannot be eliminated from the collection of multi-party spoken data, its impact need not always be solely negative. In a longitudinal study, the influence of observation upon the data is possibly less significant and the benefits to the participants are, conversely, potentially greater. By stimulating the speakers' awareness of their communication styles, observation and recording may facilitate the improvement of communication skills. Whether this actually happens very much depends on the nature of the professional relationship between the researcher and the research participants,

their level of engagement in the project, and their ability to learn through self-reflection.

2.2.3 Data Specification: Two Data Sets

The recorded data comprise over sixty hours of meetings talk. Approximately eight hours of spoken data were transcribed. The data were collected across three Chamber work teams: 1) the Regeneration Team (REG); 2) the International Trade Advisers' Team (ITA), and 3) the IT User Group (ITUG). These teams were selected as they were typically representative of the Chamber having a membership of between ten and 15 individuals, were lead by an SOM, had functional responsibility for Chamber work, kept a defined programme of meetings and were expected to make operational decisions. Appendix 2.1 provides an overview of meetings transcribed for the analysis – Data Set One and Data Set Two. A paper copy of all transcribed meetings is provided in the Data Annex and in electronic form (PDF) on the enclosed CD.

Prior to the transcription, the data were reviewed in a series of 'rounds' and recording maps, or as called elsewhere "recording logs", were produced for the data (Goodwin, 1994, cited in ten Have, 2004). Evidence was sought to gain assurance that the observed phenomena were not only some preconceived notions of what was representative of the data, but that these formed the core for an unbiased data-based argument.

Transcription was undertaken in two phases and two data sets were produced. Initially, four meetings were transcribed, two from the REG and two from the ITA data. The objective was, firstly, to obtain a clearer idea of how the decision process is enacted through the talk-in-interaction and to examine the variation in the talk of the individual meeting participants. The interaction was examined for *turn-taking*, *sequences* and instances of *repair*, a preparatory analytic routine (ten Have, 2004). The aim of the subsequent analysis was to identify the decision-making processes in the meetings and to understand the role played by Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in this. Results stemming from this first phase are reported in Chapter Five as part of the pilot study.

The second phase of the analysis centred on examining the ways in which the practices were employed by the teams at the time of organisational change where the constituents, roles, and the complexity of the matter discussed differed significantly. A further six hours of data were transcribed and these were selected systematically from the meetings of the REG and ITUG teams. The REG team was one of the departments most deeply affected by the separation of the BL from the Chamber, whereas the ITUG provided an excellent, comparative set of meetings bringing together voices of representatives from across the entire organisation. In addition, the ITA team also offered full access to their meetings and the researcher attended 20 out of 25 recorded meetings in a year. The impact of the changes on the ITA team was, however, significantly less severe than that experienced by the REG team as ITA activities were, for the most part, separate from those provided by BL. Therefore, a decision was made to focus the ensuing analysis on the REG and ITUG data. Attendance at the ITA meetings, nevertheless, continued and data were gathered for ethnographic purposes to ensure that a Chamber-wide perspective on change was maintained whilst focusing on the REG and ITUG teams in detail.

The two data sets produced comprise transcripts of the following character:

Data Set One includes four meetings recorded in the REG and ITA managerial teams. The meetings were internal, semi-formal, with an appointed Chair, and featuring the element of a visitor. In the ITA meetings, the visitor was an external partner to the Chamber. All four events were observed by the researcher and each featured a single objective: the formulation of an action plan or a decision. The four meetings in this set comprise 1 hour 43 minutes of transcribed interaction.

Data Set Two is of a substantial volume and is analytically valuable as it provides a diachronic collection of the meetings recorded in the REG and the ITUG teams. The ITUG meetings were held every eight weeks, when the representatives from across the entire company would attend to discuss IT problems and issues of system performance. The REG meetings were held weekly by the managers of the team, who attended to discuss project work, team performance, and strategy. In total, six ITUG meetings and thirty-six REG meetings were recorded, yielding in total nearly forty hours of spoken data. The Set documents regular discussions and instances of decision-making engaged in by the teams at time of a major organisational change within the respective departments and the wider Chamber. As a collection,

the recordings serve as an excellent progression log of how organisational change impacted on the team dynamics and how uncertainty affected the communication practice and decision-making of the teams.

The data selection was determined on the basis of conversational activity and genre. In the case of the ITUG data set, the meetings were cross-disciplinary, designed to address IT issues impacting on the entire organisation. The focus was placed on problem-led discussions as these typically required a decision to be made or communicated by a senior member of the group, and were concluded over a number of turns. In contrast, REG meetings were target driven. Team members were focused on the delivery of contracted services, such as budgets and outputs.

In total, a little over six hours of recordings were transcribed for both teams, of approximately three hours each. One entire meeting was transcribed for each group. For the ITUG, this included Meeting One (77minutes 27seconds) as it was representative of the meeting's genre in terms of its format and structure and also marked the beginning of the recording period. In the case of the REG data set, Meeting Thirty-six (50minutes 50seconds) was transcribed in full, since it marked the climax of the organisational change for the team – the team was restructured.

Further data sampling targeted the last 25% of REG meetings recorded, i.e., January - March 2006, as this was the most significant period for the team in terms of organisational change. The transcripts create a trail of discussions around the budget, the restructuring and splitting of the team, relocation, project delivery, team identity, a vision of future working, and away-day planning. In the case of the ITUG meetings, additional data were selected as random samples from across all the six meetings that were held during the year .

The following section provides details regarding the transcription process adopted.

2.2.4 Transcription

This section summarises the principles and the system used for the transcription of speech recorded in meetings, and sets out the considerations that preceded the transcription work. A complete list of transcription conventions is provided in Appendix 2.2.

Trade-offs

Although meetings clearly provide a multi-sensory experience, their spoken element is central to any kind of analysis of meetings. A transcript, a written representation of the observed interaction, captures talk in time, and enables it to be revisited and subjected to examination. It would be insuperably difficult to study the meetings interaction, content or conversational progression without a set of transcribed data. A transcript, on the other hand, despite it being an indispensable analytical tool, may never provide an unbiased and a complete picture of the observable reality (e.g., Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; DuBois, 1991; Edwards and Lampert, 1993; McCarthy, 1998; Cameron, 2001; and Johnstone, 2002). By default, it is always geared to the purpose of research and is therefore bound by a set of project criteria.

Transcription choices determining what needs to be transcribed and how this is to be achieved are inevitable; compromises occur with every transcript. These typically entail decisions between “transparency and simplicity on the one hand, and the level of contextually-relevant detail on the other” (Koester, 2001: 30). It is not always the case that greater detail need necessarily imply improvement because this may impinge upon the clarity of the transcript; or it may, due to the costs in terms of the time and financial constraints of transcription, potentially limit the volume of transcribed data to an unsatisfactory or non-representative minimum. Thus, the amount of detail necessary for inclusion in the transcript should be determined entirely by the research question and the availability of supporting ethnographic data that further contextualise the meetings talk. In this case, the key need was to adopt such a transcription system that was not over-burdened by the minutiae of talk, yet was detailed enough to track the discussions and interactions amongst meeting participants and to interpret these in terms of the decision-making process.

Principles

The principles adopted for transcription of the meetings data collected included the *principle of authenticity*, and the *principle of practicality* (Edwards, 1993). Although these two principles merely subsume desirable transcript properties under two general transcript design goals and do not eliminate transcription trade-offs, they provide a guarantee that certain standards will apply across all data and at all times.

The authenticity principle warrants that the transcript preserves information needed by the researcher in a manner true to the nature of the interaction itself. For example, in dialogic or multi-party interactions, the ignoring of overlapping or back-channelling would significantly violate this principle. The principle of practicality asserts that the transcription conventions are practical with respect to the way in which the data are to be managed and analysed. In the case of meetings data, where the transcript focuses on an analysis of decision-making, it was important to record especially the sequence of interaction, cooperation and the general flow of information. It was necessary to transcribe larger sections of data in order to capture these properties.

Transcription Conventions Adopted

The transcripts feature just under eight hours of meeting talk (7hours 56minutes 36seconds). All transcriptions were carried out by the researcher (a non-native speaker of English), then double-checked and edited for accuracy and inconsistencies by an experienced editor (a native speaker). With respect to the volume of data, all transcripts were kept very lean, in line with simplified CA conventions. Standard orthography was used throughout, prosodic marking was reduced to the minimum, and the transcripts consider no variation stemming from dialect or idiolect. On the other hand, attention was paid to features indicative of group communication dynamics, such as turn-taking, overlapping and back-channelling.

In order to assist the identification of the decision-making process, it seemed helpful to encode the transcripts for features related to the flow of information and how it is communicated, including the speech tempo, false starts, turn assistance, and information ‘portioning’, i.e., how the individual speakers used intonation and emphasis to convey their intended message. Transcription conventions were broadly based on Jefferson’s notation system for talk-in-interaction developed for Conversation Analysis. However, due to the multi-party character of meetings data and the considerable stretches of talk to be examined in the analysis, a choice was made to adopt a modified system of transcription.

In order to test that the selected transcription format was appropriate, a pilot transcription project was undertaken on data recorded for the initial four meetings. Considerations were made around three areas of transcription tasks, in which

modified transcription systems typically apply to encode for characteristic conversational features:

1. Interactional dynamics, e.g., simultaneous or overlapping speech, back-channel cues and failed interruptions, pauses, emphasis, laughter, uncertain or unintelligible speech, repetition and repairs, and information on related contextual events;
2. Pronunciation variations and lexis, e.g.; sudden pronunciation deviations, mistakes made without self-correcting, inserted direct speech utterances, the use of foreign words or neologisms, names, acronyms, and abbreviations;
3. Spelling, e.g., the use of standard contractions and lexicalised reduced forms, spelling conventions for filled pauses and back-channel cues, truncations, hyphenation, numbers, and the spelling of abbreviations.

Interactional asymmetry, cooperative and cohesive features of talk, and time flow, including pauses and speech tempo, emerged as the three most prominent aspects within the multi-party meetings data. As soon became clearer, these were vital in providing insight into the decision-making as it took place at the time of an organisational change – a period of increased communication and general uncertainty. Hence, it was useful to adapt to accommodate these features in the transcripts format, as they aided further working with the data and assisted the subsequent analysis.

The final transcription system was compiled as a result of the learning acquired during the pilot. Interactional asymmetry was manifested mainly by long turns, a feature customary to the discourse of institutional and professional settings (Drew and Heritage, 1992). In the meetings data, it was not uncommon for some turns to exceed one minute in length, which generated long stretches of running text. Commas were used to segment the flow of information as it unfolded in these extended stretches of talk in real time and as a consequence of the mental processing of the respective speakers. Hence, punctuation used in the transcripts is – dissimilarly to the situation in written discourse – not based on syntax; rather it reflects the verbal properties of talk and its production. In speech, this regular feature of segmenting information has been identified by Brazil (1985: 11-12) and defined as a tone unit, “the stretch of language that carries the systematically-opposed features of intonation”. While applied only in a circumscribed fashion, commas in the transcript mark the non-phrase-intonation contours indicative of the information segments and

hence usefully visualise the breaks in the speech flow. Full stops then indicate the final falling intonation contour of an utterance.

The significance of back-channelling and pausing has been amongst others commented on, for example, by Edwards and Lampert (1993: 23-4) or by Stenström (1994). In the context of meetings data, it was noticeable that, firstly, the frequency of verbalised back-channel and minimal responses had a much closer affinity with casual conversation than with more formalised speech events such as committees or board briefings. Secondly, utterances conventionally marked as latching were an ever-present phenomenon in meetings data, unless a pause was explicitly marked between the turns. In addition, meetings data featured a number of semantically contiguous turns in which Speaker Two cooperatively completed information to the preceding, unfinished, turn of Speaker One. This was often a very obvious demonstration of the team's involvement in the discussion. Such semantic completion of other people's turns was also used by some speakers as a strategy for gaining a turn, then either expanding on another's idea or providing their own input on the back of another's thought. Awareness of this type of latching proved particularly useful in understanding the argumentation styles of the individual speakers, and in recognising various degrees of assertiveness, creativity, and communicative confidence.

Progression of the talk is marked conventionally: by turn numbers. All turns were assigned to those speakers who produced them. Pauses longer than 0.2 seconds were measured and in the transcript are noted in tenths of seconds, in parentheses, at the place of their occurrence. Time markers were introduced as an additional mark-up convention to provide information on the interaction tempo. They not only provide valuable information on the speech rate of the individual speakers, but also assist in aligning the transcript with the original recording. This marking may be usefully drawn on, for example, for the purposes of feedback or teaching when the transcripts provide an authentic, textual record of the actual interaction. Time markers are indicated at twenty-second intervals, again in parentheses, similarly to all other non-linguistic contextual information.

Other conventions include the marking-up of laughter as a feature of social cohesion, emphatic stress marked in capitals, transcription of repetitions and truncations, and the use of the *sic* symbol to point out mistakes made by speakers without self-

correcting, as otherwise the error could appear to be a transcription error. Non-verbal communication was transcribed when it was audible, i.e., banging on the table to reinforce a point or clapping.

A complete list of the transcription conventions used in the current study is presented in Appendix 2.2 and a full transcription of the data constitutes the Data Annex.

2.3. Methodology

[S]tudies in work settings usually require researchers to insert themselves into relatively unfamiliar contexts, and so theoretical and methodological issues of what constitutes the domain to be researched are particularly tough questions to be answered.

(Sarangi and Roberts, 1999:389)

The present section describes the procedure adopted for the analysis of meetings data and expands the introductory rationale for employing a CA-ethnographic research approach initially presented in Section 0. It is divided into four sub-sections setting out:

1. The framework used to situate the analysis of decision-making in meetings in the wider context of the organisation – IPO model;
2. The approach of analysing decision-making in meetings through an examination of selected discursive practices – Integrated Analytical Model;
3. The extent to which the ethnographic data informed the analysis of the three selected discursive practices and the understanding of their impact on decision-making in meetings – ethnographic perspective;
4. A modified CA methodology adopted for the examination of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – focus on the discursive practices.

The first three methodological perspectives were necessary and worthy of inclusion in order to conceptualise and grant relevance to a linguistic analysis of an essentially interdisciplinary phenomena. It is, however, the modified CA methodology (Section 2.3.4) developed for the examination of the three discursive practices which constitutes the original contribution of the present thesis.

2.3.1 IPO Conceptual Model: Situating the Analysis

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) conceptual model is a generic functional scheme particularly helpful in deconstructing processes into their individual components. It is typically used to describe business or economic processes and acts as a template on which to map the structure and the dynamic of the subject under investigation – in this case, the decision-making process. By considering each stage of the model, it is possible to identify the key elements of the process under review and to map their mutual relationships. When decision-making is mapped within the IPO framework, both meetings and their constitutive discursive practices are positioned within the Process element of the model. The IPO thus provides a descriptive framework within which it is possible to identify and analyse the role of communication in the decision-making process.

The analysis of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations recognises the fluid character of organisational decision-making and the role of meetings within this. That is, decision-making rarely starts concomitantly with the commencement of a meeting. Instead, meetings represent the ‘mixing and cooking pots’ of various decision-making inputs that teams and work groups are expected to process into certain specific outputs or further actions. When a meeting is called and a group of people comes together, the process is already in motion, with individuals bringing different levels of executive power, understanding, experience and opinion, all adding to the initiation of a decision.

Visually, the Input-Process-Output model of organisational decision-making is summarised in Figure 6 below. This expands the generic IPO structure by specifying the individual components of the decision-making process as it was observed in the target organisation. Conceptually, the scheme incorporates the findings of the Bradford Studies which identified the parameters influencing decision-making at each stage of the process. In the Process phase of the model, these include “matter for decision”, “the complexity of decision problems”, and “politicality of decision interests” (*cf.* Bradford Studies model of decision-making, in Hickson *et al.*, 1985: 166)¹⁴.

¹⁴ The Bradford Studies were a large-scale research project undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s, it investigated over one-hundred-and-fifty decision case histories in Britain. Drawing on more than ten years of systematic fieldwork, the Bradford Studies produced one of the most robust analyses of

A further aspect added to the model and specific to the research undertaken is the context of organisational change. It frames the three parts of the IPO decision-making scheme (Input-Process-Output) and determines the complexity and the nature of political pressures to which decisions will be exposed externally to the meeting. In the case of the data analysed, this wider organisational context of change impacted on all meetings and decisions taken in these. Organisational change also affected the flow, content, and manner of communication at each stage of the model. Its influence therefore had to be considered in the analysis.

Finally, Figure 6 denotes the presence of the three discursive practices in talk in business meetings and acknowledges their influence on organisational decision-making. The rationale and methodology on which to analyse decision-making in meetings through an examination of selected discursive practices are further explained in Section 2.3.2

strategic-decision-making across all major industry sectors in the UK. *Matter for decision*, the *complexity of decision problems*, and *politicality of decision interests* were identified by Bradford Studies as three decision-making parameters instrumental for the decision process to occur (*see* Section 1.1.1).

Figure 6: Expanded Input-Process-Output (IPO) Decision-making Model

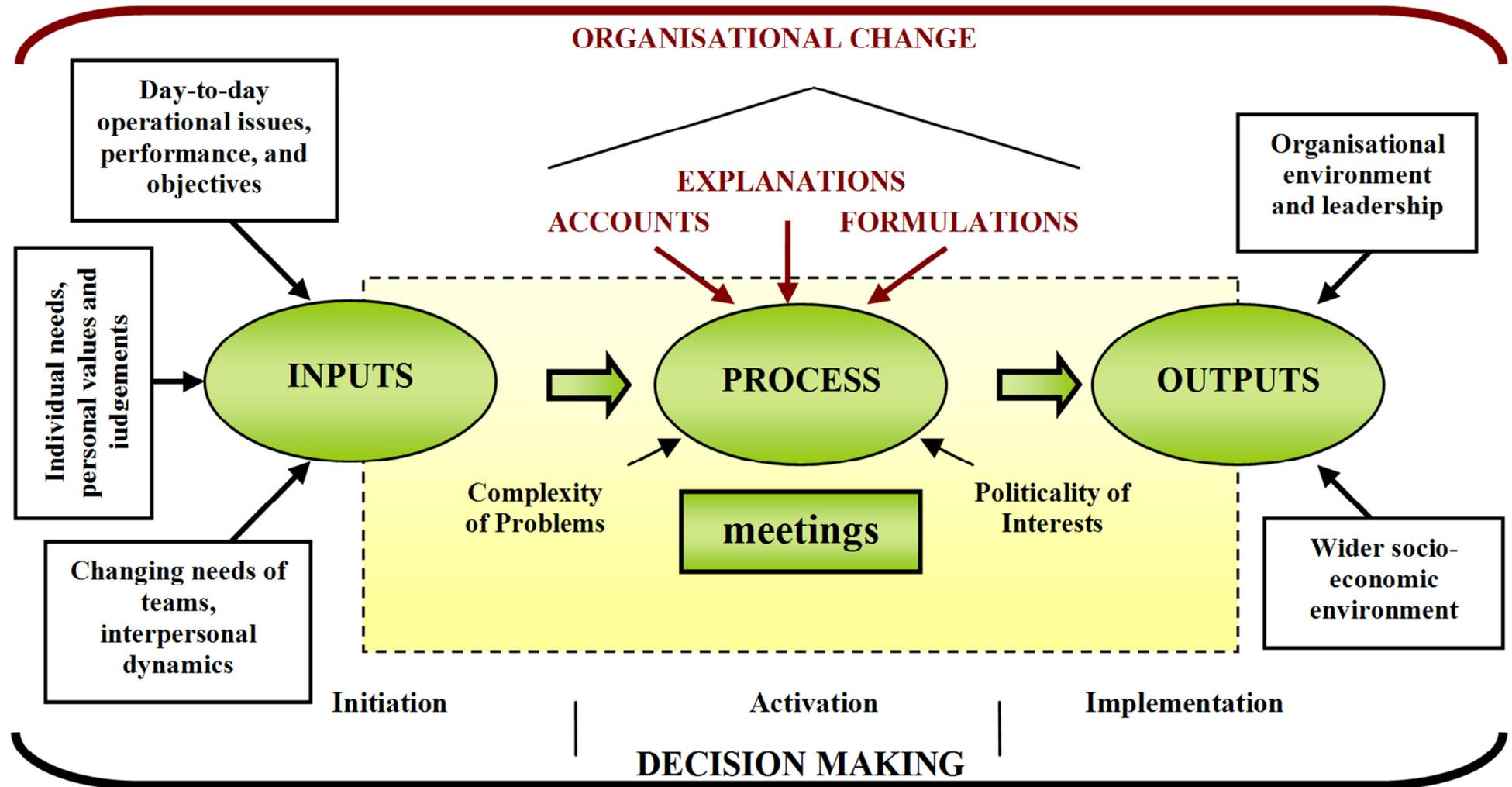


Figure 6 helps clarify the conceptual starting point of the analysis of decision-making in meetings. It is localised in the **Process** part of the IPO model, in which decision-making revolves around the *matter for decision* and meetings represent the organisational action. Meetings discussions address the decision matter and progress it discursively within the existing organisational structure. Whether and how decisions evolve in meetings is then determined by the level of *complexity of decision problems* and the *politicality of decision interests* involved. As confirmed by the Bradford Studies (Hickson *et al.*, 1985), each of these parameters may cause decisions on the same topic to be addressed and managed differently. The matter for decision, the complexity of decision problems, and the politicality of decision interests therefore constitute the underlying setting of decision-making interactions in meetings. The influence of these aspects should thus not be disregarded as they will often affect or sometimes even determine the decision-making outcome.

The **Inputs** side of the scheme emphasises that inputs may both stimulate the discussion in meetings and be brought into meetings alongside the matter for decision. The inputs include: 1) day-to-day operational matters including issues of performance and company objectives; 2) individual needs, past experience, expert opinion, personal values and judgements; 3) the rules of the organisation in how it works, including the changing needs of teams and issues of interpersonal dynamics. All of these elements influence how the decision-making process is undertaken and subsequently progressed in the meeting. They constitute a myriad of factors adding to the complexity of both decision-making and the discursive practices employed as participants attempt to work through them in order to synthesise the optimum decision.

The **Outputs** side of the IPO decision model represents activities carried out as a result of actions or decisions agreed within a meeting. Whether and how decisions made in meetings are implemented is contingent upon the wider socio-economic environment, the organisational environment, levels of executive authority, and leadership. While the outputs of a meeting are usually formulated straight away, as are often small administrative types of decisions, major decisions need not automatically be so. In fact, it is possible that decisions made in meetings do not become implemented, due to these external socio-economic, organisational or personal influences. Alternatively, a meeting may not produce a decision at all, yet

its output and discussions will inform a decision at a later point separate from the meeting. Therefore, simply to assess decisions made in meetings without acknowledging the incremental and process nature of decision-making is unlikely to provide a complete picture.

The model thus enables the decision-making process to be tracked across a number of meetings. In effect the output of one meeting may, if unresolved, become the input of the next meeting, maintaining the gist and theme of the issue at hand. The input can also occur in a number of ways: minutes and action points from the last meeting, additional related new information in the form of reports, memos, new instructions and in the retained knowledge of the individuals who attended the last meeting and who are also present at the current one.

Overall, the IPO scheme provided a conceptual framework that has been further developed by the researcher to capture the dynamics of organisational life and the interaction of teams. By recognising the fluid character of organisational decision-making and identifying the relevant forces at every stage of the process, it was possible to ground the analysis of the meetings data in the context of the target organisation. Meetings, positioned in the Process part of the scheme, were instrumental in advancing organisational decision-making. Decisions, however, could be – and often were – made or taken outside of meetings. The IPO therefore assisted in focusing the analysis of decision-making not on singular instances of decisions made in the meetings, but on the conversational practices constituting the actual decision process from meeting to meeting.

2.3.2 Decision-making in Meetings: Integrated Analytical Model

The expanded IPO scheme identified meetings as being a core component in the process of organisational decision-making. The present thesis argues that decision-making in meetings may be approached *via* an examination of selected discursive practices and thus effectively moves the focus of the analysis down through the layers of the IPO model to the level of the discourse constituting the meetings. The discursive practices subjected to the analysis have been determined as Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. They were repeatedly identified in the analysis of the meetings transcripts. Due to the pragmatic forming and impact of decision-making, the analysis required more than taking a microscopic view of the language recorded

in the meetings. Instead, it was important that the analysis acknowledged the interrelationship between discourse and the wider organisational context in which the teams operated. The analysis therefore sought an approach integrating the components of decision-making in meetings, organisational change, the discursive practices, and the transcript data. One way of representing such a relationship is suggested in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7: Decision-making in Meetings – Linear Analytical Model

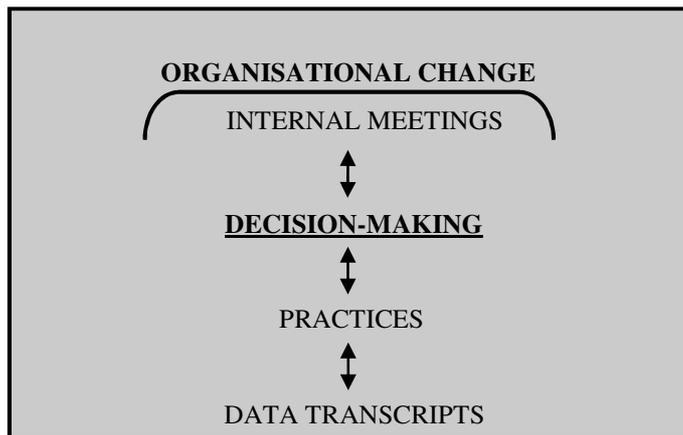


Figure 7 conceptualises the interpretation and analysis of data transcripts linearly. In the model, the analysis starts at the textual level of the transcripts (meetings data) and moves upward to the interpretation of the data in context (organisational change). Alternatively, it first situates the enquiry within the wider discourse reality (organisational change) and subsequently progresses downwards to the level of text (transcripts of the meetings data).

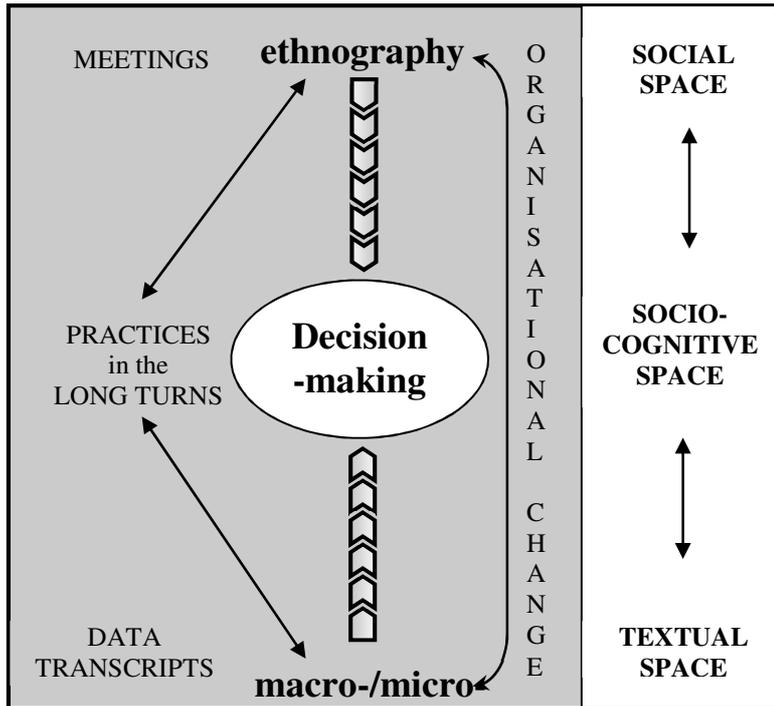
Such a linear approach to the data is highly appealing as it creates an organised progression of understanding. In reality, the individual stages of the model are, however, not mutually exclusive; that is, they do not exist independently of one another. It may justifiably be claimed that the levels of the discursive practices and decision-making are created dynamically through constant interaction with both the level of wider discourse (organisational change) and talk in meetings (recorded and transcribed as meetings data). By implication, interpreting decision-making in discourse without taking this fluid interaction into consideration may fail to provide sufficient depth to the understanding of how the practices contributed to the process.

The current thesis proposed to overcome the static insufficiency of the linear concept by incorporating the notion of “overlapping discourse spaces” as articulated by Bhatia (2004) in his multi-perspective model of discourse. Originally introduced for

the analysis of written discourse, Bhatia (*ibid.*) defines four discourse spaces: textual (discourse as text), tactical (discourse as genre), professional (discourse as professional practice), and social (discourse as social practice). The model maintains that the four spaces are complementary to each other; their conceptualisations occasionally overlap. The overlap occurs especially between the tactical and professional spaces. Since they operate closely together, Bhatia (*ibid.*) labels their shared domain with the term “the socio-cognitive space”. The model asserts that the socio-cognitive space provides an understanding of the exploitation of generic resources through which professionals achieve their objectives and maintain professional solidarity. As Bhatia (*ibid.*: 21-22) proposes, the socio-cognitive space embraces both the tactical and professional spaces of discourse and it therefore has the potential to explain “the construction and use of written discourse the way it is done in professional practice” (*ibid.*: 21-22). This is a strong claim which has one fundamental implication: the understanding of how language is used institutionally and tactically by work professionals may be obtained from a simultaneous consideration of both the textual space of discourse, including the relevant features of the textual form, and the use of discourse in its broader context of the social space. As the tactical and professional spaces *de facto* emerge from the surrounding social and textual spaces, yet are not absorbed by their formal properties, the socio-cognitive space may be accessed and interpreted *via* an analysis of its two surrounding domains – discourse as text and discourse as social practice.

Although proposed for the analysis of written discourse, the notions of complementarity and the dynamicism of the multi-perspective model are very similar and, in principle, immediately transferable to the analysis of conversation. The present thesis has therefore adopted Bhatia’s notion of discourse spaces and related these to the dual CA-ethnographic analysis of the meetings data proposed in the current thesis. It placed decision-making at the centre of an integrated analytical model in which the influences of both the ethnographic findings mapped from the IPO model and the macro-/micro-textual analyses of meetings transcripts may be examined and understood. The understanding and interpretation of how the practices informed decision-making in meetings was therefore not obtained from either the top-down or bottom-up type of analysis but resulted from the synthesis both of the textual and the wider, non-textual data collected in the target organisation. The perspective adopted is illustrated visually in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Decision-making in Meetings – Integrated Analytical Model



Within the Integrated Analytical Model presented in Figure 8, the macro-/micro-analyses are undertaken at the level of meetings transcripts. At the textual level, the macro- perspective principally enables the mapping of the practices either singularly or in combination with each other in relation to decisions made or reported in the meetings and also in relation to other speakers’ contributions. It tracks the sequential progression of the practices in the entire meeting and directs attention to the discourse surrounding decisions. The micro-analysis subsequently focuses exclusively on the individual turns. It explores the role, patterning and impact of the discursive practices in the long turns of the meetings contributions, and explains how the practices behaved in these.

The wider, ethnographic perspective was gathered from a range of non-textual sources in the form of appropriate memos, emails, minutes and planning guidance. This collected ethnographic information was necessary to complement and also challenge the findings of the textual analysis. It grounded the examination of meetings discourse in the organisational context and so assisted in interpreting the choice and use of the discursive practices in meetings, the effect to which they were employed, and the ways in which decisions were developed, announced or made.

An example from the REG data will now be used to demonstrate the dynamic interaction between the textual and social spaces of business meetings within which decision-making emerged discursively from the use and combination of selected discursive practices.

The Formulation below Data Sample 2.3-1 encapsulates a cornerstone decision that marked the beginning of a new era for the REG team. The decision was announced by Peter, an SOM, as part of his team's weekly operations meeting. It was made in REG36 in turn T22, in the sixth minute of the meeting. It represented the climax of a period of detailed work in re-defining the role of the team in response to major organisational change.

Data Sample 2.3-1: So, what I've decided to do

REG36_Peter

22 Peter... (0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) ...
(06:00)

The utterance is a classic example of a Formulation's preserving, transforming and possibly negating the previous talk. It marks the shift in the progression of the discussion and endorses the route towards future working. Both the gravity and importance of the message were signalled by the use of 'SO' and a pregnant pause (one second) separating the move to announce a decision and the actual pronouncement of it. In addition, Peter used another two pauses to give prominence to the message delivered – one inserted at the beginning (0.5 seconds) and one (0.7 seconds) at the end of his statement.

When analysing meetings data, the following needs to be stressed. Firstly, decisions do not occur separately and independently of the surrounding discourse. In this particular instance, the decision was embedded in a turn lasting in excess of six minutes. Secondly, the sequential positioning of the decision is part of the news delivery strategy and it affects how the decision will be received. In the case of the REG team, Peter's decision emerged near the end of the turn – and not at the beginning, as might be expected for such a major and fundamental piece of information. Therefore, of interest is not only the mere utterance itself; it lies also in the entire turn in which the decision is embedded and the professional skill Peter displayed in its announcement. The turn, its sequential organisation, and the organisational context within which it is set frame the decision and provide an insight into how the practices combined in its making and delivery.

Consider the next extract Data Sample 2.3-2 – that occurred at the opening of the same turn (1minute 10seconds into the meeting).

Data Sample 2.3-2: Because I did wanna announce something

REG36_Peter

22 Peter ... (0.2) because I did wanna announce something, and uh it would be (01:20) ...

Already, in this introductory message delivered as an Account, Peter lets the team know he intends to announce something important. It has the impact of keeping the team silent, with their not interrupting or challenging throughout the turn – a form of behaviour unprecedented in the culture of the REG team and their normal mode of operation, generally characterised by open discussion and debate¹⁵. The turn features all three practices. After an Account-Formulation-Account-Formulation sequence, serving to set the scene and building the steps towards an announcement of a cornerstone decision, Peter then uses an Explanation, in which he provides factual information about the contracting position and the potential loss of funding. He thus re-emphasises the necessity to re-structure the team and initiates a fundamental change to the team's operation.¹⁶

The decision announced by Peter in the meeting evolved over a series of weeks as a result of external factors leading to change within the organisation. Its delivery illustrates that Peter actually deployed very effectively a wide range of discursive practices in order to communicate the cornerstone decision with its desired impact. The importance and implications of the decision for the team could therefore be interpreted only in relation to how it was situated in the wider context of the organisation. The ethnographic notes assisted in obtaining a view of how the delivery of the decision was composed as a “social practice” (Bhatia, 2008), i.e., it contributed organisational and pragmatic insight into how the decision was formed; a view that could not be deduced merely from the text at a specific point in time. In contrast, the impact of the decision on the team rested in how Peter planned to deliver the news, in how his choice of discourse practices resulted in discouraging any potential interruption by team members prior to announcing the decision, and in how he managed the ensuing debate. All of these skills were part of Peter's professional role of being a Senior Manager and a Team Leader and they were manifested discursively.

¹⁵ Interestingly, in the later analysis it becomes clear that SOMs routinely dominated the discussion, yet the perception held by the teams is that the meetings were open forums.

¹⁶ A full transcription of turn T22 is provided in Appendix 6.1.

In business meetings, the social, socio-cognitive and textual spaces were thus in a continuous, dynamic relationship, all of them informing the analysis in regard to how decision-making occurred in the meetings. The analysis was therefore required to embrace this fluid interaction in how it examined and interpreted the textual evidence obtained in the meetings.

The following two sub-sections further develop the dual CA-ethnographic mechanism in examining the use of the discursive practices and their impact on decision-making in the business meetings data.

2.3.3 Ethnographic Perspective: Organisational Change and Decision-making

The ethnographic aspect of the study enabled additional insights that could only be obtained through the undertaking of the longitudinal approach to the research. The unrestricted access to the meetings and observation of the teams over the period of a year enabled an in-depth understanding of the organisational change influencing the teams. It assisted in contextualising the environment in which decision-making took place and encompassed the build-up to the changes in the organisation, as well as the acceptance and implementation of change strategies.

In addition to the observation, access was granted to a wide range of source documents. These included business plans, team delivery objectives and targets, performance reports, minutes of meetings, e-mail, memos, attendance at the REG Team Away Day and other internal materials. External documents and publications which impacted on the organisation and its teams were also examined. For example, the RDA strategy to disconnect the Business Link from the Chamber was readily available and was indeed used as a key planning tool by both the REG team and the wider organisation. This additional non-discourse data assisted the analyst in positioning the decision-making process firmly in the context of the ongoing organisational change.

The summary set out below describes how ethnographic information was synthesised to develop an insight into the character of the change process as it was occurring within the organisation, and specifically within the REG and ITUG teams. It maintains the context of organisational change and establishes the need for the

organisation to take action in moving the teams forward; in effect, identifying the 'what' and the 'why' of the decision-making process.

The change had an immediate impact on both teams because it required a complete separation between the Chamber of Commerce, on the one hand, and the BL department, on the other, and involved organisational and operational restructuring. Due to the change taking place in the immediate business environment in which the teams existed, the process placed extra demands and pressures on the teams and necessitated the taking of a number of major decisions. Communication in team meetings became an essential tool through which the Chamber was able to generate and maintain positive engagement by all departments and their staff in the change across all levels of the organisation.

For **the REG team**, the organisational change presented a major threat to their ability to deliver publicly funded programmes and existing contracts. Decisions were forced on the team by external changes in the delivery of services and by the resultant shedding of budgets and contracts. Each of these external decisions had a direct impact on the team's activities, and were instrumental in determining their future existence. The team, consisting of nine experienced project managers, met every week to discuss business matters and the performance of the entire Regeneration department; it became necessary for the team to re-evaluate every one of its projects and re-engineer the entire business strategy in order for the department to survive. A high level of discussion and planning was required to achieve this and decisions had to be made committing resources to its implementation.

In contrast, the position of **the ITUG team** differed in that the existence of the group was not endangered immediately by the unfolding change. The role of the group was twofold: it had both to ensure the smooth day-to-day IT performance across the whole company, and to define future IT requirements. This necessitated the creation of a two-way dialogue in the communication between the operational units of the organisation and its Senior Management Team (SMT). Hence, there was no need to re-structure the ITUG team as a result of the change, although there was a requirement to re-focus and re-prioritise its activities due to the changing demands of its users. For example, the REG team required the separation of its current IT systems and data into BL and non-BL areas of work, and to create new IT processes for the data management of prospective future work. The challenge for the ITUG

team was to ensure that the group members were engaged so as to be able to implement strategic decisions made at the SMT level and to influence and support the implementation of these at a departmental level. In the ITUG team, the decision-making process was therefore typically longer due to the needs to plan for the long term, to consult across the organisation, and to develop the specification requirements of the planned changes.

For both teams, the external change initiated by the RDA thus represented a period of increased decision-making activity, lack of clarity, and frequent elements of uncertainty. The decision-making required in the two teams differed slightly and this was in turn reflected in how each of the two teams approached the management of change.

The REG team was directly experiencing the change, thus the making of key decisions regarding the future existence of the team was immediately required. The weekly team management meetings presented the forums for discussion, debate and, ultimately, for decisions. Peter, the team's SOM, was leading the change, driving the team through it. In the meetings, Peter was consistently the most dominant speaker.¹⁷ The REG team change was a leader-managed change; Peter created the discourse environment in which the change could be managed and discussed.

On the other hand, the ITUG meetings were about incremental change, both in addressing the IT needs of the organisation as a whole, and in adapting and addressing priorities as these emerged from the separation of the BL from the Chamber business. Most decisions made by the group were operational and could be resolved in the meetings. More complex, longer-term IT infrastructure needs were also highlighted. However, as these required decisions and commitment from the Senior Management Team (SMT) before they could be implemented, the meetings tended to be for information only or else were used as a forum for eliciting opinions and views from the teams as to the feasibility of various proposed changes. The ITUG team change was therefore an organisation-driven change.

Identically for both teams, the organisational change influenced significantly the decision-making activity. The teams often had to implement decisions made

¹⁷ cf. REG36 macro-analysis results presented in Section 6.2.

elsewhere, for example, by the SMT or external funding partners, where the decision-making chain had already commenced. This resulted in reducing the ability of the teams to inform the decision-making process. However, they were often able to influence the implementation of the decision as part of their respective operational strategies.

The researcher rarely has the opportunity to experience change as it unfolds and observe the impact of the altering and often unfamiliar context on decision-making as it occurs within the organisation at that time. The longitudinal character of the study has enabled such exposure during which the ethnographic information collected was continuously informing the analysis of discourse data and thus constituted an indispensable complement to the fine-grained, yet narrowly-focused, approach of the CA methodology. Specifically, ethnographic research aided the understanding of the motivations and drivers stimulated by change and exhibited by individuals in their meetings discourse. More importantly, the recasting of the organisation into its new form was conversationally enacted in the patterns of verbal interaction. These occurred during meetings discussions and constituted the decision-making of the teams. Also, the participants' level of understanding of the change affected their choice and evaluation of and their reaction to the discursive practices employed in the meetings. The analysis of the ordering and use of Explanations, Accounts, or Formulations employed in the meetings therefore benefited from the additional ethnographic insights into the context and content of the meetings discussions.

The next Section concludes the overview of the approach to the research and introduces the modified CA methodology developed for the analysis of the three discursive practices under investigation.

2.3.4 Conversation Analysis: Focusing on Discursive Practices

Conversation Analysis (CA) is conventionally employed for the examination and interpretation of naturally occurring conversation. The principle orientations of CA were established in the 1960s and 1970s by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schlegloff, and Gail Jefferson, who centred these on what they labelled “the orders of talk-in-interaction” (ten Have, 2004). CA methods may be described as systematic and replicable, enabling researchers to undertake an in-depth analysis of localised

instances of natural talk, of its turn-taking and conversational management. Wooffitt (2010: 13) summarises the CA approach towards the analysis of conversational data in four points:

1. It examines language as social action;
2. Talk-in-interaction is taken to be systematically organised and ordered;
3. The primary data for research are audio (and, where necessary or appropriate, video) recordings of naturally occurring interaction. Transcripts assist the analysis of audio/video materials;
4. The transcription system provides a detailed characterisation of ‘messiness’ of everyday interaction, focusing on speech production and turn-taking organisation.

Psathas (1995: 45) further asserts that CA as an analytic approach “seeks to describe and analyze social actions, the organizational features of various, naturally occurring, interactional phenomena”. This claim acknowledges an important observation: talk lies at the heart of human interaction, invoking, negotiating, and formulating social action, its advancement and outcomes. Moreover, Psathas’ definition derives from one of CA’s possibly strongest analytical insights, arguing that participants exhibit their understanding of social interactions through the organisation and sequential ordering of their verbal contributions. That is, “any spate of talk-in-interaction will have a sense for its participants” as “this sense – their understanding of what-is-going-on-right-here-and-now – is, at least to some degree, displayed in the design of successive contributions to that interaction” (Schegloff, 1997 in Wooffitt, 2010: 158). The methodological potential of CA therefore surpasses that of analysing conversational phenomena. Specifically, CA embraces the relationship among the action orientation of language, the sequential ordering of the individual contributions in talk, and the resultant social action. This ability grants CA an analytically exclusive position and makes it particularly suitable in analyses of institutional and workplace interactions and processes.

In the current study, CA was one of the core methodologies enabling a deeper, finer-grained analysis of the transcripts. The CA approach was instrumental especially in mapping out the three discursive practices and their coding in a considerable volume of transcribed data. CA has also provided a repository of related research, guiding the selection and identification of the conversational practices targeted for further analysis. Although the textual boundaries set for defining Explanations, Accounts,

and Formulations in the transcripts have somewhat expanded upon the original CA concepts, the endeavour to describe these on a case-by-case basis was very much in line with the approach pursued by CA. Section 4.1 expands on this in detail by reviewing the conceptual origins of the selected practices, and relating these to the conversational meetings data.

The dual CA-ethnographic methodology adopted for the analysis of the data enabled the thesis to draw a pragmatic link between discourse and decision-making. Defining this relationship was inherently an interdisciplinary task. A closer examination of the transcripts soon indicated that although decisions in discourse were explicit, the process of decision-making was not. In order to examine the collected data systematically, it was necessary to determine correctly which linguistic forms played a major role in the mechanism of decision-making in discourse. A set of reflections that resulted from the longitudinal observation of decision-making in meetings were considered as relevant and worthy of inclusion. These were summarised as:

- Decision-making does not occur in systematic and rational stages. Therefore targeting the analysis solely at decisions in meetings provides little insight into how these were reached.¹⁸ The discursive process of formulating decisions in meetings, however, provides information on the individual meeting participants constructed sense through talk and their mutual interaction, and how they arrived at the point of decision.
- Long turns¹⁹ within meetings are significant, as it is within these that the ground is prepared in order to present or make decisions. It is therefore here that attention should be focused in order to describe the meetings discourse underpinning the decision process.
- The discursive practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations, and their inherent properties provide speakers with the techniques with which to influence the decision-making process and to make decisions.

The rationale to base the examination of the data on the analysis of long turns, was further guided by two strands of circumstantial evidence derived from the data collected. Firstly, the discourse leading to decisions in meetings was essentially to:

- Consider and discuss the key issues then ultimately agree on further action or make a decision;
- Discuss and plan the implementation of a decision;

¹⁸ Charles (1994) makes an identical observation in her study of sales negotiations.

¹⁹ See Section 5.1.3 for data evidence.

- Communicate a decision already made.

Accomplishing any of these required time to build towards, through debate and discussion, a shared understanding and, at the same time, engage the team in supporting and implementing the decisions. The discourse underpinning this activity tended, in consequence, to produce longer stretches of talk.

Secondly, observation of the meetings identified the fact that Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were continually recurring in the conversations. In addition, the practices clustered around decisions made in meetings (*see* Section 3.3.2). It was noted that a significant amount of time was given to Accounts and Explanations. Formulations frequently accompanied these or occurred in their vicinity. It therefore seemed legitimate to explore the respective and combined impacts of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations on decision-making in meetings.

The actual design of the analysis was therefore required to contextualise decisions within sizeable stretches of talk and then to analyse the interactions beyond their surface level. For this purpose, a two-tier, macro-/micro-approach was developed for the textual analysis of the data. Its principles could be described as follows:

1. The transcripts were coded for time to enable the identification of long turns;
2. Coding was developed to indicate at a macro-level Explanations, Accounts, Formulations, and their combinations occurring in the long turns;
3. Business decisions were identified in the transcript;
4. The results were subsequently converted into a graphic interpretation (*interactional matrices*) showing the relationship among the discursive practices, the progression of the meeting, the speakership and decisions;
5. The trends and clustering of the practices directed the researcher to a detailed micro-analysis of the transcripts, in order to explore decision-making in relation to Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations.

An the **macro- level**, the transcripts were analysed both in terms of the overall meeting dynamics, and of the individual speakers' contributions. The framework used to process and evaluate the contribution of each participant was developed as an Excel database. Once the transcripts had been exported to Excel and formatted to enable text searching, it was possible to analyse the discursive practices in detail. To confirm empirically the dynamics of the practices in meetings, the pilot analysis

presented in Chapter Five also set up filters in the Excel database of Data Set One meetings; it thus enabled the collation of the core statistics concerning the number of turns, overlaps, back-channel responses, and instances of latching. All categories were recorded as totals and were also recalculated *per* speaker.

Coding of the data was carried out on two levels. Firstly, each turn was measured in terms of its length. Ten-second time-markers were embedded into the original transcripts to enable long turns to be identified and logged. The minimum limit for a long turn was set at ten seconds, i.e., all turns exceeding ten seconds were coded as long turns. The ten-second criterion was applied as a result of the observation of the meetings. It was noted that if the speaker maintained the floor for more than ten seconds, their contribution established evident dominance in the debate. The long turns were further differentiated as L10 turns (turns of ten to nineteen seconds) and L20 turns (turns longer than twenty seconds). This measure enabled the tracking of all individual contributions exceeding twenty seconds, since such information was, as will be demonstrated, of value to the interpretation of turn-taking and the overall dynamics in meetings.

The second level of coding logged the practices as they occurred in the long turns of the transcribed meetings talk. The long turns (L10 and L20) were examined in detail to identify the respective occurrences of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. Not all long turns were constituted solely by these three practices. A **five-category coding system** was applied to the data to track only those turns in which the practices were dominant: Accounts (**A**), Explanations (**E**), Formulations (**F**), Combinations (**C**) consisting of (E), (A), or (F) in any arbitrary combination, and Other (**Z**), a miscellaneous category logging all of the remaining long turns.

Coding of the transcripts necessarily involves a degree of subjectivity. Therefore, entire turns were coded: not only their parts. An eighty-per-cent minimum criterion was applied, i.e., 80% of the long turn needed to be constructed with an Explanation, Account, Formulation or their combination for it to be coded for further analysis. In addition, decisions made in the meetings were tracked against the criteria set out in Section 3.3.1, and the respective decision types were noted. Decisions were logged as they occurred in the meeting to enable the examination of the talk surrounding the decision.

The results of the data analysis were summarised and are presented in charts and graphically in interactional matrices in the five analytical chapters of the present thesis – Chapters Five to Nine.

The **micro-analysis** was designed as a three-step process which undertook an examination of selected Combination turns identified in the macro-analysis. It firstly deconstructed the long turns (L10 and L20) into their constituent parts (E, A, F, and Z) and noted the sequence in which the practices occurred in the Combination turn. Secondly, each practice within the turn was subjected to a further analysis at a textual level, describing the type of the practice, identifying the degree of its impact on the decision process, and explaining the interactive role of its constituting discourse. Thirdly, for the purposes of working with the data systematically and understanding what the practices were doing in more generalisable terms, each practice was described using a category ‘sub-code’.

Three category sub-codes were developed for each discursive practice to summarise and map its behaviour. The sub-codes were built on the body of past research into each of the discursive practices and they acted as shorthand in describing the outcomes of the micro-analysis. The codes are introduced and discussed in detail in Chapters Seven to Nine. An overview is presented in Figure 9 below:

Figure 9: Micro-analysis – Coding

MICRO-ANALYSIS: CODING		
Practice	Sub-code	Sub-code Description
Explanations	SOF	Statement of fact
	REP	Reporting
	EXP	Expert opinion
Accounts	MRO	Mitigating requests or objections
	MPO	Managing potential for objections
	REF	Referencing decisions
Formulations	SC	Sense construction
	FP	Formulating a proposal
	FPD	Formulating a proposal decision

The interactive role of each discursive practice was determined through its positioning in the surrounding discourse as it essentially unfolded in time and in conjunction with the other practices. In order to understand the role and impact of the practice, it was necessary to consider its interaction within the context of the data as a whole. The micro-analysis therefore recorded the position and sequential patterning

of the three practices as these factors enabled an examination of their frequency, and relationship and positioning to each other as the discourse unfolded.

Finally, the impact of the practice on the decision process was recorded in either a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ category. When the impact was recorded as ‘yes’, the practice could still either facilitate or obstruct the decision-making process. To determine the polarity, the respective function of the practice was then set as a verbal descriptor, linking the text back to the context of the meeting.

Figure 10 (below) illustrates the micro-analysis on an example of the Formulation contained in REG36 in Peter’s turn (T22):

Figure 10: Micro-Analysis – Working Procedure

22 Peter ... (0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) ... (06:00)				
Practice	Type (Sub code)	Sequence	Impact	Notes on the Impact
Formulation	FPD	A1F1F2 A2F3E1F4F5F6A3F7A4F8(D) ZF9F10F11 See Figure 68 (Section 9.2.3) for further information on the speakership and length of the entire contribution, and Appendix 8.1 for additional textual evidence.	Yes.	Announces a cornerstone decision. Part of a turn that communicates a major decision to the team; indicates a radical change of operation, job roles and management structure; signals a new way of working; engages the team.

Turn REG36_T22 is further discussed and analysed in detail in Section 6.3. As the in-depth examination of each practice pursues its own route of questions, a further elaboration of this qualitative method is provided together with their respective analyses in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine.

In sum, CA was instrumental in analysing the meetings interactions beyond their surface level. Its principles of analysing talk in interaction were applied to the development of macro-/micro- tools with which to undertake an in-depth examination of the discursive practices in multi-party data. The macro-analysis mapped the use of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations by individual meetings participants and related them to the decisions made or announced in the meeting. The tool of the interactional matrices recorded the meetings dynamics and mapped the sequential unfolding of the practices and decisions within these. The micro-analysis

subsequently explored closely all extended turns and determined the role of the practices in the meetings and their impact on the decision-making of the teams.

Conclusions

Chapter Two has provided a contextual, conceptual, and methodological framework for the present thesis and placed this firmly within the fields of linguistics and discourse. It has introduced the target organisation (a large UK Chamber of Commerce and Industry), and the three teams who participated in the research (the Regeneration Team, the International Trade Advisers' Team, and the IT User Group). It has presented an overview of the data, reviewed the data collection process, and discussed the impact of the Observer's Paradox on the authenticity of the recorded talk and on the communicative behaviour of the teams. The Input-Process-Output (IPO) scheme has been employed to explain as to why the aim of the research was not to assess decisions, but conversely to discuss decision-making as a process generated or advanced in the meetings discourse. The introduction of the expanded IPO model subsequently deconstructed the concept of organisational decision-making into its individual components, establishing the specific part of the decision process that may be informed by a linguistic analysis of meetings interactions. Finally, the methodology introduced the dual CA-ethnographic approach towards the analysis of the discursive undertaking of decision-making in business meetings.

Overall, the research method employed for the analysis of the conversational behaviour in business meetings could be labelled as 'mixed', combining the *etic* and *emic*²⁰ approaches towards the description of social actions. The CA aspect of the study provided the *emic*, internal and discovered, insight into decision-making in meetings, while the ethnographic approach provided a broader view reflecting the resources examined, i.e., whether these originated from the teams (*emic*) or other external sources (*etic*). The complementary natures of the internal and external views of the data appeared indispensable in disentangling the complexity of how decisions were made in the meetings.

The general direction of the thesis has thus been laid out: to attempt, through an analysis of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations, to gain an insight into

²⁰ The *etic-emic* construct developed by an anthropologist Kenneth Pike has been criticised (by e.g., van Maanen, 1979) for its simplified polarity; many researchers seem to favour a combined, mutually complementary approach.

the ways in which business matters are voiced and decisions taken in internal meetings. This is progressed in Chapter Three, which advances the pre-analytical grounding of the thesis and establishes the key concepts required for the analysis of the three practices in meetings.

CHAPTER THREE

Analysing Decision-making in Meetings: Adopting a Linguistic Approach

Chapter Three takes the first step towards the empirical part of the thesis. It discusses meetings and the process of the discursive realisation of the decision-making as a target for the analysis. It formulates a definition of a business decision, and explains the relationship between the three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – and decision-making. All concepts and definitions proposed in the chapter are considered in the context of authentic meetings data collected.

3.1. Introduction

The present thesis approaches decision-making in meetings *via* an analysis of the Explanations, Accounts and Formulations employed in meetings discourse. Methodologically, the approach is not new as it draws heavily both on Conversation Analysis and Ethnography in examining the textual data transcribed from the meetings and situating the analysis within the organisational context as described by the IPO model in Section 1.1.1. However, the relationship between the three practices and decision-making has never before been explored. The two preliminary questions of interest therefore are:

- What is the impact of Explanations, Accounts and Formulations on the decision process?
- How do speakers employ these practices in meetings?

In order to address these questions appropriately and to launch a linguistic analysis of the discursive practices in the meetings, the chapter formulates a set of concepts underpinning the examination of the data. These emerged from the body of research reviewed and undertaken and include: meetings and their definition; the core purposes of meetings; the definition of a business decision; identification of a business decision in meetings discourse; and the determining of the role of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the decision-making process. Where a new definition is formulated in the text, it has been presented in **bold**.

3.2. Defining Meetings

Meetings are a well-established feature of organisations; there is, therefore, neither a scarcity of definitions nor any considerable controversy about the constitution of meetings.²¹ Understanding the breadth of definitions available and deciding on one that best reflects the activity of the business meetings observed and reported on may, however, pose a key challenge to a fledgeling research.

Below are three examples of definitions of meetings as formulated by researchers in the U.S., in Europe, and in New Zealand. They illustrate the array of views and meeting characteristics that are possible to be included. The definitions were part of three independent studies carried out over the span of nearly ten years. Although all three studies investigated the discourse of corporate meetings, the definition of meetings was, surprisingly, in each case considerably different and required the current thesis to consider its own baseline before progressing.

Consider:

1. Meetings are the interaction order of management, the occasioned expression of management-in-action, that very social action through which institutions produce and reproduce themselves (Boden, 1994: 81);
2. Meetings are explicitly task-oriented and decision-making encounters that involve the co-operative effort of two parties, the Chair and the Group, and which are structured into hierarchically-ordered units (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997: 208);
3. [Meetings are] interactions which focus, whether indirectly or directly, on workplace business (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 59).

The first, definition by Boden is voiced in the social constructionist tone suggesting that reality is socially created as an ongoing and dynamic process. In this view, meetings are the venues in which organisational reality is created and maintained through interpersonal interactions. Being highly interactive events, meetings thus represent the key management tool for accomplishing work.

In contrast, in the definition by Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, meetings are defined as a *priori* hierarchically organised and task-orientated events. The interactive order

²¹ OED definition of a meeting: “The act or an instance of assembling or coming together for social, business, or other purposes; the action of encountering a person or persons.”

and structure are a given. They pre-set a route along which decision-making progresses.

Finally, Holmes and Stubbe offer probably the most eclectic definition of meetings. They emphasise the role held by meetings for business in the workplace, yet they deliberately leave open to interpretation the notion of ‘doing business’ in meetings. As they pragmatically point out later, what ‘doing business’ means is ultimately subject to individual conduct and interests (emphasis added):

This ‘business’ may or may not be consistent with official workplace goals – after all, for various reasons, employees sometimes have meetings aimed at subverting their organization’s objectives, perhaps because they consider them to be badly formulated, misguided, or whatever. (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 59)

A definition thus creates a conceptual link between the object of an investigation and the research pathways or its findings. By default, it also pays lip service to the data or vein of research from which it originated. Consider the sources of the three research strands:

Holmes and Stubbe base their definition on a substantial volume of data and therefore their concept of meetings incorporates as few restrictions as possible. Their definition allows leeway for differences in participation, formality, and purpose.

In contrast, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris’s definition of meetings draws on data comprising recordings of semi-formal and formal British and Italian meetings. It is therefore only natural that the viewpoint of these authors foregrounds the aspects of hierarchy, decision-making, and goal-orientation in meetings.

Lastly, Boden examined a variety of data, ranging from recordings collected in hospitals and travel agencies to data from the White House. In her analysis of meetings, she explains the role of talk at work and why it is important for the staff of an organisation to engage in it. Boden’s definition thus encapsulates the operational role of meetings in organisations and does not treat the form of meetings as being central to the definition. It is the function and not the form that applies consistently across Boden’s considerably diverse meetings data.

Overall, possibly the only common denominator of the three definitions is that meetings are action-oriented encounters. Other parameters of meetings, such as

the level of formality, the number of participants, the structural character of the event, the venue, the duration, and the periodicity of the event, either have not been referred to at all or were treated as variables or considered otherwise supplementary to the core concept. That view perhaps has merit, especially at the present time when business is conducted globally and meetings are held, often through a medium such as video-conferencing, across continents, time zones, and cultures.

In sum, the three definitions discussed all recognise the complexity of the various inputs into the meetings and the need to provide a specific definition related to the focus of the research. Additional information contextually relevant to the interpretation of meetings may also be introduced, i.e., information about the meeting participants, the size of the group, and the venue. Nevertheless, it appears to be the purpose of the meeting that provides the framework within which participants must interact.

The definition of a business meeting formulated in the present thesis draws on this observation and is underpinned by four features: 1) meetings are communicative workplace interactions; 2) they are planned; 3) they are limited in time; and 4) they have a purpose. This may be synthesised as follows: **A business meeting is a planned or agreed communicative workplace interaction that takes place as a single event and during which a group of individuals comes together to pursue a business purpose through talk.**

The next section builds on this definition and explores the relation between the purpose of a business meeting and decision-making as conducted by the meeting participants through talk.

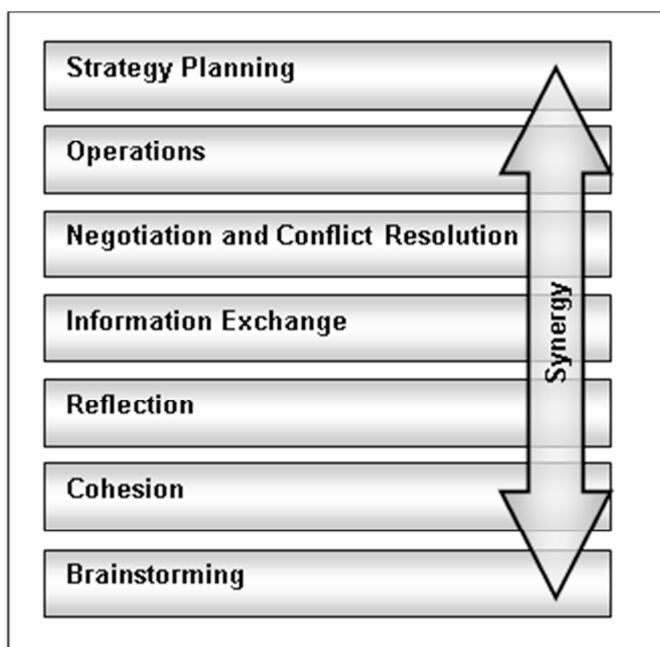
3.2.1 Meetings: Purpose and Decisions

Given the diverse business goals and environments, meetings may be events of multiple interactions. A core function of a meeting is to measure organisational or team performance against the business plan, to recognise success and learn lessons from this to improve future activities and performance, and to initiate actions addressing any areas of weakness or failure.

The purpose of a meeting encapsulates information about its participants, form, and potential outcomes. It answers the questions: ‘What are we here to discuss today and why is the organisation paying us to do so?’ It provides the rationale for the meeting itself through the desired or desirable outcomes. The meeting’s purpose thus sets the ‘rules of engagement’, i.e., who is required to attend, the venue, time and length and sets the meeting agenda with its outcomes and objectives. With respect to decision-making, this will define the type and complexity of business decisions that are to be made, and whether any business decisions should be expected.

This section draws on seven prototypical purposes of meetings as described by Charles Handy in his seminal book *Understanding Organizations* (1976: 150-179). Handy’s categorisation represents one of the first comprehensive sets of purposes for which meetings are called and work groups assembled in organisations. Figure 11 adapts Handy’s classification into a visual diagram designed by the current thesis encapsulating the breadth and spread of meeting purposes that typically occur in organisations.

Figure 11: Purposes of Meetings (adapted from Handy, 1976: 150-179)



The overriding idea of Handy’s categorisation is that every meeting has one dominant purpose for which it is called. Synergy in Figure 11 then emphasises the joint effect of the collective skills, talents, and knowledge on the outcome of the meeting as it occurs when a group of individuals are working together.

Although workplaces draw on the key purposes of meetings, organisations habitually establish and label meetings according to their needs. Often, these describe either the constituents of the meeting (e.g., Senior Management Meeting) or a function (i.e., Quality Control) but fail to clearly convey their remit or purpose. Figure 12 (below) therefore provides a description of seven generic meeting types observed in the researched organisation and aligns these with key purposes of meetings proposed by Handy:

Figure 12: Generic Types of Organisational Meetings

Generic Types of Organisational Meetings	
MEETING TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Strategic meetings	Either pre-planned as part of the annual business development cycle or scheduled irregularly in response or reaction to a change in the organisation or the business environment in which it operates. The meeting participants typically have executive power, such as the senior management teams, whose task it is to develop a business strategy, decide on key projects, and plan the budget. Alternatively, strategic meetings are conducted by the Boards or top management executives of two or more business partners who plan to run business activities jointly.
Operational meetings	Routine and regular. They aim to monitor and manage day-to-day operations in the company and assist in project management or logistics. Often, they take the form of a regular scheduled meeting at agreed periodic intervals, i.e., weekly, with a line manager.
Negotiation and conflict resolution meetings	Initiated by a variety of circumstances. The negotiation function is typically featured in supplier-customer meetings or in sales meetings where business partners negotiate the conditions of co-operation, i.e., contractual or co-operation agreements. Intense negotiation can also take place in disciplinary or grievance meetings addressing issues of employment and work performance, or in steering committee meetings dealing with requests for project plan changes. Such meetings are called only if there is a need to depart from an original plan, or a crisis or breakdown has occurred in a contractual or a working relationship.
Informative meetings	Organisations regularly schedule a wide range of informative meetings or briefings, instances of which include staff forums, employee briefings, best-practice meetings, or presentations to the staff. The role of such meetings is to enable a face-to-face exchange of information. Characteristically, a one-way information flow dominates.
Reflective meetings	Intended to raise awareness of recent errors or achievements, and to stimulate future progress or organisational learning. Examples may include project evaluation meetings, a 360-degree staff appraisal, or quality control circles. The meeting participants can be drawn from various teams, departments, or organisations.
Cohesive, rapport-building meetings	Intended to create a single direction through shared values, goals, and beliefs. The meetings' importance is best documented by an increasing number of Away Days, team-building meetings, get-to-know meetings between or among new business partners, or keep-in-touch meetings between established ones. Cohesion stimulates higher levels of individual performance and positively impacts on such qualities of communication as trust and openness.
Brainstorming meetings	Harness the diversity of human resources and particularly exploit the synergy of skills, talents, and knowledge generated when people are brought into working together. Brainstorming is one of the essentials of successful workshops, creative groups, or in discussions of outside-the-box solutions. Brainstorming meetings often function as marking a point in time when the decision process of innovation was originated or commenced.

The generic meeting types described in Figure 12 encapsulate the variety of meetings observed at the Chamber. By classifying meetings into categories, it is possible to predict the character of the event and the level of decision-making that is conventionally expected to be performed in these. It also signals to participants how they are expected to contribute and behave. However, although meetings are conventionally expected to have one dominant purpose for which they are called, it may not always be possible to classify meetings according to their prototypical categories. In reality, meetings – and internal organisational meetings in particular – do not confine themselves to these clear-cut categories, and they often perform multiple purposes within organisations. This feature may be termed as multiplicity of meeting purposes and the implications it bears for an analysis of decision-making in meetings discourse are further discussed in the following section.

3.2.2 Multiplicity of Meeting Purposes: Data Sample

The present section introduces a data example from meeting REG14 and uses it to illustrate the multi-purpose character of a meeting and the implications this had when undertaking the analysis of decision-making.

The Regeneration Team (REG) meetings occurred weekly and had a fixed length of one hour. They represented the single weekly event bringing together the whole management team. Apart from their operational purpose of performance management and review, these meetings were also occasions for developing general strategy, for communicating and discussing information derived from meetings of the senior management team, for reflecting on completed projects, for general socialising, and for team rapport building. Although the overall character of the meetings remained constant – it was operational – the team's behaviour and planned agenda changed to accommodate other meeting purposes as appropriate. Figure 13 illustrates this in the course of a single meeting (REG14):

Figure 13: Multiple Purposes of Meetings - Data Sample

<p align="center">Multiple Purposes in Meetings – Data Sample REG14, Length of the interaction: 19min 40sec, 7 participants</p>				
AGENDA	DISCUSSION BRIEF	PURPOSE	DECISION MADE	FOOTAGE
Small talk	Pouring coffees and starting with a ritual talk about biscuits and TV. Introducing the visitor (CEO) to the recording context.	Cohesion/Rapport building	No	00:00 – 00:50
Opening	Dividing the chairing responsibilities. Introducing the CEO to the format of the meeting.	Information Exchange	Yes	00:50 – 02:00
Staffing issues	The team’s SOM will be away on unplanned leave due to a family crisis. The CEO raises the issue and the team responds by discussing how they will ensure that current work commitments are delivered.	Operational problem-solving	Yes	02:00 – 04:05
Performance review	Tense discussion and negotiation of next steps and actions to hit the targets. The exchange featured negotiation, information exchange and brainstorming leading to a decision.	Operational, addressing contractual underperformance	Yes	04:05 – 17:40
Closing	Before the formulaic social closing takes place, the CEO diffuses the tension inherent in the previous interaction with a joke, changes the topic and engages the team in a non-contentious work discussion.	Cohesion and Information exchange	No	17:40 – 19:40

In meeting REG14, one of the organisation's CEOs attends to review the team's performance and discuss what measures could be taken so that the organisation would meet its annual output targets. This issue required action on the part of the team and constituted the chief purpose for which the meeting was called. However, on examining the progression of the meeting, two assertions have been made with regard to decision-making in meetings:

1. Meetings inherently function as multi-purpose events and do not adhere strictly to a single purpose. Although one main purpose usually dominates, taking the larger share of time (the shaded area in Figure 13), other additional purposes also impinge on the entire interaction.
2. The purpose and context of the interaction often determine the type of decisions made and the frequency with which it might occur. For example, at a strategic meeting, decisions are likely to be high-level and business-focused; at a personal review or a social meeting, the decisions made may develop interpersonal interaction, cohesion, and team-building but be of a lower operational delivery focus. In some meetings the decision-making process is open and invites collaboration and participation in order to address and resolve the issue optimally, e.g., a brainstorming meeting; in others, the decision (a strategic decision) has already been made externally, usually higher up in the organisation, and is being communicated to the team for action.

The implication is that business decisions are neither made nor expected to occur in all meetings. Meetings of a strategic or operational character are likely to feature a higher number of business decisions than are meetings driven by other, less business-oriented purposes. The decreasing likelihood of business decisions' being made or required in a meeting of a particular type may be illustrated by a diagonal arrow as in Figure 14 – an extension of the original Figure 11 presented in Section 3.2.1.

Figure 14: Purposes of Meetings and Likelihood of Business Decisions

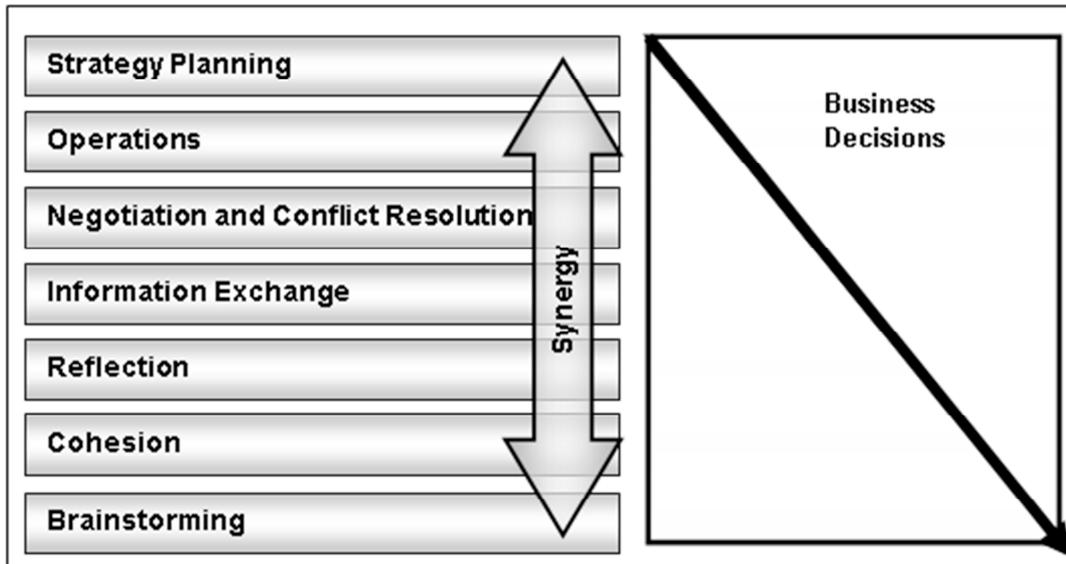


Figure 14 recognises that, conversely, as the core purpose of the meeting changes, the level of other, non-business, decisions increases. This is in part due to social and team needs' taking greater prominence in meetings focusing on information exchange, reflection, cohesion, and brainstorming. The change in the core purpose thus widens the boundaries of the meeting and increases the opportunity for non-business talk to occur. The participants understand this; a different type of discourse is generated.

It is therefore important to acknowledge the multi-purpose character of meetings. Information exchange, engagement, and rapport are equally valid contributing factors to successful communication, decision-making and implementation, since the information generated may be used in successive meetings to influence or inform the decision process. In that sense and in their own right, all meetings thus contribute to the decision process.

In terms of the research undertaken, a decision was made to target operational meetings because these were more likely to contain a high level of business decisions and be influenced by both strategic and day-to-day operational matters. It was also noted that operational meetings introduced information, discussions, and agreements to have emerged from other meetings (at which the researcher was not present). These included, for example, Senior Operational Managers meetings, external partner and contractor meetings, and policy meetings and were used to inform and

influence the current meeting, in effect summarising the outputs of past meetings and advancing them in the meeting at hand.

Having explained the purposes of meetings and their relation to decision-making, the next section addresses the notion of a decision in discourse and defines the parameters of a business decision.

3.3. Defining Decisions

A wide array of books has been written on decision-making. Little, though, has been said about what counts as constituting a decision in discourse – and what does not. The concept is vague; determining which stretch of talk captures the exact moment when a decision has been made appears subjective. The present section examines the general notion of a decision against the backdrop of how decisions have previously been identified in business discourse. A definition of a discourse-realised business decision is then proposed and adopted for the purposes of the current study.

The top three *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) definitions of a ‘decision’ offer:

1. The action of deciding (a contest, controversy, question, etc.); settlement, determination.
2. The final and definite result of examining a question; a conclusion, judgement: esp. one formally pronounced in a court of law.
3. The making up of one's mind on any point or on a course of action; a resolution, determination.

Although not discourse specific, the OED definitions already capture the crux of the matter – the issue of:

1. Whether a decision is an action or an outcome (definition 1 v. definitions 2 and 3);
2. Whether a decision requires a group input and negotiation or whether it is a result of an internal, cognitive process of an individual (definition 2 v. definition 3);
3. Which types of activities are explicitly tied with decisions (e.g., giving an opinion, making a judgement or drawing a conclusion, answering a question, making a commitment, individual and group problem-solving, or mere instruction-giving).

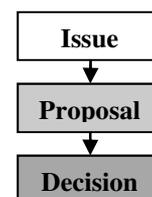
In meetings, decisions result from a wide range of interactions that often encapsulate all of the above activities and behaviours. Discourse analysts have described decisions in a number of ways. Two contrasting linguistic interpretations of decision-making in meetings are presented below in order to demonstrate the variation in using the label ‘a decision’.

The first example of an analysis of decision-making in meetings was carried out by Marra (2003). In her thesis *Decisions in New Zealand Business Meetings*, Marra (*ibid.*) puts forward a **baseline model for decisions**. Drawing on the LWP data (described in Section 0 of the current thesis), the model provides an interpretation of the decision process as it happens in meetings. Marra’s argument is that discursive decision-making takes place in three phases: *issue raised* → *solution proposed* → *decision ratified*.

In order to illustrate how the model works, Marra (2003: 79) introduces a key, prototypical example (reproduced in Figure 15). As the author herself points out, this prototypical example illustrates the three decision-making phases and “incorporates all the major concepts found within the data”. The example consists of one turn, in which Sandy, the meeting Chair, raises the issue of ongoing training needs. The three proposed phases of the decision process have been highlighted in the original transcript:

Figure 15: Identifying a Decision (After Marra, 2003: 79)

- (1) Sandy: [drawls]: um: ++ and therels a new issue here
- (2) which is ongoing training needs
- (3) is this being examined in the career development project ++
- (4) so we'll put that against ++ ms banks shall we
- (5) who is running the ++ train- er the career development project
- (6) and is not here to defend herself (4)
- (7) jolly good
- (8) right now i've taken up heaps of time



In fact, the example highlights a number of potentially problematic issues. Firstly, in the example, ‘jolly good’ is proposed to be the decision terminating this particular decision topic.²² A decision topic is defined in the study as “a meeting topic which requires a decision to be made” (*ibid.*: 10), which seems to set extremely loose

²² Marra’s model (2003) actually seems to be substantially based on Fisher (1994). Fisher (*ibid.*) advocates that the productivity of a group is constituted by the sum of the accepted (decision) proposals – an analogy to Marra’s proposed solutions. Where the two authors seem to diverge is when Fisher (*ibid.*: 142) maintains, “A *decision*, ultimately the outcome of group interaction, is inevitably a choice made by group members from among alternative proposals available to them.” Marra, in contrast, does not seem to differentiate whether the decision originates solely from group interaction, or is made by an individual (as in the example above).

boundaries to the concept. Questions thus arise as to what decisions and what decision topics qualify for an analysis as there are many decisions made in meetings yet not all are appropriate to business, i.e., ‘What biscuit would you like, Jammie Dodger or Jaffa Cake?’ and ‘Tea or coffee?’ It may then be asked whether decisions of different kinds, then, perhaps should be treated and analysed differently.

Secondly, what parameters define the three phases of the baseline model? How are they to be identified? Is it to be assumed that these have been determined purely pragmatically, guided by common sense? In the example, all three phases are identified within a single turn, the division of which seems arbitrary. Moreover, in discourse, the individual decision-making phases are not likely to occur as neatly as shown in the example. Marra (*ibid.*: 11) acknowledges this shortcoming and even points out that the actual decision topics analysed as part of her data were often spread over a number of meetings. This makes the model analytically yet more problematic. The model provides no clarity as to what type of discourse qualifies as corresponding to the respective phases of the decision process. Should ‘jolly good’, the excerpted example, be a legitimate candidate representing the decision phase, then apparently many phatic items will serve in its place. The labels *issue*, *proposal*, and *decision* thus may represent a very loose and perhaps idealised abstraction of a decision-making process in discourse.

A contrasting view of decision-making in meetings has been formulated by Boden (1994). Boden (*ibid.*) argues that decisions are often the focal point of most meetings; she also observes that not many decisions are actually reached there. She expresses scepticism about the meaningfulness of studying overt decisions made in meetings. As Boden (1994: 84) maintains, “decisions – in the typical sense discussed in business and academic settings, indeed often with many diagrams and much handwaving – are frequently invisible”. Instead, she emphasises the interactional value of meetings and the need for the participants to have the capacity to contribute to different “thinking out loud” conversational models.

In her analysis, Boden makes a decision not to analyse the “organisational action”, which could be achieved through focusing directly on decisions. Rather, she describes a number of conversational procedures and organisational practices surrounding the realisation of the actual meeting goals. Practices discussed include: adjacency organisation, questions and queries, informing, reporting, positioning,

agreeing, negotiating, and achieving agendas. Decisions as such are neither explicitly defined nor categorised.

Similarly to Boden's view, this thesis is interested in the process of decision-making as it happens in discourse, rather than in the actual decisions resulting from the process. In order to map the process, a conceptual definition of a business decision has been formulated: **In meetings, a business decision represents a point at which an action committing people, resources, or time to the delivery of business objectives occurs.** It is formulated either as an explicit summary of action to be undertaken or in terms of its being a staged-decision functioning as a step towards a future decision. The decision may take place in the meeting or may be made externally as a pre-meeting decision and requiring the meetings participants to act on it.

In the context of the decision-making process, decisions therefore need to be considered along two complementary perspectives:

1. *Business perception of a decision:* Business decisions are wide and varied, yet are nevertheless focused on and aligned with the direction in which the organisation wishes to go, i.e., its business plan. Decisions thus concern the deployment of resources, including staff, budgets, and time, towards achieving these ends. Alternatively, a decision determines the most appropriate and effective route selected from a number of proposals in order to achieve a set goal.
2. *Language realisation of decision-making in meetings:* Within meetings, the pattern of decision-making is complex, non-linear and often non-structured; in other words, all participants want to give their opinion, reflections, and experiences. Gradually, as the pool of knowledge and understanding grows, is clarified and refined, these dynamics change. It is possible therefore to realise a number of staged-decisions that build steps towards the final decision. They act as a logical series cutting through the morass of information and discussion in an attempt to reach the final goal.

The business perspective emphasises the interest of an organisation as the driver of the decision process. It filters out decisions that have no real impact on the organisation's objectives or goals, i.e., the Jammie Dodgers-type of decision-making. Hence, it creates a pragmatic criterion for what qualifies as a business decision in meetings. The language perspective then addresses the fluid and multi-purpose character of decision-making in meetings (*see* Section Figure 6 for

the discussion of the IPO model of decision-making). It acknowledges the incremental nature of decision-making as well as the fact that some decisions are made externally to the meeting and it is the role of the team to implement these, while other decisions are formulated explicitly within the meeting. Decisions made in meetings include final decisions, process staged-decisions facilitating implementation, and partial interim decisions facilitating progress.

Despite every effort at being explicit, the definition is merely a general concept providing no specific guidance on how decisions may be recognised and identified in meetings discourse. The next section therefore proposes an orientation through which business decisions may be identified in authentic meetings data.

3.3.1 Recognising Business Decisions in Discourse

In broad terms, decisions fit into a basic cognitive Source – Path – Goal schema: a pattern that is either consciously or subconsciously applied to any problem-solving situation. According to George Lakoff (1987), cited in Willing (1992: 213-214), the Source – Path – Goal schema is the main route used in understanding virtually any sort of progression. In the data, the pattern could be observed across many decision-making situations or ‘thinking-out-louds’. Consider Data Sample 3.3-1 (below):

Data Sample 3.3-1: If you can copy that to me

REG15 <K> Karyn – Marketing Manager, <Ma> Maria – Partnership Support Manager
50 <K> 1. **PROBLEM-SOLVING SOURCE = REQUEST FOR ACTION**
 Yeah, ok. So if you can copy that to me, (09:00) [<Ma> Yeah] and then send it back to the team [<Ma> Yeah]
51 <Ma> 2. **PATH = LOGICAL CHAIN**
 I can’t work out whether it’s printed off the computer or whether it’s a photocopy. (09:10) (0.5)
 3. **GOAL = ACTION/DECISION**
 If it’s a photocopy, I can’t mail it.

Although the Source – Path – Goal schema logically clarifies the decision-making progression, it is analytically impracticable; it does not determine the scale of the problem-solving source. Therefore, it provides neither information on nor a context in which to gain an understanding of the importance of the actual decision.

In turn T51, ‘If it’s a photocopy, I can’t mail it’ is an example of a mini-decision made to function merely as a component of a higher-level decision. Meetings generate many decisions of this kind. They are the steps on the way, either moving the decision process forwards or backwards, or taking it nowhere at all.

In order to ensure an equitable approach to decisions and decision-making performed in meetings, an analyst needs to determine both the way of bridging the concept of a business decision with what is actually said in a meeting, and a mechanism establishing how the decision fits the overall decision process in the organisation. The current thesis proposes to resolve this by distinguishing between the form and the type of a decision.

The form of a decision encapsulates a possible linguistic realisation of a decision in discourse. The form of a decision is recognisable in the transcript as it captures an explicit formulation of a decision and points to the moment in a meeting in which the team or individuals commit to an action and work of some kind. In the meetings analysed, decisions were formulated in one of the three decision forms:

1. Decision agreed or put forward as a **proposal**, i.e., “I/we should do this...”;
2. Decision communicated as an **instruction** or a set of instructions, i.e., “You do this...”;
3. Decision formulated or announced as an **action**, i.e., “I/we will do this...”.

All of the three decision forms have distinctive interactional dynamics and could be used to describe decision-making in a meeting. However, the narrow focus of the decision form on minimal discourse provides insufficient information about the decision-making process and about the actual outcomes of the meeting. Consider the following extract (Data Sample 3.3-2) in which Doug, CEO, allocates himself a role in the meeting:

Data Sample 3.3-2: Chairing arrangements

REG14	 Ben - Chair, <D> Doug, a guest and CEO, <A> Andrew – Business Adviser
16	<D> For some reason, (0.3) Sharin thought I was gonna chair this, <u>just to let you know, I have no intention to.</u> → DECISION ANNOUNCED AS ACTION
17	<A> [(laughs)] (politely)
18	 [(laughs)] All right, [[yeah]] (0:57)
19	<D> [[I'm]] a visitor.
20	 That's fine. ...

In the exchange above, turn T16 (...‘just to let you know, I have no intention to’) represents a strongly resolute decision determining both a personal stance and the management of the actual meeting. In this case, the decision is announced as an action and is accepted, thus immediate arrangements as to who will be chairing the meeting are put into place. In a limited manner, the decision form even provides some information about how power and status are negotiated in the meeting. Nevertheless, the decision in no way alters the agenda of the meeting or its

outcomes. The presence of this decision has no impact on the organisation as such, i.e., lacking a decision the business is unlikely to lose or change its direction: it is not a business decision although it eases and prepares the way for the rest of the meeting.

In comparison, Data Sample 3.3-3 excerpts a decision proposal providing the rationale for the changes resulting from the team's major restructuring. Although Peter chooses to communicate the decision merely as a proposal, the decision is final and will have a major impact on the team: it is a business decision.

Data Sample 3.3-3: Reorganising the team

REG36 <P> Peter – Chair, Team's Senior Manager
22 <P> And I think whi- - what (0.2) struck me most forcibly, (04:00) was that (1.5.) what (0.7) what I think we need to do (0.7), is to MOVE to a structure that enables us (0.2) to to have some real FOCUS around bidding, (0.2) and and I I think the other kind of BIG area, which is- - sits ALONGSIDE the bidding, uh (0.3) but is- - you know is is a separate process (04:20) in itself, but but sits very close to the bidding, (0.4) is → **DECISION PUT FORWARD AS PROPOSAL**

As demonstrated consistently through the analysis of the data, decision forms pointed to those sections of transcript where decisions were formulated or communicated. In addition, they may also signal the decision opportunities of individual speakers or indicate the decision-making style practised in the meeting. By being recognisable in the transcript, they have the potential to be coded.

The one shortcoming of structuring a data analysis solely around decision forms is in their noticeably narrow focus on short utterances. Singling out the individual decision forms from a transcript and assessing their impact irrespective of the discussions in which these are embedded inevitably leads to an incomplete, if not entirely skewed, picture of the decision process. Consider the following sequence of three decision forms occurring in three consecutive turns:

Data Sample 3.3-4: Staffing problem

REG14 Ben - Chair, <D> Doug, a guest and CEO
49 I mean there is two things honestly, one is Kirby (1) uh (2) uh (02:57) Samuel and me are going to be looking at his diary, and just cancelling for the next week if we can. --> **DECISION AS PROPOSAL**
50 <D> Ok, and avoid putting pressure on him, --> **DECISION AS INSTRUCTION**
51 Yeah, we'll just take it out, so we'll just want him to have the choice, (03:07) and then- - and anything that needs to be done, we'll make sure that somebody goes. --> **DECISION AS ACTION**

In Data Sample 3.3-4, the members of the team plan and commit themselves to an operational action through a series of decision forms (T49 – proposal, T50 – instruction, and T51 – action). The real impact is in no single turn, but in the whole decision-making sequence. It is therefore the entire discussion that needs to be

examined to appreciate how the team seeks collaboratively a solution to a temporary staffing problem and how it is able to translate the instruction into concrete, deliverable actions.

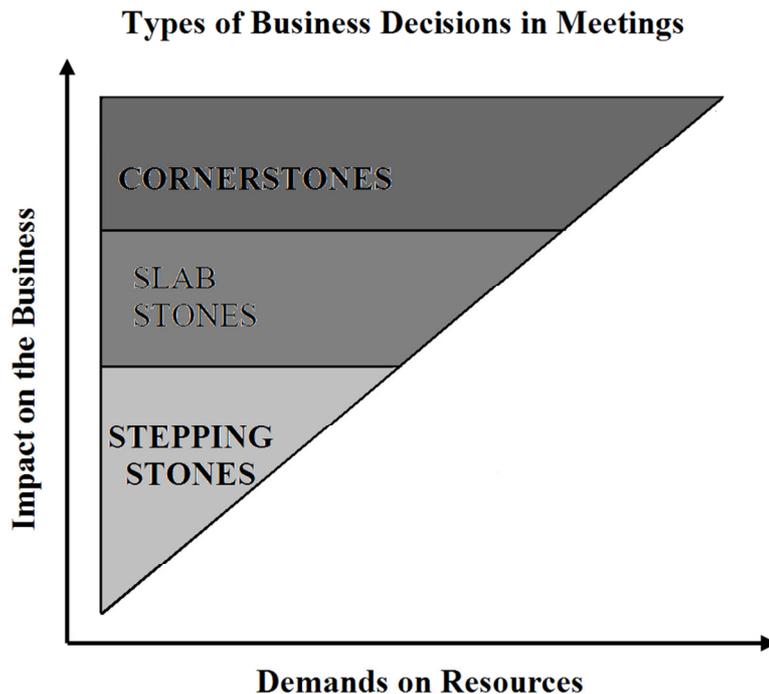
In sum, the form of a decision (a decision proposal, instruction, and commitment to action) provides a useful tool for identifying decisions in the transcript; nevertheless, it carries yet insufficient information about the decision-making process out of which a particular decision arises. In order to understand the relationship among decisions made in meetings, organisational decision-making, and discourse, the significance of decisions needs to be determined pragmatically, in the context of the overall business process. The current thesis proposes, in addition to recognising the form of a decision, to introduce a category called ‘the type of business decision’.

The **type of business decision** contextualises the individual contributions made in a meeting, placing these in the larger frame of organisational decision-making. It is a pragmatic category ranking decisions according both to the extent to which they impact on the business, and to the demands they place on resources needing to be available at the time of the decision. The resources may include both tangible assets, such as materials, people and finance, and intangible assets including sufficient executive power, information, prioritisation, and time.

Three types of business decisions have been identified in the meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. For simplicity, the decision types have been labelled: **cornerstones**, **slab stones**, and **stepping stones**.²³ Figure 16 illustrates the demands each decision type places on resources and the degree of impact it has on the business of the organisation:

²³ This three-fold decision typology does not aim for originality by introducing a set of neologisms. Its purpose is to address the weight of the individual decisions made in meetings, and to do so without confusing the reader through acknowledging and discussing the nuances among the established decision nomenclatures (*see* Section 1.1.3). In principle, the three decision types proposed are close to Ansoff’s typology of “strategic” (long-term), “operating” (tactical), and “administrative” (functional) decisions – with the exception of stepping stone decisions, as these acknowledge that some decisions may be formulated in a preliminary fashion still requiring further consultation.

Figure 16: Types of Business Decisions in Meetings – A Pragmatic Discourse Classification



The pragmatic characteristics of the three decision types may be summarised as follows:

1. **Cornerstones** (e.g., business planning, budgets, target setting, team restructuring and redundancies) represent strategic decisions made by senior management. Once these are made, the meeting serves as a platform for communicating the decision or negotiating whether and how it is achievable (i.e., plan and agree what additional resources are required in order to deliver the targets or, alternatively, whether the decision should be overturned). In lower-level meetings, cornerstone decisions are not always expressed directly or openly;
2. **Slab stones** (e.g., scheduling and work arrangements, the allocation of project work, and the delivery plan) represent predominantly operational decisions placing immediate demands on resources. Slab stones set out concrete actions agreed or communicated in a meeting. They reflect different management styles and workplace activities, and are typically negotiated, announced or agreed over a span of a few turns;
3. **Stepping stones** (e.g., provisional decisions or arrangements, decisions needing further consultation, and decision proposals) represent decisions that are not finalised in the meeting. This is either because a more thorough understanding needs to be built first before the team is ready to take a concrete action, or the decision requires the commitment of other teams or external resources.

Overall, decision types help to distinguish different levels of decision-making realised in meetings of different purposes. This is very valuable as it indicates the type of interaction expected to take place in a meeting and reconfirms the decision to focus research attention on operational meetings.

Having defined the forms and types of decisions made in the meetings, it remains to explain how the process of decision-making is enacted in discourse, that is, how a speaker's spoken contribution in a meeting facilitates decision-making. The goal of the final section in this chapter to explain the role of the three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – in the decision-making discourse.

3.3.2 Decision-making: The Role of the Three Practices

Decision-making in organisations may take place at any time, depending on the nature of the decision (strategic, operational, social, etc.). The discourse leading to decisions in the meetings is essentially to:

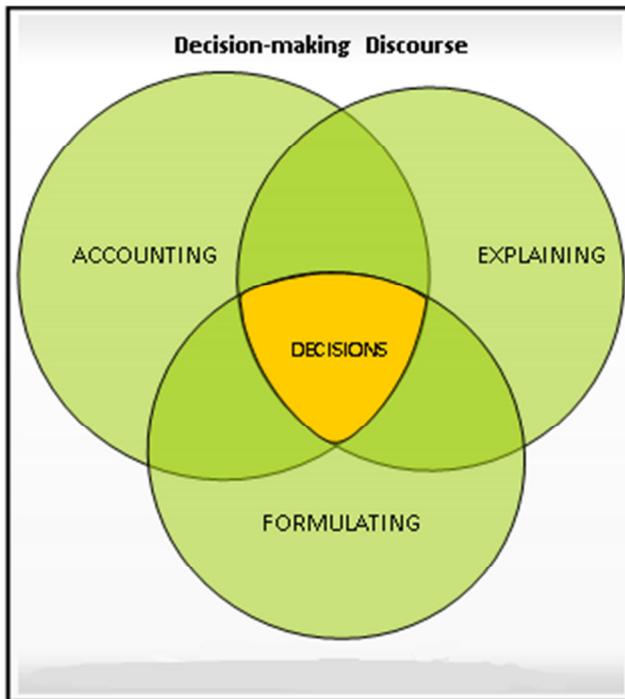
- Agree a decision in a meeting, i.e., to make an interim or a final decision depending on the information and decision-making power available;
- Discuss and plan the implementation of a decision, i.e., operational decisions facilitating how engagement and implementation may take place;
- Communicate a decision that has been reached prior to the meeting and use the meeting to inform the team and gain the members' commitment to it, i.e., the decision is made at the executive level of the organisation and should fit into the overall business plan.

This implies that in meetings decisions revolve around information exchange, the sharing of knowledge, communicating past experience, and sense construction; that is, the engagement in decisions is generated through discussion.

Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations are at the core of these processes. In the Chamber of Commerce meetings, the practices were observed repeatedly to be prevalent in the discourse of decision-making. The practices clustered around decisions or led up to them. When analysing the data it therefore seems helpful to look for such clusters, given that they often signpost conversations in which decisions are progressed or made.

Conceptually, the link between decisions and the discursive practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations may be visualised as in Figure 17:

Figure 17: Decisions at the Interaction of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations



Decisions principally determine the circumstantial ‘what, who, when, where, and why’ of what is to happen. The ‘what, who, when, where, and why’ are also encapsulated in the three practices. At the interaction of the discursive practices with the decision: 1) Explanations furnish the decision-making process with additional detail, are usually fact-based, and build an information pool in preparation for a decision; 2) Accounts typically address the ‘why yes’ and ‘why not’, providing past experience and opinions of a decision or of an act in question; and 3) Formulations do the “summarising, glossing, and gisting” (Heritage, 1985) of the subject matter currently discussed and provide the platform from which to launch a decision or a decision proposal. Decisions thus principally integrate, result from, or are facilitated by any one or two, or all of the three discursive practices.

To illustrate the interconnection and proximity between decisions and the discursive practices, Data Sample 3.3-5 is presented below (REG14).²⁴ Firstly, it excerpts business decisions formulated in one meeting. These comprised: a staffing resource decision (slab stone), performance review decision (cornerstone), and marketing campaign decision (slab stone). Secondly, it highlights and labels the individual

²⁴ See Section 3.2.1 for an overview of Regeneration Team (M14_ 070905).

decision forms – proposal, instruction, or action (in **bold**), and instances of Accounts and Formulations (**in red**) that occurred in the vicinity of the respective decisions. The progression of the meeting is presented in its original sequence and a short commentary follows.

Data Sample 3.3-5: Textual Proximity between Decisions and Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

REG14 <D> Doug, a guest and CEO, <A> Andrew – Business Adviser, Ben – Chair

SLAB STONE - Staffing Resource Decision

47 <D> /He wasn't coping ?/ I wasn't sure how many there were. And his wife is still in- - at the hospital, she is not looking as if she would come out this week, (02:27) [Mhm] **so I plan not to have it next week.** [<A> Yeah yeah] Uhm (0.5) **and if there are any issues that you need (0.3) anybody else to pick up, then let us know,** [<A> Mhm] (02:37) really. **And- and avo- avoid bothering him if you can, because (0.3) you know I think he's having a really tough time.**

instructions →

an intended action

ACCOUNT

CORNERSTONE - Performance Review Decision

Opening

63 <D> We're- we are concerned about the pressures (04:17) that we're getting from (0.4) (name of regional organisation), about hitting the targets (0.3) set by (name of national organisation), and I just wanted to get some confidence, uh hopefully with you guys, (04:27) that we were going to hit the targets in terms of outputs. **I know we've had a lot of delay, we've lost what three to six months in the lead up to the contract, due to the bureaucracy and the difficulties, (04:37) getting systems in place, but** we're now stuck with uhm four months left, [<A> Mhm] (pp) of the year to try and produce (0.2) the outputs in terms of (04:47) assists. How likely is it, that you're gonna hit your targets? (3) How unlikely is it you- - ('you' said in pp, no real intention to carry on)

ACCOUNT →

64 <A> I'd say that's 70% (04:57) likely. (0.9)

65 <D> Does that mean you'll hit 70% of the targets?

66 <A> Mhm.

declaring the goal

SLAB STONE – Marketing Campaign Decision

142 <D> **Ok, I'll get Karyn to come, and do some proposals. So targeted marketing, uhm fi- fi- financial aware- - any needs for- -, wait a minute, how are we gonna encapsulate this?**

143 It should be- -, **shall we send you an email with the thoughts?** (15:07) [<A> Yeah] I'm just I'm just thinking, if we do that by today. [<A> Yeah]

144 <D> **If you send it to me, and copy to Karyn, I'll speak to Karyn.**

145 Yeah, 'cause then that way it gives us time to actually (0.8) to articulate it properly, and say what we think it means.

action point agreed

decision proposal

Request for a FORMULATION

decision ratified & new action point made

CORNERSTONE – Performance Review

Decision

Closing

177 <D> [leave you with a thought that], **it's not about chivvying you up, [<R> Mhm] it's about saying, is there anything I can do to help you guys meet- -, you know, hit the targets,** [<A> Mhm, ok, Ok (pp)] and (17:37) any quick wins any- any quick fixes please let me know. Ok, thank you very much, that was all.

**FORMULATION restating a superior goal
Cornestone decision encouraging action**

The agenda of the meeting addressed two main points: staffing issues (one slab-stone decision) and the team's performance (one cornerstone and one slab-stone decision). The decisions were made or communicated in turns T47, T63 and T177, and T142-T144. The practices either surrounded the decisions (T47, T63, and T142) or were embedded in them (T177). The closing Formulation in T177 merely repeats the cornerstone decision communicated to the team by the CEO at the opening of the team's performance debate. T177 thus does not represent a new decision made in the meeting.

The first, staffing, decision made in T47 concerns the substitution for a temporarily absent SOM. It is exclusively operational, consisting of an action statement and a set of instructions to the team. As the team had already divided the tasks needing to be done among them when the situation arose, the decision is voiced as a mutual agreement on the process and action taken. The Account used by Doug in this case builds rapport and alignment with the team. The whole discussion is localised into a few turns only, and no negotiation takes place. T47 provides an example of a slab-stone decision.

The second decision made in T63 addresses the team's performance. It presses them to meet the targets for the R2I business programme they deliver. It is a strategic, cornerstone decision. When the CEO comes to speak to the team to ask about how they are meeting the business targets, he already knows that their current performance statistic is running at seventy per cent and not at the one hundred per cent required by the organisation. The decision to improve current performance is made by the executive board prior to the meeting. The meeting of the CEO with the team serves solely as an opportunity in which the management call to action is communicated. The exclusive '*we*' used in T63 refers to the management of the company. It creates the impression of collective concern and shared decision-making. It also confirms the authority of a single speaker in the hierarchy of an organisation. In contrast, '*we*' employed in the subsequent Account refers to the 'we as an organisation, we as one team' and it aims to create alignment with the team and to soften the impact of a potentially negative message. The role of the discussion is to make the team appreciate the gravity of the situation and to urge them into producing additional activity.

The third, marketing campaign, decision is made in turns T142-T144 as a result of a relatively polarised discussion between the team and the CEO. From the very onset of the debate (T63), the team uses the meeting as an opportunity to voice their defence, to negotiate the workability of the set targets, and potentially to alleviate the impact on the team of the cornerstone decision. In negotiation, the team achieves agreement with the CEO on an allocation of additional resources, enabling them to organise a marketing campaign and thus facilitating higher levels of business engagement in order to achieve the performance targets. The Formulation in T142 indicates the CEO's favourable attitude to the action proposed. It also marks a positive progression in the negotiation, as it is the CEO who is formulating the action requested from him by the team. The decision made is, in fact, a spin-off from the original cornerstone decision (T63 and T177). It assists project delivery and provides an example of a slab-stone decision.

The interaction between decision-making and the three discursive practices occurred frequently in the data. The question arises, however, of what the interaction meant in terms of the decision process: in other words, what can be said about Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in relation to decision-making. In the discussion so far, the only conclusive fact is that their use was observed to be both productive and counterproductive: Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations either progressed the discussion positively towards decisions or, in other meetings, they hindered, disrupted, challenged, manipulated or otherwise obscured the decision process. Whether the decision-making discourse led to effective, well-thought-through decisions utilising past experience, shared knowledge and understanding or whether it led to long, disruptive, inconclusive meetings was partly subject to how well speakers employed these discursive practices to drive the meeting along.

Having established the link between the three discursive practices and decision-making in meetings, attention is now focused on determining the exact role of Explanations, Accounts and Formulation – either singularly or in combination – in assisting meeting participants in the process of making decisions.

3.4. Conclusions

Chapter Three holds a conceptually important role in the thesis. It interconnects meetings (and their purpose), decision-making, and the three discursive practices of Accounts, Explanations, and Formulations for the first time in the context of the discourse data. It discusses the types of meetings that take place in organisations, and the types of decisions occurring within these. The research focus is subsequently directed to operational meetings, since these occur regularly and provide access to decision-making at a middle-management level. The chapter also formulates a definition of a business decision and demonstrates that the constitution of a decision in discourse is highly sensitive to interpretation: not all decisions are actually formulated in meetings, nor are they equal in terms of their impact on the business process. The chapter therefore advocates analysing the data not only for the occurrence of decisions in meetings but, more importantly, it proposes to clarify the role of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in constituting the decision-making process. The conceptual origins of the three discursive practices, their textual boundaries, and an introduction to how each individually impacts upon the decision-making process forms the outline of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations: Review of Concepts and Discussion

Chapter Four introduces the practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations proposed by the thesis as being central to the discursive construction of decision-making in meetings. Definitions of Formulations and Accounts pursued in this thesis draw on the original concepts as defined in the CA literature, i.e., Formulations by Heritage and Watson (1979) and Accounts by Scott and Lyman (1968). Traditionally within CA, Explanations have not been given exclusive attention; rather, they have been amalgamated with Accounts. This thesis takes the decision to differentiate both practices as it is argued that they perform related, yet substantially diverse functions in the decision-making process.

The chapter reviews the conceptual origins of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations and clarifies the link between each individual practice and decision-making as it has been established both in the supporting literature and in the data collected. First of all, however, the textual boundaries of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the meetings data are defined since these expand the traditionally narrow focus of CA to examine short or tokenised exchanges of natural conversation.

4.1. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations: Defining the Boundaries

In order to undertake a linguistic analysis of decision-making, the discursive practices need to be coded systematically in the meetings transcripts, that is, their textual boundaries must be determined. This required a definition of both the conceptual and textual properties of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the context of the meetings data. This process is set out below.

A key feature to emerge from the data analysis was the identification of the substantially greater duration of the turns produced by individual speakers. Both the high frequency of the occurrence of the three practices and their combined use to

create long turns of a multi-party talk has not yet been discussed in the literature. In fact, the approaches to the analysis of the practices in discourse are markedly disparate in the various disciplines of the social sciences. This factor may best be illustrated through the example of Accounts.

In CA, Accounts have historically been defined primarily as a politeness strategy pre-empting negative inferences that might otherwise arise from unelaborated answers between two people. In this sense, Accounts are relatively short, confined to or as part of single turns, constituting polite conversational tokens embedded in a minimal interactional context (*cf.* Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). In contrast, in behavioural and psychological studies, Accounts represent personalised versions of reality, i.e., “a person’s perception and interpretation of events in the world, of the self, of others, and so on” (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Their discourse realisation is inevitably substantially longer and often equals the entire speech event.

In business meetings, the need to communicate and discuss complex ideas and information is inherent in this genre. The knowledge pool of the organisation may be extensive; individuals are often specialists in their fields. As a result, turn-taking in business meetings may be substantially long and complex, often featuring interactional asymmetry characteristic of professional discourse. Turns lasting several minutes were not exceptional in the data.

When these long turns, irrespective of their length, were examined for content, the three practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were present at their core; they accounted for a significant part of time of the long turn, either as a single practice or as a combination of the three. Conceptually, there was no difference, for example, in the short-turn-based Accounts described in CA in invitation refusals (e.g., Santa Barbara telephone calls data, Atkinson and Heritage, 1984), the long turns taken up by the extended personalised Accounts analysed in psychology and psychiatry (e.g., self-explanations of dieting failures, Turnbull, 2007), or the long-turn-based Accounts of the REG Team declaring the team’s restructuring (Chamber of Commerce data, current thesis). The analysis therefore aimed to map the practices in the long turns at the level of their discursive function rather than micro-analysing the long turns for individual words or phrases.

From the outset of the thesis, a decision was made to differentiate between the practices of Accounts and Explanations. In meetings discourse, Explanations and Accounts represented two distinct practices, although in the literature the line between the two is rarely drawn consistently. In principle, the difference may be very subtle as both Explanations and Accounts are essentially constructed to provide information, context and detail to the on-going debate. Their circumstantial perspectives, however, differ considerably. Compare the two illustrative examples:

1. The global business environment continues to decline and its impact will soon be felt on the UK labour market. → **Explanation**
2. Our debtors have failed to pay the bills, our company will have to close down and you will be made redundant. → **Account**

The first sentence provides an impersonal observation of the economic climate articulated as a fact-based Explanation. In contrast, the other is a personalised, situation-specific interpretation of an unpopular decision. It is constructed to justify or excuse the impact of the actual action/decision that the employee will be made redundant – the second statement classifies as an Account.

In business meetings, **Explanations** fulfilled the aspects of information and experience sharing and were frequently responsible for the production of very long turns. Their role was to furnish detail or create a general information pool, establishing common ground rather than reason or justify for a shortfall of some kind. Explanations provided reference points against which prospective action could be evaluated or, if ignored, the risk assessed. They were the building blocks on which a decision could be formulated, or else provided the direction for further exploration.

Accounts, in contrast, were typically employed to bridge the gap between actions and expectations (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Frequently, they were problem-led and were produced either in response to a failure or in anticipation of one. In meetings, Accounts created new, personalised interpretations of debated issues. They consisted of opinions or interpreted experiences and provided a view based on these, i.e., inherently they might or might not be true. Accounts were then honoured or not depending on how the audience received the Account, the result of which could either help to progress the meeting discussions or derail it.²⁵

²⁵ The requirement to evaluate an Account is explored in detail in Chapter Eight.

Formulations were used to accomplish “summarising, glossing, or developing the gist” of the previous talk (Heritage, 1985). They were employed to signpost the progression of a conversation, summarising the speakers’ understanding up to a specific point in time, or projecting a new meaning implied from the preceding discussion. Formulations typically featured the “preservation, deletion, and transformation” of the previous talk, which has made them highly implicative for the subsequent talk or prospective decisions (Heritage and Watson, 1979).

In order to confirm the textual boundaries of the three practices in respect of how they recurred in business meetings, examples of authentic data will now be presented to illustrate:

- The discursive function of each practice and its link to decision-making;
- That at a pragmatic level the practices constitute considerably long stretches of meetings talk and it is therefore legitimate to treat them as single units, without fragmenting these unproductively into their individual sub-components.

Consider the following extract (Data Sample 4.1-1), in the data marked as an Explanation. In Meeting Two (T30), Mike provides background information about a financial support scheme called R2I. The Chamber of Commerce offers it as part of their business assistance to start-up businesses. The programme is managed by the team. Mike outlines the project to Karyn, the marketing manager, who currently has little understanding of the programme, yet who will be required to develop marketing materials to promote the scheme to businesses.

Data Sample 4.1-1: The R2I plan

REG15

30 <M>

EXPLANATION

<M> Mike – Partnership Support Manager

= eh the R2I plan, basically i:s (name of a funding body) funded, [<K> Yeah] eh Business Link managed, [<K> Yeah] regional programme, [<K> Yeah] eh (0.3) [<Ma> Yes (pp)] we have the main contract, (04:40) eh and we are also obviously responsible /for everything we need to do here/ in (name of city). [<K> Yeah] (1.3) It's [<S> /?/] (parallel talk, unrelated) segmented, (1) it's (Maria and Ben laugh mildly), it's split to six seg- it's- - [<K> Yeah] it works on four levels. [<K> Yeah] If you /buy in a personal tool/, /?/ raise awareness [<K> Yeah] eh of business /?/, (05:00) of sourcing the finance, [<K> Yeah] I suppose you just (Ben coughing) want to let people know what kind of finance is there, [<K> Exactly] but that's about the first thing. Second level then is to (1) educate people [<K> Yeah] on what they need to do to to access our help, our finance [<K> Yeah] in terms of preparing businesses. [<Ma> Yeah (pp)] Eh those two things primarily, (05:20) those two levels primarily, (Ben coughing again) eh would be done on a kind of group basis, that's [seminars, that kind of /?/]

The information provided is fact based, stating the current status of the project. The Explanation is logically structured, and is left to Karyn’s consideration for further action.

In comparison, the second extract (Data Sample 4.1-2) presents an example of an Account produced in Meeting One (T68). Andrew, the REG team's Business Adviser, provides a justification for why the performance targets set for the team by an external body have not been met. In his personalised defence of the team's lack of success, Andrew constructs a number of arguments rebutting the criticism to which the team is being exposed. Through the use of an Account, Andrew creates 'breathing space' enabling the team to negotiate possible ways of making up the backlog.

Data Sample 4.1-2: I mean, the problem is

REG14	<A> Andrew – Business Adviser
68 <A>	I mean, the problem is, (0.3) we've done a bit of awareness, and it's more of a conversion into using the: consultancy, and I think that's where the issues are, because there's issues are around the bidding process, and the issues are around the value for money, for what you get back from it (0.8), (05:27) and in a sense we- we've got a double-edged one really, for using Mustard and using Launch, in a sense that's better value for money, (0.3) and what we are trying to do, is actually wean people away from that, and to say right, fine, [<D> Mhm (pp)] a little bit of this, but also have a little bit /about the/ Readiness. So the education from outside is already taking place, (05:47) and if anything (0.4) probably what we need to do is to step up the ante, is increase that activity, go back to /? routing/ last year, which haven't (0.3) uhm done to any great extent, and I think - (1.5), I can't immediately see a resource, I mean, what- what I might say, it might be useful for us to probably consider doing, is putting on (06:07) a perhaps a bigger awareness session, [<M> Mhm] as a cross-sector awareness [session, or education]

ACCOUNT

Finally, of the three practices, Formulations, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Nine, exhibited the most direct influence on decision-making. In Data Sample 4.1-3, Dee employs a Formulation (T169, highlighted in grey), to summarise a section of a debate. The Formulation pursues an immediate decision determining the content of a telemarketing questionnaire. Turn T173 (highlighted in **bold**) then illustrates the awareness and sensitivity of the team to the importance of the individual words of the telemarketing script in order to avoid incorrectly raising the expectations of the customers. The discussion and its level of detail demonstrated the team's positive commitment to the project.

Data Sample 4.1-3: As part of the script

ITA05	<D> Dee – External Consultant
169 <D>	Ok, so you know, (0.5) as part of the script that I would develop, is it for me all right for me to be saying, uhm that maybe you're a sign-post mechanism to (0.3) help /support ? funding/ that could be available? (45:47)
170 <A>	Yeah
171 <J>	Hmh, [yeah, definitely]
172 <M>	[Hmh hmh]
173 <A>	It's a very it it it's a fine line [<M> Mhm] between saying there is, [<D> Yes] and there may be.

FORMULATION

The sequence illustrates how Formulations participate in the construction of the decision process in meetings. Although the Formulation/decision is, initially,

ratified by the team, further thinking and clarification are re-introduced in T173, i.e., the Formulation both facilitated and constituted the decision process in the meeting.

To summarise, in the scope of this thesis the practices have been defined as follows:

An Explanation is a compilation of information that is fact based and specific and where the speaker's motivation is to provide this detail to assist the progression of the meeting. This includes background information, context, historical experience and organisational processes enabling individuals to assess the gravity and priority of issues under discussion.

An Account is a personalised compilation of information that always presents a personal perspective on an issue at hand, the key role of which is to bridge the gap between actions and expectations. An Account is based on actual activities, previous experiences, beliefs, and opinions and these are conventionally presented either as excuses or as justifications.

Explanations and Accounts thus do not aim for the same goal although each provides information or a contributory message to the meetings. Whereas Explanations create a stock of information that could be used by the participants in the meeting (are fact-driven), Accounts are produced to create a position for the speaker or the party he or she represents (and are based on the *I*, *we*, or *you* perspectives). In consequence, a speaker may use Accounts to influence the decision-making process regarding their own personal agenda, while Explanations tend to remain fact based and to facilitate decision-making on an equal basis.

A Formulation marks the shifts in the progression of the discussion either in favour of or against a proposed action or a decision. A Formulation is employed to summarise, emphasise, or state a favoured stance or a route towards further discussion or working. In decision-making discourse, Formulations are particularly powerful as they provide the discourse upon which a decision is either proposed or made.

In conclusion, the definitions and textual boundaries of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations provided in this section have been established in the context of business meetings data. The section has also articulated the difference between

the discursive functions of Accounts and Explanations and explained why the decision was made to treat them as two distinct practices. The initial links between the three practices, their unique properties, and decision-making have been drawn. A literature-based review of specific decision-making properties of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations will now be presented.

4.2. Explanations and their Decision-making Properties

Ultimate solutions to problems are rational; the process of finding them is not.

(William J.J. Gordon, 1961:11, adapted from Hicks, 1995)

Explanations have been traditionally researched from two angles: the first surveys Explanations as they appear in communication, whereas the second is more closely concerned with the mental representation of Explanations and with how this affects individuals' feelings and behaviour.²⁶ This fundamental dichotomy between the investigative angles of the two traditions has bred a body of highly diverse research. Antaki (1988: 1), for example, relates to this incongruity with an almost philosophical proposition:

'Explanation' can mean many things, and ordinary explanations can be sought and interpreted in many ways. Different researchers will have different ways of netting explanations and different ways of making sense of their catch. The differences among researchers are not just in what they think about explanations, but also in what they think about people and how they ought to be studied.

A degree of confusion thus exists in the fields of Linguistics and Social Psychology, where in both a discourse-based definition of Explanations is non-existent and Explanations have been customarily dealt with under the label of 'Accounts'.

The current thesis takes the view that Explanations furnish factual discourse in meetings interactions in order to communicate knowledge and experience, and to describe reality as it is perceived by the speaker at that point in time. The factuality of Explanations is, however, approached neither through the arguments of psychoanalytic causal explanations (*cf.* Davidson, 1963; Buss, 1978; Kruglanski, 1979) nor through philosophical debates drawing on the themes of realism and representation, objectivity and truth, (*cf.*, Smith, 2007). Factual discourse is

²⁶ See Antaki (1988: 5-12) for an extended discussion of the two traditions.

considered pragmatically, within the remit of workplace discourse, as described, for instance, by Boden (1994: 47):

Ethnomethodological studies of organizations, ... treat members' competence in and local knowledge and understanding of a setting as a central topic of investigation rather than as a resource for improving some social science view of that setting.

The analysis adopts an emic participant orientation describing reality from the speaker's point of view and not as a universal theoretical canon. That is, the focus is placed on authentic conversational data in which Explanations are analysed along the systematic, bottom-up CA principles of interpretation.

Despite the close link between Explanations and decision-making (further explicated below), a study examining the linguistic underpinning of their use and their impact on the decision-making process in meetings has, to my knowledge, never been undertaken. The discussion below outlines selected concepts and empirical research relevant to the analysis of Explanations and their relationship to decision-making in workplace discourse. Further, it establishes the notions of *factuality* and *relevance* as two properties central to the description and evaluation of Explanations in meetings discourse.

4.2.1 Explanations as Part of the Decision-making Process

Explanations, the first of the three discursive practices, represent the principal conversational technique used for the dissemination and sharing of information and data in meetings. This role of Explanations in the initial, yet critical, stage of the decision-making process has been emphasised both by the rational, sequential models of decision-making, such as the decision-making sequence progressing from *orientation* to *evaluation* and *control* of Bales and Strodtbeck (1951), and also by more organic problem-solving approaches to decision-making, such as *Synetics*, a creative problem-solving methodology developed by George M. Prince and William J.J. Gordon.

Through data finding, gathering and sharing Explanations inform the decision process in a number of ways. For example, Isaksen and Treffinger (1985, adapted from Hicks, 2004), advocate the following benefits:

- Taking stock of the situation by determining what we really know about it and what we do not;

- Breaking away from stereotyped or habit-bound thinking, and look beyond the ‘constraints’ imposed by assumptions;
- Uncovering key pieces of the ‘mess’ (problem situation) that might have been obscured, overlooked or so obvious that they had previously gone unnoticed;
- Revealing hidden patterns and interrelationships among the data.

Explanatory activity accomplished in meetings thus helps the participants simplify and conceptualise the issue under discussion and facilitates subsequent decision-making.

4.2.2 Explanations in Team Mental Models

At a cognitive level, Explanations feed into what have been termed “team mental models” (Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994) – psychological structures of expectation, interpretation and interaction. In sociology and linguistics, a concept analogous to “team mental models” has been investigated under the label “schemas” and “frames” (e.g., Goffman, 1974, 1981; Tannen, 1993) and was examined mainly in narrative structures and in the construction of factual accounts (e.g., Smith, 1978; Potter and Edwards, 1990; Wooffitt, 1992).

Team mental models are claimed to provide a conceptual framework for describing, explaining, and predicting future system states (Rouse and Morris, 1986). A widespread and documented view exists that efficient group decision-making correlates positively with the aggregation of individuals’ knowledge structures.²⁷ Klimoski and Mohammed (1994) critically examined the concept and mapped empirical research relating to the collective strategic decision-making and team dynamics and performance.²⁸ Two of their principal observations (*ibid*: 414-432) may be glossed as:

- Mental models reflect organised knowledge and categorical processing, which happen naturally as part of human sense-making and action orientation. In the team environment, mental models thus facilitate the process of problem comprehension, analysis, and solution finding, and increase the speed of its implementation;

²⁷ See Johnson (1998) for an extended discussion of this argument.

²⁸ See Klimoski and Mohammed (1994: 408-409) for a detailed listing of research dealing with shared cognition and an overview of terms that have been attached to this concept.

- Mental models often merely reflect learned patterns deriving from presumed cause and effect linkages. While these patterns may be strictly spatial in nature and origin, knowledge relating to these is organised semantically. Verbal explanatory activity thus feeds into and may subsequently change or enhance mental models currently possessed by the meeting participants.

Unfortunately, team mental models are context-driven constructs. As such, they rely on individual's interpretation of what exactly is learned and thereby on what is "shared by the interaction participants" may, and often does, remain inconclusive, as has been demonstrated by Johnson (1998). Johnson's (*ibid.*) study of cognition and behaviour applied the model to an analysis of decision-making in top management across three organisations. An analysis of meetings and interview data explored the relationship between collective cognition and convergent behaviour in managerial teams. Despite pursuing four specific propositions regarding how managers and meeting participants use and make sense of information in meetings, the study failed to overcome the context-contingent variables, such as, organisational priorities, levels of resources, or the organisational culture. The outcomes of the study thus remained undetermined.

In sum, employing team mental models as constructs for the understanding of decision-making in meetings is always vulnerable to subjectivity as it is impossible to know what an individual is thinking. The constructs help shape and share the group's knowledge but each individual can interpret this in a slightly different way. Explanations and their properties of factuality and relevance are closely aligned with the characteristics of team mental models. As a discursive practice are able to articulate the characteristics of the team mental constructs and through discourse refine and develop these. What can therefore be observed from the sequential unfolding of a conversation and the subsequent analysis of the data is the reaction of the listeners to the discourse and whether this is challenged and the speaker interrupted.

4.2.3 Explanations: Group-wide Knowledge Integration

At the level of day-to-day business, Explanations used for the purposes of establishing a group-wide understanding and knowledge integration are confronted particularly with the argument of the ultimate group efficiency. Questions have been

raised as to whether group-wide knowledge integration is necessary at all times; whether the generally time-intensive Explanations are actually compensated with higher quality decisions; and whether individual decision-making would, under some circumstances, be more effective.

The theoretical reasons supporting the building of a team-wide information pool include:²⁹

- The group can bring more information to the decision-making process;
- The group is able to analyse information critically and with greater objectivity;
- A strong commitment to the group and its success develops among its members.

An empirical study attempting to challenge the benefits of knowledge integration was undertaken by Enberg *et al.* (2006). The study examined the extent to which extensive knowledge sharing and close face-to-face interaction in meetings improve the performance of project teams.

The study observing a manufacturing project development team over a year confirmed that the regular interactions in meetings and information exchange strengthened the levels of commitment and willingness to integrate specialised knowledge bases (Enberg, 2006: 157); however, the research concluded that in a manufacturing workplace context, based around frequent routines and the exchange of experience that individual work and updating meetings may be more efficient and cost-effective than is time-consuming, discussion-based team knowledge integration. On the other hand, the research argued, in contexts where strategy changes were made, successful operation requires a continuous exchange of information and the building towards joint understanding and shared goals.

There are two observations emerging from the Enberg *et al.* study: firstly, although knowledge integration need not be present in every meeting, it remains important for the successful undertaking of project management and leadership function given that it reflects on the learning process and flows of knowledge over time; and secondly, if the commitment to the decision is the overriding issue, the integration of the team's knowledge is essential. Group-wide knowledge integration thus bears particular

²⁹ Originally affirmed by Harold J. Leavitt (1978), cited in Hicks (2004).

relevance in contexts of change in which a sustained explanatory activity is crucial in the building of group involvement and in overcoming uncertainty and resistance. As Lee *et al.* (1999: 31) put it, “the inevitably difficult decision may be more acceptable to those affected by it if the decision is taken by the group”. The data analysed as part of the current thesis correspond to this argument, as increased levels of communication and a high proportion of Explanations were also documented.

4.2.4 Explanations as Research Data in Business Meetings

It is interesting to note that although some of the key concepts interpreting the role of explanatory activity in meetings are non-linguistic in character, empirical research evidently draws on primary language data. The studies by Enberg *et al.* (2006) and Johnson (1998), introduced above, both relied on meetings data in their analyses of information exchange in face-to-face decision-making interactions. Nevertheless, they analysed the language in meetings textually, in terms of what it says, and did not consider how speakers used or positioned the discourse. In other words, the sense-making of the data was exclusively content based.

New to the field, the study by Poole (1985), of how coherence is accomplished within group decision-making interactions observes this general insufficiency. Although the research does not address Explanations explicitly, it provokes the debate as to what types of analysis have the potential to explain how a “decision logic” and “task representation” are collectively established through discourse (*ibid.*: 214-216). In his analysis, Poole (*ibid.*: 212) makes a fundamental claim, “Without reference to micro-level discursive processes a complete explanation of the decision development is impossible.” This view at that time was novel in the light of theory-driven concepts of organisational and group decision-making; Poole (*ibid.*: 217) subsequently develops his study around the identification of three types of “discussion-management moves”. While Poole’s study acknowledges the importance of discourse for the analysis, actual discourse data and samples are never used.

The macro- and micro-analyses of Explanations applied to the current thesis reflect the concepts and observations presented above. They focus on how language is used and how the practice influences decision-making in meetings. Specifically, the micro-analysis undertaken examines how two properties characteristic of

the practice – *factuality* and *relevance* – affect the impact of Explanations on decision-making.

4.2.5 Factuality and Relevance

The boundaries between Explanations and Accounts may not always be distinct in the stream of talk (*see* Section 4.1). However, the one feature distinguishing Explanations from Accounts is their facility to provide factual information (*see* Section 4.1); in other words, Explanations do not behave in the same way as Accounts: Explanations do not provide “explanations of self” (Turnbull, 2007), nor a person’s perception and interpretation of events in the world (Wood and Kroger, 2000), and they are not produced in response to untoward behaviour (Scott and Lyman, 1968). While Accounts have been described as typically bridging the gap between actions and expectations, Explanations are more accurately referred to as a practice bridging understanding. Explanations bridge different levels of awareness, familiarity, and expertise; their key property as it has been identified in the current thesis is that of **factuality**.

The factuality of Explanations in business meetings does not fundamentally differ from other types of factual discourse as these have been examined, for example, by Schegloff (1972), who analysed descriptions of place; Woffitt (1992), who explored the factuality of descriptions of paranormal phenomena; Drew (1992), who compared conflicting factual descriptions of a rape; Smith (1978), who looked at the construction of a factual description of mental illness; or Potter and Edwards (1990), who investigated how the content of a meeting with Nigel Lawson MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was subsequently presented by ten political journalists. In business meetings, factuality enables Explanations to:

1. Declare evidential information publicly, i.e., they are related to the business purpose;
2. Refer to objects and states of affairs explicitly, i.e., they typically use specialised lexis;
3. Be structured around statements, not around arguments, i.e., they maintain a neutral structure.

In the main, the factuality of Explanations is responsible for and determinative of the informative value of business meetings.

The issue central to the debate about factuality is that Explanations do not occur merely out of the blue. They exist within the natural talk of the organisation. In meetings, they are either solicited by a question being asked, by a general invitation to participate in a debate, or are unsolicited where an individual identifies and furnishes information s/he believes might help in clarifying or focusing the discussion. Therefore, although Explanations provide evidential information to the meeting participants, their factuality is ultimately dependent on listener's interpretation: it is at the discretion of the speaker which facts s/he decides to share and the cognitive abilities of the listener determining what they understand.

As Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008: 32) maintain, there are two salient points to be understood: firstly, "facts themselves do not constrain the ways we may describe or refer to them"; and secondly, "to describe or refer to an object or state of affairs, there is a potentially inexhaustible range of words and combinations of words which may be legitimately used". Schegloff (1972) illustrates the implication of this with a description of place, in which all of the facts are correct yet the speaker would probably not use them all. Consider the example:

Were I now to formulate where my notes are, it would be correct to say that they are: right in front of me, next to the telephone, on the desk, in my office, in Room 213, in Lewisohn Hall, on campus, at school, at Columbia, in Morningside Heights, on the upper West Side, in Manhattan, in New York City, in New York State, in the North east, on the Eastern seaboard, in the United States, etc. (Schegloff, 1972: 81)

Furthermore, in business meetings it is possible for an Explanation to employ a wide range of descriptive terms that are all factual yet perhaps do not help to inform or clarify the debate. Factual utterances such as 'The world is round' may be true, yet will have no relevance to the meeting. Speakers are therefore selective in their utterances and use judgement when presenting Explanations, ensuring that these are relevant to the meeting.

Factuality and relevance continuously work together during both the production and the reception phases of meeting talk. Where relevance is provided, an extended contribution may legitimately follow. Reactions to the factual contribution then depend on how the contribution is evaluated by the recipients. The assessment of whether an Explanation is relevant is ultimately speaker dependent.

Hunston (1989), who examined aspects of evaluation through an analysis of experimental research articles, proposed that relevance be assessed on the scale of

“important-unimportant”. Hunston (*ibid.*: 356) also argues that the function of relevance “is organisational and is responsible for prospective and retrospective chunking and pattern-making”. That is very illuminating since it explains why some meetings participants will accept an Explanation as perfectly relevant and meaningful, while others will query the same Explanation with the ‘why this now?’ probing question. In business meetings, the prospective and retrospective pattern-making of information was observed particularly in the combined effects in the decision-making process of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations upon the result.

In sum, the factuality and relevance of Explanations significantly reinforce the role of Explanations in meetings and their impact on decision-making. Together, these ensure that Explanations produced are appropriate to the group at that time. In the operational meetings observed, Explanations provided the team with information and data around which the members could construct their thinking, planning, and decision-making.

4.3. Accounts and their Decision-making Properties

Scott (1993) attributes the first use of Accounts as a social scientific concept to a fellow student in Berkeley – Harvey Sacks – and dates it back to 1964, four years prior to when he and Lyman (1968) published their seminal paper on Accounts. As Scott (*ibid.*) recalls, Erving Goffman – at that time Scott’s supervisor – categorically rejected Accounts as a potentially sound concept of social organisation. Yet, ever since the publication of the article, Accounts have generated continuous research interest within various disciplines of social sciences.

The breadth of the relevance of the concept of Accounts has, more recently, been mapped out by Buttny and Morris (2001), who reconfirm the broad application of Accounts to the analysis of social phenomena; they also discuss numerous perspectives from which Accounts have been conceptualised in research. Some of these conventionally recognised roles of Accounts include: a practice reconfiguring the process of an event, a practice used to negotiate reality, to constitute narratives, to reason for exceptions to the rule, or to provide non-preferred responses. In their review of the 1990s accounting research, the authors (*ibid.*) also note the systematic

development of Scott and Lyman's original paradigm. Buttny and Morris (*ibid.*), however, assert that although systematic, research into Accounts has evolved separately along two different perspectives adopting two different methodologies, and asking different questions: the first examines the practice in the tradition of 'the social psychology', while the other analyses Accounts as 'language'. Both are underpinned by empirical research; they converge in their findings, and *de facto* re-attend and expand various facets of the original concept of Accounts as it was formulated by Scott and Lyman.

It may be asked why, then, the understanding of Accounts has yielded such a powerful influence on the thinking and the interpretation of human interactions. Buttny and Morris (2001: 286) 'account' for this old-time query by emphasising that Accounts have been used to reason both "(1) *for* actions in the sense of answering for troublesome conduct and (2) *of* actions in the sense of giving a description or a narrative of events, not necessarily involving troubles [*italics in the original*]." By acknowledging this dual use of Accounts, the arena of the accounting practice is substantially enlarged.

In the context of the meetings data, the 'for' and 'of' proposed by Buttny and Morris (*ibid.*) embrace two very distinct scenarios of accounting episodes: Accounts triggered by the use of a reproach, and Accounts that were produced in anticipation of such and were as a result self-initiated. The former frequently underpinned negotiation exchanges in which the challenge of one's claims or actions produced a mitigating accounting episode, restorative of the business relationship at hand. On the other hand, Accounts produced in anticipation of a reproach and were self-initiated, were not necessarily problematic. On the contrary, they attempted to head off problems and not to fracture relationships. Their discursive function was similar to Accounts described by Schlenker and Weigold (1992), who characterise the practice as instrumental in the management and regulation of impression. In respect of the current thesis, the management of the overall discourse through Accounts created an impression of leadership, control, and a structured thought process. The self-initiated Accounts thus provided an insight into the decision-making process and how this was progressed in the more complex turns to build towards a decision.

The following five sub-sections discuss specific links among Accounts, workplace discourse, and decision-making in meetings.

4.3.1 The Relevance of Scott and Lyman's Concept to the Analysis of Decision-making

Decisions are made by individuals who lead change, who recognise the need for it or who are invited to participate in it. Whether the change entails a purely intangible shift, such as a change of behaviour, attitude or strategy, or whether the decision causes a change in the material circumstances, is *per se* irrelevant. The significance of the change springs from its thrust to initiate the move from the present and familiar reality to a state that is new, unexplored, different, or potentially threatening. When this shift is part of a conscious mental process, decision-making is involved.

Scott and Lyman's concept of Accounts creates one critical perspective towards the understanding of decision-making in discourse: Accounts provide the threads from which any subsequent decisions are woven. Accounts lay the groundwork and set out the motives for decisions to be made. Transcripts of how Accounts are verbally performed by individuals or groups then record the phased process of decision forming, planning, and negotiating the implementation of a decision, or managing its delivery. An analysis of Accounts thus provides an insight into the underlying interactions and discussions of the decision-making process. In the group environment, such analysis clarifies how decision-making is undertaken collectively. It indicates to what extent decisions were part of a shared process, how heavily they were subject to justification, and in which manner and at what pace the reproach-account-evaluation sequence unfolded.

Although Accounts have enjoyed a plethora of different research approaches, Scott and Lyman's original paper contains all of the fundamental arguments necessary for the defining of the role and functionality of Accounts in the decision-making process. These arguments may be synthesised into seven points:

1. Accounts are statements made to explain untoward behaviour;
2. Accounts bridge the gap between actions and expectations;
3. Accounts are "situated" according to the status of the interactants;

4. The character of the social circle into which an Account is introduced and the background expectancies of the interactants determine whether or not the Account is honoured;
5. An Account is not honoured, i.e., is deemed unreasonable, when the stated grounds for action cannot be “normalised” in terms of the background expectancies of what ‘everybody knows’;
6. In ordinary life, Accounts are usually “phased”;
7. A study of Accounts should be able to provide a set of instructions on “how to give an Account” that would be comprehended by the parties involved as usual and acceptable. (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 46-61)

These properties are further explored below as to how they sustain the decision-making process in business meetings.

4.3.2 Accounts as Part of the Decision-Making Process

This thesis adopts the original ideas of Scott and Lyman (1968) on the role of Accounts in discourse (as summarised in Section 4.1.3 above) and applies them to the understanding of decision-making in the workplace. The results of the analysis of the meetings data have, however, enabled the definitions of Scott and Lyman to be advanced specifically in the context of business meetings and in relation to the discursive realisation of decision-making in these. The behaviour of the practice in the meetings discourse of decision-making may be summarised as follows:

1. Untoward behaviour was represented by a change in the business environment or work performance, creating misalignment between that and the overall organisational direction. Decisions were required to be made in order to re-establish the balance;
2. Accounts were produced in order to help communicate, formulate, or implement a decision. The accounting party deemed the making of an Account necessary in order to ensure smooth organisational performance or optimum working relationships;
3. The power, status, remits, and composition of the team distributed, or indeed inhibited, the accounting activity and responsibility across the participants. That is, different types of accounting were expected at different levels of meetings within the organisational structure (strategic, tactical, or

operational).³⁰ It was often noted that the more junior members of staff would never make comments when senior staff members were present;

4. Corporate culture and established communication practice conditioned individual expectations. These determined how individuals evaluated and received the content of the Account. If individuals perceived the Account as reasonable, it stimulated a positive reaction – they reacted to it favourably;
5. Accounts were deemed unreasonable when they were not understood and could not be internalised by the individuals upon whom they had an impact. The need to establish clarity was therefore important and partly explained the need for both Explanations and Formulations to work in an integrated manner with Accounts;
6. Accounts were embedded in the on-going dialogue of meetings. In the communication of complex ideas, the information carried by Accounts was phased to help participants understand the debate and its implications for future actions;
7. An analysis of organisational Accounts practice unveiled the process of how decisions are made through discourse in a specific workplace setting.

As reported in Chapter Eight, the textual analysis of Accounts documented their staged structuring and sequential build-up towards a proposal or a decision. The single property identified in the analysis of meetings data that rendered Accounts indispensable in the decision-making process was their ability to ‘normalise the grounds for action’. Accounts normalised meeting interactions through the managing of expectations and by ameliorating any anticipated or existing disparities between decisions and their reception. This feature was most noticeable in the Combination turns, usually led by the SOM³¹.

Discursively, ‘normalising of the grounds’ was manifested through three conversational gambits: 1) mitigating requests or objections (MRO); 2) managing potential for objections (MPO), and 3) referencing decisions (REF) – *see* Section 2.3.4 and Section 8.1. Interestingly, while both managers and staff used Accounts to mitigate the boldness of requests or objections raised, it was predominantly SOMs who employed Accounts to manage the potential for objections and to reference decisions.³²

³⁰ *See* Figure 14 in Section 3.2.2.

³¹ *See* Section 8.2.4 for data evidence and further discussion.

³² Further exemplification through the discussion of data samples is presented as part of the data analysis reported in Chapter Eight.

The following sub-section focuses on how Accounts have been examined in workplace discourse. It discusses which findings from this research may be transferred to the examination of Accounts in how they affect the process of decision-making in meetings.

4.3.3 Accounts in Workplace Discourse

A sustained research interest in Accounts goes beyond the past forty years demarcated by Scott and Lyman's (1968) original paper as may be noted, for example, in research undertaken by Mills (1940) in his study of situated actions and vocabularies of motive, or the analysis by Sykes and Matza (1957) of techniques of neutralisation. In other words, although the authorship of defining Accounts incontrovertibly dates back to Scott and Lyman (1968), the notion of the accountability of human action is crudely pragmatic and originated much earlier. Scott and Lyman (*ibid.*: 46) in fact gloss an identical point when rehearsing the Hobbesian question of "How is society possible?", while McLaughlin and Cody and (1983) quote an even earlier resource: *Genesis*, the first chapter of the Bible, with its depiction of sin and repentance portrayed through the words of God and the actions of Adam, Eve, and the snake. The concept of Accounts thus goes right to the heart of how individuals perceive and make sense both of their own role and that of others in society, and of how they use talk continuously to create order between the two.

Studies of Accounts localised in workplace or institutional discourse have been similarly wide ranging. In the period during which Accounts have been examined in discourse, researchers have explored data collected in a variety of environments including traffic courts (Cody and McLaughlin, 1988), academia (Antaki, 1988), research and science (Mulkay and Gilbert, 1982; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), business organisations (Bies *et al.*, 1988), suicide prevention centres (Sacks, 1964-1965/1995; Watson, 1978), or courtrooms (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1990 and 1992).

The studies undertaken up to the 1990s focused mainly on establishing the relevance of the concept across different contexts and developed taxonomies and category systems of Accounts (Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981; Semin and Manstead, 1983;

Schonbach, 1990; Nicholas, 1990).³³ However, more recent research into Accounts in workplace and institutional discourse focuses the analysis of Accounts as their being situated sequences of conversational activity. The approach to Accounts has become more discursive and less psychology based, addressing the issues of how people in their descriptions and accounts “assign causes to events” (Horton-Salway, 2001/2009: 153) rather than attempting to disclose what is going on inside their thinking processes. In workplace discourse, this trend coincided with the shift towards applied research in social sciences.

Psychotherapy and psychopathology represent traditional areas of workplace discourse in which the work practice is embodied in interaction. They are also areas in which the move from a description to application has been very smooth and continually evolving.³⁴ A clear example of applied studies of Accounts’ revealing how people come to understand or to be seen as having a health or a psychological problem has been provided by Horton-Salway (2001/2009) and by Palmer (2000). Palmer (*ibid.*), who analysed Accounts of a person diagnosed with schizophrenia, argues that delusions may be recognised through tacit skills. His analysis further explains how the Account may support the diagnosis of the patient. While Palmer (*ibid.*) adopts very much a CA approach to the analysis of the data and extends Woffitt’s (1992) debate of paranormal phenomena, Horton-Salway, (*ibid.*) tends towards a DA approach to the analysis of a “discursive construction of M.E.”³⁵. Horton-Salway (*ibid.*) applies Edwards and Potter’s (1992) discursive action model to the analysis of the data, which she uses to interpret the ways in which the participants, represented by both doctors and sufferers, make sense of the causes and definitions of the illness. Horton-Salway (*ibid.*) thus demonstrates how Accounts contribute to the construction of meaning and authority.

Following the applied paradigm, other studies undertaken in the area of workplace and institutional discourse have confirmed the role played by Accounts in sustaining workplace practices. Accounts have been shown to play a role in: constructing versions of reality in political discourse (Bennett, 2009); negotiating the legitimacy of medical problems (Heritage, 2009); reaching agreements (Hagler and Brem, 2008); affecting the perception of diversity and justice in the workplace (Roberson

³³ As reviewed by Buttny and Morris (2001).

³⁴ Woffitt (2005/2010: 102-112) provides an extended discussion of some applications of a CA approach to workplace practice.

³⁵ Myalgic encephalomyelitis.

and Stevens, 2006); helping in managing threats to identity (Sheer and Weigold, 1995); influencing the dynamics of group discussions (Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008); assisting in sense-making (Randall *et al.*, 2007); influencing employees' reactions (Tata, 1998); and giving advice (Zhang Waring, 2007a, 2007b). Extensive research has been carried out by Buttny into various aspects of accountability. More recently, this has included WalMart's accounts to the community (Buttny, 2009), a description of discursive practices in talking through problems during a school/family meeting (Buttny and Rath, 2007), and accounts in public hearings (Buttny, 2010).

Nor has research into Accounts in business meetings been lagging behind in acknowledging the pro-active use of the practice. For example, the analysis of Accounts by Firth (1995b) demonstrates the strategic and prospective use of the practice in a single case of negotiation discourse; Iacobucci (1990: 97) illustrates how "ostensibly relational talk may have a use, a purpose, for accomplishing a task-goal"; and Koester (2004) proposes that Accounts are frequently linked to or are part of decision-making or directive discourse. Although the research mentioned here into the language of meetings follows the paradigm applied, the role of Accounts has been analysed only in the data of dialogic interactions, perhaps due to the complexity of working with multi-party talk.

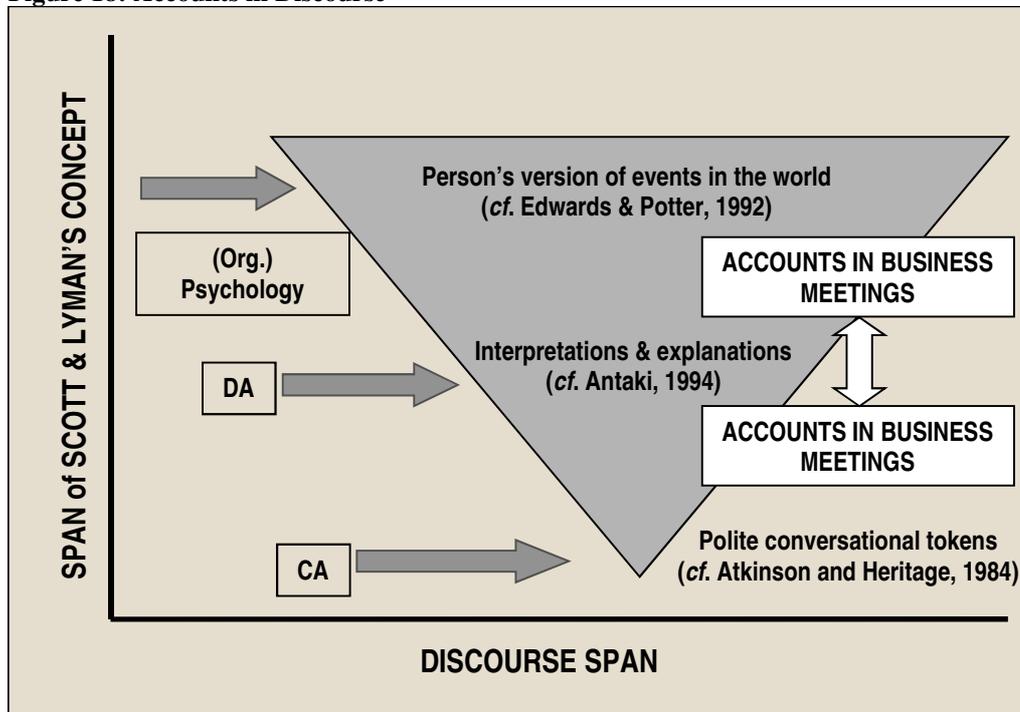
The current study expands the interpretation of the function and goal orientation of Accounts in meetings. It is possibly the first study to investigate the phased production of Accounts in meetings, deliberately to differentiate Explanations as a discrete category, then to examine these as well as the integration of Accounts with Explanations and Formulations in their joint impact on decision-making.

4.3.4 Accounts as Research Data in Business Meetings

Since 1968, Scott and Lyman's paradigm has thus experienced significant interdisciplinary widening and been applied to discourse data of various lengths. The most marked differences stand out between pure CA studies treating Accounts as polite conversational tokens, on the one hand, and the pragmatically oriented psychological views of Accounts, on the other, treating the practice as the speaker's version of reality (as discussed in Section 4.1). Figure 18 schematically illustrates this span of Accounts in discourse as it has occurred as a natural consequence of

Accounts' being applied to the interpretation of social interaction. The figure also marks the discourse elasticity of Accounts as it has been observed in the meetings data.

Figure 18: Accounts in Discourse



In meetings, Accounts were constitutive of multi-party discourse and were undertaken multilaterally by the meeting's participants. They were employed as a discourse practice whenever an action was subject to an evaluative enquiry, that is, entirely within the scope of Scott and Lyman's original definition. 'Fractured sociation' rarely occurred as the main trigger of accounting episodes. The length of Accounts was flexible, varying broadly from a few words uttered within a single turn to long, monologic accounting episodes, in which Accounts were integrated with other practices. The impact of Accounts on decision-making was then optimally understood through an analysis of interactional sequences because Accounts were, typically, interactionally negotiated; then, the alignment or misalignment emerged gradually with the unfolding of the meeting.

Depending on the nature of the interaction, Accounts were elicited by a direct reproach, else were produced in anticipation of one. Accounts were often honoured as part of the canonical three-phase structure (reproach-account-evaluation); however, it was not uncommon for the evaluation phase to be delayed within the meeting, postponed to a later meeting, or not verbalised at all. In negotiation

discourse or in strategy-planning meetings, Accounts were frequently chained,³⁶ whereas in operational meetings they were observed typically to take the form of short one-to-one problem-solving exchanges; Accounts were often completely absent from informative or brainstorming meetings. It was therefore both the character of the meeting, its purpose, and the type of a decision taken, communicated or implemented that determined the length, form, and impact of Accounts produced in the meeting.

The variation in the lengths and types of Accounts has more recently been acknowledged by Buttny and Morris (2001), for example, and also Draper has previously claimed that Accounts cannot reliably be analysed as isolated passages extracted from transcripts (1988). Draper (*ibid.*: 28-29) analysed Accounts as a type of causal explanation, on which basis he formulated two conclusions disputing any such an attempt: firstly, although the function of an Account will be clear to the interlocutors on other grounds, it is not likely to be marked explicitly; secondly, Accounts quoted are “selected against the background of what is mutually known by the interlocutors” and is thus probably not known to non-participants.

The analysis of meetings data confirmed this implicit yet intrinsically interactive character of Accounts. Accounts adopted different forms appropriate to the respective existing need and the status of the interactants. The coding of Accounts was therefore undertaken in context and was driven by the role of Accounts as observed in the meetings. The impact of individual Accounts could largely not be measured, given that their being honoured was subject to existing background expectations. However, observation of the type of accounting practice adopted, and analysing the speakership, frequency and length, provided insight into the decision-making direction and process of the team.

³⁶ See Figure 25 in Section 5.2.1, where participants linked and chained together a number of Accounts as part of the strategy to negotiate a decision as to how the targets were to be achieved.

4.3.5 Sequentiality of Accounts in Meetings

In the words of the ancients, one should make his decisions within the space of seven breaths.

(Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai*, 1983)

As will be reported in detail in Chapter Eight, Accounts were frequently chained in the meetings interactions. Their sequences provided insight into how the participants were constructing the social interaction within which they made or discussed organisational decisions. Central to this process was a “‘*reflexive*’ dimension of the social action”, which Heritage (1998: 2) defines as:

[B]y their actions participants exhibit an analysis or an understanding of the event in which they are engaged, but by acting they also make an interactional contribution that moves the event forward on the basis of that analysis.

Accounts thus created the discursive trail of arguments underpinning the individual decisions made or communicated in meetings. Their distribution indicated the places of distinctive turn-taking, and marked how participants processed the meetings talk and reacted to it in their own professional capacity. Through Accounts participants demonstrated their understanding of organisational action. To articulate such understanding took time, as a result of which Accounts substantially prolonged the turns produced and contributed to the asymmetry of the meetings talk.

The longest and most elaborate Accounts were produced by SOMs who, as part of their managerial role, employed them to set direction, to provide vision, to mitigate objections, and to create a concept for change or prepare the way in order that a decision could be made. Such Accounts served as a basis upon which Formulations could be made (*see* Chapter Nine) or were drawn upon by other meeting participants, who either extended the argument presented or launched their own contribution on the back of it. The conversational-analytic approach to the analysis therefore enabled Accounts to be viewed within “the specific sequences of talk” in which they were produced and to examine them “in terms of their relationship to predefined outcomes” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 80).

With regard to the decision-making process, accounting sequences marked the signposts of its incremental progression. There was no single instance in the meeting talk recorded of when a decision was made or announced with the immediacy of ‘Eureka! This is what we shall do.’ No matter whether

the decisions were the ‘predefined outcomes’ of the meeting or actually originated there, they were always reached as a consequence of a staged and reasoned interaction in which Accounts contributed to the decision-making discourse. Decisions wove in and out of the discourse in which the teams engaged and which the SOMs could hijack, veto or merely moderate as they propelled the meeting forward. In this sense, to adapt Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s famous thought, SOMs acted as Samurai who employed Accounts to breathe life into their decisions.

4.4. Formulations and their Decision-making Properties

In contrast to Explanations, the concept of Formulations is well established and similarly to Accounts rooted in Conversation Analysis. Drawing on the work of Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), the definitive description of the practice was published by Heritage and Watson (1979). The current research into Formulations in workplace discourse seeks to understand how the relevance of the practice is exploited both in a range of dispersed institutional settings and within specialist functions. The ensuing five sub-sections review the concept and the links between Formulations and decision-making as these have been explored in workplace discourse studies, and discuss the occurrence and relevance of Formulations in the context of business meetings.

4.4.1 Formulations as Part of the Decision-making Process

Formulations possess two qualities through which they influence the decision-making process. These comprise the sense-making property and the ability to keep talk on track. The sense-making quality of talk has been described by Garfinkel (1967), who asserted that even if individuals wished to participate in human action or with institutions, they are not able to do so or choose not to engage unless they can “make shared sense of their circumstances and act on the shared sense they make” (Heritage, 2001/2010: 49). It is the inherent property of Formulations continuously to build the sense of the discussion and to maintain it accessible to every individual present. By keeping the talk on track, Formulations then also enable participants to construct and develop their talk while remaining focused on the meeting’s goals.

In addition, a further quality of Formulations, one directly linking the practice to the decision-making process, is that of being able to frame propositions, formulate proposals, and make decisions. This property, in effect, transforms the meeting's talk into action. In the meetings observed, Explanations and Accounts incrementally developed and constructed the discussion; through Formulations the sense of the discussion was maintained. The direction of the discussion was shaped and ultimately brought to a close by the making of a decision proposal. Chapter Nine examines this feature of Formulations in detail.

4.4.2 Formulations in Workplace Discourse

Recent research into Formulations has become increasingly institutionalised. The focus of studies investigating formulating practices in workplace discourse has been essentially twofold: firstly, Formulations have been examined to interpret how individuals go about – and make sense of – their work by using talk and, secondly, to clarify how they arrive discursively at mutual understanding in workplace situations and professional relationships, that is, constructing shared sense through talk. In these two fairly general areas of workplace discourse enquiry, Formulations have been analysed, for example, as forming leading questions and constituting questioning techniques used by work professionals to elicit information and control the unfolding of the interaction³⁷, as a practice constructing sense by (re)formulating the words of others (e.g., Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1990; Antaki *et al.*, 2005; Bolden, 2010), and as facilitating collective solutions and agreements (e.g., Edwards, 1995; Diaz *et al.*, 1996; Barnes, 2007). Research into the two areas of formulating work has been traditionally pursued in and included psychotherapy and mediation, courtroom interactions, news interviews and, more recently, meetings talk.

One of the key arguments supporting applied research into institutional formulating is that Formulations preserve institutional interactions (e.g., Heritage, 1984; Barnes, 2007). The need to preserve certain versions of talk as accountable phenomena for future interactions is often at the heart of institutional work where interrogative and investigative procedures represent prototypical examples of such work. In contrast, casual conversation rarely fixes talk in incremental stages by consciously performing formulating work. In casual conversation, arguments are possibly the one exception

³⁷ See Freed and Ehrlich (2010) for a comprehensive overview.

when the fine line between spontaneous and consciously produced language is crossed.³⁸ Such comparative consideration between the sense-making impact of Formulations naturally occurring in everyday conversation, on the one hand, and their fixative, specialised use in workplace settings, on the other, grants Formulations an exclusive position in the decision-making process and generates a focus on where to direct analytical investigation.

The rationale propelling research into formulating within workplace contexts is, therefore, not about questioning the work done by professionals through talk, but about understanding how they accomplish this, and whether they could in fact do it differently or more successfully. In psychotherapeutic research, for example, this applied focus of the research into Formulations has been encapsulated as follows:

[W]hile therapists are quite clear that they have routines which they use to extract facts an (*sic*) basic data from their clients, they may not be aware that they use formulations in this way, possibly because formulations are closely associated, in our cultural view of therapy, with psychological interpretation. (Antaki *et al.*, 2005: 643-4).

Research into business meetings is currently one of the few areas in which Formulations are being investigated as part of multi-party interactions. Past research has identified Chairs to use Formulations most effectively by for the purposes of facilitating common agreement, reaching collective solutions, and moving the meeting forward. A close analysis by Barnes (2007) is one example of a study into how Formulations allow speakers in curriculum development meetings to close topics or move on to new ones. Gafaranga and Britten (2004), drawing on data from GP consultations, then discuss and illustrate the role of the practice as both formulating a summary, i.e., making sense of the talk thus far, and orienting towards an action, i.e., committing the speaker to a decision.

In conclusion, Formulations play a dual role in achieving workplace goals. Firstly, they enable individuals to make sense of the meetings discourse and their place in it and, secondly, through their fixative qualities Formulations enable teams – from a diverse range of inputs and options – to construct and agree a shared sense of the conversation thus far. The present thesis examines Formulations in relation to the discursive undertaking of decision-making in meetings and keeping the meeting

³⁸ Barnes (2007: 278) makes a similar claim when she asserts that adversarial environments present the one type of casual conversation in which Formulations are purposefully used to preserve the interaction.

on track. That is, it specifically focuses on the sense-constructing property of the practice in talk described by Heritage and Watson (1979: 152) as “reassembling the sense of conversational materials” to achieve “other conversational ends”. It examines the sequential interrelation of Formulations with Explanations and Accounts in the long turns of talk, as these extended turns constituted the basis on which decision-making activity was performed.

4.4.3 Formulations: Sense-making and Frequency

The dual role of Formulations of having both sense-making and sense-constructing properties, emerged from the thinking of Harol Garfinkel. When Garfinkel established ethno-methodology as a new research approach to social knowledge, he drew on the old philosophical question of why society exists and how it is possible, “insist[ing] that shared sense making is a primordial feature of the social world” (Heritage, 2001/2010: 50). To test his theorem of social action, Garfinkel (1967) conducted a series of breaching experiments investigating the ways in which people in a given society used shared methods of practical reasoning to “analyse, understand, and act in the common-sense world of everyday life” (*ibid*, 2001: 50). That is, he was interested in how they make sense of and take part in the world in which they live. In 1970, in tandem with Harvey Sacks, Garfinkel further advanced the idea of people’s inherent desire to have order and to strive for shared understanding. Their joint paper “On Formal Structures of Practical Action” grounded one highly perceptive resource for the study of “accountably rational activities” – the practice of *formulating a conversation*.

Formulations are a device in talk that enables people to check their own understanding and help other people to understand. They are pervasive in language and they constantly display the speakers’ sense of practical actions in which they engage. On the pervasiveness of “doing formulating”, Garfinkel and Sacks (1970: 352) note:

The work is not restricted to special circumstances. On the contrary, it occurs routinely, and on a massive scale. Members are particularly knowledgeable of, sensitive to, and skilful with this work, with doing it, assuring it, remedying it, and the like.

Formulating is therefore a verbal, natural embodiment of people’s intellectual engagement with reality and with the practical activities of their everyday lives.

The effort to achieve practical goals in meetings utilises Formulations abundantly. Formulations link the spatial, temporal, and personal entities in an individual meeting or within a series of related events. Formulations have the ability to do that because they possess the reflexive properties of a natural language through which they establish sense, gist, upshots, and the like (Heritage and Watson, 1979). As Heritage and Watson argue (*ibid.*), Formulations also establish the relevance and meaning of the indexical expressions with which natural talk is saturated. This observation explains the commonality of Formulations in talk; furthermore, it is critical to the understanding of how shared sense is arrived at, even though to an outsider to the conversation its final formulation may often still appear indirect and situational. Data Sample 4.4-1, extracting data from a discussion of the budget, illustrates the indexicality of sense making in meetings:

Data Sample 4.4-1: Budget – It’s better than everybody else’s

REG29_T3-6_Peter_T6-6_F(SC)

- 3 **Peter** Well, (0.2) **it’s** **it’s** BETTER than everybody else’s, u:h (0.2) (45:00) because **it** is, but (0.2) **it’s** still (0.2) not as uh **it’s** not as good as this year. (0.2) And I mean, (0.2) when we were originally looking at **this**, we thought **it** looked REALLY GOOD, well, **that’s** ‘cause there were some problems with the formulas (0.8)
- 4 **Ben** Oh, in Excel, yeah
- 5 **Peter** Well, you know, I -- we -- you know, we -- one didn’t look at the formulas, did one? (0.2) Because you DON’T (f), it’s the bloody finance (45:20) [ghastly form]
- 6 **Roxanne** [One would expect] formulas to work (laughs)

The indexicals ‘it’, ‘that’, and ‘this’ (highlighted in **bold**) all make explicit reference in the preceding talk/meeting to the ‘budget’ and in fact to all issues and problems connected with it. Their use does not, however, seem in any way to have an impact on Ben’s and Roxanne’s understanding of the talk thus far. Instead, they both gloss Peter’s preceding turn by formulating a comment (underlined) on the latest information provided – a mistake in Excel formulae used in the calculation of the budget. Ben is seeking or sharing clarification in checking that it is indeed a problem with the budgeting software (Excel). Roxanne then excuses the team and Peter from responsibility for the budgeting error. Both of their comments are cooperative and serve the purpose of the sequential orderliness of conversation.

The formulated comments are therefore not at all about displaying one’s understanding of Excel. By being able to formulate, Ben and Roxanne exhibit that the conversation thus far “*has been* an understandable, coherent, decidable, preservable, and reportable – i.e., *orderly* – phenomenon” (Heritage and Watson, 1979: 156, italics in the original). In addition, their translating and explicating of

Peter's talk is provided not because they are unsure of their own understanding, but because through offering their comments they demonstrate their involvement in the conversation and confirm their qualified contribution in the meeting. Formulating work in meetings may therefore be described as natural and customary, yet also as a highly motivated conversational activity.

The final observation of Garfinkel and Sacks to be remarked here is that formulating in conversation may take many forms. In their definition, the authors describe formulating in a conversation as a way to:

[D]escribe that conversation, to explain it, to characterize it, or explicate or translate, or summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules. (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970: 350)

That is to say, speakers have various ways of displaying sense through talk. Thus, when they formulate, they actually make decisions with regard to the formulating technique they use on a particular occasion. By electing to apply certain techniques – and not others – speakers may not only achieve different practical ends, such as interpreting talk, fixing a part of it, or managing its closure; they may sometimes make clearer sense of the news delivered to the other participants in the conversation. This property of Formulations is particularly valuable in multi-party interactions such as meetings, where shared understanding is of paramount importance for forward-heading and orderly interaction.

4.4.4 Formulations as Research Data in Business Meetings

Formulations in the meetings data featured the expected interpretative, fixative, and proposal-building qualities, and this was in line with the established research into Formulations as discussed in Section 4.4.2. In addition, the close relationship between Formulations and decisions repeatedly demonstrated itself through formulating utterances, which either contained or led towards decisions. However, when these were examined more closely, it was noted that not all Formulation-decision pairs were positioned adjacent to each other as was established by Heritage and Watson (1979).

Heritage and Watson (*ibid.*) describe Formulations as occurring in an interactive pattern, in which Formulations occasion receptions in the succeeding turn. Specifically, the writers assert that the character of the reception of the Formulation

by the next speaker is “sharply constrained to confirmations or disconfirmation or, more generally, decisions” (*ibid.*: 141). While the meetings data evidenced a strong sequential implicative aspect of Formulations for the subsequent talk and its orientation towards decisions, Formulations were not always found a) adjacently paired, or b) adjacently paired with decisions.

The most striking observation was the occurrence of Formulations and the suspension of the responding part of the agency pairing as described by Heritage and Watson (1979) in extended long turns undertaken by SOMs in the meetings. In these, speakers held the floor for a significant length of time, for the duration of which turn-taking was suspended, and the talk took the form of an individual monologue. Its subsequent analysis identified the repeated use of self-Formulations in combination with both Explanations and Accounts.

Throughout these long turns, Formulations acted in their traditional role of sense construction. However, the self-formulating talk of the SOM substituted for the second party’s confirmations or disconfirmations. This continued until the speaker either formulated a proposal for action or announced a decision, which then signalled a change of turn. Interestingly, not even at this point did the second speakers’ turn necessarily take the form of the adjacently described confirmations or disconfirmations. Instead, they featured a variety of responses: evaluations, completions taking the form of latching, reformulations of some aspects of the previous talk, and requests for clarification.

In conclusion, Formulations introduced a specific interactional dynamic into these long Combination turns. In business meetings the dynamics changed, particularly around the communication of complex ideas requiring time to be set out and articulated clearly. Self-formulating suspended the opportunity for second party interaction *via* the traditionally expected response of adjacency pairing. In effect, by self-formulating managers fulfilled both roles of the adjacency pairing. This enabled them to prevent disruption or challenge in the initial stages of the turn. It may be asserted that the monologue created in the long turn is not a conversation in its own right. By implication, however, it is required to behave as one and to use the properties of Formulations, together with Explanations and Accounts, to create the shared understanding and participation of all members of the meeting.

4.4.5 Formulating at the Level of Topic

This final sub-section re-visits the paper written by Heritage and Watson (1979). It specifically considers some of the original propositions made by the authors with regard to how Formulations are structured at the level of topic and relates them to the results of the analysis of decision-making in business meetings as reported in Chapter Nine. Heritage and Watson (*ibid.*) comprehensively systematise the role of the practice in the management of topical organisation in conversation into six claims. It is argued that these display a remarkably close match with the use of Formulations as observed by the researcher in agenda-driven meetings. Figure 19 (below) builds on Heritage and Watson’s observations and explains how they operated in the management of the meetings.

Figure 19: Formulating at the Level of Topic

Formulating at the Level of Topic	
Heritage and Watson’s Observations (1979)	Transferability to the Management of Agenda-driven Meetings
1. Formulating in long sections of talk	Self-formulations in long sections of talk address the issues of asymmetry in knowledge amongst meeting participants and help build cumulative understanding of matters discussed
2. Institutional distribution of the rights to formulate	In meetings, individuals fulfil additional roles to those of being conversationalists, e.g., the Chair, and are therefore entitled to formulate at any time in order to drive the meeting forward
3. Formulations as prefaces	Formulating from past meetings to create prefaces to the current conversations in setting the topic for discussion
4. Formulations and matters of special importance	Using Formulations as a device to (re-)emphasise the importance of a particular point or action to the meetings participants
5. Understanding and closure	Meeting members formulate to display understanding and create the opportunity for establishing a natural closure to the current agenda point
6. Collaborative achievement and outcomes of the conversation	Formulations working at the level of topic create coherence in meetings talk and translate that talk into a reportable and accountable outcome leading to actions and decisions

Although the observations of Heritage and Watson (*ibid.*) were limited to Formulations of the gist, their application appears to apply to all Formulations identified in the meetings analysed. The astuteness and universality of the ideas of Heritage and Watson regarding rests, in particular, in recognising that Formulations in meetings integrate larger conversational units and achieve more than a mere reproduction of “what has been talked about thus far” (*ibid.*: 149). Instead, Formulations continually attend to what information is being shared and mutually

understood in meetings, and in doing this they treat “talk as practical business” (Edwards, 1997:115). Hence, Formulations not only constantly orientate to the construction of sense in talk; they also actively engage in creating “the state of play of the interaction” (Antaki *et al.*, 2005: 643). This feature, coupled with the mindfulness of achieving the meeting’s goals, enables Formulations to translate talk into decisions and thence to actions.

4.5. Conclusions

Chapter Four has identified, described, and discussed the unique properties of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations that position the three discursive practices in the role of principal conversational strategies in constituting the process of decision-making in meetings. In meetings, speakers draw on the fact-based, informative character of Explanations in creating relevance to an argument at hand. In contrast, Accounts furnish personalised interpretations of debated issues and assist in the build-up of specific perspectives and scenarios. This property ties them closely to Formulations that employ the reasoning of Accounts to frame propositions, formulate proposals, and make decisions. The frequent, combined use of the three practices in the meetings data is one that has not been commented upon in literature before. It has therefore also been the role of this chapter to prepare the ground for an analysis of this feature by establishing the textual boundaries of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the transcripts of conversational data collected in business meetings. Finally, an attempt has been made not to formulate novel propositions where original CA concepts regarding the discursive role of the practices have already been articulated – namely through the work of Scott and Lyman (1968), Heritage and Watson (1979) and Sacks and Garfinkel (1970). These have been reviewed and interpreted in the context of the decision-making discourse in meetings and have been found to be sufficiently robust to underpin the subsequent analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Set One Pilot Analysis: Interactional Matrices

Chapter Five commences the analytical part of the study. It pilots the methodology developed for a discursive analysis of decision-making in meetings in order to test whether the mapping of the practices into the interactional matrices (introduced in Section 2.3.4) is sufficiently viable for it to be applied to a larger volume of data. It sets out the coding system for the macro-analysis of the data and undertakes a preliminary analysis of four meetings.

5.1. Four Meetings: Overview

The ensuing overview offers an introduction to the four meetings analysed describing the contextual setting of the meetings and the interactional dynamics amongst the meetings' participants. Section 5.1.3 subsequently provides data evidence establishing the significance of long turns in the meetings and determining the focus of the analysis undertaken.

5.1.1 Background

Four meetings were subjected to analysis. All were scheduled as regular weekly events to facilitate the operations of the two respective teams: The Regeneration Team (REG) and the International Trade Advisers' Team (ITA).³⁹ They shared many similarities, rendering them comparable and analytically interesting. They were all business meetings dealing with project and team performance; all were run semi-formally in the environment of two managerial work teams; all participants were native speakers of English, and both genders were represented.

A factor common to all four meetings was the attendance of a visitor: the company's CEO (Doug, Meeting One), in-company Marketing Manager (Karyn, Meeting Two), and an external marketing consultant (Dee, Meetings Three and Four). In Meetings Two, Three, and Four, the visitors were invited to the meeting as marketing consultants. In Meeting One, Doug, the company's CEO, announced his attendance approximately one week prior to the meeting with the notified purpose of discussing

³⁹ The abbreviations REG and ITA are used in figures and data samples.

the team's under-performance. The meetings were thus driven by one main objective, which required a decision either to be made or to be communicated. This then demanded further action by the team or individuals in planning the implementation of the decision.

Meetings One and Two were held by the REG team. Meeting One was an operational meeting. The entire interaction was, however, driven by a strategic decision that had already been made at the executive level of the organisation. The CEO was in attendance to communicate the decision to the team and to reinforce the team's engagement in it. The meeting had seven participants. The team's Senior Operations Manager (SOM) was not present at either Meetings One or Two. One cornerstone and three slab-stone decisions were made in Meeting One.

Meeting Two took place a week later as a follow-up to Meeting One. It was the weekly pre-planned operational meeting to plan and implement the actions of Meeting One. Karyn from the Marketing Department attended in order to draft a marketing and promotional strategy to assist the team in meeting the set targets. Six participants were present. No concrete marketing initiative was agreed in the meeting.

Meetings Three (operational) and Four (reflective)⁴⁰ were held by the ITA team. The purpose of Meeting Three was to discuss and plan a telemarketing campaign to be carried out externally on behalf of the team. Dee, an external consultant commissioned to undertake the work, was in attendance. Five participants were present; the SOM was not in attendance. Core decisions around the allocation of staff, resources, budget, and activity were all made in the meeting. In total, this resulted in nineteen mini-decisions (slab stones).

Meeting Four with Dee, the external contractor, reviewed the performance of the telemarketing project and brainstormed possible future action. Joseph, the team's SOM, was also present and was chairing. The meeting had six participants. Even though the role of the meeting was primarily to assess and reflect on the work delivered, four decisions (slab stone) were nevertheless made as a result of the discussions.

⁴⁰ See Section 3.2.1, Figure 8 for an overview of generic types of organisational meetings.

5.1.2 Interactional Overview

Despite a number of shared typological similarities among the meetings, the decision process differed considerably in each case, as did the dynamics of the interactions leading to the meetings' outcomes. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were frequent in all four meetings. In addition, they typically clustered around decisions made in meetings.⁴¹ In order to determine with certainty what was significant in forming the decision process in the meetings, the entire interaction was examined. Figure 20 provides an overview of interactional characteristics tracked in the four meetings.

⁴¹ See previous Section 3.3.2 for further detail and examples.

Figure 20: Four Meetings - Interactional Overview

FOUR MEETINGS: INTERACTIONAL OVERVIEW																				
MEETING	Duration (Transcript)	No. of Partic.	Objective	Decision Types	No. of Turns		No. of Turns by Chair		No. of Turns by Visitor		No. of Back- channels		Overlap Initiation		Latching Initiation		No. of Long Turns		Duration of Long Turns	
					Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	Rel. Freq. %	Total	%	Total	%	Total	Rel. Freq. %	Total (sec)	% of Meeting Time
Meeting One (REG_M14_070905)	19m 40s	7	To negotiate performance targets	Cornerstone (1), Slab stone (3)	223	16%	31	16%	81	36%	60	27%	32	14%	3	1%	21	9%	580s	49%
Meeting Two (REG_M15_140905)	10m 07s	6	To agree and plan a marketing activity	Stepping stone (1)	98	12%	12	12%	35	36%	72	73%	26	27%	12	12%	14	14%	355s	58%
Meeting Three (ITA_M05_150605)	41m 26s	5	To plan a telemarketing campaign	Slab stone (19)	548	23%	112	23%	127	27%	307	56%	147	27%	29	5%	58	11%	1240s	50%
Meeting Four (ITA_M18_021105)	32m 11s	6	To feedback on the telemarketing campaign	Slab stone (4)	411	30%	124	30%	71	17%	177	43%	79	19%	20	5%	40	10%	1020s	53%

aware of these underlying differences and sometimes also rendered them overtly noticeable in the produced talk. For example, in Meeting One, Doug (CEO) in T16 and T19 explicitly states his role of a visitor and asserts his right not to chair the meeting (Data Sample 3.3-2 – Chairing Arrangements, presented in Section 3.3.1); in Meeting Three, Dee (external consultant) uses the right as a specialist to open the meeting in T11; and in Meeting Four in T66, Dee’s professional status is acknowledged when she is requested to provide a recapitulation of the telemarketing campaign undertaken; Joseph passes her the floor and invites her to commence the transactional part of the meeting. Consider Data Sample 5.1-2 (below).

Data Sample 5.1-2: Passing the floor

ITA18 <J> Joseph - Chair, <R> Rachel – Projects Coordinator, <D> Dee - external consultant
 66 <J> Right, so how are we getting on, the floor madam is yours.
 67 <R> /? ? /
 68 <D> Uhm, actually, the telephone marketing I believe has gone very well,

Although the differences in rank and status occasionally assisted some speakers in gaining a greater turn-taking share, whether or not speakers capitalised on these turns depended, however, largely on how the speakers asserted and negotiated their overall contribution within the meeting. The rank and status thus did not by default condition the speakers’ dominance. However, the topic under discussion and the fact that these were operational issues did afford specific individuals the floor if they chose to use it. In other words, despite the differences in rank and status, the absolute majority of turns were managed locally, on a turn-by-turn basis. The data provided no evidence that turns pre-allocated by the Chair or SOMs, sparse in the total number, would be in any way more significant in their impact on the overall decision-making.

Turn-taking dominance as measured in the total number of turns per speaker presented, similarly to the rank and status of the participants, another inconclusive characteristic. Turn-taking dominance could have, yet did not automatically, resulted in a greater impact on the decision-making process. For example, in Meeting Two, Karyn (Marketing Manager) monopolised 36% of the turns. The whole meeting cumulated merely in the formulation of one stepping-stone decision, which required still further consultation. In contrast, Dee in Meeting Three was not the most dominant speaker as regards the total number of turns produced (twenty-three per cent), yet she formulated the highest number of decisions – nine slab-stone decisions, representing over 50% of all decisions made in the meeting. The total number of

turns produced by speakers was thus not a determinant of decisions they made in meetings.

With regard to the organisation of turn-taking, it was observed that long turns consistently recurring in the meetings appeared to be significant in terms of the turn-taking dynamics. The data were therefore tracked for all turns exceeding ten seconds.⁴³ Information about the number and length of the long turns produced in the meetings is provided in the last four columns of the interactional overview (Figure 20). The findings provided the first objective link between turn-taking organisation and decision-making in meetings.

5.1.3 Significance of long turns

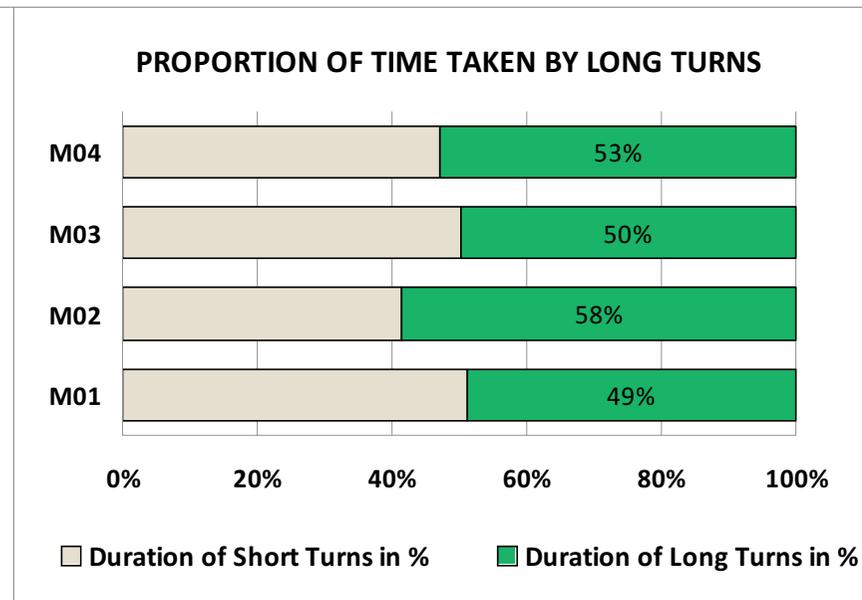
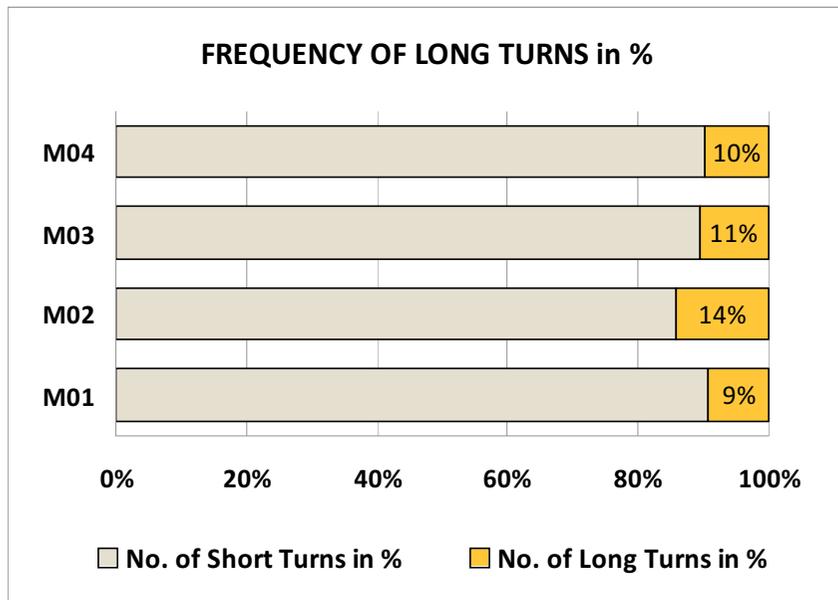
Long turns within meetings were significant, as it was within these that the ground was prepared in order to present or make decisions. The section describes the compelling relationship between the frequency and length of the long turns as they were produced in the meetings, and sets out the ways in which long turns related to the surrounding decisions.

Firstly, when both frequency and the length of the long turns were counted, a prominent contradiction has emerged. The frequency of long turns in the four meetings averaged eleven per cent, with a nine per cent minimum in M01 and 14% maximum in M02. However, when the long turns were recalculated in terms of the proportion of the time they represented in the meetings, the long turns took on average 53% of the time, with the minimum of 49% in M01 and the maximum of 58% in M03 (*see* a complete overview of the data in Figure 21, below). This count has thus highlighted an important fact about the data: **approximately 11% of turns represented more than 50% of the meeting talk.**

⁴³ See Sections 2.3.4 and 5.1.3 for further information on L10 and L20 coding.

Figure 21: Four Meetings - Long Turns Analysis

PROPORTION OF TIME TAKEN BY LONG TURNS				
MEETING	Duration of Short Turns in %	Duration of Long Turns in %	Length of the Meeting (in seconds)	Total Length of the Long Turns (in seconds)
M01	51%	49%	1180 s	580 s
M02	42%	58%	607 s	355 s
M03	50%	50%	2486 s	1240 s
M04	47%	53%	1931 s	1020 s



Secondly, long turns were significant as they provided the leads to the subject matter discussed and to the decision-making orientations presented in the meeting. In other words, long turns were not merely the result of a reporting activity. Long turns facilitated information exchange, debate, and negotiation in which the decision process was taking place. These turns also furnished the conversations with factual detail, opinion, previous experience, learning, and new information. Long turns represented those stretches of talk in which speakers were developing, maintaining, or arguing their stance. Boden (1994) has described this type of conversational contribution as ‘thinking out loud’. Consider Data Sample 5.1-3:

Data Sample 5.1-3: Thinking out loud

ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair, Senior Manager, <D> Dee - external consultant
 109 <J> Well the way we stand at present, and that’s something we’re goin’ have to debate among ourselves, [<D>Mhm] is is that I think you’ve done a very good job, (22:40) and and we are actually well ahead of target, of what we- - what we have to do. [<D>Mhm] Uhm we’re well ahead of target on churn, I don’t know about the quality, but that’s not your problem, that’s that’s our problem, in as much as we can only give you what we get ourselves, [<D>Mhm] and that is an internal debate we have to have about where do we get, better, more intelligent, [<S>Mhm] more focused information from. [<S>Mhm] I mean, if you- - if you give (23:00) Dee the stuff we give her, we get what we give! [<D>Mhm] But that said, we we’ve got a series of KPIs that we have to hit, one of which is the diagnostics, which is a fancy word [<D>Mhm] for company visits, [<D>Mhm] our target for the year is about two hundred fifty or so, we’re at about two twenty already, [<D>Uhm?] and the the year ends in April, [<D>Yeah] for goodness sake! [<D>Yeah] Uh and the other KPIs (23:20) are equally as as well covered for the moment. [<D>Mhm] This gives us the chance for the rest of this year to do our day-to-day work and so on, and it gives us the chance to some some housework and tidying up, which we need to do, but it gives the chance in the last quarter starting January of next year /?/calendar to April [<D>Mhm] of preparing the ground ahead. (23:40) (accentuates his words with his fists pounding gently onto the table, one beat per word) We’ve never had the luxury in international trade of preparing ourselves a year in advance, or a quarter in advance for the next year, because we were running like mad in the last quarter to get those last_
 110 <D> =Finished. Mhm. (p)

The turn T109 (above) has been extracted from M04. It is seventy-five seconds long and demonstrates the predominantly reflective nature of the meeting. The turn is complex and Joseph uses it in a number of ways: 1) to undertake performance assessment; 2) to stir the team’s thinking by presenting his own thoughts; 3) to motivate the team by accentuating good results; 4) to pre-formulate decisions by painting future scenarios generating engagement and encouragement. Such an approach avoids telling the team what to do; instead, the team are given the opportunity to influence the formulation of actions proposed. The thinking out loud takes place through the verbalisation of Joseph’s own thoughts and comments, which subsequently stimulates the team’s thinking and decision-making activity. By providing the team with an opportunity to think and engage in the process, Joseph draws the team into his own thinking and decision-making. The team react to this by

contributing their ideas, as a result of which a number of decisions is made. In sum, it appears legitimate to examine more closely the long, complex turns as these contain clues regarding the decision-making activity undertaken in the meeting.

The third and final point to be made about the significance of long turns is that **decisions were either made during the long turns or clustered around them**. In the four meetings, twenty-eight decisions were made, 68% of which were either part of the long turns (LT) or occurred in their vicinity (around the long turn – ALT). For example, the cornerstone and stepping-stone decisions made in M01 and M02 were both incorporated into long turns. In M01, the long turn was used to introduce the decision made prior to the meeting. In M02, it functioned as an exit strategy providing a degree of assurance and generating confidence in the marketing support provided. In both cases, the long turn bridged the gap between the actions and expectations: it softened the impact of what was to be communicated (M01) or mitigated the indefinite and therefore somewhat unsatisfactory outcome (M02).

The findings regarding the occurrence of the decisions in M01-M04 are summarised in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Four Meetings – Occurrence of Decisions

	Turn	Decision Type	Speaker	Position	Spoken Contribution ...
M01	47	slab stone	<n Doug>	LT	/He wasn't coping ?/ I wa
223 turns	50	slab stone	<n Ben>	LT	Yeah, we'll just take it
4 decisions	63	cornerstone	<n Doug>	LT	We're- we are concerned a
	142	slab stone	<n Doug>	NALT	Ok, I'll get Karyn to com
M02	88	stepping stone	<n Karyn>	LT	Yeah I will eh (0.3) I wi
98 turns					
1 decision					
M03	169	slab stone	<n Dee>	LT	Ok, so you know, (0.5) as
548 turns	199	slab stone	<n Adam>	LT	[I think they- -] I think
19 decisions	208	slab stone	<n Dee>	ALT	So just refer it.
	217	slab stone	<n Adam>	ALT	/I'll just/ get you one?
	239	slab stone	<n Max>	ALT	Use the Chamber Tool!(0.4
	266	slab stone	<n Max>	ALT	Yeah [[we'll tidy that up
	271	slab stone	<n Julia>	NALT	Yeah yeah
	275	slab stone	<n Adam>	NALT	Johny Budmore
	315	slab stone	<n Adam>	LT	I mean if they would say,
	324	slab stone	<n Sam>	ALT	[and we'll give you] the
	331	slab stone	<n Adam>	ALT	It's probably easier if y
	341	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	Those will be emailed to
	347	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	we just send that across,
	356	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	I'll send you it, if you
	361	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	We would introduce as Cha
	402	slab stone	<n Sam>	ALT	And if there's five each,
	405	slab stone	<n Dee>	LT	and put another day or tw
	442	slab stone	<n Dee>	ALT	Yeah. So that's what we w
	474	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	[Yeah well we've actually
M04	196	slab stone	<n Joseph>	LT	[Zak,] can you take a loo
411 turns	211	slab stone	<n Joseph>	LT	Uhm anyway we'll talk abo
4 decisions	277	slab stone	<n Joseph>	ALT	But that's a very interes
	339	slab stone	<n Dee>	NALT	I'll get that sorted for
68% of decisions occurred in LT or ALT					

Decisions not made in or around the long turns (NALT) were all slab-stone, process decisions. Slab-stone decisions set out concrete actions and are thus either confirmatory of or inhibitory to what has been discussed in the meeting. M03 featured a number of these, which all unfolded from a detailed information exchange that took place in the first half of the meeting. This information building was essential to developing a shared understanding and to establishing the process trail for the planned telemarketing campaign. Hence, even those slab-stone decisions not made in the long turns or in their vicinity still, effectively, 'rolled out of' the long turns. The long turns conceived the decision matter and subsequently legitimised shorter, swifter, operational exchanges and produced a considerable number of concrete action points.

In conclusion, decisions were made in all meetings and long turns were significant in the discourse leading to them. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations recurred

consistently in the long turns. It therefore appeared reasonable to examine these practices in terms of their impact on decision-making. As a result, the subsequent analysis examined the long turns within the transcripts and identified within them instances of occurrence of the three practices. The practices and decisions made in the meetings have been plotted on charts to enable the relationship between them to be interpreted.

5.2. Four Meetings: Analysis

The *interactional matrices* in Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.4 map the relationship between the practices, the progression of the meeting, and decisions. All long turns (L10 and L20) have been logged and assigned to the respective speakers. These are marked in the graphs by a unique symbol: each speaker has his/her own colour, and team members' contributions are marked with a triangle, with the visitor's contribution represented by a blue diamond. Decisions are marked in red circles. The horizontal *x* axis represents turn-taking. The vertical *y* axis notes decisions (0), Explanations (1), Accounts (2), Formulations (3), Combinations (4), and the miscellaneous category Other (5). Further detail of the turns is provided in colour-coded charts under the graph; numerical statistics are listed in an overview of the individual contributions, according to the graph on the next page.

The matrices typically show:

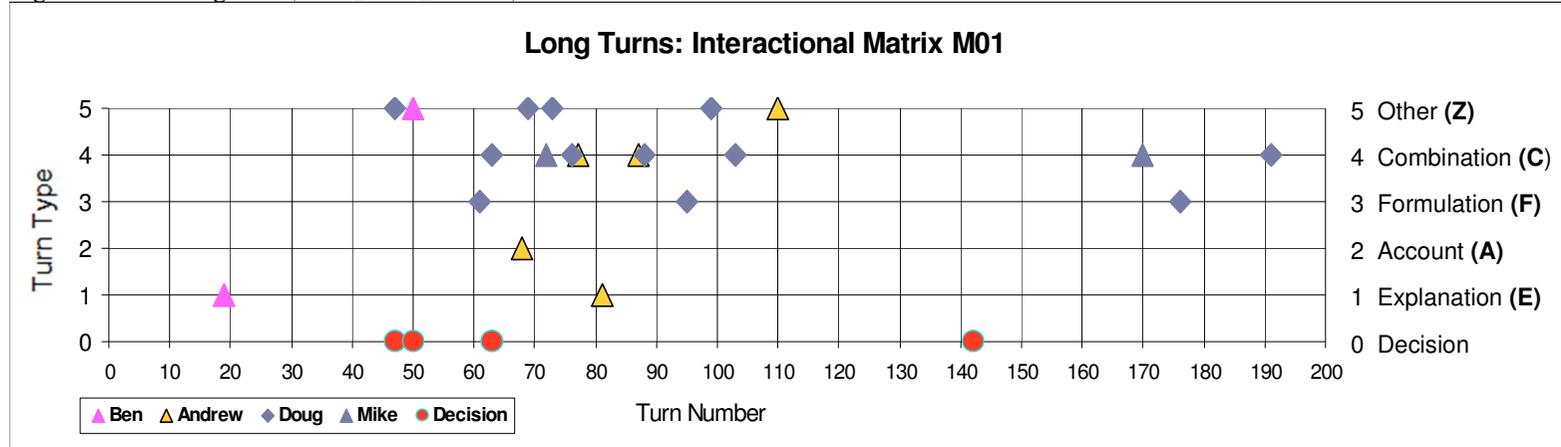
1. Speakers' participation and their interaction in time;
2. Types of individual long-turn contributions;
3. Occurrence of decisions;
4. Clustering of long turns.

5.2.1 Meeting One: Performance Targets

Summary

Ben chaired the meeting. Once the introductions and scene setting were complete he made little further contribution. The leading point of the meeting was a performance review, the discussion of which was commenced by Doug in turn T63. All decisions made prior to this turn were staffing slab-stone decisions, unrelated to the performance review. Doug was active throughout the meeting, continually pushing for action and agreement on how to implement his cornerstone, executive decisions. Both Andrew and Mike, the project managers, attempted to mitigate the unrealistic targets by providing logical Accounts of the present situation and Explanations proposing how to progress the project. In the end, a compromise solution was agreed. The team would receive marketing support assisting them in raising the profile of the project with local businesses and, by engaging with them, improve the possibility of meeting the performance targets of the R2I business programme. The occurrence of the practices and decisions, together with the progression of the meeting are presented in Figure 23. The contributions of the individual speakers are summarised in Figure 24

Figure 23: Meeting One (REG_M14_070905) – Interactional Matrix



LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER	
68	A <n Andrew>
77	C <n Andrew>
81	E <n Andrew>
87	C <n Andrew>
110	Z <n Andrew>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER	
19	E <n Ben>
50	Z <n Ben>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER	
47	Z <n Doug>
61	F <n Doug>
63	C <n Doug>
69	Z <n Doug>
73	Z <n Doug>
76	C <n Doug>
88	C <n Doug>
95	F <n Doug>
99	Z <n Doug>
103	C <n Doug>
176	F <n Doug>
191	C <n Doug>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER	
72	C <n Mike>
170	C <n Mike>

Figure 24: Meeting One (REG_M14_070905) – Individual Contributions

MEETING ONE (REG_M14_070905) - INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

SPEAKER	JOB TITLE (Org. Rank)	No. OF TURNS	% share of total meeting turns	BACK-CHANNELS	OVERLAP INIT.	LATCHING INIT.	LONG TURNS TOTAL	Long turns as % of all turns	No. TURNS >20S	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C)>20	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>20	No. TURNS <10s;20s>	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C) <10s;20s>	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>10
Andrew	Business Adviser (M)	36	16%	30	4	0	5	14%	3	0	1	0	2	0	3	100%	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	50%
Ben (ch.)	Business Partnership Manager (M)	31	14%	13	5	0	2	6%	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0%	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	100%
Doug (v.)	CEO (E)	81	36%	8	8	2	12	15%	8	0	0	1	5	2	6	75%	4	0	0	2	0	2	2	50%
Kevin	Business Development Manager (M)	6	3%	0	4	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Maria	Partnership Support Manager (M)	2	1%	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Mike	Business Development Manager (M)	23	10%	4	4	0	2	9%	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Roxanne	Contracts Manager (M)	33	15%	5	6	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
All	N/A	11	5%	0	1	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	N/A	223	100%	60	32	3	21	9%	14	0	1	1	9	3	11	79%	7	2	0	2	0	3	4	57%

Dynamics

Turn-taking in M01 was very smooth with minimal gaps. Most instances of overlap occurred in transition-relevance places.⁴⁴ However, as the intensity of the negotiation grew, the floor became more frequently contested. Doug was most pro-active in seizing the floor. One of the conversational strategies he employed for this purpose was the use of a *transitional overlap* (Jefferson, 1983).⁴⁵ The following extract (Data Sample 5.2-1) exemplifies this initiative. Sections marking the transitional nature of the overlap have been highlighted in grey:

Data Sample 5.2-1: Transitional overlap

REG14 <A> Andrew – Business Adviser, <D> Doug, a guest and CEO, <M> Mike – Business Development Manager, <R> Roxanne – Contracts Manager,
68 <A> ... it might be useful for us to probably consider doing, is putting on (06:07) a perhaps a bigger awareness session, [<M> Mhm] as a cross-sector awareness [session, or education]
69 <D> [Mhm, can I] come into that. It seems so where- - that sitting the way back, that the the model doesn't work, (0.3)
...
72 <M> ... and also putting the infrastructure in place as well, it's been you know- -
73 <D> I understand that, and ... it's been hugely complex bureaucratically, ... but nevertheless, ...
...
89 <R> Some of them will fit cross-sector anyway, so we can segment and we can define where we want- - =
90 <D> = I mean the one area /above of all that/ we've all agreed that doesn't work, is the segments, /?/ unilaterally [<A> Yes] /apart from anything/ [<A> Yes] So if that's bit's plain--, I don't think it would be- -
91 <A> /actually get them/ agree with the point
92 <D> Yeah, get that well across. Sorry, I interrupted you.
93 <R> No, that's fine. (11:47) (laughs)

Turns T69 and T73 demonstrate how Doug launches his turn on the platform of the previous, unfinished turn. In the meeting, it was crucial for Doug to secure the targets and gain the team's commitment to meeting them. He therefore uses this strategy frequently to maintain the floor and to voice his line of argument. In talk, however, a transitional overlap onset may be – and often is – perceived as

⁴⁴ *Transition-relevance place* is a projected place in a conversation in which a speaker change may occur. Speakers orient to these places by constructing their talk into units – turn-construction units. Speakers distribute these units in conversation by following the rules of the turn-taking mechanism. The concepts of transition-relevance places, turn construction and turn distribution have been proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in their seminal paper on the systematics for the organisation of turn-taking.

⁴⁵ It is characteristic for a *transitional overlap* that the speaker using it commences his/her next turn at a projected transition-relevance place, and not actually at a transition-relevance place. This type of overlap indicates certain conversational confidence or even arrogance. Through its use, the speaker manifests that s/he has grasped the gist of the previous turn and can therefore progress the conversation further.

an interruption. This is also the case of the turn T90, in which Doug terminates Roxanne's contribution (T89). Although he subsequently apologises for this aggressive intervention (T92) and Roxanne accepts the apology (T93), the short laugh makes her annoyance audible – through laughter she communicates her point and negotiates conversational conduct (highlighted in **bold**).

M01 was also of interest due to the significantly lower frequency of back-channelling undertaken than in the other meetings. This may be attributed to the polarity of interests between Doug and the team. The majority of back-channel responses occurred during Doug's long turns and Andrew, as the main consultant on the project, produced most of them. These were predominantly minimal (*Mhm, Right, Yeah*), signalling attention rather than agreement. Andrew rarely employed his voiced back-channels as a gateway for hijacking the turn. He did however maintain his involvement in the discourse, which enabled him to respond with a counter argument later in the meeting.

Long Turns in Interaction

Doug was the most dominant speaker both in terms of the total amount of turns performed (81/223) and the number of long turns (12/21, out of which eight were L20). Andrew performed the second-highest number of turns. The heated part of the debate took place between T63 and T142. 67% (14/27) of all long turns were performed between T63 and T111, in which the team agreed to a compromise solution of marketing support. T142 (Doug) formulates the definite decision. Mike's two long turns (T72 and T170) effectively prevented potential communication deadlocks.

Employment of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

All three practices were employed in the meeting. Explanations were primarily realised in combinations (C) with Accounts and Formulations. They furnished factual information communicated in support of an argued or defended point. For example, an EA combination was used in T72 (Mike), with FE combinations in T88 (Doug) and T170 (Mike).

In contrast, Accounts and Formulations played a prominent role in influencing the progression and outcomes of this meeting. A series of logical Accounts was

employed by the team to counter the implications of Doug's repeated Formulation, pressing the team to hit the targets. In M01, the sequence of Formulations and Accounts resulted in reaching a negotiated equilibrium – an agreed slab-stone decision. The mechanism of using Accounts and Formulations in meetings will be further discussed in Chapters Six and Eight. For now, a sample sequence is presented in the descriptive overview of M01 presented in Figure 25.

Figure 25: M01 – Accounts and Formulations Sequence

TURN	ACTION/PRACTICE EMPLOYED	COMMENTS
T63	<p>D introduces the issue of performance, declares the goal - Meta-Formulation</p> <p><i>"We're- we are concerned about the pressures (04:17) that we're getting from (0.4) (name of regional organisation), about hitting the targets (0.3) set by (name of national organisation), and I just wanted to get some confidence, uh hopefully with you guys, (04:27) that we were going to hit the targets in terms of outputs."</i></p> <p>He aligns with the team through an Account 1</p> <p><i>"I know we've had a lot of delay, we've lost what three to six months in the lead up to the contract, due to the bureaucracy and the difficulties, (04:37) getting systems in place, but"</i></p> <p>Then Doug presses for reassurance</p> <p><i>"but we're now stuck with uhm four months left, [<A> Mhm] (pp) of the year to try and produce (0.2) the outputs in terms of of (04:47) assists. How likely is it, that you're gonna hit your targets? (3)"</i></p>	<p>4':20"</p> <p>OPENING PHASE</p> <p>Formulating the goals, aligning with the team</p>
T63	A estimates the expected targets at seventy per cent	Moderation of expectations
after T67	-	5':07" potential communication deadlock 1 , both parties have their view of the situation
T68	A provides Account 2 - reviews current work practices, highlights the pitfalls of the process and proposes a solution	
T69	D does not honour Account 2 , D is familiar with the situation, presses the team to look for a more effective strategic solution	equilibrium not reached
T70	R allies with A , Account 3 – argues the feasibility of meeting the targets under current business conditions (T70<10s)	potential communication deadlock 2
T71	D steps back, makes no attempt to dispute the team's stance, re-opens the discussion	
T72	M agrees with D that there is a solution to the situation but accounts again, Account 4 – explains the dependence on the organisation's key business partner, highlights constraints represented by time and systems in place	7':53" first indication of a TRANSITION PHASE
T73	D makes the first concession but still urges the team for an action	7':53" second indication of a TRANSITION PHASE
T75	B ("What's the regional picture, Doug?") zooms out and re-contextualises the problem	7':53" TRANSITION PHASE
T76	D – tunes to the rhetoric of the team, re-opens the discussion as 'we'	
T78 - T87	Collaborative discussion of a feasible solution, a series of exchanges between D & A	8':47" – 11':07"
T88	D heats up the discussion again, emphasises the importance of meeting the targets (Formulation)	potential for drifting apart
T89-93	Collaborative exchange follows	
T94	B proposes to draft an action plan	
T95	D refuses as he has aims to gain the team's immediate commitment, repeats the goal by offering to bypass the red tape (Formulation)	
T97 and 99	M deflates by proposing D to discuss some of the issues at the level of the executive board again	
T98	D agrees	
T100 – 102	Collaborative clarification sequence	
T103	D re-emphasises the importance of meeting the targets (Formulation)	
T104 – 177	Phase of joint discussion, brainstorming and of reaching a compromise solution	13:33 – 17:27
T176	D closes with a final Formulation re-emphasising the targets	
T177 – 180	Final exchange, closing on a positive note with a joke	CLOSING PHASE Re-establishing the equilibrium

Accounts in M01 prevented deadlocks in the discussion and provided new perspectives to a situation of potential conflict. Account 1 was realised by Doug in the opening phase; Accounts 2, 3 and 4 were performed by Andrew, Roxanne and Mike. Their cumulative quality advanced the meeting into a transition phase and moderated the meeting's outcome.

The sequence of Formulations was performed consistently by Doug. Doug applied Formulations to emphasise the importance of meeting the targets, to which he alerted the team right at the outset of the meeting by communicating to them the cornerstone decision (T63). After that, Doug adopted the strategy of incorporating his key message (a *meta-formulation*) into his long turns. In negotiation, this meta-formulation has been used as a highly assertive and uncompromising technique.

Impact on Decision-making

Long turns exhibited in M01 significantly formed the decision-making process realised in the discussion between the team and the CEO. Most notably, the CEO's repeated Formulations exerted constant pressure on the team throughout the entire meeting. In response to this strategy, the team produced a sequence of Accounts that served to prevent communication deadlocks; instead, a new perspective on the conflicting situation was created.

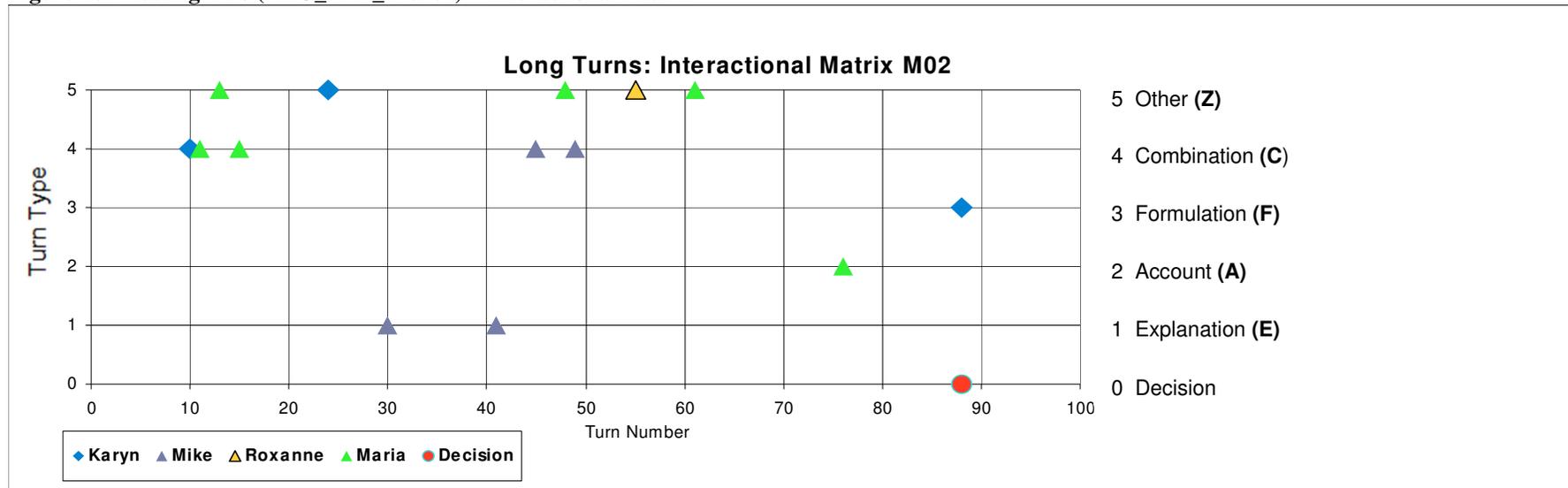
5.2.2 Meeting Two: Promotional Campaign

Summary

This meeting was held as an outcome of M01 and Doug's commitment to additional marketing support. Karyn, Head of Marketing, attended the meeting in order to fulfil this role. Karyn was active at the outset of the meeting, after which she switched to information gathering as she attempted to understand the needs of the team. Mike and Maria provided much of the factual information and expressed the team's needs, along with expectations of the marketing activity. A stepping-stone decision was agreed at the end. Apart from Karyn's commitment to progress the team's request further, no specific proposals or decisions were made. The occurrence of the practices and decisions, together with the progression of the meeting are

presented in Figure 26. The contributions of the individual speakers are summarised in Figure 27.

Figure 26: Meeting Two (REG_M15_140905) – Interactional Matrix



LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
10	C	<n Karyn>
24	Z	<n Karyn>
88	F	<n Karyn>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
11	C	<n Maria>
13	Z	<n Maria>
15	C	<n Maria>
48	Z	<n Maria>
61	Z	<n Maria>
76	A	<n Maria>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
30	E	<n Mike>
41	E	<n Mike>
45	C	<n Mike>
49	C	<n Mike>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
55	Z	<n Roxanne>

Figure 27: Meeting Two (REG_M15_140905) – Individual Contributions

MEETING TWO (REG_M15_140905) - INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

SPEAKER	JOB TITLE (Org. Rank)	No. OF TURNS	% share of total meeting turns	BACK-CHANNELS	OVERLAP INIT.	LATCHING INIT.	LONG TURNS TOTAL	Long turns as % of all turns	No. TURNS >20S	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C)>20	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>20	No. TURNS <10s;20s>	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C) <10s;20s>	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>10
							0	0%									0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ben	Business Partnership Manager (M)	6	6%	1	2	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Karyn (v.)	Marketing Manager (M)	35	36%	53	9	4	3	9%	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	50%	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	14%
Maria	Partnership Support Manager (M)	26	27%	11	11	1	6	23%	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	50%	4	0	1	0	1	2	2	29%
Mike	Business Development Manager (M)	12	12%	2	1	4	4	33%	3	2	0	0	1	0	3	100%	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	14%
Roxanne	Contracts Manager (M)	5	5%	0	0	2	1	20%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0%
Samuel (ch.)	Regen. & Inclusion Manager (M)	12	12%	4	3	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
All	N/A	2	2%	1	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	N/A	98	100%	72	26	12	14	14%	7	2	0	0	3	2	5	71%	7	0	1	1	2	3	4	57%

Dynamics

M02 was highly cooperative and Karyn positioned herself as open-minded, agreeable and supportive. She was by far the leading speaker in terms of back-channelling – she produced 74% of back-channels (53/72), all of which were a positive affirmation of the talk into which they were inserted. Karyn also latched onto the team’s ideas a number of times. Consider the sequence of turns T57 – T60 in Data Sample 5.2-2:

Data Sample 5.2-2: You want a menu

REG15	<Ma> Maria – Partnership Support Manager, <K> Karyn – Marketing Manager, <M> Mike – Business Development Manager
56 <Ma>	Yeah, I think what we need to do here, eh one of the issues with this is- - was sort of- -, you know, Roxanne had NO idea what it was gonna cost us, [<K> Yeah] eh it’s also =
57 <K>	= yeah, you want a menu, you don’t- - you want lots of ideas [<Ma> Mhm] and then [<Ma> Yeah] you can keep that bit, =
58 <M>	= oh yeah and pick ourselves = (10:00)
59 <K>	= that bit’s not gonna work, or it’s too much or that’s gonna be better.

In turns T58 and T60 (highlighted in grey), Karyn projects the completion of the previous turn and continues the train of thought. Although Karyn starts talking before the end of the previous turn-construction unit, the contribution is meant to be cooperative, demonstrating her understanding of the team’s needs; her overlap onset may be termed *recognitional* (Jefferson, 1983).

Cooperative conversational strategies alone, however, did not suffice to make Karyn’s contribution to the meeting effective for the team. When analysed in greater detail, the majority of Karyn’s turns were minimal, vague and formulaic. Karyn neither provided the team with specialist marketing input nor outlined the process to them; she neither picked up on the information presented to her nor developed any of the themes proposed by the team.

Long Turns in Interaction

M02 featured the highest proportion of long turns in the four meetings (fourteen per cent). Nevertheless, the meeting failed to result in more than a stepping-stone decision made towards its end in T88. The clustering of long turns provides some insight as to why this was the case.

As visible from the interactional matrix (Figure 26), Karyn was in practical terms ‘absent’ from the entire middle part of the meeting (T25 – T88). As the marketing

expert, Karyn provided little input during the meeting. Her only structured contributions were her two LTs at the beginning and at the end of the meeting (T10 and T88). In T10 she formulated the objectives of the meeting and in T88 she closed the meeting with a promise of further action. Throughout the remainder of the meeting she acted as an information gatherer. She was, possibly, either unprepared for the meeting, lacked experience or was not in the position to commit resources or to make the decision. This comes across, for example, in Data Sample 5.2-3 through the incoherence of T24, Karyn's only other long turn in the meeting (highlighted in grey):

Data Sample 5.2-3: You have enough for the theme?

REG15 <S> Samuel – Chair, Regeneration and Inclusion Manager, <K> Karyn – Marketing Manager
 23 <S> You have enough for the theme? of the programme as a whole, to do this, or do you need more information and- - ? =
 24 <K> = possibly a little bit more /?/ to be fair 'cause I know, (name, male) and (name, female) are working on a couple of events fur- further down the line, and we've had brief overview, (04:00) obviously I had a brief conversation with D, /that I was sent with ?/ but if you were able to give me a bit in terms of what you've done, already, [<S> Mhm] and then just eh anything else about the programme, well I mean this is very concise and it is quite good background to it. What have you done so far? (1.3) Sorry. (laughs) (shortly)

Prior to the meeting, Karyn was provided with a summary of the business programme, subject to the marketing. She was also briefed through a written memorandum on the expectations the team had from the marketing activity. In T23, the Chair invites Karyn to ask specific questions that would assist her in tailoring the campaign. T23 also represents a moment in the meeting when Karyn is expected to start outlining or planning a scenario of an intended marketing activity. Instead, in T24 she produces a very minimal, hedged contribution, in which she accounts for her lack of familiarity, and shifts the conversation back to the team.

In contrast, the long turns produced by the team were structured to facilitate the planning nature of the meeting. T11, T13 and T15 encapsulate brainstorming at the beginning of the meeting and were undertaken by Maria. In T30, T40, T45 and T49, Mike very clearly explained the business programme in question and formulated what messages the team was seeking to convey in the marketing initiative. Some of Mike's ideas were further complemented by responses from the team. Karyn confirmed her understanding yet not once made an original, substantial contribution. Whatever the reason, Karyn absented herself from making any firm decisions and therefore minimised her conversational participation accordingly.

Employment of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

As regards the employment of the practices, M02 is characteristic of the disparity between the informative nature of the contributions made by the team and the general, frequently hedged contributions produced by Karyn. Consider the vagueness contained in the sequence of Karyn's three turns (T14, T16 and T20) in Data Sample 5.2-4:

Data Sample 5.2-4: That needs to be picked up with ...

REG15 <K> Karyn – Marketing Manager
14 <K> That really needs to be picked up with (03:00) with (name, Marketing Department Senior Manager), ...
...
16 <K> Yes, yeah and do it for the press and so on, [it might be a good way.]
...
20 <K> = and the usual /?/ yeah

In Data Sample 5.2-4 in T14 Karyn transfers the decision-making responsibility onto another member of the team; in T16 she is facilitative but not constructive, and in T20 she acts as an experienced marketer, yet contributes no actual marketing knowledge to the debate.

The team quickly recognised Karyn's lack of grounding; in T30 and T41 Mike reacted to it by outlining the entire R2I business programme to her in two informative, neutral and clearly structured Explanations. As Karyn merely confirmed her reception of the information, Mike later on produced two further turns (T45 and T49), in which he formulated both the goals of the marketing activity and the key messages Karyn could use to promote the business programme. However, Karyn failed to comment, query, or develop any of the information received.

In addition to Explanations, two distinct combinations of the practices were featured in M02. Firstly, it was Mike's use of a **Formulation – Explanation** (T45 and T49) to provide an explicit message substantiated by factual evidence. In other meetings, for example, in M03 and M04, this was a strategy that effectively assisted in the formulation of views and in advancing the progression of decisions. Secondly, it was a combination of an **Account – Formulation** employed by Karyn at the beginning of the meeting (T10). Consider Data Sample 5.2-5:

Data Sample 5.2-5: I don't know how much we want to talk about it

REG15 <K> Karyn – Marketing Manager
10 <K> Uhm I mean it depends on- - I don't know how much really we want to talk about it, maybe as a group generate some ideas, and eh and my proposal was going to be that I go away, and put a little bit more thought into it, have a chat with the girls, then we come back. [

The GIRLS] the girls, we're all girls at the moment, [<All> (laugh)] then I come back with a plan of some kind, next week (02:20) or so [when /?/]

Formulations used to introduce the objectives or the agenda of the meeting were frequent in the data. Fronting a Formulation with an Account was, however, used in situations when the speakers wanted to soften the impact of their forthcoming message⁴⁶. Alternatively, it signalled uncertainty or a lack of confidence in one's own contribution. The latter applies to T10 above (Account highlighted in grey, Formulation underlined).

Impact on Decision-making

From the decision-making point of view, M02 was problematic, as supported in the interactional matrix M02. Long turns were scattered; there was no apparent intensive interaction between Karyn and the team. As a planning meeting, the role of the debate was to plan a specific marketing activity promoting one of the business programmes run by the team. However, the debate lacked a clear data-gathering phase at the beginning of the meeting, Karyn herself made no concrete proposals of possible marketing scenarios, the process was not mapped during the meeting, and no specific marketing activity was agreed⁴⁷.

Meetings similar in nature to M02, in which the outcomes are inconclusive or decisions are deferred, are common in organisations. By analysing the spoken interaction and contributions of the individual speakers, it is possible to identify which aspects of the conversation are responsible for or have led to such outcomes. However, determining the relevant forces influencing a particular progression of decision-making at the time of the meeting, and understanding why the meeting was conducted in a certain manner and pace, often needs to be interpreted against a wider organisational context.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For example, in M01, Doug T63, discussed in Section 5.2.1

⁴⁷ As a consequence, a generic promotional leaflet was developed in-house but was not widely used as there was no budget to disseminate the information sufficiently and in time.

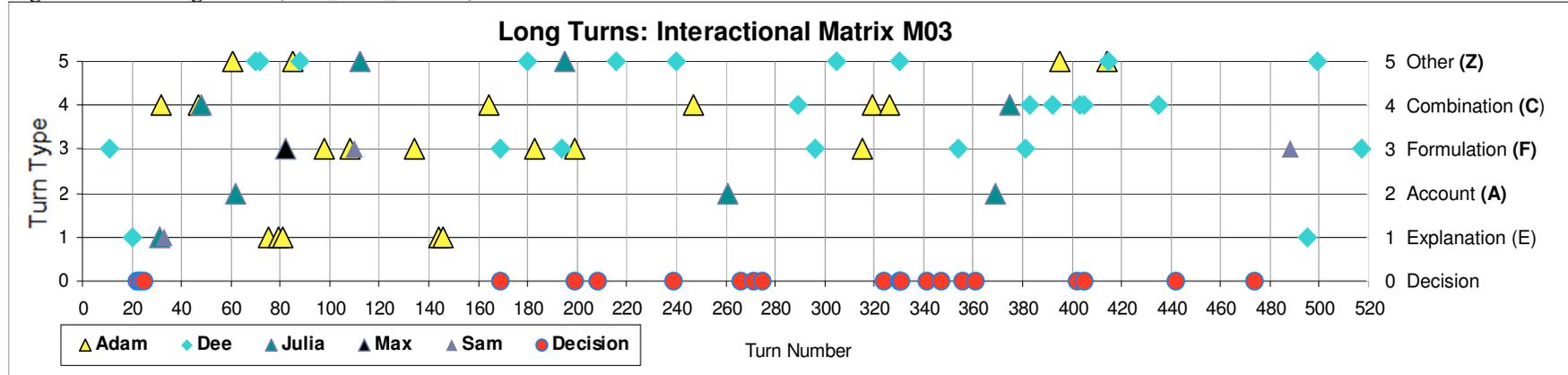
⁴⁸ For further reference *see* Section 2.3.1 – the IPO Conceptual Scheme.

5.2.3 Meeting Three: Telemarketing Campaign

Summary

The ITA team held a meeting with a Marketing Consultant to plan a telesales campaign to engage local businesses in considering developing their markets overseas. Although Dee as an external consultant was in the position of ‘outsider’ in the meeting, she quickly seized control of the discussion to agree exactly what the team expected from the telesales programme of work. All team members participated actively in the discussion. The meeting resulted in the formulation of specific actions – nineteen slab-stone mini-decisions. These enabled Dee to launch the telemarketing campaign on behalf of the team. The occurrence of the practices and decisions, together with the progression of the meeting are presented in Figure 28. The contributions of the individual speakers are summarised in Figure 29.

Figure 28: Meeting Three (ITA_M05_150605) – Interactional Matrix



LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
32	C	<n Adam>
47	C	<n Adam>
61	Z	<n Adam>
75	E	<n Adam>
79	E	<n Adam>
81	E	<n Adam>
85	Z	<n Adam>
98	F	<n Adam>
108	F	<n Adam>
134	F	<n Adam>
144	E	<n Adam>
146	E	<n Adam>
164	C	<n Adam>
183	F	<n Adam>
199	F	<n Adam>
247	C	<n Adam>

315	F	<n Adam>
319	C	<n Adam>
326	C	<n Adam>
395	Z	<n Adam>
414	Z	<n Adam>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
11	F	<n Dee>
20	E	<n Dee>
70	Z	<n Dee>
72	Z	<n Dee>
88	Z	<n Dee>
169	F	<n Dee>
180	Z	<n Dee>
194	F	<n Dee>
216	Z	<n Dee>
240	Z	<n Dee>

289	C	<n Dee>
296	F	<n Dee>
305	Z	<n Dee>
330	Z	<n Dee>
354	F	<n Dee>
381	F	<n Dee>
383	C	<n Dee>
392	C	<n Dee>
403	C	<n Dee>
405	C	<n Dee>
415	Z	<n Dee>
435	C	<n Dee>
495	E	<n Dee>
499	Z	<n Dee>
517	F	<n Dee>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
31	E	<n Julia>
48	C	<n Julia>
62	A	<n Julia>
112	Z	<n Julia>
195	Z	<n Julia>
261	A	<n Julia>
369	A	<n Julia>
375	C	<n Julia>
LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
82	F	<n Max>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
33	E	<n Sam>
110	F	<n Sam>
488	F	<n Sam>

Figure 29: Meeting Three (ITA_M05_150605) – Individual Contributions

MEETING THREE (ITA_M05_150605) - INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

SPEAKER	JOB TITLE (Org. Rank)	No. OF TURNS	% share of total meeting turns	BACK-CHANNELS	OVERLAP INIT.	LATCHING INIT.	LONG TURNS TOTAL	Long turns as % of all turns	No. TURNS >20S	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C)>20	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>20	No. TURNS <10s;20s>	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C) <10s;20s>	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>10
Adam (ch.)	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	112	20%	19	29	2	19	17%	10	2	0	2	5	1	9	90%	11	3	0	4	1	3	8	73%
Dee (v.)	External Consultant	127	23%	98	16	3	25	20%	5	0	0	0	2	3	2	40%	20	2	0	7	4	7	13	65%
Julia	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	94	17%	58	32	3	8	9%	4	1	1	0	2	0	4	100%	4	0	2	0	0	2	2	50%
Max	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	69	13%	23	22	5	1	1%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	100%
Sam	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	142	26%	109	47	16	3	2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	3	1	0	2	0	0	3	100%
All	N/A	4	1%	0	1	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	N/A	548	100%	307	147	29	56	10%	19	3	1	2	9	4	15	79%	39	6	2	14	5	12	27	69%

Dynamics

M03 was a highly dynamic meeting featuring a high number of back-channels, overlaps and instances of latching. The interactional activity was distributed relatively evenly among all speakers. As is illustrated in the M03 interactional matrix (Figure 28), this also applied to the production of long turns.

Overlapping (147 occurrences, with a relative frequency of twenty-seven per cent) represented a characteristic feature in Meeting Three. All types of overlap onset were represented. Data Sample 5.2-6 excerpts a few examples:

Data Sample 5.2-6: Types of overlap onset

ITA05 <A> Adam – Chair, Intl. Trade Adviser, <D> Dee – External Consultant, <J> Julia – Intl. Trade Adviser, <S> Sam – Intl. Trade Adviser

1. *transitional overlap onset* – Adam commences his turn in a projected transition-relevance place in Julia’s turn. To complete her turn, Julia raises the volume of her talk.

50 <J> so we don't we don't want to do a sort of (0.3) do a big (0.4) push on the service, [because I don't think I DON'T THINK (f) it works]

51 <A> [No, I think If you if you say to somebody], we are /first/ service and overseas marketing introduction service known as bablabla (36:27) /wooo/

2. *recognitional overlap onset* – Sam is closely following Adam’s talk. His contributions are produced as overlaps. They, however, either support or echo Adam’s ideas.

54 <A> [[If you say]] if you say to somebody, we can find you contact services, [<D> Mhm] [<S> Yes] that's [what they really want].

55 <S> [We can help you actually- -]

56 <A> Yeah we can find you sales leads overseas, [<S> Mhm] we can tell you how to, [<S> Yes] [<D> Mhm] you know that's what (0.3) we find is is [[a better]] door opener,

57 <S> [[/?/?]] open the door, it's the key

58 <A> than blinding people with [<S> A:h] scheme names [<D> Yeah] and all the rest of it, especially this time. [<S> Yeah] We [want to --]

59 <S> [/yeah it's cold/] (0.3)

3. *progressional overlap onset* – Julia is assisting Dee in finding the right words and moving the conversation forward

503 <D> That's right, [[yes. It was eh - -]]

504 <J> [[Yeah /as other/ international trade]]

The transitional overlap onset was most frequently practised by Adam (T51, highlighted in grey). Adam employed this type of overlap to launch his own contributions and to maintain control over the meeting as Chair. In contrast, of all of the speakers, Sam employed the recognitional overlap onset most heavily; this type of overlapping was characteristic for Sam in M03. He perhaps overused it as a turn-initiation technique, yet he was also often able to recognise this and self-corrected its

disruptive effect by stopping his input immediately: none of T55, T57, or T59 continues further. In the meeting, Sam also scored the highest number of overlaps (47, with a relative frequency of thirty-three per cent). These interventions were essentially collaborative and supported ideas of other speakers (e.g., all Sam's contributions highlighted in T54–T59). Instances of progressional overlap onset (T504, highlighted in grey) were somewhat exceptional, as the meeting featured no major lacks of fluency.

Related to overlap, a number of instances of the *procedural repair* (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) occurred in the meeting. This form of repair is to do with speakers' orientations to the basic turn-taking rules, and not with what is commonly called 'correction'. None of the instances of repair in M03 indicated obstruction or a breakdown in communication. Consider the following data samples:

Data Sample 5.2-7: Repair

ITA05 <A> Adam – Chair, Intl. Trade Adviser, <D> Dee – External Consultant, <J> Julia – Intl. Trade Adviser, <S> Sam – Intl. Trade Adviser, <M> Max – Intl. Trade Adviser

1. *Self-initiated self-repair* – Adam (T199) and Julia (T327) terminate the start of their turn to continue it with a new word selection, either as a result of changing their thought or of finding words expressing their idea more precisely

199 <A> [I think they- -] I think the answer's got to be yes to wanting to export, or exporting. (48:27)
 [<S> Yes] If they say, we do export, we are all right with the export side, but it's importing /we need help on/, fair enough. [<J> Mhm mhm] If they turn around and say, we just want help importing, (0.3) we don't export anything, then no I don't think we do want to see them.

...

327 <J> [[Yes, and they need- - , it's always better]]

2. *Self-initiated other-repair* – by opening the floor to the other speakers with a question, Adam asks for help with a completion of his turn

14 <A> We've got a database of how many? about hundred (0.2) = and something companies?

15 <S> =sixty

16 <M> = hundred and sixty companies

17 <A> which are not necessarily totally cold, [<D> Uhuh] as /in/ they have been pre-qualified [to certain extent, but (0.8) but not probably well.]

18 <J> [Mhm that was earlier in the year], that might be five or six months ago.

All instances of repair presented above take place either within (T199 and T327), or immediately after (T15 and T16), the turn construction unit containing the source of the trouble. The *self-initiated self-repair* reflected the mental processing of the speakers alongside their efforts to express their arguments by using a correct combination of words. In speech, the type is common in utterances beginning a new topic or answering a question (Schlegloff, 1979, cited in Hutchby and Woffitt, 1998). In contrast, *self-initiated other-repair* indicated the collaborative

practice of brainstorming and knowledge sharing. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (*ibid.*: 66), a repair system in conversation is very important as it signals “the maintenance of mutual orientation to common topics and fields of reference”. This was also the case in M03, where repair occurred at places in which speakers were enthused by the ongoing talk and engaged in its processing.

Back-channelling was significant in the contributions of two speakers – Sam and Dee. Sam produced the highest number of back-channels (109), which correlated with his overall collaborative overlapping and latching initiatives. Dee produced 32% of back-channels in M03. Although this was the second-highest figure after Sam, when recalculated per turns, Dee’s back-channelling represented less than eighteen per cent. Most of Dee’s back-channelling occurred during the first part of the meeting when she was using it to signal attention and understanding while the team was familiarising her with their needs. Dee, however, did not use these minimal tokens of agreement to excess. In conversation, she was both collaborative and assertive. When necessary, she wrote down the key points or requested clarification from the team. She was prepared to think, negotiate and decide on her feet. Dee also demonstrated her ability to process the information she was provided with in the real time of the meeting and she reacted to it instantly. In consequence, she herself formulated nine decisions and assisted in making the remaining ten taken in the meeting.

Long Turns in Interaction

All five speakers participated actively in the meeting. Adam (the Chair), and Dee (the visitor), however, produced together the majority of long turns – nearly eighty per cent, in approximately equivalent proportion. Adam was responsible for the main part of knowledge gathering undertaken in the first part of the meeting. In contrast, Dee made most of her long contributions in the second half of the discussion when she was outlining the telemarketing process to the team and was agreeing with them its individual steps.

Although Adam and Dee were the main contributors, the meeting was certainly not polarised by them. Long turns produced by other team members – Julia, Max and Sam – between T30 and T112 demonstrate the active participation of the entire team from the very beginning of the meeting. When analysed for content, the long turns

also document the fact that all team members were familiar with the previous marketing activity of the team, were prepared for the discussion of the forthcoming telemarketing campaign, and had a unified understanding of what had to be achieved. Mainly, all were confident to describe their current work practices and were able to formulate messages they needed the telemarketing campaign to communicate for them (e.g., T47, T48, T82, T98, or T110).

Similarly, a dense cluster of Dee's contributions (T289 – T435) encapsulates the phase of the meeting during which Dee was negotiating the individual steps of the telemarketing campaign with the team. She knew what she was expected to achieve. At the same time, she had to secure sufficient remuneration for the time invested by the company she represented. Dee therefore continuously moderated the team's expectations and optimised the process of the marketing activity to achieve the best outcome for both parties involved (e.g., T289, T296, T381, or T392).

Finally, M03 was representative of an operational meeting in which it was expected that issues would be discussed and resolved within the meeting. The clustered alternation of long turns and decisions exhibited in this meeting is exemplary of the incremental process of business decision-making compacted into the time and space of a single meeting.

Employment of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

M03 was very fluid and spontaneous, yet progressed steadily towards its goal: to plan and agree a launch of the telemarketing campaign. Explanations and Formulations were employed both individually and in combinations. Accounts were used sparingly, either as a technique moderating expectations when sharing negative information (e.g., Julia T62) or to support a line of argument in negotiation situations⁴⁹ (e.g., Julia T369). Consider the two usages in contrast – Data Sample 5.2-8:

Data Sample 5.2-8: I don't think the data is that good

ITA05 <J> Julia – Intl. Trade Adviser
62 <J> I don't think the: the data is that good [<A> No] in terms of their- - the information on their export status and the markets, [<S> No] and how much they export, (0.3) [<D> Ok] that seems to be the worst part of it, to be honest.

⁴⁹ A use identical to that identified in Section 5.2.1.

369 <J> I mean the reason, I suppose, why we're wanting to do this, is is the trial, [<J> Mhm]
[<S> Mhm] to be able to sort of see, well is it is it the right way for us to, you know to able to
sort of obviously get in, and =

In T62 (highlighted in grey), Julia employs an Account as an information-sharing technique. By mentioning the insufficiencies of the database supplied, she is accomplishing three tasks: 1) She is being direct and honest about the quality of the data; 2) she moderates Dee's expectations; 3) she generates awareness of and space for discussion of what could later become a problem. Although the Account evaluates a past project (the contact database was compiled over twelve months ago), its use is pro-active; it aims to eliminate future complications, failures or errors in decision-making.

The Account in turn T369 – above (not highlighted) is used to conclude an agreed action. It provides the perspective of the team in justifying their requirements. It communicates the team's expectations of and interest in the project, and aims to generate involvement in the established partnership.

Explanations were employed numerously. Most frequently, they assisted in creating a common knowledge base (e.g., Julia T31, Adam T32, T75, T79, T81, and T98; Sam T33). Secondly, they were also used more strategically to provide additional unsolicited information. Explanations of this type were often deliberate actions through which the speakers intended to establish their credentials or to create demand for their ideas, services, or products. Consider the sequence of turns T492 – T496 in Data Sample 5.2-9:

Data Sample 5.2-9: Chamber data search

ITA05 <D> Dee – External Consultant, <M> Max – Intl. Trade Adviser
492 <M> Can I ask a question? Are you working with any other chamber departments currently or are you- - (68:47)
493 <D> Yeah, /?/ pop upstairs to see (name) a minute now.
494 <M> Oh, are you?
495 <D> In Chamber (0.5) data search, [<J> Mhm mhm] [<M> Right] we- - and look after all (name)'s clients, [<M> Yeah] but also there's an there's an initiative at the moment, where there's a marketing initiative of some sort, [<S> Mhm] to get help with brochures and all sorts of things, [<M> Yeah] and a taster, [<S> Oh yeah] a taster telemarketing campaign so [/we've done about seven of those now/]
496 <M> [Oh right, oh I see]/?/

The exchange encapsulated in turns T492 – T496 is very interesting. It takes place close to the end of the actual meeting after all nineteen decisions have been made. During the entire meeting, Dee's professional status has never once been questioned. Yet, when services are outsourced, the credentials of the supplier are of importance to the contractor. Dee is aware of this as she swiftly demonstrates her on-going work

for the Chamber by means of an extended answer in T495 (highlighted in grey). In her turn, she is informative, factual, direct and natural. Although very effective when used sparingly, Dee judges her placing of Explanations taking care not to overuse this technique.

Finally, Formulations wove as threads through the entire meeting. They were employed most extensively by Adam and by Dee. Dee used Formulations to set the objectives of the meeting (T11), to draw it to a conclusion (T517), and to signpost the meeting's progress when she formulated the gist of a particular debate section into a specific slab stone decision (e.g., T169, T195, and T354). Adam employed Formulations particularly as point-making techniques, enabling him to interpret or emphasise the preceding contribution (e.g., T134). Combinations, such as Formulation-Explanation (e.g., T296) Explanation-Formulation (e.g., T47, T48, T79, T81, and T405) and Formulation followed or preceded by a question (e.g., T281, and T330) were also used as techniques advancing effectively the progression and outcomes of the meeting.

Impact on Decision-making

In sum, M03 met its objectives in full. All decisions required for a successful launch of the telemarketing campaign were made in the meeting and were subsequently confirmed through a memo distributed to the team on the same day. The telemarketing campaign was carried out with successful results. Its outcomes were reviewed in a follow-up meeting scheduled for five months later (M04).

Considerable credit for the efficiency of the meeting may be attributed to two speakers – Adam and Dee. Adam was responsible for the majority of the information input, in the undertaking of which he repeatedly employed Explanations and Formulations, or their combination. Dee took an active part in the entire meeting. Initially, she adopted the role of listener when she was gathering the core information. Later, after the team had finished the initial brief, she virtually took the reins of the meeting from Adam and teased out the team's preferences for the actual process parts of the telemarketing campaign. This she did in a very methodical and pro-active manner, frequently using examples of past work practice, illustrating her depth of experience in similar projects and asking questions. She very

skilfully employed Formulations when she needed to convey and re-inforce the main messages and to agree the action points with the team.

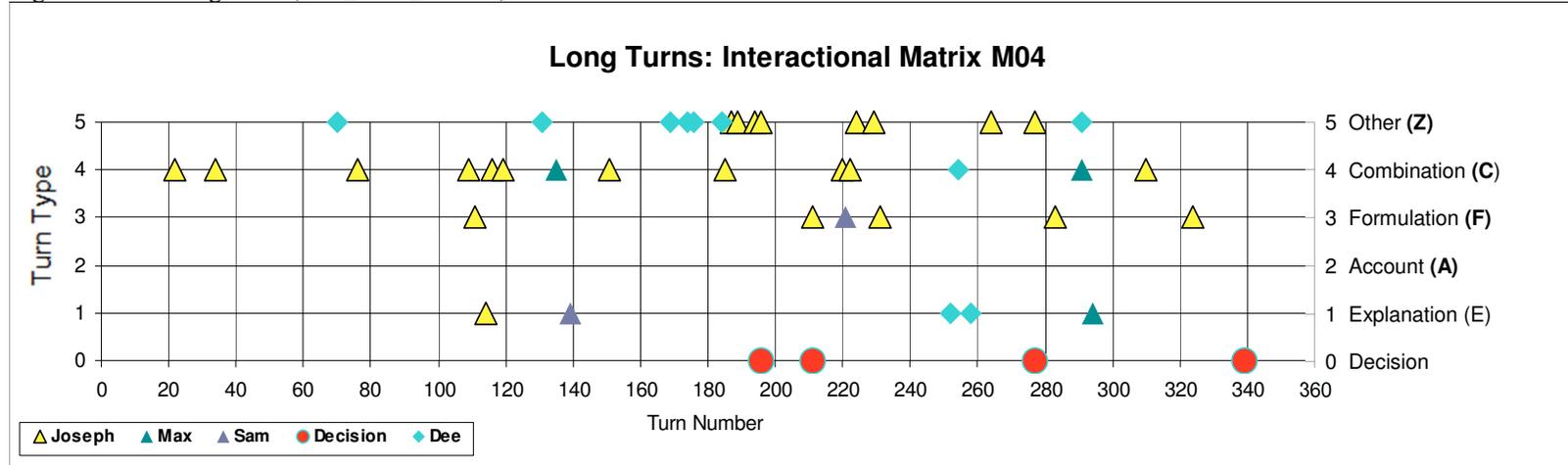
The telemarketing campaign was considered a success by the team (*see* transcript of meeting M04) and as demonstrated in meeting M03 the planning and communication played a key role in achieving this. The meeting data have indicated that the three practices (Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations) produced in the meeting made considerable contributions to the outcomes of the meeting. The structure, distribution and mutual interaction of the individual turn types proved extremely efficient in shaping what was principally a planning meeting. The individual contributions were informative and to the point. The speakers' conduct was semi-formal yet direct; information sharing was smooth and unobstructed by formal protocol or lack of expertise. In brief, M03 brought together the right speakers at the right time of the organisational decision process.

5.2.4 Meeting Four: Feedback Meeting

Summary

M04 was scheduled as a review meeting with Dee (the external contractor) on completion of the telemarketing campaign. The discussion was characterised by Joseph's (the Chair and the team's SOM) monopolising the meeting and using it as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and to formulate future proposals. Vibrant, reflective discussion resulted in the formulation of four slab-stone decisions. The occurrence of the practices and decisions, together with the progression of the meeting are presented in Figure 30. The contributions of the individual speakers are summarised in Figure 31.

Figure 30: Meeting Four (ITA_M18_021105) – Interactional Matrix



LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
22	C	<n Joseph>
34	C	<n Joseph>
76	C	<n Joseph>
109	C	<n Joseph>
111	F	<n Joseph>
114	E	<n Joseph>
116	C	<n Joseph>
119	C	<n Joseph>
151	C	<n Joseph>
185	C	<n Joseph>
187	Z	<n Joseph>
189	Z	<n Joseph>

194	Z	<n Joseph>
196	Z	<n Joseph>
211	F	<n Joseph>
220	C	<n Joseph>
222	C	<n Joseph>
224	Z	<n Joseph>
229	Z	<n Joseph>
231	F	<n Joseph>
264	Z	<n Joseph>
277	Z	<n Joseph>
283	F	<n Joseph>
310	C	<n Joseph>
324	F	<n Joseph>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
70	Z	<n Dee>
131	Z	<n Dee>
169	Z	<n Dee>
174	Z	<n Dee>
176	Z	<n Dee>
184	Z	<n Dee>
252	E	<n Dee>
254	C	<n Dee>
258	E	<n Dee>
286	Z	<n Dee>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
135	C	<n Max>
291	C	<n Max>
294	E	<n Max>

LONG TURNS PER SPEAKER		
139	E	<n Sam>
221	F	<n Sam>

Figure 31: Meeting Four (ITA_M18_021105) – Individual Contributions

MEETING FOUR (ITA_M18_021105) - INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

SPEAKER	JOB TITLE (Org. Rank)	No. OF TURNS	% share of total meeting turns	BACK-CHANNELS	OVERLAP INIT.	LATCHING INIT.	LONG TURNS TOTAL	Long turns as % of all turns	No. TURNS >20S	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C)>20	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>20	No. TURNS <10s;20s>	Explanations (E)	Accounts (A)	Formulations (F)	EAF Combinations (C)	Other (Z)	(E+A+F+C) <10s;20s>	% of long turns constituted of (E+A+F+C)>10
Dee (v.)	External Consultant	71	17%	46	11	3	10	14%	6	1	0	0	1	4	2	33%	4	1	0	0	0	3	1	25%
Joseph (ch.)	Head of Intl. Trade (SM)	124	30%	13	21	7	25	20%	15	0	0	3	10	2	13	87%	10	1	0	2	1	6	4	40%
Max	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	77	19%	16	23	3	3	4%	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	100%	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	100%
Rachel	Projects Coordinator (M)	23	6%	2	2	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Sam	Intl. Trade Adviser (M)	89	22%	98	21	6	2	2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	100%
Zak	Admin. Assistant (S)	14	3%	2	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
All	N/A	13	3%	0	1	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	N/A	411	100%	177	79	20	40	10%	22	1	0	3	12	6	16	73%	18	4	0	3	2	9	9	50%

Dynamics

Joseph's dominance set the rhythm for the dynamics of M04 (*see* Figure 31). Joseph maintained a conversational lead throughout the entire meeting and he also controlled the agenda. The other five speakers effectively structured their contributions around Joseph's turns.

His dominance resulted from a combination of factors, which went beyond an authority that would normally be accorded to an SOM: he was chairing the meeting; he had rich experience as a business professional and as a member of the senior management team; he was also a very confident and effective speaker. In the data, these characteristics were indicated in a number of ways. For example, Joseph was not hesitant in offering his contributions and he was also very quick in seizing the floor by means of an overlap onset or by latching his new turn onto that of the previous speaker. In addition, his access to a turn was rarely contested as Joseph's strong personal authority favoured him in commencing a new turn. Consider the following sequence (Data Sample 5.2-10):

Data Sample 5.2-10: Ok, this is very interesting

ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair, Head of Intl. Trade, <D> Dee – External Consultant, <M> Max – Intl. Trade Adviser
259 <J> Right.
260 <D> We then click on the right one that we have identified as being the one for email [/? ? /, and I can then identify- -]
261 <J> [Ok, this is very interesting.] So, - -
262 <M> [/?/We can sort of- -]
263 <D> Yeah, and I can then identify the nine hundred that we've cleaned, and we know we've got a directory mail address sitting next to them.
264 <J> Two questions related to that then, (39:20) for all of us, *totally off the top of my head, I want to finish by now anyway.* Could you, if you're able to access Impact, actually record the fact that you've made an appointment, for one of the ITAs on Impact, on the company name?
265 <D> Yeah. (2)
266 <J> Which would then automatically be a new client or a new company, wouldn't it? (very melodic intonation)

The sequence excerpts an exchange in which Dee is explaining to the team the functionality of a new marketing tool used by another Chamber department. Some indicators of Joseph's dominance have been highlighted in grey. Firstly, in T261 Joseph initiates a transitional overlap, which effectively cuts off the remainder of Dee's turn T260. In his next turn (T264), the insertion of '*totally off the top of my head, I want to finish by now anyway*' indicates both Joseph's confidence about contributing his ideas and his overt control over the meeting's progression. Finally, T266 further confirms Joseph's secure place as lead speaker. The turn is preceded by

a two-second gap, yet the opportunity to launch a new turn remains untaken until Joseph simply voices his new thought to the team.

Example 1 also illustrates how Dee coped with Joseph's interactional style and how she communicated the interests of the company she represented. Although Joseph interrupts her in T260, she completes her information input in T263. Both T260 and T263 are examples of her extended answers, in which she frequently provided unsolicited information. Dee used these turns to claim ownership of the marketing work she was doing for another Chamber department, by which she promoted herself as a marketer well established in the organisation. As Dee never used self-promotion forcefully – consider the two-second 'thinking' time provided at the end of T265 – the additional information included in her turns is her selling point for future collaboration or business.

Finally, back-channelling statistics further corresponded with the overall distribution of roles in the meeting. Dee, as the recipient of the feedback, produced approximately 25% of all back-channels. On the other hand, Joseph used back-channelling only rarely. The absolute back-channelling leader was Sam, who himself produced over 50% of all back-channel responses. Frequent back-channelling was characteristic of Sam's interactional style, which could be described as cooperative, with voiced signals of his attention to the ongoing talk or agreement with what has been said. Consider Data Sample 5.2-11:

Data Sample 5.2-11: You told them!

ITA18 <S> Sam – Intl. Trade Adviser, <J> Joseph – Chair, Head of Intl. Trade, <D> Dee – External Consultant
169 <D> incorrect. (29:40) It's NOT particularly RUBBISH, it's just that it's got a wrong number on, [<S>Yeah] uh or we have to start [<S>Yeah] researching it, we have to start finding, you know, [<S>Mhm] there are some out-of-businesses, but there's a PROPORTION of them is STILL THERE, we just have to go and FIND THEM, that's all. Uh but then you know, when you're buying data, you'd hopefully like to think, (30:00) that you're actually buying something that's got at least like a phone number on it. (laughs) = (30:04)
170 <n Sam> = [You told them!]
171 <n Joseph> [You told them, when] you bought them, this was no good!
...
182 <J> ... For example, if we KNOW, and we DO KNOW NOW, that Passport lasts a year, [<S>Yeah] we KNOW that. And we KNOW, that (name, manager) doesn't- - (name, manager) doesn't REALLY want hangovers of money from year to year, [<S>Mhm] that tells us, that what we REALLY REALLY REALLY want to do, is do our Passport workshops (0.5) =
186 <n Sam> = April the first, or thereabouts.=

The Data Sample 5.2-11 also illustrates another cooperative strategy employed by Sam – latching (T170 and T186 – underlined). These latched turns have increased Sam's turn-taking share; although they were usually short and merely

complementary in their character, Sam was frequently using latching as a gateway for him to win the next turn. Interestingly, Sam commenced nearly 25% of his turns as overlaps, a feature that would, in most cases, be considered as disturbing. However, because Sam was constantly being heard during the meeting through his supportive minimal tokens, his overlapping turns, too, no longer seemed to be perceived as disturbing. Else, they were simply accepted as customary and part of Sam's interactional style.

In sum, as stated in Section 5.1.2, the analysis of back-channelling, overlapping, and latching could not, on its own, provide sufficient information for the interpretation of the decision process. In M04, however, these turn-taking parameters provided an insight into the general tone of the discussions and the relationship among the meeting participants.

Long Turns in Interaction

Joseph and Dee were the two most dominant speakers. In Figure 30, this is noticeable in the frequent alternation of their long turns during the whole meeting. Together, they produced nearly 50% of all turns, out of which 20% of Joseph's and 14% of Dee's turns were long turns. This represented 88% of the total of all long turns. When recalculated for time taken per long turn, the proportion rose to 92%. That is, Joseph and Dee not only produced the majority of long turns, but their contributions were also of substantial length.

The contributions of the other speakers were significantly less prominent. Zak, as a junior administrative assistant, adopted the approach of quiet participant. Also Rachel's contribution was minimal. In contrast, Max and Sam were reasonably assertive in their turn-taking; when an opportunity presented itself, both demonstrated their respective knowledge of the work practice and shared their experience of the telemarketing campaign. Their conversational contributions were, however, predominantly complementary. They produced between them five long turns, only one of which was longer than twenty seconds.

Employment of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

The interactional matrix of the long turns highlighted three properties characteristic of M04. These included:

1. An absence of Accounts;
2. Frequent Combinations (C);
3. A considerable number of Other (Z) turns.

M04 was a reflective meeting, positive in its character, which stemmed naturally from the success of the recently completed telemarketing campaign. Dee therefore attended the meeting as an external marketing consultant who has successfully delivered the assigned work; she therefore would not need to account for any kind of poor performance or failure. However, the progression of the telemarketing work was subject to a couple of probing questions, testing whether the databases provided to Dee were worked through exhaustively, Dee was always prepared to answer these questions directly and to the point. In her answers, she never used Accounts for the purposes of an excuse. In fact, Accounts formed as excuses were virtually non-existent in the business meetings data overall as these would have been regarded as unprofessional. If Dee used an Account, it was incorporated into a Z turn and used for the purposes of extending the logic of her argument.

Secondly, the high occurrence of Combinations (C) resulted predominantly from Joseph's ability freely to combine Explanations and Formulations (e.g., T76, 151, 185, 220, and 310), or sometimes all three practices together (e.g., T109). He typically blended the practices when he was 'thinking aloud', and when he was substantiating his decisions, claims or ideas with evidence or explanations of some kind. Consider the following example of a Formulation underpinned by an Explanation and concluded with a question:

Data Sample 5.2-12: This time we shouldn't have that problem

- ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair, Head of Intl. Trade, <S> Sam – Intl. Trade Adviser, <M> Max – Intl. Trade Adviser
- 111 <J> This time we shouldn't have that problem. So what I'd be looking at, again it's an internal discussion, is to find (0.5) a mechanism, for you and one or two others perhaps, (24:00) to SET UP, [<D>Mhm] what you've done previously, starting from April the first, [<D>Mhm] in other words, using February to March, to make appointments for April and May. [<D>Mhm] Does that make sense?
- 112 <S> [Yeah]
- 113 <M> [makes good sense] (2)

Joseph's turn T111 is almost a classic 'teacher's sequence' explaining a new concept: 1) the overall idea is introduced with a Formulation (underlined); 2) its meaning or the mechanism is concretised with an Explanation – in this case a decision proposal (highlighted in grey); 3) the sequence is concluded with a comprehension question ('Does that make sense?').

Such a sequence enables the speaker to structure his/her thoughts and present them in the form of a mini-presentation. In the workplace, it is therefore commonly used for managing staff and for communicating to them the work agenda. Although the question invites a response from the audience, it comes at a moment of surprise. The response is therefore often minimal, such as in T112 and T113. Conveniently for the manager, the next substantial turn reverts to him. This was also the case in the example above – in T114 Joseph freely continues the train of thought through which he sustains his control of the meeting. Perhaps one of the dangers of this sequence is that the staff may perceive such communication conduct as patronising and disengaging in its effect. Once they familiarise themselves with it, they may also be more prepared to react to it with an adequate counterargument.

Finally, Z ('other' discourse) represented nearly 38% of all long turns in M04. They included especially extended answers, comments, narratives, and decisions formulated as a set of instructions. Their considerably high number was an indication of the conversational character of the meeting created especially by the occasional eloquence and side-tracking of Joseph's contributions.

Overall, with the exception of an occasional narrative, expanded answers represented a category that could be directly related to the decision process. Data Sample 5.2-13 (below) provides an example of the contributory role of Accounts and Explanations in its discursive realisation:

Data Sample 5.2-13: Because obviously

ITA18 <J> Joseph – Chair, Head of Intl. Trade, <M> Max – Intl. Trade Adviser, <D> Dee – External Consultant

130 <J> ... How did- - I mean, is there anything you want to tell us?

131 <D> Uhm no, not really! Because obviously when I came along the second time, and we met up, we sort of went over everything, and took it all back to the office, set it all up, uhm as as I said to you guys before, if there's anything that you doubt on the appointments (26:40), so you get you know what's good and what's bad, and if there's anything we can uhm bring into our conversation [<S>Yeah] that is either gonna qualify the appointment a little better, or alternatively uhm something we may ASK.

132 <M> [/I don't think so/]

In T131, the bare answer Dee provides to Joseph's question is 'Uhm no, not really!'. A failure to expand on this message could be perceived as arrogant. Moreover, it would most likely also result in a loss of status for Dee as she would be relinquishing a turn in which she was explicitly invited to have her say. Dee is confident about her work and she therefore endeavours to expand her answer in two ways. Firstly, she provides a description of the work interaction she had with the team – Account (highlighted in grey). Secondly, she uses an Explanation to reiterate the team's role in the design of the telemarketing questionnaire (underlined). The expanded answer thus verbalises Dee's position, challenges the team's participation, and directly requests the team's view. By shifting the task of performance evaluation back to the team, Dee reinforces their favourable assessment of her work. A positive confirmation from Max follows in T132.

In sum, Explanations and Formulations were two leading practices in the meeting and they in particular shaped the presentation of information, data, and opinions. Accounts were predominantly employed in order to moderate expectations. The practices were frequently combined in (C) and sometimes in (Z) turns. Due to the reflective character of M04, other long turns (Z) were also characteristic of M04 and affected its overall conversational character and dynamics.

Impact on Decision-making

As the main purpose of M04 was reflective (*see* Figure 12), it was not anticipated that operational decisions would occur. Nevertheless, four slab-stone decisions were formulated as a result of reflective thinking verbalised in the meeting. The chief agent of the decision-making activity was Joseph, also the most dominant and most senior speaker in the meeting. He made all the decisions with the exception of the last one (T339). All of the three decisions made by Joseph were made in the long turns, of which two were Other (Z) turns and one was a Formulation. This illustrated Joseph's capacity to think on his feet, articulate his thoughts out loud, and change quickly the direction of the interaction through his off-the-cuff ideas. Dee formulated the last decision in a short turn and this was made in direct reaction to Joseph's request. M04 thus demonstrated the dominance of one leading speaker in action and its impact on decision-making undertaken in the meeting. In relation to the three practices, M04 specifically illustrated that Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

frequently combined in long turns and their patterning assisted in achieving particular meeting outcomes .

5.3. Emerging Trends

A number of trends indicative of the use of the three practices emerged from the initial analysis. These are summarised below – Figure 8:

Figure 32: Pilot Study – Common Trends in the Use of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations

Pilot Study – Common Trends in the Use of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations		
USE of the PRACTICE	COMMENTS	EXAMPLES of TURNS
Prototypical Use of the Practices		
Explanations building a common knowledge base	Conceptualised the subject matter and set the orientation towards further debate and decision-making	M02, Mike T30 and T41; M03, Julia T31, Adam T32, T75, T79, T81, and T98; Sam T33
Accounts constructed as ordered reasoning in negotiation situations	Moderated expectations by mitigating the gap between opposing arguments	M01, Andrew T68; M03, Adam T85; Julia T369
Formulations setting the objectives or drawing the conclusions to a particular topic or period of talk	Used as an effective framing device	M02, Karyn T88; M03, Dee T11 and T517
Formulations emphasising or interpreting the preceding contribution	Frequent in the meeting discourse as a point-making device	M03, Adam T134, T199; M04, Sam T110 and T448
Formulations signposting the meeting's progress	Used as an overt marker of the incremental progression of teams' decision-making	M03, Dee T169, T195, and T354
Tactical Use of the Three Practices		
Explanations used to provide additional unsolicited information	Deliberate moves on the speaker's part to establish credentials or expert knowledge	M03, Dee T495; M04, Dee T258 and T286
Accounts used as an alignment and rapport strategy	Expressing empathy and understanding of problems communicated by the other party; provided a 'launch pad' for introducing a counterargument	M01, Doug T64; Mike T72
A repeated Formulation	Used assertively as a meta-Formulation throughout the meeting in order to claim or ascertain a position	M01, Doug T74, T89, T96, T104, and T177
Combined Use of Practices; typically opinion-forming or decision-making situations		
Explanation-Formulation pair	Employed to guide the information processing or to facilitate the forming of views or actions	M01, Doug T103; M03, Dee, T405; M04, Max 135; Dee T254; Joseph T310
Formulation-Explanation pair	Used as an engagement technique presenting the broad-brush picture first and afterwards translating or detailing its implications	M01, Doug T88; Mike T170; M02, Mike T45 and T49; M03, Adam T47, T164; Julia T48; Dee T403; M04, Joseph T116, T119, T151, T185, T222
Account preceding a Formulation	Signalling alignment with the the other party and used as a mitigating device moderating the expectations or precluding a potential deadlock in communication	M01, Doug T63; M02, Karyn T10
Formulation-Question	Used as a conversation management technique, in which the Formulation serves to recapitulate incrementally part of the discussion, and the question to request an agreement for action or to direct the discussion towards a new point	M03, Dee T281, T330

The practices occurred consistently in all of the four meetings; their relative impact either singularly or in combination could be deemed principally the same. The power of the practices lay, however, in how speakers selected them or their combinations to achieve the goals pursued in the meeting. This became apparent especially once Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were examined in the context of the three decision types.

For example, Meeting One was driven by a cornerstone decision and the role of the team in implementing this. In order to assert the desired outputs, the main interactive strategy of the CEO was a repeated use of Formulations preceded by an occasional Account. The Account was used solely as a ‘softening’ device, indicating common ground and giving some credit to the arguments presented by the team. The Account had no real impact on the decision as it had already been made. On the other hand, Accounts produced by the team were an essential part of their negotiation strategy. They were aimed at justifying the team’s position and negotiating new, deliverable targets, or at least mitigating the pressure they were facing as a result of the executive decision.

In contrast, Meeting Four was scheduled as reflective in nature and was not expected to produce many business decisions. Joseph repeatedly employed combinations of Explanations and Formulations, or *vice versa*, not so much to assert a validity of a decision, but to engage the team in thinking and forward planning. The manager-team dynamic was based on Joseph’s launching and explaining his ideas to the team and seeking their approval or enthusiasm for action. Hence, the practices stimulated conversational and brainstorming activity and ultimately this resulted in the formulation of a number of decisions. Irrespective of the type of meeting (*see* Figure 8), the practices were utilised by the meeting’s participants. The practices thus continued to play their roles in helping meetings to progress and, if appropriate, to assist in the decision-making process.

In sum, the recurring trends support an investigation into how the practices constitute decision-making in the meetings. The trends also appear to support the appropriateness of focusing analytical attention on long turns produced in meetings data. How significant and verifiable these trends in fact are, however, requires further investigation across a larger volume of data.

5.4. Summary and Implications for Decision-making

The above description of results confirms a direct relationship between Accounts, Explanations, and Formulations, on the one hand, and decision-making, on the other. By providing the time and environment, meetings encourage discussion, which enables the sharing of experience and the building of a shared understanding or of a negotiated compromise. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations are continuously present in the meetings data and participants use the discursive practices to facilitate the on-going discussion. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations each fulfil different and unique roles in the discourse of the decision-making process and may potentially speed up the formulation, acceptance of and commitment to a decision. Occasionally, teams would be asked to contribute an opinion and information to help in the formulation of a collective decision elsewhere in the organisation. The discursive practices thus operated consistently even if a decision was not required or reached.

Whether the impact of the practices on decision-making is ultimately positive or negative, i.e., whether each or all would operate in favour of or counter to the decision process, is dependent on how the speakers choose to use them. Being aware of the effects of using the discursive practices, speakers may aim to apply Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations to influence the discussions in the meetings and impact on the decision-making process. Realisation of this kind provides both a genuine research interest and the authority for conducting a more detailed examination of the practices in order to obtain an even deeper understanding of how Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations impact on the discursive realisation of decision-making in meetings.

5.5. Conclusions

Chapter Five has carried out an initial analysis of four meetings in order to establish the nature of the impact made by Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations on the decision process. The key findings resulting from the analysis are that the three practices recurred consistently in the discussions and clustered in or around longer turns of the discourse. Some speakers, more than others, used the practices to the benefit of the meeting progression or its outcome. Those who employed

the practices to this effect also secured for themselves as individuals or members of a team a larger share of meeting time and, as a consequence created a chance of influencing the decision process.

The outcomes of the pilot study have confirmed the suitability of combining CA and ethnographic analysis as appropriate to the thesis. The results so far have encouraged further enquiry towards a more detailed, textual analysis of the discourse, focusing on Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in examining their role in the decision process. Finally, the pilot study tested the macro-analytical tool of the interactional matrices in the examination of meetings data (Data Set One). The matrices were able to map the relationship and interactions between participants, the three discursive practices, and decisions within the time frame of a meeting. The subsequent analysis provided a high level of information regarding the practices; the matrix tool will be applied in the subsequent research.

CHAPTER SIX

Data Set Two Analysis: The Macro-/Micro-Analysis of REG and ITUG Meetings

Chapter Six introduces a new data set, Data Set Two, consisting of a further six hours of transcribed spoken data. This was recorded in the meetings of two teams, the REG team and the ITUG team, and is presented in Section 6.1 (below). The teams were dissimilar in terms of both their structure and their operational remit, yet were subject to and experienced the change brought about by the separation of the Business Link (BL) and a subsequent loss of funding and staff (*cf.* Section 2.1.1). The thesis thus aims to test the approach developed in Chapter Five and apply it to the analysis of a larger and more diverse set of data. It takes the opportunity to determine whether the differing structural nature of the teams in any way affected the behaviour of the practices in meetings and their impact on decision-making.

The chapter expands upon the current way of examining the practices in that it establishes a close focus on selected Combination turns of Data Set Two, where these are not merely mapped out in meetings but are also deconstructed into their constituent parts. The analysis undertaken thus creates a necessary link to the next level of examination of the three practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations undertaken in Chapters Seven to Nine.

6.1. Data Introduction

From over sixty hours of reference data collected, six hours of meetings talk from the REG and ITUG teams were selected for further analysis. These constitute Data Set Two, in which approximately three hours of meetings talk were transcribed for each team (*see* Appendix 2.1 for an overview).

The two teams – REG and ITUG – created an analytically interesting contrast. REG were a well-established, mature department responsible for the delivery of part of the Chamber's operations. The ITUG were a diverse group of employees drawn from across the organisation, from a wide range of grades, backgrounds, and experiences.

They operated within a clearly defined remit to resolve IT issues affecting operational efficiency.

From the set, Meeting One of the ITUG team (77minutes 27seconds, recorded in June 2005) and Meeting Thirty-six of the REG team (50minutes 50seconds, recorded in March 2006) were completely transcribed and analysed. This choice was determined by three data parameters: 1) together, the two meetings created a time frame of nine months during which the teams were observed by the researcher for the period of one year, 2) the organisational change was ongoing, and 3) they were representative of the meetings data collected in the respective teams. In addition to REG36 and ITUG01 meetings, further data extracts were transcribed. These provided an additional four hours of transcribed meetings talk. Analysis was undertaken in order to establish the decision-making properties of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the meetings at times of organisational change and whether the discursive practices behaved consistently over an extended period of time. .

The next section illustrates the macro-/micro-dual approach adopted to the REG36 and ITUG01 data and integrates this with the ethnographic findings in interpreting decision-making in the meetings of each of the two teams. The analysis thus replicates the tool of interactional matrices developed in the pilot in Chapter Five and prefaces – through a close textual focus on the practices – a more profound examination of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations performed on a new data set and presented in Chapters Seven to Nine.

6.2. Macro-Analysis of REG36 and ITUG01

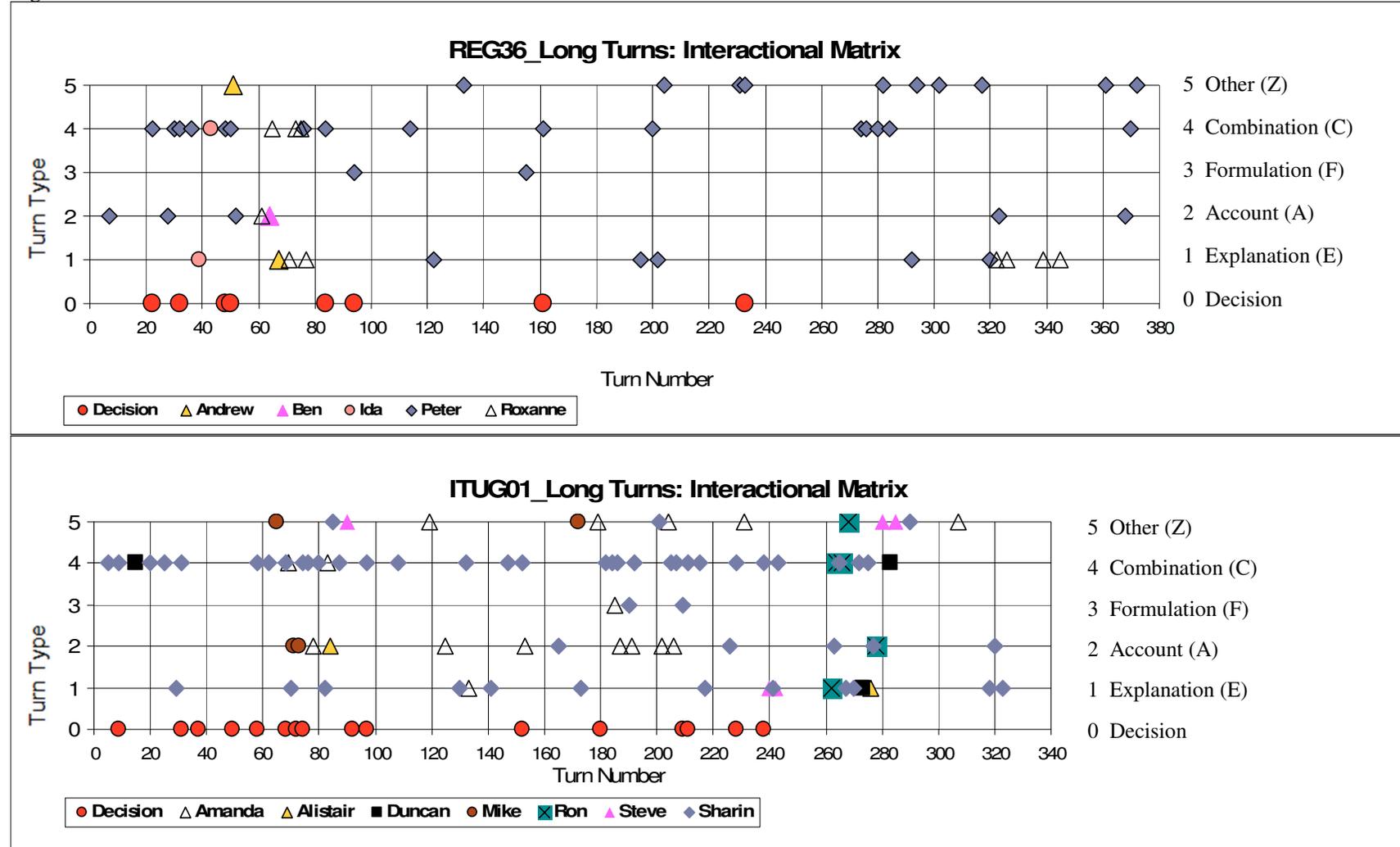
The macro-analysis of REG36 and ITUG01 meetings examined the long turns and decisions in the meetings. The principal results regarding the dynamics of the meetings are contained in the REG36 and ITUG01 interactional matrices in Figure 33 below. The information extracted from the matrices regarding the speakers' participation and the distribution of the long turns and decisions in the two meetings is further expanded in Figure 34 , Figure 35, Figure 36, Figure 37, and Figure 37:

1. Figure 33 – Interactional matrices of REG36 and ITUG01 meetings;

2. Figure 34 and Figure 35 – Speakers’ participation and the order of their interactions in the long turns;
3. Figure 36 – Long turns cumulative count;
4. Figure 37 and Figure 38– Decisions Overview.

The REG36 and ITUG01 interactional matrices (Figure 33) presented below track the sequential organisation of speakers’ contributions in the meetings, the frequent use of the practices in the long turns and the clustering of decisions around these.

Figure 33: REG36 and ITUG01: Interaxctional Matrices



In the two meetings, Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations constituted a high proportion of long turns and these were frequently featured as complex, Combination, turns. The majority of long turns was performed by the Chairs – Peter and Sharin – whose use of Combination turns (C) was as high as 43% for Peter, and 55% in the case of Sharin. The interactional dominance of these two speakers is also demonstrated in the matrices in Figure 33 where their participation is marked by a blue diamond ().

Long turns were also significant in respect of the decisions produced in the two meetings: all but four decisions were made in the long turns, with cornerstone decisions, whether made or reported, always being embedded in the long turns. The key difference between the two teams was, however, in how and when the Chairs inter-reacted with the other speakers.

In REG36, Peter delayed the discussion of the team's re-structure until after he had introduced and set out the overall plan. The actual debate of the issue opened with Andrew's contribution in turn T51. This turn was followed by a part of the meeting during which all speakers, except Kevin, contributed at least one long turn. This sequence of substantial group participation finished with Roxanne's turn T77 after which the debate still continued to be centred around the re-structure, the primary topic of the meeting. This took place right up to turn T161. The inter-reaction between Peter and the team was about Peter's creating an opportunity for the team to voice their opinions at a designated place in the meeting, yet not allowing discussion or any potential distractions until he had provided the complete picture and the reasons for his decision.

In contrast, ITUG01 was an agenda-driven meeting. Sharin frequently employed long turns to report back on progress and implementation updates, to evaluate projects, and to share information. He stimulated the debate and dealt with it by generating consensus, by creating a buy-in and support for his vision of how the group should operate in order to deliver its remit. Sharin's inter-reaction with the team was agenda-driven and created the framework for debate. He therefore performed a dual role: one of being the head of IT and making decisions around key IT issues or planning, and the other as group Chair managing the meeting. In the matrix, the chairing function generated talk for the managing of the meeting and

resulted in the regular use of turns labelled as Other (Z). Such turns typically comprised questions, queries, or examples of work practice. The clustering of the long turns performed by the chairs and the types of long turns employed by the individual speakers is summarised in Figure 34 and Figure 35. The overview displays the contributions of the speakers and assists in examining the patterns of their interactions in talk.

Figure 34: REG36 – Speakers’ Participation

REG36: LONG TURNS			REG36: LONG TURNS			REG36: LONG TURNS		
TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE	TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE	TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE
7	<n Peter>	A	76	<n Peter>	C	284	<n Peter>	C
22	<n Peter>	C	77	<n Roxanne>	E	292	<n Peter>	E
28	<n Peter>	A	84	<n Peter>	C	294	<n Peter>	Z
30	<n Peter>	C	94	<n Peter>	F	302	<n Peter>	Z
32	<n Peter>	C	114	<n Peter>	C	317	<n Peter>	Z
36	<n Peter>	C	122	<n Peter>	E	320	<n Peter>	E
39	<n Ida>	E	133	<n Peter>	Z	322	<n Roxanne>	E
43	<n Ida>	C	155	<n Peter>	F	323	<n Peter>	A
48	<n Peter>	C	161	<n Peter>	C	326	<n Roxanne>	E
50	<n Peter>	C	196	<n Peter>	E	339	<n Roxanne>	E
51	<n Andrew>	Z	200	<n Peter>	C	345	<n Roxanne>	E
52	<n Peter>	A	202	<n Peter>	E	361	<n Peter>	Z
61	<n Roxanne>	A	204	<n Peter>	Z	368	<n Peter>	A
64	<n Ben>	A	231	<n Peter>	Z	370	<n Peter>	C
65	<n Roxanne>	C	233	<n Roxanne>	Z	372	<n Peter>	Z
67	<n Andrew>	E	274	<n Peter>	C			
71	<n Roxanne>	E	276	<n Peter>	C			
73	<n Roxanne>	C	280	<n Peter>	C			
75	<n Roxanne>	C	282	<n Peter>	Z			

In REG36, Peter’s long turns occurred in conspicuous clusters. The second most significant contributor to the meeting was Roxanne. The Account-Combination sequence performed between turns T7 and T36 forms the centrepiece of the meeting and is also analytically the most interesting since it provides an insight into the language strategy employed for the communication of a cornerstone decision.

Figure 35: ITUG01 – Speakers’ Participation

ITUG01: LONG TURNS			ITUG01: LONG TURNS			ITUG01: LONG TURNS		
TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE	TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE	TURN	SPEAKER	TYPE
5	<n Sharin>	C	132	<n Sharin>	C	228	<n Sharin>	Z
9	<n Sharin>	C	133	<n Amanda>	E	231	<n Amanda>	Z
15	<n Duncan>	C	141	<n Sharin>	E	238	<n Sharin>	C
20	<n Sharin>	C	147	<n Sharin>	C	240	<n Steve>	E
25	<n Sharin>	C	152	<n Sharin>	C	241	<n Sharin>	E
29	<n Sharin>	E	153	<n Amanda>	A	242	<n Steve>	E
31	<n Sharin>	C	165	<n Sharin>	A	243	<n Sharin>	C
58	<n Sharin>	C	172	<n Mike>	Z	262	<n Ron>	E
62	<n Sharin>	C	173	<n Sharin>	E	263	<n Sharin>	A
65	<n Mike>	Z	179	<n Amanda>	Z	264	<n Ron>	C
68	<n Sharin>	C	182	<n Sharin>	C	265	<n Sharin>	C
69	<n Amanda>	C	184	<n Sharin>	C	266	<n Ron>	C
70	<n Sharin>	E	185	<n Amanda>	F	267	<n Sharin>	E
71	<n Mike>	A	186	<n Sharin>	C	268	<n Ron>	Z
73	<n Mike>	A	187	<n Amanda>	A	270	<n Sharin>	E
74	<n Sharin>	C	190	<n Sharin>	F	272	<n Shakir>	C
76	<n Sharin>	C	191	<n Amanda>	A	274	<n Duncan>	E
78	<n Amanda>	A	192	<n Sharin>	C	275	<n Sharin>	A
80	<n Sharin>	C	201	<n Sharin>	Z	276	<n Alistair>	E
82	<n Sharin>	E	202	<n Amanda>	A	277	<n Sharin>	A
83	<n Amanda>	C	204	<n Amanda>	Z	278	<n Ron>	A
84	<n Alistair>	A	205	<n Sharin>	C	280	<n Steve>	Z
85	<n Sharin>	Z	206	<n Amanda>	A	283	<n Duncan>	C
87	<n Sharin>	C	207	<n Sharin>	C	285	<n Steve>	Z
90	<n Steve>	Z	209	<n Sharin>	F	290	<n Sharin>	Z
97	<n Sharin>	C	211	<n Sharin>	C	307	<n Amanda>	Z
108	<n Sharin>	C	215	<n Sharin>	C	318	<n Sharin>	E
119	<n Amanda>	Z	217	<n Sharin>	E	320	<n Sharin>	A
125	<n Amanda>	A	220	<n Amanda>	A	323	<n Sharin>	E
130	<n Sharin>	E	226	<n Sharin>	A			

In ITUG, the distribution of long turns among the individual speakers was markedly more even. Sharin was, however, still the most dominant speaker. He produced 60% of all long turns in the meeting, and he always took the opportunity to have at least one long turn with every agenda topic. This overview of the distribution of long turns and user frequency is more typical of an agenda-driven meeting, where each agenda item is provided with its own slot and participants are normally ready to exploit these as appropriate.

Figure 36 (below) quantifies the participation of the individual speakers in the production of long turns and decisions. In particular, it highlights the dominance of Peter and Sharin in the two meetings.

Figure 36: REG36 and ITUG01: Long Turns Distribution Analysis

REG36_STATS						
SPEAKER	NO. TURNS	No. LTs	Frequency of LTs in %	LTs DURATION (s)	Duration of LTs in %	DECISIONS
Peter	156	37	10%	1935	63%	14
Andrew	30	2	1%	25	1%	0
Ben	23	1	0%	15	0%	0
Ida	22	2	1%	30	1%	0
Kevin	42	0	0%	0	0%	0
Roxanne	96	10	3%	190	6%	0
All	6	0	0%	0	0%	0
Helena	1	0	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	376	52	14%	2195	72%	14
ITUG01_STATS						
SPEAKER	NO. TURNS	No. LTs	Frequency of LTs in %	LTs DURATION (s)	Duration of LTs in %	DECISIONS
Sharin	140	53	15%	2995	64%	14
Alistair	18	3	1%	45	1%	1
Amanda	90	17	5%	350	8%	0
Cohen	4	0	0%	0	0%	0
Duncan	16	2	1%	40	1%	1
Liz	7	0	0%	0	0%	0
Mike	25	4	1%	80	2%	1
Ron	12	5	1%	140	3%	0
Steve	20	5	1%	80	2%	0
Helena	2	0	0%	0	0%	0
All	22	0	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	356	89	25%	3730	80%	17

PETER - Dominance	%
Turns in the meeting	41%
LTs in the meeting	71%
LTs:No. Turns	24%
LTs Duration	88%
LTs Duration:Meeting Duration	63%
Decisions	100%

SHARIN	%
Turns in the meeting	39%
LTs in the meeting	60%
LTs:No. Turns	38%
LTs Duration	80%
LTs Duration:Meeting Duration	64%
Decisions	82%

The impact of their contributions is apparent especially when their long turns are recalculated in terms of duration (*see* Section 5.1.3 for a discussion of this feature). Peter's long turns represent 88% of the time taken up by long turns in the meeting, and 63% of the total meetings time. The figures are similar also in Sharin's case – 80% of the time taken up by long turns in the meeting, and 64% of the meetings time. This demonstrates that each SOM alone dominates nearly two-thirds of the meeting time. In reality, this figure is even slightly higher, as the speakers also contribute in the short turns, which in REG36 meeting represent 28% of the total meetings time and in the ITUG01 20% of the total meetings time.

An analysis of the decisions recorded in the macro- chart in Figure 33 also identifies the dominance of the two speakers in terms of the decision-making activity recorded in the meetings – Peter was responsible for the production of all fourteen decisions in REG36 (100%), and Sharin made fourteen out of seventeen decisions in ITUG01 (82%). The decisions overview in Figure 37 and Figure 38 (below) provides detail of the decisions formulated in the two meetings. The charts log information about the type of the decision, its language form, and place in the meeting in which the decision was made. They also extract the original text enabling comparison of the language used by different managers to deliver decisions and to assess their approach to decision-making in the meeting.

Figure 37: REG36 – Decisions Overview

REG36: Decisions Overview					
No.	DECISION	TURN	SP.	TEXT	D. FORM
1	Cornerstone	22	Peter	(0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7)	action
2	Slab stone	32	Peter	(0.2) umm (0.2) what I'm therefore suggesting, is that (0.7) (11:40) Samuel (0.4) and Ben, become the delivery manager, and the influencing and bidding manager, (0.2) uh	proposal
3	Slab stone	32	Peter	(0.5) uh (0.5) I'd like Roxanne to be the regeneration (0.3) one,	proposal
4	Slab stone	32	Peter	(0.4) umm (0.2) then an enter- - one enterprise manager,	proposal
5	Slab stone	32	Peter	(0.2) umm (0.4) the other (0.2) BIG change in there, (0.3) is that, uh (1) I am looking at (name of colleague) being (0.4) oth- - on that level, (13:00)	proposal
6	Slab stone	48	Peter	(19:00) (0.2) then, I think, that that the one of the things we need to do pretty quickly, (0.2) I mean the FIRST thing we need to do, frankly, is to talk to the teams, (1.2)	proposal
7	Slab stone	50	Peter	(19:20) (0.5) BUT I WOULD LIKE to hold onto it until I've at LEAST spoke (sic) to the other managers, [<A> Mhm (pp)] (0.6) if that's ok, (0.4)	proposal
8	Slab stone	84	Peter	it's still gonna be ME going to the zone meetings, and and and so there is still a DIRECT relationship, you know, in terms of making sure that the agenda is right, and so on,	action
9	Slab stone	84	Peter	I am not I am not looking to CHANGE THAT , in terms for example, you know, of getting, (0.2) getting Ben involved in in in those things, (0.4)	action
10	Slab stone	84	Peter	(0.5) so, once we've - - once we've have the TEAM meeting, (0.5) once people (27:00) all know, and we will get to the point where we put this thing in place, whatever it IS_(0.2) then we can [have an information - -]	action
11	Slab stone	94	Peter	I'll send an email out	action
12	Slab stone	161	Peter	= I will just talk to the other managers, so, if you can keep it - - I know it's gonna be hard, 'cause you wanna talk to people, but if you can just keep it until MONDAY, (0.4) uh (0.3) then that would be good, (0.2) is that POSSIBLE?	instruction
13	Slab stone	161	Peter	(0.5) And obviously, I think, as well, the other thing I am happy to do, well, I WILL do, is gonna, you know, is to have one-to-one conversations, as well, [<R> Yeah] with people,	action
14	Slab stone	233	Peter	I'll (0.3) I'll circulate it round later umm umm (2) umm umm (3) uh (0.8)	action

In REG36, all but the last decision (T238) related to the process of restructuring the team. All decision-making activity was executed solely by Peter, who began the meeting with a cornerstone decision announcing the team's re-structuring. It was the key decision made in the meeting and was delivered as an action. The six subsequent decisions immediately drew on the implications of the strategic change. They addressed personnel issues resulting from the re-structure and planned how the change would be communicated to the rest of the team. These decisions were made in the form of proposals providing space for feedback from the team. Although Peter invited contributions from the team regarding the implementation of the re-structuring, all of his decisions were delivered directly; there was little doubt the change was unavoidable and would take place. Peter had a line-management responsibility. He was expected to display leadership and decisiveness – and he did so continuously throughout the meeting (*see* decisions eight to fourteen).

Figure 38: ITUG01 – Decisions Overview

ITUG01: Decisions Overview					
No.	DECISION	TURN	SP.	TEXT	D. FORM
1	Slab stone	9	Sharin	So, if the group is happy with this, [<L> Yeah] (0.2) we'll (0.2) put an area for the I.T. user group, where we can put our documents in there, so, (0.2) anybody in the company can see it. (03:00) And uh we'll put the terms of reference there as well. So, we'll get on with it, (0.3) and and do that. (8)	action with a condition
2	Slab stone	31	Sharin	So, we'll do that, nearer the time.	action
3	Slab stone	37	Duncan	= Oh I've got no problem with it	action
4	Slab stone	49	Mike	Oh yeah, [I'll do it]	action
5	Slab stone	58	Sharin	(0.8) I WILL (14:40) (0.3) perhaps send an email (0.2) next week, to tell the whole organisation, who the two members are, and what they will be working on. ... So, I'll do that (0.2) next week (15:00)	action
6	Cornerstone - reported	68	Sharin	the Blackberry devices will be (0.4) uh I HOPE you guys have, (18:00) I don't know, have had some communication from your managers to say (0.3), they'll be rolled out, (0.2) uh (0.2)	action
7	Slab stone	72	Alistair	You don't need to phone us, (0.3) you can do it on the Intranet, (0.2)	instruction
8	Slab stone - reinforced	74	Sharin	Yes. Yes, it is necessary.	instruction
9	Slab stone	92	Sharin	Not a problem, (0.2) we'll (0.2) we'll send an email.	action
10	Slab stone	97	Sharin	So, what we'll do, (0.2) will send an EMAIL, to REMIND people to LOOK at THAT document, basically. (0.2)	action
11	Slab stone - repeated	97	Sharin	(0.4) Uh so I'll I'll (0.4) I'll send an email out, (0.2) to remind people (10) (29:40)	action
12	Slab stone with a condition	152	Sharin	No, uh (0.7) seriously, (0.3) if it is if it is a business requirement, then we will have to accommodate it somehow, we will look into it, [<A> Mhm] with you, (0.2)	action with a condition
13	Slab stone	180	Sharin	Uh (0.3) the: short answer is, (0.4) the OWNER of the equipment, (0.2) should support THAT equipment. If we own it, (0.2) we will support it.	action
14	Slab stone - repeated	209	Sharin	It it depends on what you want. BUT (f), if it's an issue, talk to I.T. DIRECTLY, (0.2) [<A> Mhm] talk to ME directly, and say, we want to do this on the portal. THEN I can say to you, YES, (0.5) we can (0.2) do this, and I'll bring in Marketing with that. If it's an ISSUE.=	instruction
15	Slab stone	211	Sharin	You talk to I.T. in the first instance, [<C> Mhm] stick it on the on the Support Desk. [<C> Mhm, yeah]	instruction
16	Slab stone	228	Sharin	And if that is- - If I see that, and and I'll run it past to you, and if you think, yeah, that's useful, then (0.2) I'll publish it. Uh (0.2) I'll TRY and DO that. [<A> Ok]	action with a condition
17	Slab stone - repeated	238	Sharin	But I'll I'll put something in place, and and hopefully that will help. (0.5) Hopefully, that will help.	action

The ITUG01 Decisions Overview documents the facilitative expert role taken by Sharin in the meeting. Sharin had no line-management responsibility or authority for the group. He did, however, realise how important it was for the effective operation of the group to generate understanding, a shared pool of knowledge, clear terms of reference, and an agreed way of working. Sharin therefore applied a consensus-driven approach to the meeting he was chairing. He was positive and immediate at making decisions in the meeting and this approach applied consistently to all of his operational slab-stone decisions listed above.

Two features in particular were of interest in Sharin's decision-making style. Firstly, it was his occasional re-statement of a previous slab-stone decision. For example, both Decisions Sixteen and Seventeen (T228 and T238) related to the agenda issue of a new Document Management System, where the latter re-stated and reinforced the former. The use of this technique appeared very effective as it created confidence within the group in what had been said and in the delivery capabilities of the IT team. Secondly, Sharin occasionally employed the practice of hedging and conditioning to manage the group's expectations, yet maintained his 'can do' attitude to handling user requests. Such handling of users' requests was employed in Decisions One (T9), Twelve (T152), and Sixteen (T228). This also had the effect of demonstrating Sharin's willingness to discuss issues and to seek and accommodate the views of the group. As a Chair, Sharin thus repeatedly demonstrated his skill in making immediate decisions on how the meetings were to be conducted; he also ensured discussions were to the point and did not digress from the main purpose of the meetings.

In conclusion, the macro-analysis of the two meetings confirmed the prominence of long turns. It has mapped the contributions of individual speakers, their use of the practices, and the share of the meeting time sustained by them. It has also recorded all decisions made in the meetings and the point of a decision when this was made. In addition, the macro-analysis further established a consistent use of the practices by SOMs who employed these in long, Combination turns to communicate complex ideas, and described the emergence of repeated sequences of the practices in these turns. This patterning of the practices and, in particular, their seemingly naturally-occurring positioning invites further research and is therefore explored in the ensuing Chapters Seven to Nine.

Finally, the section has thus confirmed that through the macro-tool of the interactional matrices it is possible to map the occurrence of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations either as that of a single practice or as part of a Combination turn. However, while it has been confirmed that it is helpful to encode the data and the turns to indicate the areas on which the researcher should focus, yet closer textual analysis of the three practices is required in examining each turn in detail to determine the presence and impact of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. Figure 37 and Figure 38 begin to do this as they introduce the focus on examining the actual content of what was said in order to understand the decisions made in the meetings. The following section will now develop this second, micro-analytical approach to the data in greater detail.

6.3. Micro-Analysis of REG36 and ITUG01

The micro-analysis undertakes a textual examination of the Combination turns⁵⁰ identified in the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings and deconstructs them into their constituent parts. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were analysed for their sequential organisation in the complex turns and for the impact they had on decision-making in the respective meetings.

Figure 39 and Figure 40 (below) visually summarise the results of this micro-analytical approach applied to two Combination turns in Data Set Two – turn T22C from REG36, and turn T265C from ITUG01. Both turns were also of substantial lengths (6min 28sec and 2min 6sec respectively). It was therefore interesting to test how the practices behaved in them. A textual analysis of the two turns forms Appendix 6.1 and has not been included in the main body of the text.

⁵⁰ In the Combination turns, the three discursive practices constituted at least 80% of the turn – *see* Section 2.3.4 (Methodology)

Figure 39: Micro-Analysis: REG36_T22C_Peter

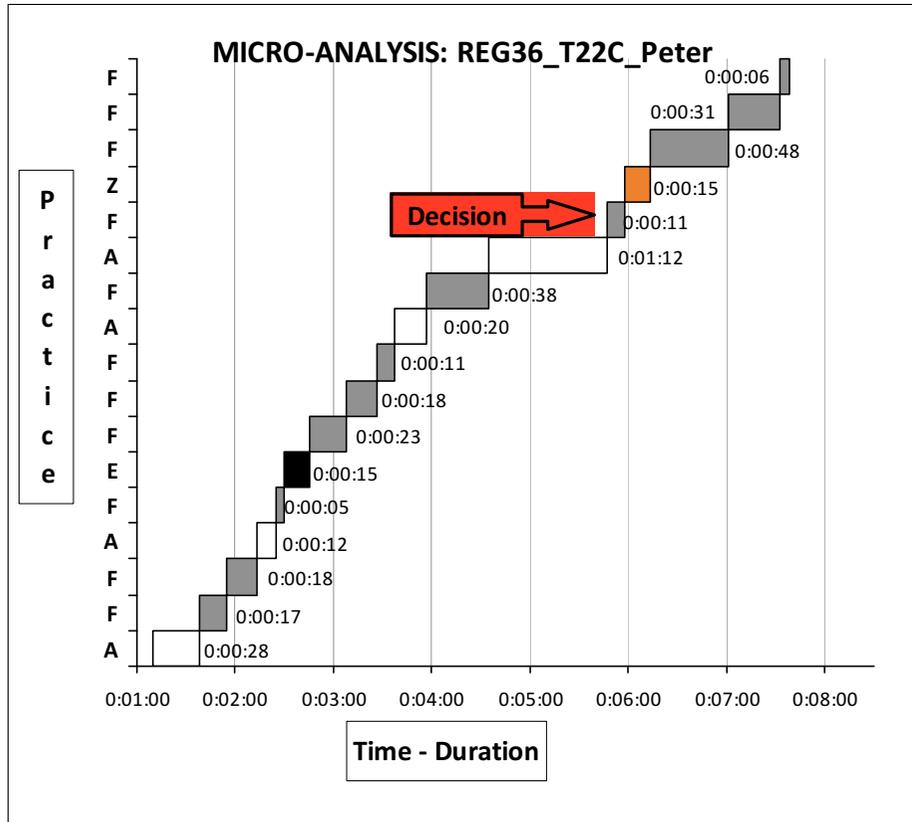
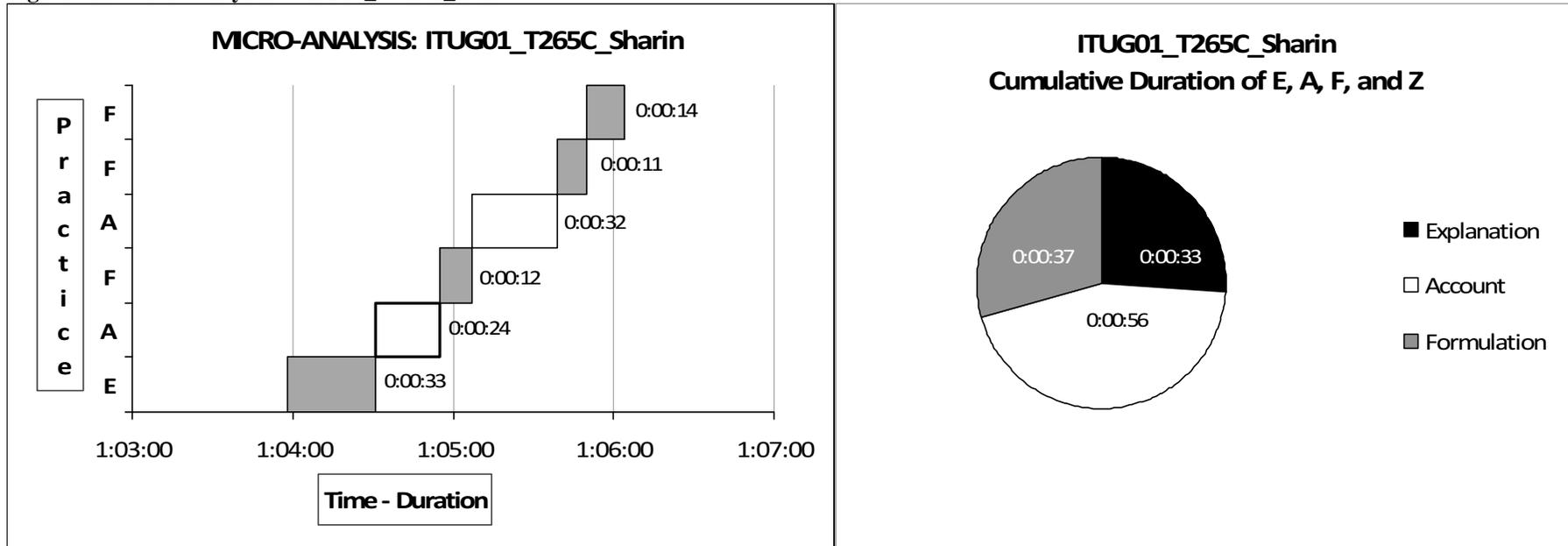


Figure 40: Micro-Analysis: ITUG01_T265C_Sharin



The graphs in Figure 39 and Figure 40 display the use of the practices in the meetings as they unfolded in time. The pie charts complement the graphs in that they visualise the cumulative duration of the practices in the turn.

As indicated on the axis *x* in Figure 39, turn T22C in REG36 commenced one minute and ten seconds after the start of the meeting and lasted slightly in excess of six minutes. The turn was central to the entire meeting and it was delivered as almost a monologue. When deconstructed, seventeen instances of the practices being deployed were identified in REG36_T22 – one Explanation (E), four Accounts (A), eleven Formulations (F), and one Other turn (Z). Overall, the turn was considerably complex, consisting of 1,253 words delivered at an average speech rate of 193 words per minute (193 wpm.)⁵¹.

It is noticeable from the chart that the Account-Formulation sequence represents an active pattern in the turn building up towards the decision delivery. The actual cornerstone decision was delivered as a Formulation of a gist (F), introduced by an emphasised ‘SO, (0.2) WHAT ...’ and set apart from the surrounding text by a frame composed of two pauses. It was announced in Formulation Eight of the turn and is quoted in full below:

Data Sample 6.3-1: Restructure the team

REG36_Peter (F)

22 Peter ... (0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) which is a little bit scary, (laughs) [(all laugh)] for all of us_...

The link between Formulations and decisions was the most direct one of all the three practices. Through the use of Formulations Peter articulated the need for change and summarised the consequences of the external forces. In contrast, the Accounts employed held a complementary function. They created rapport, removed potential fears of the change, and generally bridged the expectations of the group.

In addition, the utterance marked the climax of the turn, which was further confirmed by the next part of the turn coded as Other (Z).

⁵¹ As identified by Tauroza and Allison (1990) in their research of unscripted conversations, the figure of 193 wpm falls into the *average conversational speech rate in British English*, for which the range has been set between 190 wpm and 230 wpm According to Tauroza and Allison (*ibid.*), spontaneity and urgency to hold the floor are the two main features increasing the speech rate in different spoken language situations, although other situational constraints may be also relevant. It seems justified to assume that Peter's speech was planned and the speaker deliberately opted for a slower pace to phase the delivery of the message and to emphasise its gravity.

Data Sample 6.3-2: What I wanna do today

REG36_Peter(Z)

22 Peter ... Umm, (0.5) but, (0.4) (06:00) what I wanna do today, what I'm gonna do today, (0.2) is to share with you, (0.5) where I - - where - - what I think uh we should be doing, umm, (0.5) and how I think, how we should DO it.

In the turn, the Z-utterance provided a route map for the ensuing meeting discussion. The text is typical of chairing discourse: the speaker used the authority of the Chair to steer the meeting's progression, to handle the ongoing debate and to involve the team in it. The text therefore had an impact on decision-making by navigating it to a set target.

In comparison, Sharin's turn T265C in ITUG01 (Figure 40) took place in minute sixty-three of the meeting, close to the end of the meeting. Again, it was a complex turn lasting just over two minutes and consisting of 461 words, which generated an average speech rate of 220 words per minute (220 wpm.)⁵². The turn was constructed as Sharin's expert opinion given to the team in response to their feedback on their views of a new project – Document Management System (DMS), a project of strategic value to the organisation. The successful implementation of the new system required the right choice of the technical solution, input from all of the teams on their needs, and its quick and effective adoption by the users.

The turn employed a sequence of all of the three practices; especially the initial Explanation-Account-Formulation sequence built up a clear view of the issues at hand and stimulated further critical thinking and debate. Through the opening Explanation, Sharin started to assemble a pool of factual evidence and shared knowledge regarding the DMS. The Account subsequently adopted a specific perspective to some of the technicalities of the proposed solution. It presented the challenge posed by the new system and linked it to current business processes. By articulating both the opportunities and the trade-offs of the new solution, it effectively moderated users' expectations. The Formulation then completed the sequence; it invited a specific action and warned against the dangers of making a potentially wrong decision.

Although no formal decision was made regarding the implementation of the system, the turn was constructed in such a way that it created conditions for decisions to be made in the future. In the turn, Sharin furnished a framework and context against

⁵² Considerably higher than that of Peter (193 wpm), the rate of 220 wpm still classifies as *average conversational speech rate in British English* (cf. Tauroza and Allison, 1990).

which to evaluate new information and proposals. He thus equipped the group with the understanding of what it was supposed to be doing, which in effect assisted in filtering out quickly prospectively undesirable or wasteful initiatives and kept attention focused on the priorities of the group.

In sum, the micro-approach to the data demonstrated enables the researcher to focus closely on the practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations and to examine their use by different speakers. The textual aspect of the analysis then provides an insight into the lexical construction of sense and reason as realised by the individual meeting participants. In turns REG36_T22C and in ITUG01_T265C, both Peter and Sharin's displayed a strong decision-making orientation; as speakers and Chairs they may also be justifiably claimed to have selected effective discursive practices to achieve their goals in the meeting.

Section 6.3 has thus confirmed the powerful role of a textual analysis in enabling an in-depth insight into what is actually happening in the discourse of the meeting; that is, without understanding the original text, it is impossible to determine the impact of the practices on decision-making. Importantly for the analysis, the textual interpretation stems from and is directly linked to the findings obtained through the tool of the interactional matrices. This creates a close mutual relationship between the two layers of the analysis and enables the researcher to embrace the understanding of the practices in the context of the environment in which the organisation operates and in how it does business.

6.4. Conclusions

Chapter Six introduced Data Set Two and applied the dual macro-/micro- approaches to the examination of this larger and more diverse data set. The tool of the micro-analysis was used for the first time enabling a more in-depth understanding of the practices at the textual level of the extended turns. The undertaken analysis of meetings REG36 and ITUG01 confirmed the findings reported in Chapter Five; that is, the practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were recurrent in the meetings and that they directly impacted on the decision-making process. It was also shown that a decision may be fixed at a point in time, but that the process of decision-making is much more fluid and cannot be limited to a mere statement of

action or to an exchange of a few turns in a meeting. A decision unfolds throughout the meeting as it is nurtured and informed by the ongoing discussion. In order to interpret decision-making, it was therefore necessary to analyse considerably long stretches of discourse.

In particular, the analysis demonstrated the multi-party and interactional nature of discourse in meetings, the complexity of the resulting data, and the significance of long turns in the meetings talk. To conclude the present section, a data snippet illustrating these specific features of organisational meetings is presented below. It has been extracted from ITUG01_T265C (analysed in Section 6.3 above) and captures Sharin's Explanation of the rationale for the adoption of a new DMS:

Data Sample 6.4-1: Technically, technically

ITUG01_Sharin (E)

265 **Sharin** Uh (0.3) (64:00) TECHNICALLY, technically, the the technology is - - has advanced SO MUCH, in terms of document management, (0.3) SO MUCH, that (0.2) if you if you GO for for a DEMO, and HAVE a LOOK at systems, you think, WHOA! You know, this will do everything I want it to do. Technical, so technical solutions, we we are spoilt for choice. There are so many choices out there, that we could that we could look into, and implement in place. (64:20) And as I said, (0.2), I think I mentioned it earlier, it would be a piece of cake, from the IT perspective, to just grab a system, (0.2) get a server, get tons of disk space, (0.2) and say to people, scan and (0.2) store your data, whatever. [<AI> Mhm] That's that's the EASY bit.

Although this extract is already substantially long (thirty-three seconds), it represents less than the first quarter of the entire turn (T265). It is interactional in that it engages the group and stimulates their thinking. It is also complex as the group members will be required to feed back and consult with their individual teams. The complexity is further featured at a number of levels, including the idea, the technicality of the solution, its impact on the entire organisation and the need to consider a wide range of factors and relationships in making the right decision. All of these elements are embedded in the continuation of this Combination turn and assist in the incremental advancement of the decision-making process in meetings.

Chapters Seven to Nine will now expand the conversation-analytical investigative angle to explore the impact of each of the individual practices on the decision-making process at times of organisational change.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Explanations in the Decision-making Process

There is an issue of ‘why this now?’: why is it that at a particular point in conversation we produce utterances which report factual statements, and in others we do not?

(Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 202)

The current thesis has made a clear-cut division between Explanations and Accounts based on the factuality of the former and the positioning quality of the latter.⁵³ Both Explanations and Accounts strive to produce warrantable contributions; however, Explanations do not take the form of an argument. The epistemological orientation of Explanations (Potter, 1996), i.e., the perspective they exhibit towards knowledge, is to report what a speaker knows and how s/he has learned it. The impact of Explanations on decision-making should thus be non-constraining and appear to be free of bias. However, as the meetings data demonstrate, Explanations facilitated the formulation of decisions in meetings, especially when used as a practice complementary to Accounts and Formulations.

Chapter Seven examines the occurrence and role of Explanations in influencing decisions, and their interaction with both Accounts and Formulations in the longer, more complex Combination turns. Section 7.1 introduces and describes three sub-categories of Explanations as they were identified in the analysis of the meetings data. These expand on the idea of factuality and advance the debate in how Explanations contribute to the discourse of business meetings. Section 7.2 re-applies the two-fold macro-/micro-methodology⁵⁴ to the analysis of Data Set Two meetings and explores the specific ways in which Explanations influenced the decision process in meetings. Section 7.3 draws on the longitudinal observation of the teams at the time of on-going change and concludes the analysis presented in the chapter with the examination of how Explanations were used by SOMs and their teams in this specific organisational context.

⁵³ See Section 4.1 for an introductory discussion

⁵⁴ See Section 2.3.4

7.1. Factuality of Explanations in Meetings Talk

The introductory quote to this chapter (above) is an observation made by Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), who have investigated factual utterances. Essentially, Hutchby and Wooffitt (*ibid.*) note two highly relevant issues: firstly, speakers produce factual statements only at certain points in a conversation; secondly, speakers employ factual statements selectively in order to convey information they perceive as being relevant at the time of speaking. In other words, speakers are selective in their use of factual utterances because they use them “to accomplish specific kinds of interactional or inferential tasks” (*ibid.*: 205). The same principle seemed to apply to Explanations observed in business meetings during the preparation of this thesis and it was therefore interesting to analyse the ‘why this now?’ feature in greater detail.

In the meetings data, Explanations manifested themselves as fact-based utterances. Interactively, they provided the speakers with the opportunity to make non-confrontational contributions because the Explanations were, by default, perceived to be true and were therefore rarely opposed or challenged. Speakers used Explanations to improve their own expert position, to re-route the meeting, or to ground Accounts or Formulations within a chain of reason. This helped to facilitate the making of decisions in meetings as Explanations created a level platform of understanding and provided a ground upon from which to base a decision.

Factuality granted Explanations a special role in the decision-making process: they attempted to build a neutral ground from the information available at the time of speaking and at the time of decision-making. Explanations complemented and underpinned both Accounts and Formulations – and were rarely compromised, unless used obstructively or when the factuality Explanations reported was erroneous.

Explanations assisted the decision-making process in that they:

1. Created a factual basis upon which the debate or argument could build;
2. Provided information that was unchallenged if accepted by the group as a statement of fact;
3. Contributed to a reasoned chain of argument that could offset disagreement or discussion and provided the building blocks to progress a particular view;
4. Could close down or open up avenues for debate by providing factual information that rendered some routes impracticable or created opportunities for new thinking;

5. Contributed to the shared experience and understanding of the group and enabled this information to be utilised, i.e., Explanations had the potential to make an Account more acceptable or the endorsement of a Formulation easier due to the inherent property of factuality of Explanations.

An analysis of Explanations in business meetings identified three areas furnishing factual discourse: **statements of fact (SOF)**, **reporting back (REP)**, and **expert opinion (EXP)**. Explanations built around these all dealt with the ‘here and now’ of organisational life and performance, and the issues of business processes, corporate culture, and individual or team experience. The following data samples provide examples of each of the three types of Explanations as they occurred in business meetings. In each case, the properties of Explanations and their contribution to the decision-making process are discussed in the context of the respective meeting and its outcomes:

EXAMPLE ONE: Statement of fact (SOF)

The REG team is undergoing a period of change; the potential loss of funding sources will have a major impact on the future of the team. In Data Sample 7.1-1 in turn Twenty-two (T22)⁵⁵, Peter, the team’s SOM, employs an Explanation to begin to position the need for change. It is a long, complex turn, in which a cornerstone decision is made in the last third of the turn.

Data Sample 7.1-1: Actually in oh seven oh eight

REG36_T22_Peter_E(SOF)

22 **Peter** ... because actually in oh seven oh EIGHT, the SRB6 comes - - has come to an end, eh (national business support organisation) money obviously comes to an end, not that there’s a lot of that available for us this year, there’s a (02:40) little bit. (0.2) Uh uh, you know, we’ve got some some SCOPE, to do some things around that this year. ...

Peter’s message is brief, blunt and to the point: ‘The SRB6 comes ... has come to an end’. It is a statement of fact, the underpinning message of which is serious, leaving little room for challenge or debate. The Explanation signals that certain key decisions are required in order to resolve the impending funding difficulty.

The factuality of Peter’s statement rests in declaring evidential information publicly and explicitly. This information may or may not be generally known. However, once communicated, it becomes part of a shared resource pool, and all speakers participating in the interaction have an equal right to use this information in

⁵⁵ See Section 6.3 for a micro-analysis of the turn.

the ensuing debate and argumentation. In Explanations, factuality thus declassifies organisational information that might otherwise be of exclusive consideration only by some parts or levels of the company structure.

On their own, Explanations do not generate decisions. Factuality, however, enables Explanations to establish which issues and activities are to be discussed, to channel attention to these, and subsequently to guide further organisational engagement. One of the most prominent conversational initiatives through which such engagement becomes established in meetings is reporting. This both updates the ongoing, completion or planned activities impacting on the organisation, and prepares the floor for future plans or decisions. Consider Example Two:

EXAMPLE TWO: Reporting (REP)

ITUG is progressing its actions at its regular eight-weekly meeting. In turn T9 in Data Sample 7.1-2, the reporting is undertaken by the IT SOM. It is agenda led, utilising the minutes of the past meeting. Reporting has the impact of confirming that the activities are now completed, still on target, or require a change of emphasis or priority, or that action is no longer required.

Data Sample 7.1-2 The business continuity plan

ITUG01_T9_Sharin_E(REP)

9 Sharin (04:00) (2) The BUSINESS CONTINUITY plan was mentioned in the last meeting as well, and we said they were- - it was almost complete. Well, it is now complete. Uh, (0.2) we have signed the contract with (company name) (emphasised), who are now part of (name of company) (emphasised) for disaster recovery. Uh the plan itself (0.2) as a document is complete, and will be (04:20) published IMMEDIATELY. It will be on the Intranet, for anyone to have a look at, and it will be sent to (0.2) uh partners uh uh uh such as the: (0.2) (name of a business partner organisation), and other organisations, (0.2) (name of a business partner organisation) and so on. Uh and it will be (0.2) uh handed over to, also, all the: members (04:40) of the: business continuity (0.2) project team. (0.4)

This exchange of factual information enables the group to review the original plans and to evaluate performance in the light of the information presented. Factuality is constructed through statements of completed actions (e.g., ‘is now complete’, ‘have signed the contract’) and future plans (e.g., ‘will be published IMMEDIATELY’, ‘will be on the Intranet’, ‘will be sent to’). The entire contribution is action-driven with a clear agency of parties involved; the individual statements are punchy and not overly long, and the delivery flows with no significant pauses in the talk. Given that the emphasis is placed on ‘published IMMEDIATELY’, the immediacy and transparency of information stand out as being important within the company.

Through reporting, Explanations create that which at the time of speaking may be labelled 'objective reality'. By providing a factual basis for organisational processes and actions as they happen or have happened across the organisation, Explanations create a staff-wide familiarity. The 'objective reality' of the group may, with the awareness of new facts, either remain the same, i.e., the organisation and the staff follow the same track, or it is required to change as the organisational goalposts are moving. Accounts subsequently build on this to create the new reality, and Formulations to propose how to action the discussions.

Finally, Example Three illustrates that at times of change factuality is often conveyed through expertise or experience sharing. This enables the organisation and individuals within it to understand the need for action and to prepare the way for it.

EXAMPLE THREE: Expert Opinion (EXP)

The Chamber is considering a strategic investment into a new-generation document management system (DMS). Apart from financial costs, the decision on the new DMS and its implementation will require an organisation-wide change of archiving practices. In Data Sample 7.1-3 in turn T265, Sharin, the IT SOM, explains to the group some of the pragmatic concerns that have caused the delay in adopting a new system.

Data Sample 7.1-3: Technically, technically

ITUG01_T265_Sharin_E(EXP)

265 Sharin Uh (0.3) (64:00) TECHNICALY, technically, the the technology is - - has advanced SO MUCH, in terms of document management, (0.3) SO MUCH, that (0.2) if you if you GO for for a DEMO, and HAVE a LOOK at systems, you think, WHOA! You know, this will do everything I want it to do. Technical, so technical solutions, we we are spoilt for choice. There are so many choices out there, that we could that we could look into, and implement in place. (64:20) And as I said, (0.2), I think I mentioned it earlier, it would be a piece of cake, from the IT perspective, to just grab a system, (0.2) get a server, get tons of disk space, (0.2) and say to people, scan and (0.2) store your data, whatever. [<AI> Mhm] That's that's the EASY bit.

Expert opinions and shared professional experience are frequently marked by the use of specialised lexis (e.g., document management, technical solutions, server, disk space, or data). In addition, they usually provide detail or introduce one of the perspectives on an issue at hand. In this instance, this perspective is announced and emphasised right at the beginning of the turn ('TECHNICALLY, technically') and it is a perspective of an IT professional. It is solution-oriented and is intended to sway the group towards a coordinated action.

Explanations conveying experience or providing expert opinions can thus close down or open up avenues for debate because they render some routes impracticable. They clarify the decision-making process by setting out a limited number of alternatives. Again, subsequent Accounts and Formulations build on these in completing the incremental process of organisational decision-making.

The ensuing section reports the findings of the Data Set Two macro- and micro-analyses and discusses the specific ways in which Explanations assisted the decision process in meetings.

7.2. Data Analysis

The analysis of Explanations followed the macro- and micro-procedures as outlined in Chapter Two. The analysis examined Explanations as they occurred in the data transcripts of meetings REG36 and ITUG01 introduced as part of Data Set Two in Chapter Six. The **macro-analysis** of the data identified the occurrence of Explanations in the long turns; it highlighted the frequency and use of the practice by speakers and mapped the relationship with decisions made in the meeting. The **micro-analysis** focused on examining the properties of Explanations described in Section 7.1 and in how they influenced decision-making in meetings. The practice was analysed both as constituting single turns – Explanation turns (E), and also as part of more complex turns – Combination turns (C), in which Explanations were present and integrated with both Accounts and Formulations.

7.2.1 Macro-analysis: Results

The macro-analytical tool of the *interactional matrices* graphically illustrates both individual and multiple contributions. The matrix records the occurrence of individual practices and identifies the speakers who produced them. It has the capacity to: highlight the frequency with which Explanations were employed in the meetings; display the distribution of Explanations as they were used by the individual speakers, and indicate those sections of the meeting in which Explanations surrounded decisions.

Previously, in Chapter Six, the tool was used to extract exclusively Explanations and decisions in the two meetings – REG36 and ITUG01. In the present chapter, the

matrices were used to identify the presence of the three practices in the complex Combination turns (C) and then to focus specifically on the role of Explanations in these. This has provided a deeper understanding of the manner in which Explanations assisted in the construction of meetings talk and thus contributed to decision-making. Figure 41 and Figure 40 present the analysis visually.

Figure 41: Macro-analysis_REG36_Explanations

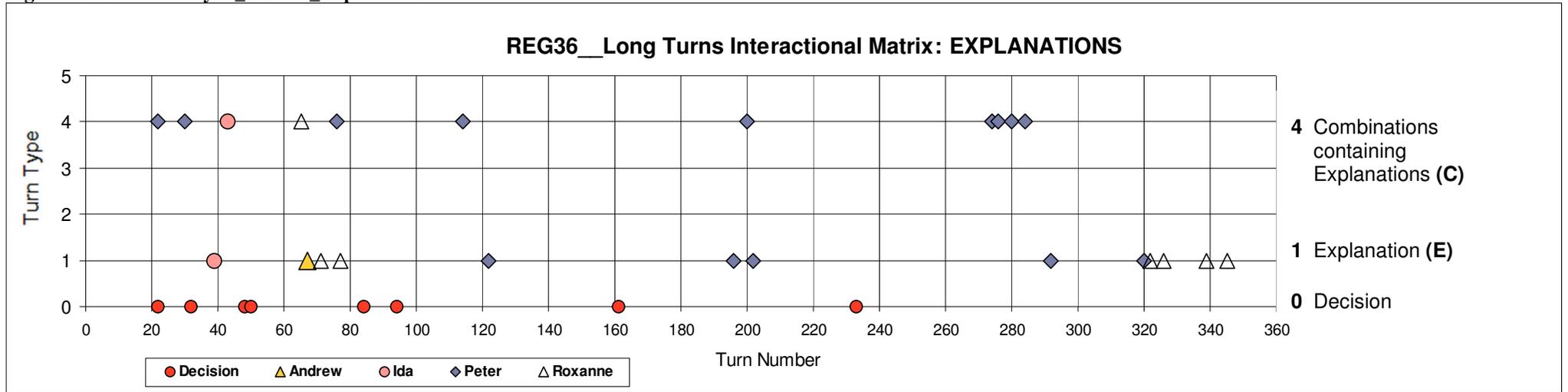
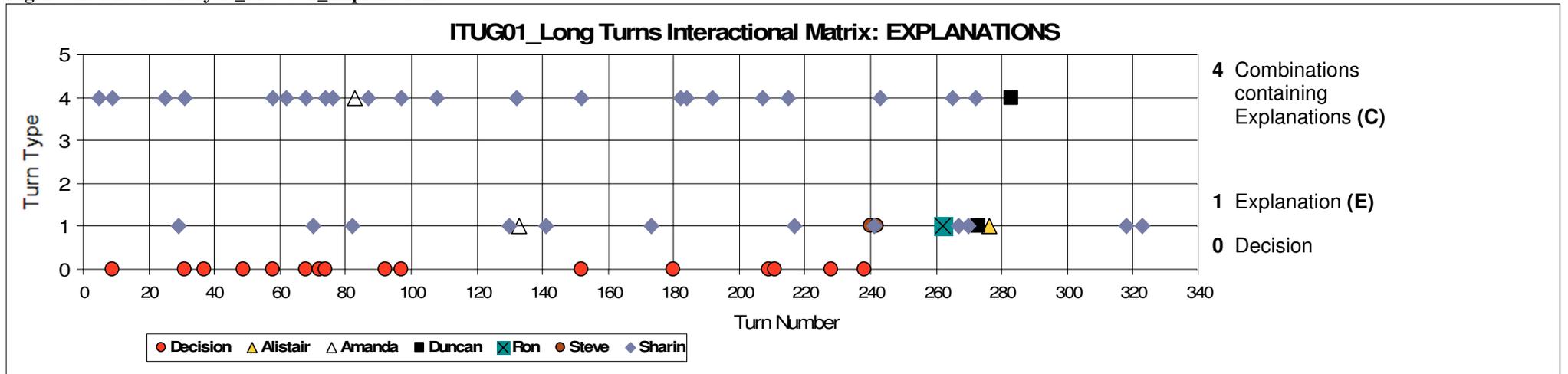


Figure 42: Macro-analysis_ITUG01_Explanations



The results of the macro-analysis confirmed, firstly, a sustained use of Explanations in the long turns throughout the meeting conversations in the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings (*see* Chapter Five for a discussion on the significance of long turns). The practice occurred in the meetings both as singular turns or as distinct parts of long Combination turns (C). In both instances, Explanations maintained their factual character. Functionally, however, the impact of the practice varied according to whether an Explanation was used in a singular (E) or in a combination turn (C). When used singularly (E), they contributed to the pooling of information available to the team, whereas as part of a Combination turn (C), Explanations were frequently used alongside Formulations and Accounts, building the base which enabled the construction of more complex ideas, arguments or proposals.

Secondly, the matrices highlighted two concrete points regarding the use of Explanations in the meetings:

1. ITUG01 featured a considerably higher proportion of Explanations than did meeting REG36;
2. It was predominantly the SOMs (Peter and Sharin) who regularly employed Explanations as part of the Combination turns (C).

The differing proportions and frequencies among the use of the practice in the meetings, in fact, corresponded closely both with the character of the meeting and with the communication goals pursued by the individual speakers. The higher use of Explanations in the ITUG01 resulted from the meeting's role to evaluate actions undertaken from the previous meeting (normally a gap of eight weeks) and provide feedback from each team on its perspectives of IT issues. The talk tended to be agenda led, issues-driven, focusing on one issue at a time and with individuals orienting towards problem-solving, sharing their comments, observations, and experience. Due to the gap in meetings, there was inherently the need for all members to be familiar with all work undertaken outside the meeting, necessitating further information sharing and the production of minutes. In comparison, REG36 was a strategic meeting, the role of which was to communicate certain fundamental decisions regarding the future existence of the team and to embed those in a structured chain of reason. Explanations were therefore used more sparsely, mainly to add weight and impartiality to the arguments presented.

The heightened usage of Explanations identified with both SOMs in their Combination turns exceeded by far the use of the practice by other speakers. Interestingly, Peter and Sharin not only produced the majority of Explanations in the Combination turns (Peter 82% and Sharin 92%), but they actually produced more of these embedded Explanations than they did of the singular instances. This finding is visually very clear in the interactional matrices presented in Figure 41 and Figure 42.

7.2.2 Implications of the Macro-analysis

The macro-analysis provides an insight into the use of the practice throughout the meeting. By mapping the authorship and frequency of Explanations in the meeting, the interactional matrix indicates with whom and where in the meeting the explanatory activity was localised. It also displays the distribution of decisions in the meeting enabling targeting of the discourse in which these were embedded.

The key findings obtained from the macro-analysis of the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings may be summarised as follows:

1. Explanations supported the decision-making process in two ways: as a single practice providing the factual base for the meeting talk; and as part of Combination turns (C) allowing speakers to build more complex ideas or proposals. This was a distinct trend both in the meetings charted above and in the remainder of the data examined within the current thesis;
2. Explanations were used to form part of the logic chain on which both Accounts and Formulations draw. This chained organisation of information and arguments in the long turns influenced whether and how decisions were made in a meeting, and decisions were typically embedded in these Combination turns (C) or were made in their vicinity;
3. The majority of Combination turns (C), of which Explanations were part, and also the majority of decisions made in the meetings were produced by SOMs.

The macro-analysis of Explanations in REG36 and ITUG01 suggested that although Explanations primarily supplied factuality to the meetings discourse, their use became strategic when they were built into the more complex Combination turns (C). In the Combination turns (C), the factuality of Explanations prepared a non-confrontational and rarely contested basis from which the speakers subsequently advanced their ideas and proposals when they integrated Explanations with Accounts

and Formulations. However, whether speakers capitalised on this opportunity and advanced their factual contributions into more complex arguments and decisions depended largely on their ability to establish the relevance of these contributions to the debate and to the other meeting participants. Since SOMs had access to a wider range of information and thus had the ability to create the relevance of the information they presented to the team, they had at their disposal considerably wider resources to use Explanations in the tactical sense, to underpin and support the point they were making – and they often did so.

An analysis at the micro-level was then undertaken in order to explore this strategic deployment of Explanations in Combination turns (C) as it appeared to provide the key to the understanding of the role played by Explanations in the decision-making process and their use by SOMs.

7.2.3 Micro-analysis: Results

The micro-analysis followed the methodology introduced in Section 2.3.4. This was applied to the data in order to identify the impact of Explanations on decision-making both in singular Explanation turns (E) and in the more complex Combination turns (C). The analysis closely examined all Explanations employed in REG36 and ITUG01 meetings and determined firstly, the type and nature of Explanations occurring, secondly, whether these were directly linked to decisions made in the meetings and finally, whether they in some way influenced or informed the decisions made. The impact was recorded in either a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ category, that is, the practice had the capability to have an impact on the decision made or announced in the meeting. A further category ‘n/a’ (not applicable) was included for those instances when the practice was used but did not link to any decision made in the meeting. The function of the respective Explanation was set as a verbal descriptor linking the Explanations back to the context of the meeting. A summary of the analysis of Explanations used in REG36 and ITUG01 meetings is presented in Figure 43, Figure 44, Figure 45, and Figure 46. A commentary follows.

Figure 43: Explanations in REG36 – Singular Turns (E)

Explanations in Meeting REG36 - Singular Turns (E)								
PRACTICE	TYPE	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
E	REP	39	10	Ida	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	NO	reporting a personal observation, indirect comment, sense making
E	SOF/EXP	67	15	Andrew	T32	Slab stone	YES	proposes a new view on the planned role
E	EXP	71	15	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	YES	comments a on the planned role by providing insight into the current work process
E	EXP	77	20	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	YES	points out a potential problem area in the new work process
E	REP	122	15	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF/REP	196	75	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	202	10	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF	292	10	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	320	30	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	322	10	Roxanne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	326	10	Roxanne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	339	40	Roxanne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF	345	10	Roxanne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figure 44: Explanations in ITUG01 – Singular Turns (E)

Explanations in Meeting ITUG01 - Singular Turns (E)								
PRACTICE	TYPE	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
E	SOF	29	10	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	NO	clarifies the plan
E	REP	70	15	Sharin	T68	Cornerstone reported	NO	thematically related but clarifies a different issue, top-down information sharing
E	REP	82	30	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF	130	15	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	sets out the process of PC replacements and resource allocation
E	SOF	133	15	Amanda	T152	Slab stone	YES	clarifies her request
E	SOF	141	20	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	provides facts to substantiating the refusal of Amanda's request
E	REP	173	80	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF	217	20	Sharin	T209, T211	Slab stone	YES	clarifies the work process
E	REP	240	35	Steve	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	241	25	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	242	10	Steve	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	262	25	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	267	30	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	270	40	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	EXP	274	15	Duncan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	276	20	Alistair	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	REP	318	35	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
E	SOF	323	20	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figure 45: Explanations in REG36 – Combination Turns (C) ⁵⁶

Explanations in Meeting REG36 - Combination Turns (C)										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	SOF	AFFAFEFFFFAFZFFF	mid	22	390	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	supports the need for change, reinforces the decision
C	SOF	EFFAF	beg	30	135	Peter	T32	Slab stone	YES	refers to an official document setting out the restructure in writing, confirms the plan to be definite
C	SOF/REP	EF	beg	43	20	Ida	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	NO	sharing information on a planned, organisation-wide project, indirect comment
C	SOF	EA	beg	65	10	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	YES	feeds information on the work process
C	EXP	EFAFA	beg	76	85	Peter	T32	Slab stone	YES	asserts the working protocol regarding the new role
C	REP	EAEF	beg/mid	114	60	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	facilitates top-down organisational information sharing
C	SOF	EF	beg	200	20	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	provides information to an aside conversation
C	SOF	EA	beg	274	40	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	facilitates top-down organisational information sharing and sense making, engages the team and stimulates them to think forward
C	REP	EFZ	beg	276	50	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	facilitates top-down organisational information sharing and sense making, engages the team and stimulates them to think forward
C	EXP	EA	beg	280	40	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	facilitates top-down organisational information sharing and sense making, engages the team and stimulates them to think forward
C	REP	FE	end	284	15	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	facilitates top-down organisational information sharing and sense making, engages the team and stimulates them to think forward

⁵⁶ Key to the abbreviated headings in Figures 43-5: PR. = practice; L = length of the turn in seconds; REF. DEC. = reference to decision; IMP = impact on decision-making

Figure 46: Explanations in ITUG01 – Combination Turns (C)

Explanations in Meeting ITUG01 - Combination Turns (C)										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	SOF	EF	beg	5	40	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	REP	AF(D)AFEAEFAEAFE	mid/end	9	220	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	REP/SOF	FEFAE	mid	25	45	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	introduces a work plan and sets an action point
C	SOF/REP	EF(D)AEFA	beg/mid	31	75	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	sets out the work process
C	SOF/REP	EFAZ(Q)AEEFEZF(D) AF	beg/mid	58	200	Sharin	T58	Slab stone	NO	facilitates top-down information sharing, the actual decision is about disseminating information and is part of the work process
C	SOF	EF	beg	62	15	Sharin	T58	Slab stone	NO	clarifies the recruitment process, creates transparency
C	REP	AEFEF(D)AEF	beg	68	225	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	SOF/EXP	F(D)AFAE	end	74	90	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	YES	substantiates the decision with a fact explaining the business process, neutralises the point of contention
C	EXP	EFA	beg	76	30	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	NO	clarifies the protocol of support desk assistance
C	REP	ZEFA	beg	83	45	Amanda	T92	Slab stone	YES	raises an issue
C	SOF/REP	EAEFFAFAF	beg	87	130	Sharin	T92	Slab stone	YES	provides procedural and technical information, asserts the role of the IT department in it
C	SOF	EF(D)AF(D)Q	beg	97	50	Sharin	T97	Slab stone	YES	raises awareness of an existing document relevant to the debate
C	EXP	EFEF	beg/mid	108	180	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	facilitates top-down information sharing
C	EXP	EF	beg	132	25	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	sets out the process of PC replacements and resource allocation
C	SOF	F(D)E	end	152	40	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	substantiates the decision with a fact explaining the implementation of the decision, neutralises the point of contention, aims to create mutual understanding
C	SOF	EA	beg	182	45	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	NO	clarifies the protocol of IT support and assistance in this particular case, asserts the role of the IT department
C	SOF	EFAF	beg	184	35	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	NO	provides technical detail to the case
C	SOF/EXP	EFEF	beg/mid	192	20	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	NO	clarifies competence boundaries between two departments
C	EXP	EAF	beg	207	80	Sharin	T209	Slab stone	YES	establishes networks of collaboration
C	REP	AEAEFF	beg/mid	215	100	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	EXP	EF	beg	243	60	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	EXP	EAF	beg	265	125	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	EXP/REP	EZEF	beg/mid	272	55	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
C	SOF	EZF	beg	283	25	Duncan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Commentary on Figure 43, Figure 44, Figure 45, and Figure 46:

1] The micro-analysis recognised and coded three types of Explanations: *statements of fact (SOF)*, *reporting (REP)*, and *expert opinions (EXP)*. The analysis determined no particular type of Explanation to be dominant in terms of its impact on decisions made in the meeting. All types had the potential to influence decision-making in the meeting and it was mainly their explanatory function which determined their use and impact within the context of the meeting. For example, statements of fact effectively created pathways for decisions, given that they typically limited the number of options available and focused the decision-making around a specific piece of factual evidence. On the other hand, reporting raised awareness of issues needing further attention and expert opinions built the debate around these.

2] Explanations constituted both singular turns (E) – summarised in Figure 43 and Figure 44, and Combination turns (C) – summarised in Figure 45 and Figure 46. The proportion between the two was 13(E) to 11(C) in REG36 and 18(E) to 24(C) in ITUG01. Although both categories facilitated the information exchange in the meeting, they differed in how they were integrated into the meeting, who employed them, and how the use of Explanations informed the decision process.

3] Singular Explanations facilitated the progression of the meeting, being a device employed by all speakers. Their influence on decision-making was either prospective, such as in turns REG36 T67, T71, or T77, or retrospective, for example in turns ITUG01 T130, T133, or T141. Their prospective influence was used to raise awareness of certain issues or to provide expert opinions and information on these. Retrospectively, they supplied facts and alternative views challenging decisions already made. Singular Explanations (E) were performed as one-off comments or observations, and speakers often chained them in the debate. Although there were instances when singular Explanations were directly linked to or facilitated the decision(s) made in the meeting, they predominantly assisted the information exchange. This was, for example, the case of all singular Explanations made in REG36 after turn T122 and in ITUG01 after turn T240, as Explanations were neither linked nor led to a decision made in the meeting. Data samples of singular Explanations referred to above are available in Appendix 7.1 and will not be further discussed here.

4] Explanations made in Combination turns helped to formulate decisions by providing a factual base underpinning the actual decision or the need for it. They were made by SOMs or experienced speakers who used them to gain the floor, subsequently taking the opportunity to build more complex ideas, or to formulate proposals or decisions. Explanations made in Combination turns informed the decision-making process by providing factuality to the debate thus removing potential objections or barriers as these were no longer relevant. In the two teams, nine out of eleven (REG36) and twenty-two out of twenty-four (ITUG01) Explanations made in the Combination turns were produced by Peter (REG) and Sharin (ITUG), respectively. Four of these Explanations made in REG36 had a direct impact on the decisions made in the meeting (T22, T30, T65, and T76). In ITUG01, eight Explanations impacted on decisions, which was proportionally very similar to REG36 and comprised approximately one third of all Explanations employed in the Combination turns (T25, T31, T74, T83, T97, T132, T152, and T207)⁵⁷.

5] The micro-analysis identified that decision-making in meetings does not progress in a linear fashion: it is an organic process of continuous talk, information building, evaluation, and interaction enabling the formulation of a decision on a team-wide basis when the opportunity arises. The data document this fact by, for example, demonstrating the anaphoric reference of some discussions to decisions already made in the meeting (e.g., REG36 T39, T43, T274, T276, T280, or T284), or by additional decisions evolving as a result of a team debate refining the implementation of a decision (e.g., slab stone decisions made in REG36 in T84, T94, and T161).

6] Finally, the main finding of the micro-analysis was that in both meetings, over 80% of the integrated Explanations were used in the initial position of the Combination turn. Considering that the majority of all Combination turns – 55% in REG36 and 69% in ITUG01 – contained an Explanation within them, it is justifiable to assume that Explanations positioned at the beginning of a Combination turn were performing ‘a specific kind of interactional work’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). What kind of role and its significance it was in terms of its impact on the decision-making process has been further analysed, and is reported on in Section 7.2.4.

⁵⁷ Incidences of Explanations: 4/11 = 36% (REG36) and 8/24 = 33% (ITUG01)

7.2.4 Micro-analysis: Positioning of Explanations in Complex Turns

This section examines the significance of Explanations when used in the initial position of Combination turns as identified by the micro-analysis (*see* Point Six above). Specifically, it explores why speakers position Explanations at the beginning of Combination turns and how this impacts on decision-making in meetings.

In terms of the phenomena observed, the analysis links to the findings of, for example, Smith (1978), Woolgar (1980), and Wooffitt (1992). It discusses the significance of the opening parts of long, complex turns, similarly to how the aspect has been examined by these researchers in non-business contexts. In addition, it is argued that skilful speakers build on factual beginnings in order to launch their subsequent contributions and development of ideas, thus increasing their chance of influencing the meeting. Such occurrence of extended turns in which speakers supply unrequested additional information was also noted by Stivers and Heritage (2001) when they investigated how patients take the opportunity to expand their answers in the restrictive context of comprehensive medical history taking. While patients typically elaborate their answers to maximise the benefits of their consultation with a medical specialist, it is argued that in business meetings extended contributions are a demonstration of leadership skills in action: leaders use extended turns to influence the course of the meeting and the discourse provides insight into how this is accomplished.

Data extracts from meetings REG36 and ITUG01 are discussed to illustrate:

- How speakers use the factuality and non-offensiveness of Explanations to drive the meeting;
- How competent speakers are effective in structuring and delivering factual information;
- Why Explanations are rarely contested and thus by default create the opportunity for an extended contribution.
- The extracts referred to in the current section are set out in full in Appendix 8.2.

The first two data extracts to consider include: DS01 (REG36_T30) documenting the exact moment in the meeting in which Peter starts to set out the plan for

the restructuring of the team and DS02 (ITUG01_T87) in which Sharin is chairing the ITUG meeting and addressing operational issues. In both examples, Explanations are positioned at the beginning of turns:

Data Sample 7.2-1: This is the chart

Appendix 7.2_DS01_REG36_T30_Peter_E(SOF)

30 <n Peter> Yeah, I mean that that was the - - this is the: uh (0.4) this is this is the chart, (0.3) which comes out, the (name of budget local fund) money comes out of number one, surprisingly enough, because we've GOT it (laughs) (f) (self-reflecting) (09:00) 'cause it's sitting in a in the coffers! ...

Data Sample 7.2-2: Remote access

Appendix 7.2_DS02_ITUG01_T87_Sharin_E(SOF)

87 <n Sharin> [Remote] access. Uh (2) with the remote access, uh (0.2) there (26:20) are a number of of (0.3) STEPS, between the user (0.2) at HOME (0.2) to our server, (0.2) [<A> Mhm] and and and the WORST of ALL is, is actually, (0.2) the: connection (0.3) to the: to the: (0.3) INTERNET from our building, (0.2) to the world out there, uh (0.3) and we (26:40) have had (0.4) FOUR (0.8) uh incidents of of downtime, (0.2) on THAT connection, (0.2) [<A> Mhm], and we are NOT (0.2) not absolutely- - we're not happy with with with THAT level of service, and we've complained to the to the provider, that's (name of a company) to say, (0.2) it's not ACCEPTABLE that we lose that connection, (0.3) ...

The first point to be made is that Explanations located in the initial position of an extended turn created a field of reference against which the remainder of the information presented in the turn was listened to and interpreted. Openings were thus a very powerful resource in their ability to establish a primary 'interpretative framework' guiding the hearer's or reader's understanding of all information presented thereafter.

This observation, however, is neither novel nor original to the current thesis. Smith (1978) already manifested this feature in her analysis of facticity construction in an account of mental illness; Woolgar (1980), drawing on Smith's work, analysed the construction of scientific knowledge in a scientist's Nobel Prize lecture address; also, Woffitt's (1992) study examined the beginnings in descriptions of paranormal experiences in terms of a three-part setting sequence through which speakers choose ways of making reference to the paranormal experience in order to establish the objectivity of their report. Each of the studies has thus made a point about the significance of the opening part of an extended, monologue contribution. In the interactive environment of a multi-party speech environment, though, this feature has not yet been reported.

Data Samples DS01_T30 (REG36) and DS02_T87 (ITUG01) illustrate two interesting aspects of how factuality is put into operation in Combination turns (C). Firstly, the speakers establish a factual foundation for that which they are to say next.

Secondly, they create an expectation on the part of the listener that further elaboration of the information will be provided. The factual foundation is established through a neutral reference to what may be declared a fact. The introduction of specific information as an Explanation creates an expectation for continuation, resulting from a natural reaction of a recipient to understand the relevance that the information provided is factual. In DS01_T30 (REG36) this is accomplished through the acknowledgement of a chart setting out the team's bidding priorities and in DS02_T87 (ITUG01) it takes the form of an overview of a business system, in this case a remote access protocol. Such sharing of concrete information and the making of explicit references to materials or business processes operating outside of the meeting, as in turns T30 (REG36) and T87 (ITUG01), motivates the recipients to find out why the information is presented and why it is being shared at this particular moment in a meeting, then to consider what implications this has for the current and future discussions.

The factuality of DS01 and DS02 is not established merely through stating what constitutes an entity or event. As discussed in Section 7.1, existence becomes a fact when it is recognised and categorised by all recipients in the same way, i.e., the recipients perceive it as "ineluctable", a quality Smith (*ibid.*: 35) glosses as "Whether I wish it or not, it is a fact. Whether I will admit it or not, it is a fact." The statements in T30 and in T87 are argument-free. Neither the existence of the chart nor the remote access protocol are contested. The Explanations are perceived as true, their veracity challenged by no member of the team. The speakers may therefore continue in their turn to establish the relevance of the factual information provided at its beginning.

In the opening position of Combination turns, all three types of Explanations were identified – see Appendix 7.2 for a list of selected data samples. For example, statements of fact (SOF) initiated Combination turns in DS04, DS05, DS08, DS10, DS11, and DS14. In the data, SOFs were most frequent and were specifically used for introducing new information. They characteristically drew on or made an explicit reference to the existence of minutes, company documents, policies, business processes or decisions taken externally to the meeting. Expert opinions (EXP) and reporting (REP) were also resources used by all meeting participants; however, only the SOMs expanded these frequently into more complex turns, e.g., DS03 (EXP), DS06 (REP), DS07 (REP), DS12 (EXP), and DS13 (EXP/REP).

The perceived neutrality and non-offensiveness of Explanations were established not so much by their type; more by the interactive order in which they were used in the meeting, as both DS01 and DS02 demonstrate. In DS01, the explicit reference to the chart, acknowledges the preceding debate about the bidding opportunities of the team in the next year. In turn T29, Ben, one of the project managers, reminds Peter with a reference to the work done by the team and summarised in a chart:

Data Sample 7.2-3: Samuel wrote that last week

DS01_REG36_T29_Ben_E(REP)

29 <n Ben> [Mhm, Samuel wrote that] last week, I don't know if he's showed you, it was uh - - I saw it - -

It is exclusively down to Peter's competence that he immediately integrates the information into his next turn and makes reference to this chart, the priorities of the new team and his own role in it – *see* Data Sample 7.2-1: This is the chart (above). It is indisputable that Peter has planned to inform the team of the forthcoming change and has prepared for it. Nevertheless, the skill with which he creates the relevance between neutral, universally accepted factual information and the cornerstone decision (REG_T22) is entirely his.

Turn T87 in DS02 furnishes a further example of the neutral tone of Explanations. In this case, it is used to direct the meeting away from a potential conflict and to steer the participants to a mutually agreeable decision.⁵⁸ The exchange opens with Amanda's use of an Explanation in turn T83 to describe a technical problem concerning remote access that she has encountered. As she is expressing her frustrations, she points out that when staff in her team attempt to contact the IT support desk, the telephone remains unanswered:

Data Sample 7.2-4: Nobody's there to answer the phone

Appendix 7.2_DS02_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns

83 <n Amanda> ... and when they call in, (0.3) the IT, and nobody's there to answer the phone ...

This information seems clearly unjustified to Alistair, a member of the IT team, and he contests it straight away by defending the team and referring to the Code of Practice:

Data Sample 7.2-5: Are they calling the support desk number?

Appendix 7.2_DS02_ITUG01_T84_Alistair

84 <n Alistair> [Are they calling the support desk phone number? /?/] (0.5) See, if they call MY number, [

⁵⁸ The entire sequence presented in DS02 in Appendix 7.2 is of direct relevance.

However, Sharin is very quick at using his authority as Chair to step into this potential battle of blame. In the next turn, T85, he re-casts the issue onto neutral ground against the agenda of the meeting; in turn T87 he addresses the issue from the beginning again, this time on an entirely impersonal level by setting out the technicalities of the remote access connection step by step. In T97, after the issue has been ‘shared and aired’ to everyone’s satisfaction, Sharin makes a slab-stone decision to circulate a reminder email summarising the user support procedure. The exchange closes with Amanda’s confirming her satisfaction with the agreed outcome.

To conclude the first point of the analysis, the perceived neutrality of Explanations positioned in the opening slots was powerful in establishing the initial frame of reference and in granting the speakers the space to build more complex arguments on the factuality of these Explanations. Not all speakers, however, capitalised on this opportunity. Their Explanations either failed the test of being ‘ineluctable’ and ‘relevant’ to those present, else their contributions were insufficiently strong to support or develop a full argument and were thus ultimately overruled by other contributions in the meeting.

The second point to be made is that competent speakers used factual information as a vehicle enabling them to develop more complex arguments, make proposals, and formulate decisions. Again, this is illustrated in T30 (REG36) and in T87 (ITUG01), in which both Peter and Sharin integrate the initial Explanation into a sequence of Formulations and Accounts. In turn T30 (REG36) this sequence is formed as EFFAF, and in turn T87 (ITUG01) as EAEFFAF. Other sequences in which the opening Explanations influence a decision made in the meeting include turn T76 in REG36, and turns T74, T97 and T207 in ITUG01 (*see* Figure 45 and Figure 46 above). The opening Explanation was thus very rarely left ‘hanging’ on its own or merely for consideration. Instead, the information provided in the opening slot of a Combination turn was presented with a purpose both to inform and also to stimulate a certain mode of thinking within the team.

The contributions of Peter and Sharin repeatedly make an impact within the meetings because the speakers are able to create immediate relevance built on a coherent argument. Consider, for example, the Formulation succeeding the initial Explanation in turn T30 in REG36:

Data Sample 7.2-6: There's some priorities around there

Appendix 7.2_DS01_REG36_T22_Peter

30 <Peter> ... (0.4) So, (0.2) uh I mean I THINK there's (0.4) uh (0.4) so there's, (0.4) so there's (0.2) some PRIORITIES around there, (0.4) and I mean, if you look at (0.4) those, you can start to say, well, ACTUALLY, you know, there's there's some priorities there in terms of what we need to, uh (0.2) what we need to focus on, uh (0.7) (09:20) and I THINK on the (0.5) on the INFLUENCING side, I mean, clearly, I do (0.2) quite a LOT of that, (0.2) but in a WAY, I'm (0.2) I'm - - (0.2) this this would make it much clearer for me, to say, well, actually, what what the team REALLY needs from me, (0.4) is to be doing that influencing work. (0.4) ...

The Formulation draws implications directly from the chart with which the team has been presented. The Formulation effectively transforms the meaning of the document into that of demonstrating the need for the team to re-structure. This is achieved firstly at the lexical level: consider the anaphoric lexical references linking the chart and the planned change (underlined), and secondly at a more pragmatic level, when Peter frames the existence of the new document in his vision for the future of the team. From the position of the team's manager, he thus links an entity that may still appear rather tentative to a concrete and definitive plan.

In comparison, a different integration of practices was observed in ITUG01 where Sharin extends the initial Explanation in turn T87 with a short Account:

Data Sample 7.2-7: We're absolutely dependent on that connection

Appendix 7.2_DS02_ITUG01_T87_Sharin_E(SOF)

87 <Sharin> ... (0.3) because nowadays we're absolutely (27:00) DEPENDENT on that connection, (0.2) email, (0.2) Internet, (0.2) [A> Mhm, email as well] remote access, and all that contained. ...

The use of the Account, in this case, creates the relevance between the factual information presented in the opening Explanation and the issue raised by Amanda. This is achieved by creating causality between the two issues; consider the use of 'because' at the start of the Account, underlined. In addition, the Account re-positions the problem from a complaint to an issue important for the work of all company staff; consider the use of the inclusive 'we', underlined. The Account is successful as it minimises the gap between the two camps, the IT department and the user base. Amanda voices her alignment with Sharin's interpretation ('Mhm, email as well'), after which Sharin continues with another Explanation reporting on the standard protocol regarding the handling of user support requests. Through that he raises the level of understanding of the work process, clarifies IT team's role in it, and gradually progresses to a decision. It is thus the integration of the practices through which Sharin demonstrates his leadership skills; he is able to capitalise on the space he creates for himself with the opening Explanation in turn T87.

To summarise the second point, speakers who were observed to employ Explanations in the opening slots of Combination turns, typically used them to drive the meeting forward. Their Explanations featured a high density of factual information, which was often technical, process- or business-related. These speakers structured their Explanations clearly, underpinned them with numerous lexical references and signposting expressions. Through linking Explanations to Accounts and Formulations, speakers were also able to build more complex arguments and develop decision pathways. Explanations used in the initial slots of the Combination turns thus enabled speakers to maximise the time they would hold the floor without being interrupted.

The final point to be made is that Explanations were rarely contested in meetings. Why this was the case had been partly answered in Sections 4.2.5 and 7.1, and may be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the factual character of Explanations creates a 'neutral bias' in the meeting, i.e., either a) speakers do not contest an Explanation because they accept the information presented as a fact; or b) they decide not to contest it because they have no adequate, factual counterargument to hand. Secondly, the processing of factual information, especially when this is provided in a structured, step-by-step manner, takes time. When information is received by listeners, they have to assimilate it into their thinking and draw implications for themselves, and are therefore less likely to interrupt. The only time when recipients are ready openly to interrupt an Explanation is when they believe it is incorrect. Even in such a situation they may decide not to comment, be this out of politeness or for strategic reasons.

The following data example REG36 illustrates a situation in which an Explanation challenges a proposed plan of action yet this is not contested by the SOM, although his view of the situation is different. In turn T77, Roxanne, one of the project managers, opens with an Explanation in which uses the strategy of agreeing with the overall structure of the proposal but expresses her concern with how the new position will be incorporated into the new team structure. The exchange follows:

Data Sample 7.2-8: There's nothing wrong with the overall structure

Appendix 7.2_DS01_REG36_T77-83

77 <n Roxanne> [No:, I'm - - (0.2) there's] nothing wrong with the overall structure, (0.3) I think just THAT placement needs to be done properly, (0.2) [<P> yeah] so that, you know, (0.4) 'cause at the MOMENT, it is very much (0.3) a project support role, [<P> yeah] but if YOU (0.2) CHANGED that, then you change the BALANCE of the team, really, (0.2) [<P> ok] and then

it's like, whose (25:20) (0.5) whose decision is it, (0.3) and who calls the last shot, (1) and and some of that IS affected by STRUCTURE, it's not, [you know - -,]

78 <n Peter> [No, it is,] I agree, [[yeah yeah yeah]]

79 <n Roxanne> [[I mean]] if you look at the PERSONALITIES involved (0.3)

80 <n Peter> Yes, (0.5) I understand. (0.8)

81 <n Roxanne> Do I need to say any more? (laughs) (f)

82 <n Peter> No, (0.2) say no more (laughs)

83 <Roxanne> We've had this conversation before, so - - (laughs) (25:40) (0.3)

Despite his different view set out in the preceding part of the meeting, in turn T78 Peter expresses agreement with Roxanne's professional opinion. In turns T80 and T82 he collaboratively closes the topic then launches a new one in turn T84. It is a strategic decision taken by Peter as he a) seeks more time to reconsider the issue; b) is not prepared to commit himself to any decision regarding the matter in the meeting, and c) is keen for the meeting to progress.

The role of Explanations was therefore to disseminate information, make it available to all present in the meeting, and create perspectives on the issues under discussion. In the meetings, Explanations were a resource employed by all meeting participants. . In regard of their impact on decision-making, however, Explanations were typically employed by SOMs, who integrated them effectively with Accounts and Formulations. Explanations employed in the initial position of the Combination turns assisted SOMs in establishing a neutral ground and creating an opportunity to develop more complex arguments, make proposals, and formulate decisions. The use of Explanations in the openings of these Combination turns was particularly powerful for the effect of preparing the way the formulation or delivery of decisions.

7.3. Managing Change: Explanations and their Influence on Decision-making

The previous sections established the role of Explanations in influencing decisions. The data analyses of REG36 and ITUG01 demonstrated how speakers drew on the factuality of Explanations in strengthening and underpinning subsequent Accounts or Formulations in order that these receive a positive reaction. This was then reflected in the decision-making process, as the information made available through Explanations either helped to influence the decisions or framed them as relevant.

The present section expands the analysis of the Data Set Two. It examines a selection of additional data drawn from a further six ITUG (ITUG01-ITUG06) meetings observed over the period of a year and from a weekly sequence of REG (REG28-REG36) meetings spanning the period of nine weeks. The purpose of this was to frame the analysis of the meetings over the period of one year to determine whether the practices were employed consistently and how Explanations were used to support decision-making at times of continuing organisational change. Furthermore, the sequence of REG meetings was examined to explore the continuity of the discussion themes and the decision-making process as this evolved from week to week. Many of the discussions recorded in the meetings were undertaken in the context of major organisational re-structuring and of continuous technological improvements to the IT infrastructure. Figure 47 below presents an abridged overview of the data analysis:

Figure 47: Managing Change: Explanations and their Influence on Decision-making

Managing Change: Explanations and their Influence on Decision Making											
MEETING	PR.	SEQUENCE	E TYPE	DISCUSSION POINT	TURN	L (sec)	SP.	REF. DEC. (Type)	REF. DEC. (Turn)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
REG28	C	EFAFAF	REP	separation	50	120	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T 50	YES	the opening Explanation sets off the discussion around the separation of the organisation and how the team should react to the forthcoming change, Peter makes three further Formulations in the turn, all of which communicate a variation of the cornerstone decision to allocate time to the issue and to discuss it in detail at the team level.
REG29	C	EFAFEAFEF(unfinished)EAF(D)	REP	budget	1	230	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T 76	YES	the opening Explanation sets out the overall financial situation of the team, including the funding streams and budgetary problems associated with the forthcoming organisational change, the information it provides underpins the rationale of the cornerstone decision announced at the end of the turn
REG30	C	ZEFEFEF(unfinished)	REP	away day	3	110	Ben	1 Slab stone reported	T 3	NO	demonstrates the involvement and understanding of the management team in the change process
REG31	C	FE	REP	separation test	3	20	Peter	1 Slab stone	T 3	NO	disseminates information from the SMT meeting, managing the change process
REG32	C	EF	REP/EXP	relocation	1	130	Peter	1 Cornerstone reported	T 1	NO	facilitates top-down information sharing, the cornerstone decision has been taken externally, is reported in the meeting
REG33	E	E	EXP	vision	217	30	Maria	n/a	n/a	n/a	demonstrates engagement in the change process
REG34	E	E	EXP	future enterprise	113	10	Andrew	n/a	n/a	n/a	facilitates understanding and sense-making within the team
REG35	C	EFEF	REP	future enterprise	17	60	Samuel	1 Slab stone	T 17	YES	the slab stone decision engages the team in the discussion, the opening Explanation sets out the framework for it, the debate is about thinking through a strategic business plan for the re-structured team
ITUG02	C	ZEFEF(D)AF(D)AF(D)EFEF(D)AFAFEEEEAZFAF	REP	DMS	3	500	Marcus	3 Cornerstone reported, 1 slab stone	T 3	YES	the slab stone decision engages the team in the communication and change implementation process, Explanations facilitate top-down information sharing but have no impact on the cornerstone decisions, these have been taken externally and are solely reported on in the meeting
ITUG03	C	EF(Drep.)EFEF	REP	DMS	82	115	Sharin	1 Cornerstone reported	T 82	NO	facilitates top-down information sharing, the cornerstone decision has been taken externally
ITUG04	C	EFF	REP	support helpdesk	19	40	Sharin	n/a	T 36	YES	facilitates information sharing across different functions, reports on the changes and improvements of the system
ITUG05	C	EFEF	REP	user profile settings	21	70	Sharin	1 Slab stone	T 21	YES	reports on how the IT team has reviewed the problem of slow log-ins, F1 proposes a solution, a definite decision is made in F2
ITUG06	C	EF(Drep.)AF	REP	separation	77	80	Sharin	1 Cornerstone reported	T 77	NO	facilitates top-down information sharing, the cornerstone decision has been taken externally, is reported in the meeting

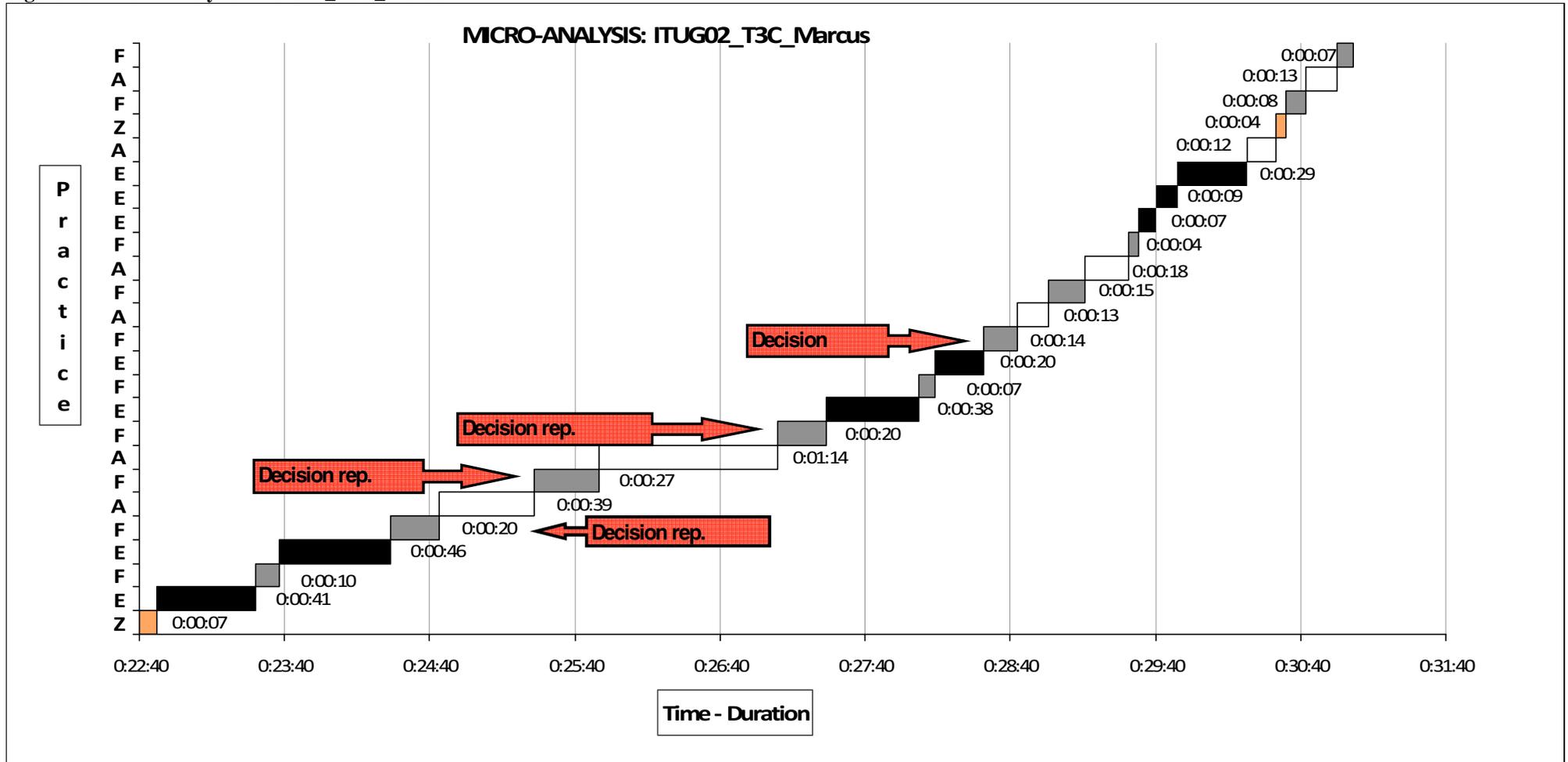
Figure 47 documents thirteen examples of long turns, all containing Explanations and all addressing or reacting to the process of change. The figure provides information regarding the meetings, speakers, and the practices, and describes the impact made by Explanations on (a) decision(s) made or announced in the meeting. The data is rich with examples of Explanations showing how different speakers engaged – or failed to do so – with the on-going change. The instances will not here be discussed. However, on reviewing the data (Data Set Two) longitudinally over the period of one year, the analysis confirmed one point: Explanations were used consistently by all three SOMs, assisting them in leading and managing the change process.

Peter, Sharin and Marcus are all SOMs. All used Explanations in the Combination turns as a ‘logic turn’ preceding the launch of a Formulation; in other words, the Explanation-Formulation pattern was the most frequently used structure adopted by SOMs. One reason for this was that the pattern proves particularly appropriate for guiding people through change. Firstly, it furnishes information, which is always required at times of uncertainty. Secondly, it draws an immediate implication from the Explanation, supplying thus a certain perspective, message, instruction, or decision. All three SOMs repeatedly used the practice to communicate information, typically in the top-down manner, and to report on cornerstone decisions taken at the executive level of the company. How this close interaction between Explanations and decision-making was enacted in the meetings analysed will now be illustrated in a sample of the data (ITUG02_T3C_Marcus) – *see* Appendix 7.3 for a full transcript of this turn.

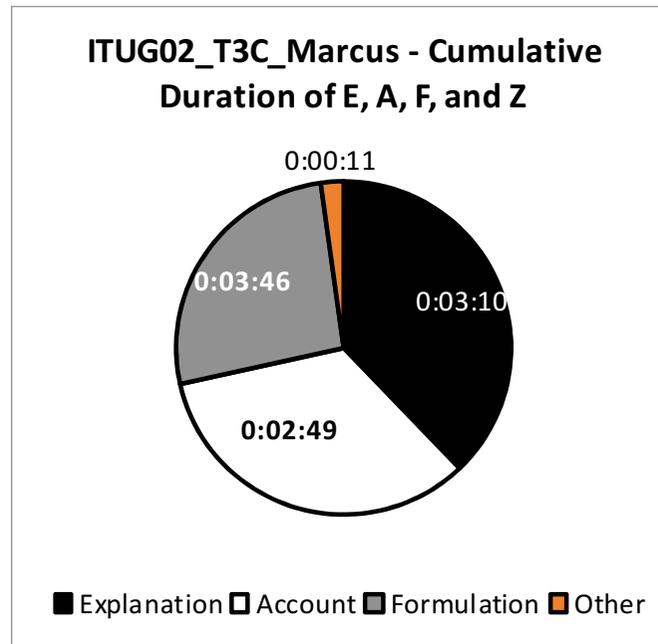
Turn ITUG02_T3C_Marcus holds a significant role in the meeting. Marcus, an SOM and Chair of the ITUG group, updates the team on the process of implementation of a new document management system (DMS), a large-scale project that the organisation has decided to undertake. The turn is the longest in the data. It lasts over eight minutes of speaking time (500 seconds). It reports three cornerstone decisions, announces one slab-stone decision, and integrates all three practices (Accounts, Explanations and Formulations), after it has opened with the Explanation-Formulation structure.

An analysis of this turn is summarised in Figure 48, replicating the micro-approach to the data introduced in Section 2.3.4.. It firstly deconstructs the Combination turn (ITUG02_T3C_Marcus) into its constitutive practices and plots decisions made in the turn. In the turn, two decisions occurred following an Explanation, and two following an Account. These instances are marked on the chart with red arrows. The accompanying table provides information on the textual boundaries of the practices and describes their respective functions.

Figure 48: Micro-Analysis: ITUG02_T3C_Marcus



MICRO_ITUG02_T3C_Marcus: Textual Boundaries	
PRACTICE	TEXT. BOUNDARY
Z	[Well, I think] that's ...
E1 (REP)	(0.6) (coughs) uh (0.8) Sharin, (name surname, senior manager) and I went to see ...
F1	(0.6) Uh (0.2) but more IMPORTANTLY, ...
E2 (EXP)	Firstly, is really (23:40) ...
F2(D)	(1) So, (0.3) we've we've acknowledged the fact, ...
A1	We're trying to get ...
F3(D)	(0.5) So, (1.3) rather than ...
A2	when Sharin, (name of aforementioned senior manager) and I went away, ...
F4(D)	So we've kind of taken half-a-step backwards, ...
E3 (REP)	(0.3) So the idea is on the seventh of September, ...
F5	(1) However, what it HASNT DONE, (0.2) ...
E4 (EXP)	like, you know, ...
F6(D)	So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, ...
A3	'cause it's easy for us all to say, ...
F7	(0.5) So it would be useful if you can go back to your teams, ...
A4	so, you know, actually, (0.5) ...
F8	So it depends a little bit on how exec go with it,
E5 (EXP)	Sharin has ...
E6 (REP)	(0.2) the FINAL thing to say, ...
E7 (EXP)	(1) uh (0.4) this -- you know, were thinking, ...
A5	(0.2) 'cause it's it's also about change management process ...
Z	So, (0.2) does that make SENSE_ and I'm getting some smiles, ...
F9	so (0.2) we got to bring about a culture change ...
A6	and FRANKLY, ...
F10	so, (0.2) that's a kind of a long speech, but that brings us up to date on where we are. ...



Data Sample 7.3-1 provides further textual evidence of the combination and sequencing of the practices as the turn unfolds. It is accompanied by a short interpretation of the role played by Explanations in the decision-making of the ITUG team and in their ‘getting through’ the period of change.

Data Sample 7.3-1: Document Management System

Appendix 7.3_DS01_ITUG02_T3_Marcus

3 <n Marcus> **Z**→ [Well, I think] that’s probably the next thing, Document Management, and a quick update on (0.5) on what we’re doing there (0.6) (coughs) **E1**→uh (0.8) Sharin, (name surname, senior manager) and I went to see some consultants on a training course they ran, which was very helpful, because (0.4) their basic PREMISE was one where if you’re trying to manage documents, (23:00) (0.4) there’s a STACK of questions upfront, that (0.4) is worth sorting out, before you get ANYWHERE near (0.4) solutions, (0.2) scanning, uh digitising everything, whatever, (0.8) uh (0.2) which includes some fairly basic things, like you know, why do you keep documents, why do you keep records, what’s is a rec- what is the difference between a record and a document, all sorts of things that actually set (23:20) a BETTER framework, to say, well, WHY DO YOU KEEP DOCUMENTS? Why do you create them, why do you keep them, why do you store them, how do you retrieve them. (0.6) **F1**→**Uh (0.2) but more IMPORTANTLY, it enabled us to see, that actually, (0.8) looking at (0.8) the way we manage documents, (0.6) there’s two things we got to do.** (0.2) **E2**→Firstly, is really (23:40) understand what we’re trying to do as a business, (0.8) for (0.4) managing our documents. We we’ve come at it, if you like, from several different angles, (0.8) u:h (0.2) one of which is the MOVE, (0.7) we know we got to start thinking about archiving, or moving, or potentially when we move, there will be less space, (0.2) so we need to think intelligently about stuff we want on our DESK, and stuff we DON’T want on our desk, (24:00) that’s quite critical, and that’s that’s that’s EFFECTIVENESS, isn’t it, and efficiency. (0.4) And then secondly, it’s about whether we as an organisation, are making the most out of (0.4) TEAMWORKING, (0.2) to say, well, actually when we create a record, which might be a CUSTOMER record, (1.4) probably each of our separate departments, (0.8) uh with the- - probably with the exception of Finance, (24:20) because you don’t keep customer records in that sense, (0.4) could do our own thing. (1) **F2**→**So, (0.3) we’ve we’ve acknowledged the fact, that you need some sort of PROTOCOL, you need some sort of (0.3) RELATIONSHIP (0.2) map, to understand what you’re doing, and what you should do about it. (1.1) Now, (0.7) before we go into any solutions, we’ve decided that, actually what we REALLY need to do, is (24:40) have a thorough (0.3) FEASIBILITY study, (0.3) around what we’re trying to do as an organisation.**

The first decision in Marcus’s turn is reported in F2 and is highlighted in bold. It is preceded by two Explanations. The first both describes the general benefits of DMS (‘scanning, uh digitising everything, whatever,’) and articulates its potential pitfalls. This Explanation progresses to a one-line Formulation condensing the potential opportunities and threats of the new system into a concrete action point (‘but more IMPORTANTLY, ... (0.6) there’s two things we got to do.’) and is followed by another Explanation detailing the business process. This time it is delivered as an expert opinion. After having taken all present through the rationale of the issue at hand and demonstrated its complexity, a decision is reported: to outsource the task to an external consultancy that will deliver a feasibility study.

The two Explanations in this opening sequence clearly rationalise the decision taken at the executive level of the company and reported in the meeting. They are voiced in the meeting because they help the team to rationalise the pathway to the decisions taken. It could be argued that it is unnecessary for the team to be informed of the detail of the decision process and that it would be sufficient for them to know solely the benefits of the new resolution and the final decision. However, reporting facts as they happened or as they contributed to the decision engages all in the process of rationalisation, aiding the understanding of those who were not part of the decision-making team yet upon whom the decision will also have an impact. Every decision inherently implies a change. Its acceptance, especially if the change is a major one, is preceded by rationalisation.⁵⁹ Rationalisation is an individual, internal process. It is therefore exactly at times of organisational change when SOMs attempt to manage change by guiding their teams through the rationalisation stage in order to help them accept the new reality as quickly as possible.

The style adopted by SOMs when using Explanations before they progressed them to Formulations or decisions could in all cases be described as ‘organised’. All SOMs had evidently thought through their contributions prior to the meetings and were very efficient in delivering the information. Explanations delivered by SOMs were well ordered, which was lexically facilitated by frequent signposting (e.g., ‘Firstly, ... and then secondly’, underlined), through the use of keywords and by putting emphasis on these (e.g., EFFECTIVENESS, CUSTOMER, PROTOCOL, capitalised); also, with messages consistently encouraging the team to think about the change as an opportunity rather than as a threat (‘it’s about whether we as an organisation, are making the most out of (0.4) TEAMWORKING, ...). In addition, the SOMs conducted the meetings in a semi-formal style, generally stimulating information exchange and removing the communication barriers by alternating freely between the inclusive ‘we as a management team’ and ‘we as members of the operational squad’.

The relationship between Explanations and decision-making in the meetings analysed was one in which decisions were often made externally (*see* the IPO conceptual model in Section 2.3.1), while the decision-making enacted in

⁵⁹ Rationalisation is part of the penultimate stage in the change cycle described by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969). The model, originally referred to as ‘the five stages of grief’, is now frequently being called ‘the five stages of change’.

the meeting was predominantly about implementing the change. In turn T3, two further decisions were reported and one slab-stone decision was made in the fifth minute of the turn:

Data Sample 7.3-2: One of the things I want you to take back

Appendix 7.3_DS01_ITUG02_T3_Marcus_decision

3 <Marcus> F6→So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, is (0.4) how MIGHT you approach this idea about the big picture, in terms of - - (0.2) uh (0.4) you know, where where you THINK your reference points are (28:40) for managing documents,

Also, this decision was underpinned with an Explanation. It was presented as a professional opinion and was aimed at engaging the entire team in the thinking of how the organisation could best benefit from the new DMS:

Data Sample 7.3-3: Are we being as efficient as we can?

Appendix 7.3_DS01_ITUG02_T3_Marcus

3 <Marcus> like, you know, are we being as efficient as we can around managing our documents, are we looking at simple protocols that might improve (0.2) the way we work, the way we create files, the way we share files, (28:20) uh (0.2) and the the MOVE, although it's been put BACK, (0.2) u:h is still looms as being something that will force the pace, and will get people to think about it.

The Explanation thus rationalised the adoption of a new system in the minds of all present and prepared the floor for the launch of the subsequent request for action (F6).

It may be concluded that Explanations helped SOMs gain acceptance for the decisions communicated to the team. Although Explanations were not precisely part of the talk directly influencing the decision, they were indispensable in the discussions surrounding its implementation. By taking the time to inform the teams of the factual underpinning of a decision made at the executive level, the decision automatically became an object of organisation-wide debate, and the potential issue of conflict was no longer its reception but how the decision was best to be implemented. In this way, Explanations were instrumental in creating the first shifts towards the acceptance of change and of the new reality.

7.4. Conclusions

Chapter Seven has taken the first step towards critically appraising the use of Explanations in driving the decision process in meetings. Traditionally, Explanations have been grouped with Accounts, they, however, fulfil a number of different tasks that provide additional insights into the decision-making process in meetings and are

therefore differentiated in this thesis. Specifically, four key themes emerged when the role of Explanations in the decision process was examined: factuality, relevance, positioning in complex turns, and the capacity to build the information base and add to the logic chain. The interactional matrices were applied to localise the use and role of Explanations in the meetings and map their relationship to the decision process. The macro-analysis identified the frequent use of Explanations in the meetings discourse both as singular turns and within the Combination turns, and established that senior managers (SOMs) heavily exploited these in their discourse. The micro-analysis subsequently demonstrated the skill with which SOMs were able to integrate the practice together with Accounts and Formulations to form extensive turns directly driving or influencing decision making in meetings.

The analysis resulted in the formulation of the following generalised observations:

- Explanations provided a factual base from which to develop an argument based on a logic chain;
- Factuality of Explanations also created the environment enabling the development of the more complex ideas and propositions;
- Explanations enabled the contribution of ‘expert speakers’ who were accorded the opportunity to extend their turn in delivering their information;
- The capacity of Explanations to be accepted as fact ensured that the speaker rarely encountered challenges from the meetings’ participants that could potentially disrupt or derail the meeting before it got started. They thus enabled the speaker to maintain the floor and develop his/her argument;
- Explanations were repeatedly positioned at the beginning of complex turns, enabling the speaker time and space to establish the credibility of the debate and build the logic base in order to develop and communicate complex ideas;
- The use of Explanations enabled information to be introduced into the meeting and for this to inform or influence the subsequent discussions as these progressed.
- Explanations therefore provided a crucial role in meetings talk through creating the foundation upon which further discussions were based. The twin notions of factuality and relevance helped to provide the structure for coherent debate, inform the participants of key information, and create permission for the speakers to continue to progress their ideas towards achieving proposals and decisions. Explanations underpinned both Accounts

and Formulations and supported these in helping to build the decision-making process. The analysis of the interaction among the three practices will be developed in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Accounts in the Decision-making Process

An account is a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative inquiry.

(Scott and Lyman, 1968: 46)

Chapter Eight examines the linguistic construction of Accounts in meetings data, their interaction with both Explanations and Formulations in the longer, more complex Combination turns, and the impact of Accounts on decision-making at times of organisational change. In CA, Accounts employed in the multi-party discourse of business meetings have not comprehensively been analysed; research to date has focused on interpreting Accounts in dyadic business interactions (e.g., Iacobucci, 1990; Firth, 1995a, 1995b; or Koester, 2004). The Chapter therefore aims to fill this gap and seeks an insight into the discursive use of Accounts in multi-party interactions.

The data analysis replicates the two-fold macro-/micro-methodology introduced in Section 2.3.4 and used for the analysis of Explanations in Chapter Seven. Section 8.1 introduces and describes three sub-categories of Accounts as they were identified in the analysis of the meetings data. These describe the normalising discourse of Accounts and reflect, each in their own way, a particular aspect in which Accounts were connected with the decision process in meetings. Section 8.2 re-applies the two-fold macro-/micro-methodology to the analysis of Data Set Two meetings and explores the incremental nature of how Accounts influenced the decision process in meetings. Section 0 draws on the longitudinal observation of the teams at the time of on-going change and documents the proliferate use Accounts by SOMs and their teams in this time of uncertainty and enforced transformation.

8.1. Normalising Discourse of Accounts in Meetings Talk

An account is deemed unreasonable when the stated grounds for action cannot be “normalized” in terms of the background expectancies of what “everybody knows”.

(Scott and Lyman, 1968: 54)

As Scott and Lyman (1968: 52-53) point out, “vocabularies of accounts are likely to be routinized within cultures, subcultures and groups, and are likely to be exclusive to the circle in which they are employed”. This is because Accounts are stance-formative and a particular kind of reaction is therefore expected within that culture or a group. Accounts are constantly subject to evaluation by the members or groups involved in their reception who expect the Account to be delivered in a particular way. As a consequence, Accounts produced and required in one type of social group may be completely redundant or inappropriate in another. Consider, for example, the inappropriateness of an elaborate Account employed as an apology to mitigate the consequences of a minor incident or the use of *ex ante* apologetic Accounts when a simple “Sorry” would have sufficed and was anticipated.⁶⁰ Speakers are therefore required to present an Account in a format that once it has been evaluated by the recipient, it is deemed to be accepted in terms of the groups’ culture and expectancies. Accounts therefore normalise social interaction through how they are constructed discursively within a particular context and environment.

In business meetings, Accounts normalised decision-making by creating the grounds for argumentation. The argumentation typically involved the group; it was rarely produced in self-defence or as a reflexive Account of an individual. Accounts recorded in the meetings data were constructed interactively, with the aim of normalising, regulating, or harmonising work activities across the organisation. This created the basis on which to then promulgate a specific course of action which the team could understand and agree with. The interactive character of Accounts was achieved through exemplifying and scenario building, which subsequently advanced the goals and interests pursued in the meeting.

In order to undertake a micro-analysis of Accounts in business meetings, their functions as observed in the long turns were described and developed into three different but related categories: 1) **mitigating requests or objections (MRO)**, 2) **managing potential for objections (MPO)**, and 3) **referencing decisions – (REF)**.

⁶⁰ Examined by Schlenker and Darby (1981) and Skarlicki *et al.* (2004), respectively.

Figure 49 below provides examples of each of the three types of Accounts, all extracted from meeting ITUG02. Each illustrates one type of normalising discourse observed in Accounts employed in meetings.

Figure 49: Types of Accounts in Business Meetings

ACCOUNT	ACCOUNT – ORIGINAL TEXT
A1: Mitigating requests or objections (MRO)	24 <Amanda> [[Will every department]] (0.3) contribute towards this money, because (0.2) some department, if they're small department they don't have the money, they (46:20) [cannot afford it, (background noise from the street) you know]
A2: Managing potential for objections (MPO)	30 <Marcus> Yeah, it's a cap- it's a corporate investment. But I think, (0.8) as I said, (0.2) the the cost benefit stuff needs to be worked out, (0.2) and and you're RIGHT, (0.2) it's gonna cost money. (0.7) But we also have NO IDEA how much money we could SAVE! (2.1) And CLEARLY, we're trying to create that kind of business issue that says, (47:00) well, if you spend two hundred thousand, which would get everybody (0.3) running around saying, cri-- we haven't got THAT money, (0.6) but if it SAVED TWO MILLION! (1.2) [<A> Mhm] (0.2) and we can quantify that, we could prove, when we would, you know, we weren't just inventing it. If we could actually SAY, it was that sort of ORDER, (0.2) then the bus- the decision becomes a a no-brainer, doesn't it? (0.2) But we're no way near quantifying that at the moment, (0.4)
A3: Referencing decisions (REF)	3 <Marcus> ... (1.1) Now, (0.7) before we go into any solutions, we've decided that, actually what we REALLY need to do, is (24:40) have a thorough (0.3) FEASIBILITY study, (0.3) around what we're trying to do as an organisation. We're trying to get some consultancy to help us DO that, uh (0.7) because we don't know what we DON'T KNOW. (0.8) And actually, uh (0.2) if we don't take a STRATEGIC view of all this, the DANGER is, we could take ANY route that might help us in the short term, scanning documents might (0.5) shift everything onto (25:00) some digital framework or microfiche, (0.4) and actually might get rid of PAPER, but might not actually HELP us in the long, in terms of coordinating records, getting SINGLE-client records together, for example, uh (0.6) working more COLLABORATIVELY to say, we're working with a client, or programme, or even in FINANCES, that a single piece of information can be accessed (25:20) through EVERYBODY, in the SAME WAY, so that we actually all know what we are doing. (0.5) So, (1.3) rather than come up with some actions, we think the first thing we need to do, is to get some feasibility. (0.3) ...

Account One (A1) is an example of accounting discourse **mitigating requests and objections (MRO)**. It justifies the critique or a claim made with an aim to improve the speaker's own position. The Account is employed in the belief that the decision maker will take such an action because it will be favourable to the accounting party. The wording of the Account is therefore selected as an argument normalising a subsequent action taken by the decision maker towards whom the Account is directed.

Account Two (A2) assists in **managing the potential for objections (MPO)** since it counters the criticism expressed by Amanda in turn T24. Marcus, an SOM, employs the Account (T30) to draw on Amanda's turn. By using new vocabularies and

introducing a different perspective on the issue, Marcus successfully re-routes the debate and the possibility of a potentially negative reception from top management to the recommendations made by the IT user group for the implementation of a new document management system. Characteristically of this type of accounting, the harmonising effect of the practice was reinforced by the complementary practices of explaining and formulating within which it was embedded. Specifically, in this instance, it is preceded by an Explanation (SOF – Statement of Fact) and followed by a Formulation. This framing of an Account was observed to be immensely efficient and, despite its high degree of vagueness, the arguments presented in the Account were rarely challenged.

Finally, **Account Three (A3)** illustrates the ways in which Accounts were used by managers to **reference (REF) decisions** already taken and how the managers were able to normalise the decisions communicated to the staff. Account Three provides details of the reported cornerstone decision – to invest funds into a thorough feasibility study. It promotes the decision by listing the specific processes on which the proposed change will have a positive effect. Once again, the Account is concluded with a Formulation. Although the Account is severely hedged, it is successful in creating a buy-in for the new reality, for which it is momentous and involves all participants.

Accounts were repeatedly evident throughout the meetings data; the three variations of accounting styles, each in its own right, were pursued to normalise the arguments put forward. Depending on how they were undertaken, the Accounts were observed both to facilitate the incremental process of group decision-making, and to inhibit resistance or objections to it. The macro- and micro-analyses of REG36 and ITUG01 further discuss the textual properties of these Accounts and their impact on the decision-making process.

8.2. Data Analysis

Replicating the macro- and micro-procedures outlined in Chapter Two, the data analysis examined the occurrence of Accounts in the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings data and determined their impact on decision-making. The **macro-analysis** identified the use of the practice by speakers in the long turns and mapped the relationship

between Accounts and decisions made in the meetings. The **micro-analysis** focused on the fine-grained detail of Accounts in the long turns of the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings. The analyses examined the practice both as constituting single Account turns (A) and also as part of Combination turns (C) where Accounts were present and integrated with both Explanations and Formulations.

In addition to the analysis of meetings REG36 and ITUG01, a selection of further data was extracted from across the meetings held by both teams (*see* Section 2.2.3). Accounts in these meetings were examined over an extended time frame to determine firstly, whether the practices were employed consistently and secondly, the ways in which they either facilitated or inhibited the continuing organisational change.

8.2.1 Macro-analysis: Results

The macro-analysis focuses on the long turns and examines the link between Accounts and the decision-making that occurred in the meetings. The interactional matrices presented in Figure 50 and Figure 51 track the occurrence and distribution of Accounts, decisions made in the meetings, and the interactional activity of the individual speakers. Consider the results below.

Figure 50: Macro-analysis_REG36_Accounts

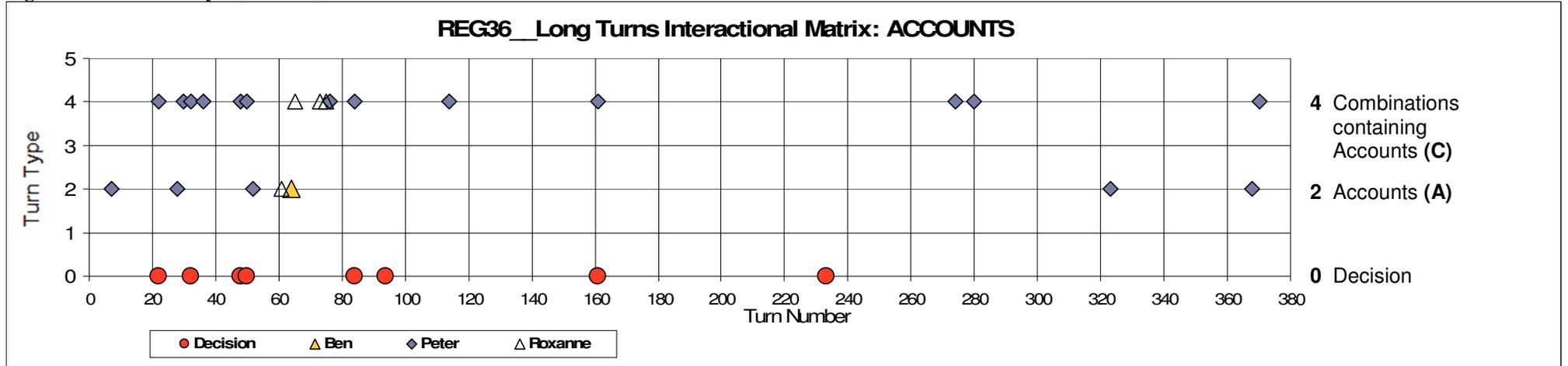
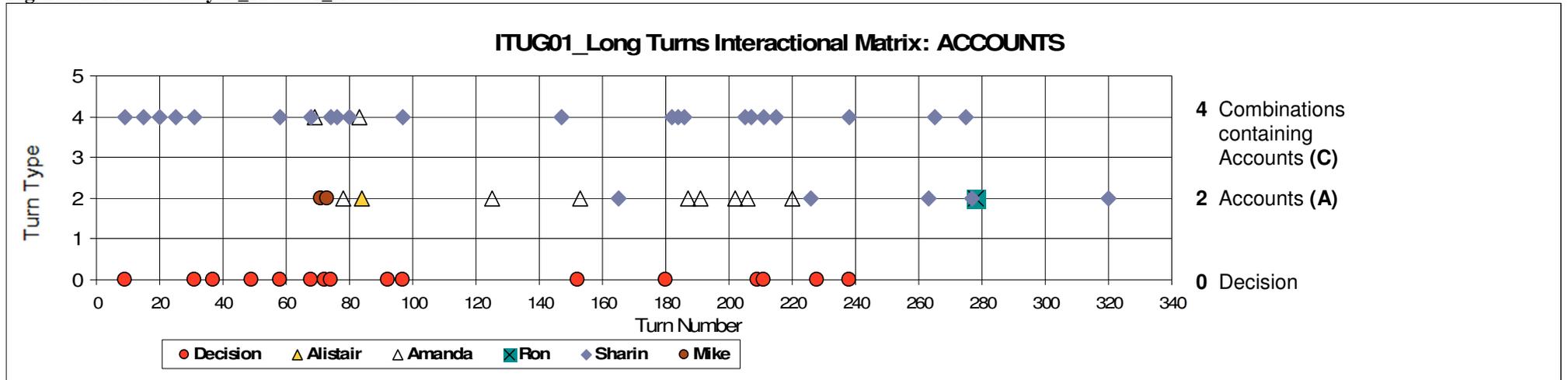


Figure 51: Macro-analysis_ITUG01_Accounts



The mapping of Accounts presented in Figure 50 and Figure 51 has confirmed:

1. A sustained use of Accounts in both meetings;
2. Clustering of decision-making activity at places where accounting was also frequent;
3. SOMs delivered the significant majority of Accounts.

The sustained use of Accounts was situated in sequences of reporting and information-sharing activity. Accounting provided part of the rationale and created the platform for the making and implementation of decisions; or, alternatively, for their being postponed, delayed, or even boycotted. The way in which the embedding of Accounts took place sequentially in the meetings is discussed as part of the micro-analysis in Section 0.

The Accounting clusters reflect both the character of the meeting and the manner in which decisions were made. In REG36, the main concentration of Accounts is visible in the first half of the meeting when Peter, the team's SOM, announced a number of key decisions regarding the future organisational structure of the team. Such future organisational structure was in direct reaction to the changing external environment in which it would need to operate while going forward. In contrast, the agenda-driven ITUG01 meeting created a more uniform distribution of topics. Each agenda point had, therefore, the potential for Accounts and subsequent decisions. This resulted in a reasonably fair distribution of Accounts among the participants present.

The macro-level link between Accounts and decisions in the meetings is illustrated in Figure 50 and Figure 51, above. Interestingly, twelve out of all fourteen decisions made in REG36 were produced as part of long turns, which also contained one or more Accounts.⁶¹ In comparison, in the ITUG01 meeting, the proportion was slightly lower, with nine out of seventeen decisions being made in long turns containing one or more Accounts. Five of the remaining decisions occurred in short turns stemming as action points from the previous debate. However, the final three decisions made in long turns include no Account (T152; T209; and 228).

Finally, the matrices repeatedly highlight the dominance of SOMs in undertaking both the production of Accounts and decisions. Such dominance is unsurprising in view of the overall speaking share taken up by these speakers: Peter's long turns

⁶¹ See Figure 35 for Decisions overview. Turns T94 (F) and T233 (Z) included no Account.

represented 63% of the meeting's time, and Sharin's sixty-four per cent. It may therefore be argued that SOMs employed Accounts consciously and strategically as part of their management discourse.

8.2.2 Implications of the Macro-analysis

The macro-analysis indicates areas of decision-making activity in the meetings and tracks precisely which discursive practices coincided with it. It does not answer the questions as to whether speakers employed Accounts in order to break important news, to justify and defend an action, or to challenge a proposal or an action, or whether they were used merely as polite tokens embellishing the otherwise transactional character of the meetings. Although Accounts were observed to perform all of those functions, the real contribution of the macro-analysis rests in establishing the **presence**, **occurrence**, and **authorship** of Accounts in the meeting and the fact that decisions were made.

The use of Accounts in the REG36 and the ITUG meetings was frequent. Accounts employed in REG36 were concentrated predominantly at the start of the meeting (T1–T161). It is interesting to note that, with just one exception (T65), they were all employed in the Combination turns alongside Formulations – *see* Figure 54. In contrast, Accounts in the ITUG01 were distributed consistently across the entire meeting. They, too, occurred in Combination turns; however, they were heavily aligned with Explanations – *see* Figure 55. One reason for this was that the scheduling of the ITUG meetings at eight-week intervals required additional reporting on activities undertaken or completed since the previous meeting. Explanations fulfilled the role of factual reporting, with the use of Accounts subsequently being more restricted and localised to shorter exchanges of turns.

The occurrence of Accounts created a contrast between those parts of the meeting where the use of Accounts proliferated, on the one hand, and those where it was virtually non-existent, on the other. It thus invited further research into examining the reasons for using Accounts and into analysing the impact of Accounts on the making (or on the absence) of a subsequent decision. In REG36, the accounting activity realised between T1 and T161 provides an insight especially into the delivery of a cornerstone decision, while the short cyclical sequences of the Explanation-Account-Formulation pattern or of any of its combinations

employed in ITUG01 exemplify a tightly structured updating and reporting discourse. The multilateral use of Accounts in ITUG01 indicated the attempts by different parties to position their teams and interests, and to present their own versions of reality.

The macro-analysis plotted the dominance in the authorship of Accounts produced in the meetings where effort was concentrated in order to normalise the issue or issues under discussion. This behaviour was typically displayed by SOMs, who either employed Accounts to interpret the organisational events and reality to their teams, or developed them consciously to direct and mitigate potentially negative reactions to change.

Further analysis at the micro-level was then undertaken to explore the influence and impact wielded by Accounts on the decision-making process, and to understand how SOMs used Accounts strategically in Combination turns (C).

8.2.3 Micro-analysis: Results

The micro-analysis examined closely all Accounts employed in REG36 and ITUG01 meetings. It replicated the methodology introduced in Section 2.3.4; it examined the role performed by the practice both when constituting singular turns (A) and when part of the Combination turns (C). The micro-analysis determined firstly, whether the Accounts were directly linked to decisions made in the meetings; secondly, whether they in some way influenced or informed the decisions made, and thirdly, how the practice achieved this. Three sub-categories of Accounts were developed for the purpose of describing the function of the practice in the meetings. Findings from REG36 and ITUG01 are summarised in Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54, and Figure 55. The impact of Accounts on the decision-making process was recorded in either a 'yes' or a 'no' category. The function was set as a verbal descriptor linking the Account back to the context of the meeting. A commentary follows.

Figure 52: Accounts in REG36 – Singular Turns (A)

Accounts in Meeting REG36 - Singular Turns (A)								
PRACTICE	TYPE	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
A	MPO	7	20	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	senior manager envisioning expectations through chairing
A	REF	28	50	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	supporting and reinforcing the decision - analysing the current situation, outlining arising opportunities, and visioning the future
A	MRO	52	50	Peter	T32	Slab stone	YES	defending the decision by sharing own train of thought and the rationale underpinning the decision, maintaining a strategic focus and keeping away from discussions of how the new team structure will impact on the individuals
A	MRO	61	20	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	providing a counterargument, using a concrete case/example to point out a weakness of the proposed change
A	MRO	64	15	Ben	T32	Slab stone	NO	engaging in the debate by providing an additional view of the previous Account re-routing the debate
A	MPO	323	10	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	using the example of external partner to justify the team's need to change
A	MPO	368	25	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	deliberating a future way of working with an external partner

Figure 53: Accounts in ITUG01 – Singular Turns (A)

Accounts in Meeting ITUG01 - Singular Turns (A)								
PRACTICE	TYPE	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
A	MRO	71	35	Mike	T72	Slab stone	YES	raising an issue through an Account, requesting clarification whilst making a critical comment on the current procedure of system failure log-ins
A	REF	73	20	Mike	T72	Slab stone	YES	challenging a decision, exemplifying - recasting the main point through a situational description
A	REF	78	10	Amanda	T74	Slab stone	YES	reasoning for a proposed way of working, collaborative bridging
A	MPO	84	10	Alistair	T72, T74	Slab stone	YES	defender, challenging one specific part of the issue
A	MPO	125	10	Amanda	T152	Slab stone	YES	justifies the request for new hardware through an example of a work process
A	MRO	153	10	Amanda	T153	Slab stone	YES	mitigating an objection
A	MPO	165	20	Sharin	T153	Slab stone	YES	bridging the gap between IT actions and Amanda's expectations by describing the context of the decision, using humour to supplement the reasoning
A	MRO	187	30	Amanda	T180	Slab stone	YES	raising an issue through experience sharing, providing a personalised compilation of information
A	MRO	191	20	Amanda	T180	Slab stone	YES	mitigating and positioning
A	MRO	202	15	Amanda	n/a	n/a	n/a	providing a different view of reality, disputing that Sharin's expectations of the workplace can work in reality
A	MRO	206	20	Amanda	T209	Slab stone	YES	exemplifying - uses a marketing example to make a link to IT, has the potential to sidetrack the meeting
A	MRO	220	30	Amanda	T211	Slab stone	YES	mitigating a request
A	MPO	226	65	Sharin	T228	Slab stone	YES	a strong statement of opinion justifying why an instruction manual has not been written
A	REF	263	30	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	addressing the request by confirming the expectations of the users and by setting out the complexity of the proposed solution, non-committing, facilitates the 'talking through' change
A	REF	277	20	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	painting a problem scenario, facilitates the 'talking through' change
A	REF	278	15	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	taking a stance, supporting Sharin's reasoning for a way of working, example of idea bridging, facilitates the 'talking through' change
A	MPO	320	15	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	positioning and identity building, manages users' expectations

Figure 54: Accounts in REG36 – Combination Turns (C), Part 1/2 ⁶²

Accounts in Meeting REG36 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 1/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	REF-MPO- MPO-MPO	A1FFA2FEFFFA3FA4F (D)ZFFF	Pre-F(D)	22	390	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	A1 - securing attention through chairing, relational in terms of addressing the group, transactional by referencing the objective of the meeting; A2 - acknowledging and weeding out potentially relevant discussion points, setting out priorities; A3 - exemplifying, i.e., underpinning a conclusion through an example; A4 - narrowing down the focus, creating the need for change - setting out the threats and weaknesses (uncertain future, budgetary constraints, complex external environment, inefficient team structure), bridging to a decision
C	MPO	EFFAF	Btw-Fs	30	135	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	exemplifying, outlining how the team can change the threats they face into opportunities
C	MRO-MPO	A1F(D)A2F	n/a - post- F(D)	32	190	Peter	T32	Slab stone	YES	A1 - reacting to a critical yet teasing comment, an unfinished excuse; A2 - contextualising the decision in terms of the team, providing further detail, justifying the change, starting to offer opportunities to people in the newly structured team.
C	MPO	A1FA2FFA3FA4F	pre-F	36	180	Peter	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	YES	A1 - relational, expressing empathy, aimed to soften the impact of the decision; A2 - provides the post-decision rationale, appeals to business thinking, outlines the opportunities for the individual members of the team, leads to a Formulation; A3 - reserves space for further manoeuvring within the proposed team structure, sets out the strategy of the proposed plan; A4 - paints a long-term vision

⁶² Key to the abbreviated headings in Figures 53-4: PR. = practice; L = length of the turn in seconds; REF. DEC. = reference to decision; IMP = impact on decision-making

Figure 54: Accounts in REG36 – Combination Turns (C), Part 2/2

Accounts in Meeting REG36 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 2/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	MPO-MRO	ZFA1F(D)A2	post-F(D)	48	45	Peter	T48	Slab stone	YES	A1 - asserting the role of a senior manager in the process of implementing the decision; A2 - guiding a group consensus of agreeing the date of announcing the decision to the rest of the team
C	MRO	ZF(D)A	post-F(D)	50	20	Peter	T50	Slab stone	YES	provides rationale for the decision, appeals to team solidarity
C	MPO	EA	n/a	65	10	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	reasoning for a way of working
C	MPO	A1FA2F	pre-F	73	15	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	reasoning against the proposed decision
C	MRO	AF	post-F	75	40	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	reinforcing own professional view, links back to the Formulation provided in T73, neutralises the grounds of potential disagreement
C	MPO-REF	EFA1FA2	post-F	76	85	Peter	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	YES	A1 - provides a counter-argument by reasoning for a particular aspect of the proposed role; A2 - references the debate to the cornerstone decision of change; re-routes the debate of an individual role to thinking about the overall direction
C	MPO	FA1F(D)A2F(D)	Btw-Fs	84	85	Peter	T22	Cornerstone		A1 - pre-justifies a decision by using an example; A2 - post-justification of a decision, asserting own role within the new structure
C	MRO	EAEF	n/a	114	60	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	NO	relational, levelling status
C	MRO	F(D)A1F(D)A2F	post-F(D)	161	40	Peter	T161	Slab stone	YES	A1 - relational, expressing empathy; A2 - reasoning for a way of implementing the decision, involving in the process
C	REF	EA	n/a	274	40	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	using an example to manage expectations between what the team wants to achieve and what is feasible in terms of resources
C	REF	EA	n/a	280	40	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	using an example to interpret external environment and setting out how it relates to the team
C	MRO	ZAF	pre-F	370	35	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	appealing to empathy

Figure 55: Accounts in ITUG01 – Combination Turns (C), Part 1/2

Accounts in Meeting ITUG01 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 1/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	REF(A1), MPO(A2,A3), REF(A4), MPO(A5)	A1F(D)A2FEA3EFA4EA5FE	pre-F(D), post-F(D), n/a, post-F,pre-F	9	220	Sharin	T9	Slab stone	YES	A1 - referencing the decision by calling on higher authority; A2 - justifying the decision; A3 - managing expectations, clarifying the rationale for the allocation of resources; A4 - evaluating a current position; A5 - justifying the progress by giving detail about the decision-making process
C	MRO	AF	pre-F	15	15	Duncan	n/a	n/a	n/a	exemplifying - sharing experience, providing an opinion
C	REF	AF	pre-F	20	30	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	defending progress
C	MPO	FEFAE	post-F	25	45	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	reasoning for the proposed way of working
C	REF(A1), MPO(A2,A3)	EF(D)A1EA2FA3	post-F(D), pre-F, post-F	31	75	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	A1 - putting a condition on a decision; A2 - defending a proposed solution; A3 - stimulating engagement
C	MRO(A1), MPO(A2,A3)	EFA1Z(Q)A2E EEFZ(F)A3F	post-F, n/a, post-F(D)	58	200	Sharin	T58 (A3)	Slab stone	YES	A1 - justifying a request through assessing progress, creating involvement; A2 - apology implying a joke; A3 - justifying an action and moderating expectations
C	MPO	A1EFEF(D)A2EF	n/a, post-F(D)	68	225	Sharin	T68 (A2)	Slab stone	YES	A1 - post-request softener, polite token; A2 - decision justifier
C	REF	AF	pre-F	69	20	Amanda	n/a	n/a	n/a	supportive of the debate,providing positive feedback, experience sharing
C	MPO	F(D)A1FA2E	post-F(D)	74	90	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	YES	A1 - justifying a decision; A2 - substantiating the decision with an outline of implications affecting subsequent work operations
C	MRO	EFA	post-F	76	30	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	YES	opening the feedback channels, creating space
C	REF	AF	pre-F	80	80	Sharin	T72, T74	Slab stone	YES	exemplifier re-inforcing the IT position
C	MRO	ZEFA	n/a	83	45	Amanda	T92	Slab stone	YES	justifying a decision proposal
C	REF	EA1EFFA2FA3FA4F	n/a, post-F	87	130	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	A1 - providing rationale for position taken; A2 - exemplifier, taking on responsibility, assists in establishing a protocol of collaboration across the organisation; A3 - appealing to high standards, creating involvement, guides towards change
C	MRO	EF(D)AF(D)Q	post-F(D)	97	50	Sharin	T97	Slab stone	YES	justifying an instruction
C	MRO	FA	post-F	147	10	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	justifying a decision
C	REF	EA	n/a	182	45	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	taking a stance and defining a work role through an example of work practice
C	MPO	EFAF	post-F	184	35	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	positioning
C	MRO	ZAF	pre-F	186	45	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	positioning

Figure 55: Accounts in ITUG01 – Combination Turns (C), part 2/2

Accounts in Meeting ITUG01 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 2/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	POSITION	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	MRO	AF	pre-F	205	30	Sharin	T209, T211	Slab stone	YES	bridging arguments, creating alignment with the organisational strategy, stimulating engagement
C	REF	EA1FA2F	pre-F	207	80	Sharin	T209, T211	Slab stone	YES	A1 - justifying an action taken, creating alignment with the organisational strategy, A2 - positioning, justifying the boundaries of individual work roles
C	MPO	F(D)AF	post-F(D)	211	30	Sharin	T211	Slab stone	YES	providing rationale for the decision made, establishing work roles, moderating expectations
C	MPO, REF	A1EA2EEF	n/a	215	100	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	A1 - justifying a negative answer, moderating expectations; A2 - selling a solution and creating alignment with the organisational strategy, guides towards change
	MPO	FAF(D)	post-F(D)	228	25	Sharin	T228	Slab stone	YES	moderating expectations by putting a condition on the decision
C	REF	AF(D)	pre-F(D)	238	30	Sharin	T238	Slab stone	YES	introducing a new perspective, involving in a bigger picture
C	REF	A1FA2	pre-F	264	50	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	A1 - taking a view, sharing work experience, bridging to new reality; A2 - scenario of an issue that will need to be addressed, facilitates the 'talking through' change
C	REF	EA1FA2FF	pre-F	265	125	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	A1 - introducing another level of complexity, inviting involvement from the users; A2 - assessing progress, comparing between now and in the future, engaging the group, facilitates the 'talking through' change
C	REF	AF	pre-F	266	25	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	creates a new scenario, justifies a request, facilitates the 'talking through' change
C	REF	AF	pre-F	275	25	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	exemplifier - presenting information that is Sharin's own opinion, facilitates the 'talking through' change

Commentary on Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54, and Figure 55:

1] The micro-analysis recognised and coded three sub-categories of Accounts⁶³: *mitigating requests or objections* (MRO), *managing potential for objections* (MPO), and *referencing decisions* (REF). Accounts were used across all meetings and no particular sub-category of Accounts was determined to be dominant. Their frequency and sub-category reflected the purpose of the discussion and the nature of the debate at hand.

Accounts mitigating requests or objections (MRO) represented the argumentation discourse of the unfolding interaction. Speakers either used these Accounts in support of their own requests (e.g., ITUG01 T71; T187; T220) or to mitigate a refusal or an objection (e.g., REG36 T32 – A1; T52; T61; T64). Managers used MROs as relational softeners of their requests or instructions (e.g., REG36 T48-A2; T161). Accounts managing the potential for objections (MPO) were typically integrated into structured debates (e.g., ITUG01 T184), or constituted decision reporting (e.g., REG36 T22; T32). They were used by SOMs both to justify decisions (e.g., ITUG01 T9-A3, A5, A6; T31; T74) and to reinforce them (e.g., REG36 T36). Chairs employed MPOs to coordinate the progression of the meeting and to manage the expectations of the meeting's participants (e.g., REG36 T7). Thirdly, Accounts referencing decisions (REF) were directly linked either to the decisions made in the meeting or to previous decisions made externally. Managers employed them throughout the meeting to direct the attention of those present to the announcement of important decisions (e.g., REG36 T22-A1), to reinforce decisions (e.g., REG36 T76-A2; T274; T280; ITUG01 T9-A1; T80; T87; T182), or to facilitate their implementation (e.g., ITUG T31-A1; T238; T264-6; T275). This also had the impact of ensuring that discussions were kept on track and aligned with the needs of the organisation.

2] Accounts were featured in both singular turns (A), as summarised in Figure 52 and Figure 53, and in Combination turns (C), as summarised in Figure 54 and Figure 55. The proportion between the two – 7(A) to 16(C) in REG36 and 17(E) to 28(C) in ITUG01 – appears less significant than the fact that the practice was recurrent, forming literally the core of argumentation discourse in the meetings. Some speakers, such as Roxanne (REG) and Amanda (ITUG), were more pro-active than were others

⁶³ See Sections 2.3.4, 4.3.2 and 8.1

in using Accounts to voice their views and positions in the meetings. Their speaking time was, however, significantly shorter than that secured by SOMs. As a consequence of their authority and status, SOMs were both expected to have and were accorded a longer speaking time. This control of the floor subsequently enabled them to increase the impact of their contributions through the production of accounting sequences within a single Combination turn. However, it was important that SOMs had the ability to use Accounts effectively in order to drive home the decisions, facilitate their implementation, and manage the change that resulted from these. Managers were also highly effective at taking the opportunity to build on other members' talk, particularly around MROs and MPOs. The opportunity to respond and then continue to build on their response ensured that managers gained an even larger share of the meeting, in which they advanced their own respective agendas.

3] The analysis of the data made it possible to follow the discussion in the meeting through to a decision or an action. This factor together with the impact of singular Accounts and of Accounts made in the Combination turns are annotated in the final column of Figure 54 and Figure 55. The micro-analysis confirmed two main points regarding the impact of Accounts on the decision process:

Firstly, similarly to the process of decision-making, the normalising effect of Accounts was observed as being incremental rather than linear. This was evident from how individuals honoured Accounts as the discourse unfolded. Some individuals voiced their support for Accounts immediately or indicated it through the use of positive body language or back-channel cues. Others delayed the honouring of an Account as they were waiting for all information to be presented before committing themselves to a course of action. Some participants even withdrew from engaging actively in the process. In the literature, such reaction to Accounts has been attributed to a natural human reaction to "treat each other's Accounts as motivated by self-interest" (Horton-Salway, 2001/2009: 155) and described as normal, indicating caution (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

Any delay in the honouring of Accounts was therefore not necessarily obstructive to the decision process in business meetings. By not challenging the Account at this time, the participants enabled the discourse to continue to flow, to build ideas and share information. Continual challenges to the speaker would have been viewed as

disruptive, unhelpful and frustrating by the meeting participants. The specific use of accounting sequences in the Combination turns helped to prevent this. By interpreting the past and the present, Accounts invariably stimulated the range of opinions and of changes in behaviour in the work process or, at least, they encouraged reflection regarding these.

Secondly, the use and frequency of Accounts were most prominent in discussions constituting the announcement or the making of strategic decisions. All SOMs whose talk was recorded and transcribed (Peter: REG, Sharin: ITUG, Marcus: ITUG, and Dave: REG) always used Accounts as a platform from which to launch cornerstone decisions. In contrast, the making of slab-stone and stepping-stone decisions was considerably straightforward and procedural. There was therefore no need to employ an Account to pave the way for the smooth delivery of a decision that was unproblematic or anticipated. Turns containing or surrounding these decisions were shorter, and the coupling of Accounts with Formulations less common or even unnecessary.

4] The main finding to emerge from the micro-analysis was the repeated sequential pattern of Accounts and Formulations. Unlike the Explanation-Account sequences (*see* Chapter Seven analysis) which featured distinctly at the beginning of the turn, the Account-Formulation pattern repeated itself within the turn and often concluded it. The accounting sequences were also linked together with Accounts from previous talk within both singular and Combination turns. This resulted in the chaining of the Accounts and enabled the incremental development of the argument. The next section develops the phenomenon of the sequential order of Accounts with Formulations in the decision-making process. It provides further textual evidence of how the normalising effect of Accounts was incrementally punctuated and sealed through the use of adjacent Formulations.

8.2.4 Micro-analysis: Sequential Order of Accounts in Complex Turns

“[I]f decisions were a choice between alternatives, decisions would come easy. Decision is the selection and formulation of alternatives.”

(Burke and Smyth, 1966: 215)

This section examines the incremental nature of accounting discourse in extended Combination turns performed by SOMs and seeks to explain the recurrent pattern of Explanation-Accounts and Accounts-Formulations. It draws on data samples ITUG01_T265C_Sharin and REG36_T22C_Peter⁶⁴ to discuss the technique of joining Accounts together – ‘the chaining of Accounts’ – and the role played by such sequential use of Accounts in the decision process.

The process of the chaining of Accounts operated along the same principles as those already described by Schenkein (1978). In his analysis of story-telling in conversation, Schenkein (*ibid.*: 219-220) asserts that both the individual parts of a story and the story itself are sequentially implicative of further talk. That is, some story parts, such as the preface, project the forthcoming story and may also have consequences for the story’s reception. This means that story telling is sequentially organised to fit a particular context of interaction.

An identical feature was observed in the case of extended accounting sequences employed by SOMs for the purposes of change management. The projection and sequential implicature may be illustrated through the example of the first Account employed by Peter in meeting REG36_T22 – *See* DS01 in Appendix 8.1 for a complete transcription of the turn:

Data Sample 8.2-1: It’s a bit of a shame

Appendix 8.1_REG36_T22_Peter_A1(REF)

22 **Peter** Uh (1.5) to be honest, it’s- it’s a bit of a sh- shame, there aren’t so many people here today, (laughs) (self-reflecting) (0.2) because I did wanna announce something, and uh it would be (01:20) quite nice, for everyone, but at least, (0.3) perhaps a FEW MORE, to be here. Eh, where’s Maria? Do you know where Maria is [<R> Ye:ah_] I spoke to her yesterday on the phone, but (1) (has a sip of coffee) I didn’t- -, no, I meant to ASK her when I was on the phone, but you know, I was a bit (0.2) stressed, at the time, (0.2) so, I didn’t, but eh (0.2), and Mike’s off, isn’t he, and Samuel’s off, I suppose that’s everyone, isn’t it actually. [<A> Mhm] That’s pretty much everyone, isn’t it, actually. [<A> Mhm] [<K> /That’s it/] Uh (0.5) (01:40)

⁶⁴ Micro-analysed in Section 6.3.

The Account in Data Sample 8.2-1 justifies the poor level of attendance at what is a key meeting in the process of re-structuring the team. Peter has realised that he had failed to ensure that all team members were available to attend. The purpose of the Account was, however, not so much to address the issues of face concerned with establishing the accountability for the absence of some members of the team, as to focus the attention of the meeting participants on the forthcoming message. This seemingly relationally oriented ‘setting of the scene’ creates the rules of a participation framework within which it was acceptable for Peter to launch an extended turn. The impact of the Account was thus sequentially implicative for further talk.

The second property of extended Combination turns containing sequences of Accounts mirrors an observation made by Psathas (1986a, 1986b, 1990) in his work on direction giving. Similarly to the interactive and bite-sized nature of direction giving, chained Accounts were also internally organised by the speaker to constitute “coherent conversational units”. The cumulative effect of the individual units – the Accounts in the sequence – resulted in creating an opportunity for a logical closure of the turn, at which point the conversation moved forward and an action or a decision could be announced. Drawing on the direction-giving analogy, the recipient knew where the speaker was heading. The participants gained this information in incremental steps; it was necessary to understand each one before progressing to the next direction point. In the absence of coherence among the individual units, there was a danger of failing to follow the ‘decisional path’. Consider the cumulative effect and sequential organisation of Accounts Two to Four and the resulting decision in the aforementioned REG36_T22:⁶⁵

Data Sample 8.2-2: We haven’t done the budget

Appendix 8.1_DS01_REG36_T22_Peter_A2(MPO)

22 **Peter** and I mean, you know, we haven’t done the BUDGET, you know, well, it’s ok budget process thinking, well, it looks ok, it’s TOUGH, (0.2) you know, it’s not not not gonna be easy, (02:20) (0.2) ’nd there is some things in there that we haven’t got yet, but let’s draw a gla- veil over that for a minute. (0.2)

Data Sample 8.2-3: You know, for example

Appendix 8.1_DS01_REG36_T22_A3(MPO)

22 **Peter** you know, I - for example, (03:40) I am writing a bid on regeneration capital in the East, (0.2) and Samuel and Maria are writing it on the West, (0.2) and, you know, and then there’s NRF, well, I’ve done a bit of the stuff into NRF, but you know, who else has really been involved on that, you get a little bit of Samuel, a little bit of the enterprise side, umm (0.2) you know, (0.5) there’s a whole string of things, aren’t there,

⁶⁵ See Figure 54, turn REG36_T22 for information on the sequential organisation of the practices.

Data Sample 8.2-4: Well, the reality is

Appendix 8.1_DS01_REG36_T22_Peter_A4(MPO)

22 **Peter** (0.2) And I mean I think, you know, probably if you look back in time, as well, you probably see some things like,(04:40) (0.3) like Enterprise Cities, (0.2) is a good example, where, (0.3) you know, we made a bit of an effort, really, but there wasn't really a FOCUS, you know, within the team, because, you know, (0.2) WELL, (0.2) the REALITY is, (0.3) the way we're structured at the moment, if you think about THOSE ROLES, (0.2) those kind of bidding and and delivery sort of roles, (0.2) is that, it- - it sits in everyone's JOB, (f) doesn't it? Everyone's got (05:00) a bit of bidding, and a bit of delivery (laughs) (self-reflecting), and (0.2) at the end of the DAY, you know, (0.2) the delivery is always gonna WIN, 'cause (0.2) that's there, (0.2) you've a contract, [Mhm] you know, and they are cracking the whip, they wanna see the outputs, and they wanna see the spend, and you know, we gotta do this form, we gonna get that done by this date, (0.2) so, the bidding kind of drifts (0.5) a little bit, (0.2) and the influencing the influencing doesn't get a look in, you know, (05:20) it doesn't really get a look in. (0.6) And I'll be HONEST (f), I mean, the MORE (f) I- - I mean this is- - this is now going, probably going back (0.3) to, (1) I don't know, about a MONTH, I'd say, probably in terms of doing this thinking, (0.6) umm (0.5) and what- - (0.2) in thinking it through, (0.2) umm, (0.3) since then, (0.2) all- - anything's that's happened has (05:40) reinforced it in my mind, that ACTUALLY, (0.2) that is - -those are the fundamental things, that that that u:h (0.3) that we need to do.

Data Sample 8.2-5: What I've decided to do

Appendix 8.1_DS01_REG36_T22_Peter_F(D)

22 **Peter** (0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) which is a little bit scary, (laughs) [(all laugh)] for all of us_ Umm, (0.5)

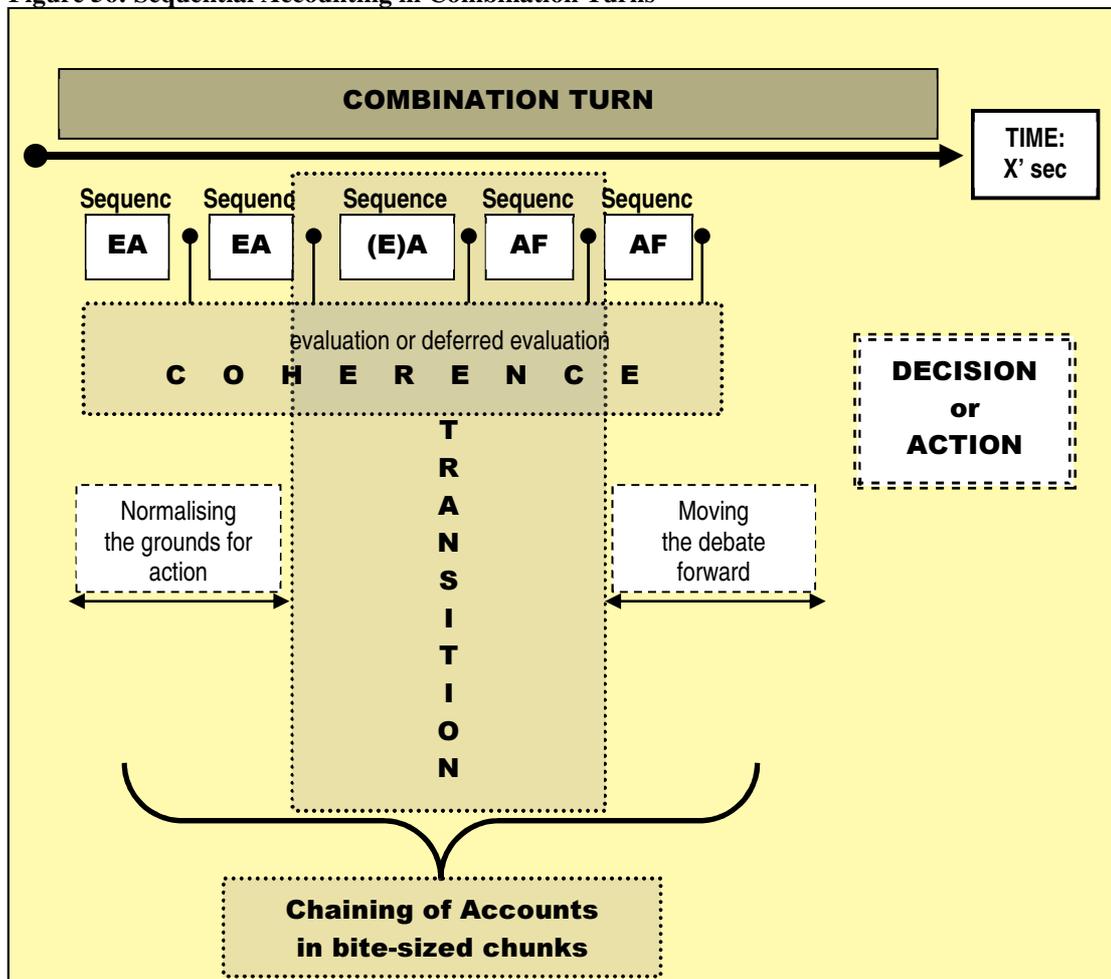
The extended turn illustrates the sequencing and chaining of Accounts, and the building incrementally of these towards the radical announcement of the restructuring of the team. In this turn, Accounts are used to acknowledge issues that need to be dealt with ('we haven't done the BUDGET'), weaknesses ('there's a whole string of things, aren't there'), to pre-empt debate or discussion ('but let's draw a gla- veil over that for a minute. (0.2)'), to orient the meeting participants to the need to work differently ('if you think about THOSE ROLES,') and to adjust to the demands of a new funding environment ('and they are cracking the whip, they wanna see the outputs'). It would have been a wrong decision simply to announce a restructuring without first attempting to soften and normalise the message, so as to enable individuals to begin the process of identifying the changes and considering their impact on the team. Hence, the careful organisation of the individual Accounts and their delivery in phased sequences guided the meeting participants steadily towards the actions and decisions as a group.

Thirdly, the analysis of meetings data identified two distinct patterns of Accounts' being employed by SOMs to lead their teams through the process of decision-making at times of organisational change: an Explanation-Account (E-A), and an Account-Formulation (A-F)⁶⁶. Accounts coupled with Explanations were very strong in

⁶⁶ See the sequential organisation of practices in Section 7.2.3, Figure 45 and Figure 46.

building arguments and in normalising the expectations of the group (*see* DS02 in Appendix 8.1). They assisted in creating a shared understanding of the issues at hand and established the necessity for change. In contrast, Accounts juxtaposed with Formulations made a transition towards a new decision or else moved the debate forward by closing down the routes that were no longer appropriate; this was achieved by the handling of potential objections, and by weeding out weak arguments (*see* DS03 in Appendix 8.1). Figure 56 (below) illustrates the sequential patterning of Accounts in meetings and the multi-faceted and complex nature of their use in Combination turns.

Figure 56: Sequential Accounting in Combination Turns



The sequential organisation of the accounting process was characteristic of the evaluation phase, its being an integral part of the meetings. Evaluation – or at least its deferral – constituted the core action that helped individuals to move their thinking forward. Through evaluation, the meeting participants supported and contributed to the decision process by demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the issues presented. Moreover, positive evaluation secured their

identification with the decisions made or reported. The selective content of Accounts, their bite-sized nature, and sequential organisation requiring either explicit or deferred evaluation, thus engaged the meeting participants in the construction of decisions and helped them to identify with the meeting outcomes. This process of incremental accounting enabled individuals to identify with the issues discussed and to agree with the decisions proposed. SOMs were aware of the need of individuals to identify with the decision. Consider the two consecutive Accounts employed by Sharin in ITUG01 meeting:

Data Sample 8.2-6: The more challenging bit is

Appendix 8.1_DS02_ITUG01_T265C_Sharin_A1-2(REF)

265 **Sharin** The the more CHALLENGING bit IS, (0.2) to understand EXACTLY how you want to use it, and how we can make it EASY for you to use, in terms of (0.2) STORING your data, (64:40) INDEXING them correctly, 'cause (0.2) you will have thousands and thousands of documents to store in there. [

...

Uh (0.4) but we're MAKING some progress, and and we're CONFIDENT, you know, if we get the BACKING of the executive board, in terms of (0.2) spending MONEY on this system, uh (0.2) then, we will have a system in place, which will (0.8) absolutely (65:20) (0.2) make it easier for people, (0.2) DEFINITELY, it will, (0.2) it will, NO DOUBT, be an improvement to the current system, because the current system is just chaos. (0.2) [<A> Mhm] So, any system will be better. But we REALLY want to get it ABSOLUTELY right. So, (0.4) in in a year's time, we could (0.2) SCALE that up, and expand on the usage, without having to say, oh, (0.3) the system's no good, we can't do any more, the Chamber has to go somewhere else.

The data extracts above illustrate how identification is enacted discursively in the course of two consecutive mini-Accounts. The first Account promotes the advantages of having a new system in place: it will facilitate the work of all organisational members. Although the 'you' employed repeatedly may be intended universally and inclusively of all organisational members, each member of the group inevitably evaluates the impact of the proposed benefits in relation to his/her own professional role. The Account stimulates personal interest in the ultimate decision. In contrast, the second Account, produced in the span of approximately ten seconds, builds on a consistent use of the inclusive 'we' to foster the psychological engagement of the organisational members in the management of the decision. The coherence of the accounting sequence and its impact on decision-making were thus accomplished through the messages contained within each mini-Account in the chain; also, through the cumulative impact of these in terms of the identification process.

The link between individual group member's identification of the issue and decision-making has already been defined by Simon (1945/1997). As Simon asserts (1945/1997: 284, *italics in the original*), "*a person identifies himself (sic) with the group when, in making a decision, he (sic) evaluates the several alternatives of choice in terms of their consequences for the specified group.*" Cheney and Tompkins (1983) subsequently applied Simon's ideas to the analysis of accounts made by teaching assistants, who were asked to justify decision choices justifying their deviations from a set curriculum. In their study (*ibid.*), Accounts were found to provide the alternatives of choice. These were constructed as causal discourse that underpinned the decision-making of the teaching assistants participating in the research; their identification with the decision taken was based upon evaluating the social environment within which they worked and the consequences of the decision for the group. Therefore the teaching assistants needed to support their decisions with snapshots of reality describing the circumstances of their choice and with which they could personally identify. This transpired similarly to Sharin's methodical building up of the reasons enabling the IT user group to identify with the strategic decision proposed in the meeting. The unique properties of Accounts to normalise the situation and to engage the group in evaluating the Accounts provided a key stage in the discourse of decision making.

In sum, the analysis of the data confirmed Burke and Smyth's (1966) assertion quoted in the heading of the present section and proposing that speakers were selective in the Accounts they presented to the group. By chaining Accounts together, speakers set out a path and direction in order to guide the meeting towards a particular point of view or proposal. They were explicit both in the content of the Accounts used and in how these were organised sequentially. Implicit in this was the need for recipients to evaluate each Account as it was presented incrementally, which enabled participants to come to identify with the decision. The overall impact of Accounts was to establish the new reality and, in combination with Formulations, make the transition towards creating decisions.

8.3. Managing Change: Accounts and their Influence on Decision-making

Qui s'excuse, s'accuse. (Whoever excuses therefore implicates him/herself)

(French proverb)

Accounts were critical to the successful implementation of organisational change. They had the capacity to normalise it in the context of the transforming organisation. As a discursive practice, Accounts justified the change by bridging the gap between the organisational actions, on the one hand, and the expectations, on the other, of those who worked for the organisation. Accounts typically helped in setting out the complex issues as these emerged from the meeting discourse, then established a persuasive rationale for future direction, decision-making and working. An essential feature of Accounts was that the recipients needed to evaluate what was being said, at which point they began in effect to engage with the dialogue of the change process and started to alter their perception of what was occurring. This could be either a positive or a negative change of view, depending on the success of how the message was organised and the clarity of the rationale with which it was presented.

Excuses and justifications are two traditional categories of Accounts established by Scott and Lyman (1968). Whereas the former was virtually non-existent in the meetings data analysed at the time of organisational change management, the latter was entirely constitutive of it. A lay explanation offers itself in the words of the old French proverb above: through inflicting upon themselves – through offering excuses – their stakeholders' negative perception, organisations would suffer greater harm than if they had merely assumed responsibility for their actions and dealt with the issues. A more data-driven observation suggested that justifications formed the links in the transition from where the organisation was to where it aimed to be once its reorganisation had been completed. Interestingly, on the few occasions when excuses were identified in the analysis, these tended to reflect the lack of understanding of an individual often as a result of poor or non-communication. Consider the negative impact of an Account structured as an excuse in turn T206 in Data Sample 8.3-2(below):

Data Sample 8.3-1 That's what we've been told

ITUG01_T206-7

206 <n Amanda> = Ok, it's like when you say, about the website, we've been told (0.2) uh (0.7) about the website, the first portal, (0.3) yeah? that everything have (sic) to go through Marketing. It's NOT THROUGH I.T! That's what we've been TOLD, (0.3) in the beginning. And sometimes they said, u:h:h Marketing, you see, we can NOT use (50:40) that, ok just forget it, [<S> No, no] (0.2) but that's the [message we GOT, (0.2) when it started.]

207 <n Sharin> [Amanda, Amanda, Amanda] We WORK (0.7) on a on a: (0.3) COLLABORATIVE basis. (0.2) We DON'T SAY, don't talk to IT, talk to Marketing, or DON'T talk to Marketing, talk to I.T ...

In turn T206, Amanda is expressing her confusion at conflicting instructions on how to obtain approval for publishing information on the company website. She uses the excuse 'That's what we've been TOLD' to justify her team's incorrect approach. There is no attempt to explain who told her or when. Her Account is vague and results in being categorically dismissed by Sharin (T207). His frustration is expressed in a repeated use of Amanda's name 'Amanda, Amanda, Amanda'. Sharin defuses and calms the situation by the use of an Explanation in which he re-states the process of obtaining approval. The use of an excuse thus exposes Amanda's lack of understanding, in effect pointing out her personal failure in managing the process.

In contrast, skilfully structured justifications "inoculate corporate stakes" and buttress the position of the organisation in the perception of its stakeholders. The term "stake inoculation" was coined by Jonathan Potter (1996: 125) as a risk management device for securing a positive evaluation of Accounts. Potter (*ibid.*) recognises that inherently there is always a possibility that an Account, particularly a controversial one, has the potential of being dismissed or discredited on the grounds of a personal stake or self-interest. He subsequently argues through an analysis of natural data that speakers take the time and care to inoculate their Account to ensure that it is presented in a neutral fashion.

Organisations and experienced managers recognise the need to avoid the use of excuses or ill-formed Accounts when advancing a particular course of action or a decision. They see this as counterproductive to achieving their goals or targets. An understanding by managers of these approaches is particularly important when seeking to introduce change within an organisation. This is often a time of major uncertainty for the organisation and the potential for misunderstanding and suspicion among the staff is exacerbated. The discourse of organisational change management therefore initially focuses on justifying the change, agreeing the plan for change, creating a new vision and direction, securing the buy-in of the teams into the new strategy, then engaging them in its delivery.

The review of Data Set Two summarised in Figure 57 and Figure 58 documents instances of accounting featured in thirteen different meetings of the REG and ITUG teams. Four observations resulted from the textual analysis of the meetings' conversations as significant for the discourse of change management:

1. SOMs were pro-actively using Accounts to manage change;
2. Their Accounts were embedded in sequences of reporting and argumentation;
3. Accounts facilitating change management shared common textual features across the data;
4. Across a period of one year, team members demonstrated through their own talk an increasing engagement with the change process, accepting it as a new reality and planning its implementation.

Findings presented in the two charts below have been used to reference selected extracts in the ensuing discussion.

Figure 57: Managing Change (REG): Accounts and their Influence on Decision-making⁶⁷

Managing Change (REG): Accounts and their Influence on Decision Making											
MEETING	PR.	SEQUENCE	A TYPE	DISCUSSION POINT	TURN	L (sec)	SP.	REF. DEC. (Type)	REF. DEC. (Turn)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
REG28	C	EFA1FA2F	REF	separation	50	120	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T50	YES	the two Accounts interpret a cornerstone decision and its implications in the context of the team ; they both precede a Formulation; A1 - casts a perspective on the current situation; it presents the dilemma brought upon the enterprise by separation and acknowledges the lack of clarity in terms of how the process should be managed; A2 - takes a personal stance on the issue and proposes a way of working, it promotes team -wide engagement and links it to the organisational plan of action.
REG29	C	EFA1FEA2FE A3FE F (unfinished)E A4F(D)	MPO	budget	1	230	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T76	YES	all four Accounts provide an additional insight into how the latest version of the budget was produced; they engage the team in the thinking process, share some of pressures placed on the team , establish the boundaries of what is no longer feasible under the constraints of the new budget, advance the perception of reality in the context of a new financial year
REG30	C	FAF (unfinished)	REF	away day	61	60	Peter	cornerstone - referred	previous debates; organisational re-structure	YES	guiding through change, managing and encouraging the process of vision drafting, stimulating team effort and group-wide cohesion
REG31	A	n/a	REF	away day	9	5	Ben	n/a	n/a	n/a	short turn followed up by another Account (Maria), part of sequence T8-T12, facilitates the role distribution in the meeting; reflects the management of chairing the meeting
REG32	C	FAF	Btw-Fs	relocation	26	15	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	acknowledging uncertainty, hedging the call for action
REG33	C	ZFFA1FA2F	REF	vision	319	50	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	A1 - justifying the need for having a vision written down; A2 - acknowledging uncertainty and projecting a scenario of action, facilitates process thinking within the team
REG34	A	n/a	REF	future enterprise	104	10	Roxanne	n/a	n/a	n/a	expressing team 's interest as a personal opinion
REG35	C	AF	REF	future enterprise	243	60	Ben	n/a	n/a	NO	challenging current team initiatives and projects; indicating a personal view but inviting further discussion; although not linked to any immediate decision, the turn facilitates the planning of future strategy and the team 's engagement in enterprise

⁶⁷ Key to the abbreviated headings in Figures 56-7: PR. = practice; L = length of the turn in seconds; REF. DEC. = reference to decision; IMP = impact on decision-making

Figure 58: Managing Change (ITUG): Accounts and their Influence on Decision-making

Managing Change (ITUG): Accounts and their Influence on Decision Making											
MEETING	PR.	SEQUENCE	A TYPE	DISCUSION POINT	TURN	L (sec)	SP.	REF. DEC. (Type)	REF. DEC. (Turn)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
ITUG02	C	ZEFEF(D)A1F(D)A2F(D)EFEF(D)A3FA4FE EEA5ZFA6F	REF(A1, A2), MRO(A3, A4), REF (A5,A6)	DMS	3	500	Marcus	3 Cornerstone reported, 1 slab stone	T3	YES	A1 - Btw-Fs, advocating the advantages of taking a strategic view and making a company investment; A2 - pre-F, setting out the rationale for investing into a thorough feasibility study; emphasising the complexity of organisational processes; A3 - post-F, calling for action, mitigating the request by linking it to the benefits of making the effort; A4 - post-F, exemplifying what needs to be done, creating specific engagement, reinforcing the urgency of the call; A5 - positioning the decision in terms of existing corporate culture; A6 - Btw-Fs, advocating the seriousness of the issue and appealing to responsibility and caution
ITUG03	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	with the exception of DMS, all issues were operational and unrelated to organisational change; DMS was dealt with in the form of reporting on progress to date (T69-T82), Accounts were not employed
ITUG04	C	EAEA	MPO	support helpdesk	206	40	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	interprets technical information from the viewpoint of the user, establishes the role of IT in the process of system updates, confirms a way of working
ITUG05	A	n/a	MRO	faulty screen	1	30	Amanda	Slab stone	T21	YES	raises the issue of faulty hardware; not related to system performance, the Account, however, offsets the debate resulting to a decision to review IT processes across the organisation; unrelated to organisational change
ITUG06	C	EF(Drep.)AF	MPO	separation	77	80	Sharin	1 Cornerstone reported	T77	NO	Pre-F, managing interests, guiding through change

Peter (REG), Sharin and Marcus (ITUG) were the three SOMs who coordinated the meetings of the two groups. Accounts were sampled across the period of one year and the data contained extensive evidence of all three managers' employing extended sequences of talk. Many of these interactions aimed to contextualise the ongoing changes, to justify the decisions made and to manage or mitigate potential objections that could feed either individual or group resistance to the change.

The pro-active use of Accounts was displayed through discussions around change-related topics such as the formulation of vision and future business strategy (e.g., REG35, ITUG06), organisation of change facilitating Away Days (e.g., REG30-31), separation (e.g., REG28, ITUG06), relocation (e.g., REG32), budgeting (e.g., REG28), and planning the adoption and implementation of new systems – DMS or a company CRM system (e.g., ITUG06). Consider how Marcus alerts the team to the dangers of making a decision before comprehending the issues around the introduction of a new data management system - Data Sample 8.3-2.

Data Sample 8.3-2: We don't know what we don't know

Appendix 8.2_DS09_T3_Marcus

3 **Marcus** ... **A1**→We're trying to get some consultancy to help us DO that, uh (0.7) because we don't know what we DON'T KNOW. (0.8) And actually, uh (0.2) if we don't take a STRATEGIC view of all this, the DANGER is, we could take ANY route that might help us in the short term, scanning documents might (0.5) shift everything onto (25:00) some digital framework or microfiche, (0.4) and actually might get rid of PAPER, but might not actually HELP us in the long, in terms of coordinating records, getting SINGLE-client records together, for example, uh (0.6) working more COLLABORATIVELY to say, we're working with a client, or programme, or even in FINANCES, that a single piece of information can be accessed (25:20) through EVERYBODY, in the SAME WAY, so that we actually all know what we are doing. (0.5) **F3**→So, (1.3) rather than come up with some actions, we think the first thing we need to do, is to get some feasibility. (0.3) The SECOND thing we've got to do, is REALLY embed this in what we want to do as a business. (2.3) And therefore what we're proposing to do, we're getting the consultants back in on the: seventh of (0.4) (25:40) SEPTEMBER, (0.7) to do a presentation to (0.8) the: u:h (0.5) executives, through the STEERING group, (0.4) to kind of get them raise the game and to see what WE DO,

In using the Account proactively by warning against making costly mistakes, Marcus effectively campaigns for investing company resources both in the undertaking the feasibility study and in each team taking the time to articulate what they require from the new system. The Account thus enables Marcus to create a compelling logical chain of thought, encourage the group in wanting to make the right decision, and offer a number of propositions for action.

It was also interesting to note that issues critical to the Chamber were key topics of debate within the individual meetings. It was clear that SOMs were actively looking to use these opportunities for communication and dialogue to manage the change that

the Chamber was undergoing at the time. Managers employed Accounts to shape the future vision and direction of the team and to manage discussions around these. The Accounts were either initiated entirely by the managers or when replying to questions, managers took the opportunity to craft them into their responses often in the form of extended answers⁶⁸ (e.g. ITUG01_T201Z_Sharin). In addition, the complexity of turns, such as REG36_T22C_Peter, ITUG02_T3C_Marcus, or ITUG06_T77C_Sharin, also indicated that SOMs carefully planned and thought through their contributions. Peter (REG), Sharin and Marcus (ITUG) employed Accounts pro-actively for the purposes of change management.

The structure of the extended managerial turns combined the factuality derived from Explanations and the normalising qualities of Accounts to create closely-knit sequences of reporting and argumentation. Reporting, conventionally undertaken through the use of factual Explanations, established a neutral ground for the launch of arguments or personal views enacted in the form of Accounts⁶⁹. Having established the basis on which to build the future direction, managers moved the debate by proposing a range of actions that would steer the organisation towards its new goals. This was demonstrated in the data by the emergence of the Explanation-Formulation pattern. The shifts from elaborate arguments to decisions or action points were punctuated by the regular use of Formulations. The process of ‘sealing of Accounts with Formulations’ is manifested especially in data extracts DS01-3, DS5-6, DS09, and DS12 – *see* Appendix 8.2. The use of Formulations in making the shifts is discussed further in Section 0.

An analysis of extended accounting sequences noted a number of textual similarities across the individual change-management Accounts. These derived from how managers constructed Accounts in order to create the reality of the new organisation and to facilitate the transition and the engagement of the teams. Although each manager had his/her individual way of interacting and of managing the group, their Accounts typically:

- Acknowledged the existing uncertainty associated with change;
- Expressed confidence in the need for change;
- Were definite about the milestones of change;

⁶⁸ This strategy has already been discussed by Stivers and Heritage (2001), glossed in Section 7.2.4.

⁶⁹ Such sequential interrelatedness of the two practices (Explanation-Account) has already been illustrated in Section 7.3.

- Promoted team-working as a way of progressing through change.

Figure 59 presents selected expressions from managerial Accounts to illustrate the four features textually. Data samples DS01-3, DS06, and DS09 in the table below can be found in Appendix 8.2 .

Figure 59: Change-management Accounts - features

FEATURE	TEXT SAMPLE
Acknowledging uncertainty	'because we don't know what we DON'T KNOW' (DS09) █ 'and and I don't think it's CRYSTAL CLEAR, I don't - - and I don't think it's black and white, (0.3)' (DS01) █ 'I mean, you know, that's that's still guesswork, it may or may not be there now,' (DS02) █ 'I mean, I I ACCEPT, you know, in the short term, that there's no doubt about it, that people are gonna be unsettled, and UNSURE, and then, you know, they're quite right to be, (0.5)' (DS03) █ 'BUT (0.2) if we can understand, (0.5) and and have a kind of JOINT, SHARED, as much as anything, not such as having a vision, but something which is a SHARED VISION (0.2)' (DS03) █ 'I'm not hundred per cent clear on what our process is from here, (0.8) I think, it's (0.4)' (DS06)
Confidence in the need for change	'cause it's it's also about change management process (30:20) isn't it (1.7) we as an organisation are not very good A: at making decisions saying everybody will do this THIS (ff) (pounces the table loudly), and sticking to it, uh we're even worse at deciding what the THIS IS (bangs the table).' (DS09) █ '(0.8) And actually, uh (0.2) if we don't take a STRATEGIC view of all this, the DANGER is, we could take ANY route that might help us in the short term, ... but might not actually HELP us in the long,' (DS09) █ 'the: OPPORTUNITY for us in terms of u:h (0.2) efficiency, saving money, saving effort, (0.2) and also, what is the cost of doing it, (0.3)' (DS09) █ 'then they ABSOLUTELY they CANNOT be CHAMBER services' (DS01)
Definite about milestones of change	'about where we're trying to get to, (0.4) uh and some of the building blocks to do that, (0.5)' (DS03) █ 'AFTER the twenty-third is to be - - I mean, if we talk about it now, (28:20) is about talking to other teams, (0.2) and talking to (name of Senior Manager), (0.2) and, you know, (0.2) and and [Mhm (p)] just to say, this is this is OUR VIEW,' (DS03) █ 'BUT, (0.2) if we get that bit of paper done, and then we (0.6) u:h (1) and then we (0.2) have another discussion about it, then, (0.4) I would like that that we have a clarified vision perhaps, (0.2) that will start to help us, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] (52:00) in terms of working through all that,' (DS06)
Promotion of team-working	it would be useful to do that, as a as as a group, (0.2) (DS01) █ 'and just take on board what everyone' (DS01) █ 'working more COLLABORATIVELY' (DS09)

The four features shared served in effect as a springboard off which it was possible to draw further justifications for the imminent change. In order to drive the change process through, SOMs did not merely structure their Accounts around certain messages, such as, 'working more COLLABORATIVELY'; they also demonstrated an ability to incorporate these into persuasive arguments or scenarios. Managers were able to chain the individual Accounts into sequences through which they were

developing positions and views either of the existing reality or of that towards which the team was aspiring to progress.

Finally, the opportunity to observe the teams and analyse the data gathered longitudinally over the period of one year provided evidence of the transition of team members towards, and their engagement with, the change process. Team members gradually became involved with the change process; they began to incorporate into their own arguments and meeting contributions the messages to which they had been exposed by senior management. Moreover, once the need for change had been established and the working principles of change management set out, team members were empowered to chair their meetings (e.g., ITUG01_T31C_Sharin – chairing) and actively to engage in the change process (REG31_T9-12_Ben – organisation of the Away Day; or REG34_T104_Roxanne – assessing the strategic potential of team projects)⁷⁰. In this sense, it could be argued that the effective use of Accounts by SOMs assisted in the facilitation of the change process and helped to smooth the transition of the organisation towards its new strategy.

8.4. Conclusions

Corporate cultures and the social circle of business meetings create specific environments for the exchange and sharing of information, and for ensuring that work is accomplished. The use of Accounts was widespread in the meetings discourse. They facilitated the exchange of views and the negotiation of positions. In combination with their quality to mitigate potential misunderstanding or a fracture in the professional liaison, Accounts continuously integrated the participants in the ways in which decisions were made, accepted, and implemented.

In business meetings, Accounts were employed not solely in the restorative sense when a failure of some kind was remarked. Drawing on the background expectations of the interactants, speakers crafted Accounts establishing causal links between these and actual actions or behaviours. The use of Accounts was both prospective and retrospective as they presented a key discursive device justifying or mitigating the announcement of actions either already taken or still planned.

⁷⁰ Included as DS04 and DS07 in Appendix 8.2.

The analysis of meetings data reported in Chapter Eight has identified that the presence of Accounts in business meetings is almost endemic and confirmed their role to be complex and multi-faceted. Accounts operated on a number of levels that, when combined, strengthened the potential of the decision-making process as they had the capacity to:

1. Perform the traditional role in addressing the issues of face or in justifying or excusing a course of action;
2. Create the new reality, 'normalisation';
3. Build the argument in incremental steps;
4. Utilise the inherent need of individuals to evaluate Accounts, and to engage them in the discussion and decision processes;
5. Combine with both Explanations and Formulations to support the transformation from discussion to action.

The macro-analysis established the continual use of Accounts in the discourse of the team in the longer turns of talk and that these were used by all participants; the SOMs in particular maximised the use of the practice. The micro-analysis identified the fact that SOMs understood the individual facets of Accounts and were pro-active in their use in managing change. Managers were selective as regards which Accounts they used, ensuring that these were applied sequentially to create a coherent and logical argument through which they directed the team into a particular course of action. Explanation-Account and Account-Formulation sequences were particularly effective in leading to proposals and decisions.

In conclusion, an analysis of the sequential organisation of Accounts in the meetings data has further advanced the understanding of the practice and of its role in the gradual build-up of the debate and in the making of decisions. It has been demonstrated how in interacting with and complementing the two other practices under investigation, Accounts served to facilitate the transition from discussion to decision. Significantly in the long turns, the evaluative phase of the reproach-account-evaluation canonical sequence was at time suspended, as listeners did not provide an immediate response. Instead, they waited to hear the complete picture before passing judgement and, in effect, offered the speaker more time to make his/her case. However, if the speaker used an inappropriate or 'weak' Account, it was always challenged. The impact of Accounts on the decision process therefore stemmed from the inherent need of the meeting participants to provide Accounts as

their personalised perspectives justifying or normalising their own, team or corporate action.

The analysis of the data again confirmed the essential collaborative juxtaposition of Accounts with Explanations and Formulations in driving the decision-making process forward. In Chapter Six, the sequentiality of the Explanation-Account pattern was examined and it was noted that this feature typically occurred at the start of an extended turn. The Account-Formulation pattern was repeatedly used in the long turns. It occurred at different points of the turn with Accounts being used to justify or normalise an action followed by a Formulation to summarise the discussion to date and ultimately then to propose or make a decision. The impact of this was to build incrementally towards a decision through normalising a particular course of action and ensuring the meeting participants were kept on track with the discussion at that point. The analysis of this patterning of the three practices will be continued in Chapter Nine, which addresses the role of Formulations in meetings discourse.

CHAPTER NINE

Formulations in the Decision-making Process

The introduction of a formulation enables the co-participants to settle on one of many possible interpretations of what they have been saying. They may thus be provided with the sense that they were indeed involved in a colloquy which was self-explicating, i.e., which contained and subsequently revealed its sense to them (and presumably could do so for others).

(Heritage and Watson, 1979: 123)

The current chapter concludes the research into the trio of practices and into how they facilitated decision-making in the discourse of business meetings. The analysis of the data in the previous two chapters reported the recurrence of the Explanation-Formulation and Account-Formulation patterns in Combination turns and established that these were linked closely to the decision-making process. Chapter Nine therefore seeks to interpret the role Formulations play as a single practice; it also demonstrates the interrelation of Formulations with Explanations and Accounts in how these combine to influence decision-making.

Methodologically, the meetings data were analysed through the lenses of the macro-/micro-approaches developed in this thesis. These enabled the systematic mapping of the formulating activity undertaken by “news receivers” and “news deliverers” – as established by Heritage and Watson (1979) – and to describe the complete dynamics of the discursive use of the practice in business meetings presented in Section 9.1. Examination of the sequential organisation of talk and of decisions made in the meetings then identified a specific use of Formulations in the long, complex turns of talk – that of self-formulating. Section 9.2 analyses Formulations in the meetings data and illustrates that self-formulating emerged as a discursive practice employed most prominently by SOMs. SOMs integrated self-Formulations skilfully with the surrounding discourse, resulting in the progressing of the meeting’s talk, its agenda, or the group’s decision-making. The final Section 9.3 addresses the integrated role of the three practices as they were used in business meetings at times of change and its implementation.

The examination of the data longitudinally has documented a textual variation of Formulations when undertaken by different speakers. Each speaker was observed to have a particular conversational style as to how they applied the practice. Despite

this variation the practice continued to operate in the same way. In the context of change, the findings further confirm and demonstrate that Formulations functioned as a frequent and tactical discursive resource of SOMs in driving change, implementating decisions and supporting the subsequent process of organisational action.

9.1. The Dynamics of Formulating in Meetings

Formulations contribute to the management of talk in meetings by helping the participants to arrive at a shared understanding through settling “on one of many possible interpretations of what they have been saying” (quoted above in full). Formulations thus create the basis for a continual conversational engagement enabling speakers to build on such shared understanding. This is achieved in order to make proposals and decisions, to allocate resources to a chosen solution, or to commit themselves to a specific course of action. In the colloquy of business meetings, Formulations thus provide the final practice furnishing insight into how, through talk, meetings’ participants experience how actions and decisions agreed in the meeting were self-explicating and shared by all members present.

The aim of the current section is two-fold: firstly, it maps out the dynamics of formulating activity in business meetings as these were observed over the course of a year; and secondly, it builds on the existing research base and provides a description of three types of Formulations identified by the analysis as being central to how decision-making is undertaken through discourse.

Formulating conventionally takes place in two types of situations: in the first instance, information is available to the speakers and they formulate matters which are understood by them and known to them. In the second, they formulate information – “news” – presented to them. Heritage and Watson (1979: 124-125) labelled these two mirroring roles as Formulations by “news deliverers” and Formulations by “news recipients”. A classic example of formulating by news recipients are media interviews, in which journalists create the news content by formulating interviewees’ talk or by formulating leading questions posed to them (e.g., Heritage, 1985).

Dissimilarly to many institutional environments, such as a court of law, news interviews, or doctor-patient interactions, the roles of news deliverers and news recipients in business meetings were not fixed. The analysis of the business meetings data identified that Formulations were used as in-meeting milestones through which news recipients expressed their understanding or otherwise, as appropriate. The roles of news deliverers and news recipients changed in response to the nature of the interaction, the agenda topic at hand, and the roles allocated to the individual meeting members. Consider the Formulation in the Data Sample 9.1-1 (below):

Data Sample 9.1-1: Let me send an email out

REG36_T9_Peter_F(FPD)

94 **Peter** Let me send an email out, (0.4) can you give me the date, and I'll send an email out (27:40) (name of Peter's PA)'s got it, doesn't she, (0.6) [**B**> Mhm (p)] and I'll send an email out to say, I would REALLY REALLY would like to see you there, (laughs) (f) it's really QUITE important (laughs)

In REG36_T94, Peter formulates a slab-stone decision in response to the preceding discussion over a proposed team-planning meeting. The discussion was initiated by another meeting member, Roxanne, who in T85 commented on the confusion caused by a memo circulated to the team. It had been worded as if to suggest that the attendance at the meeting was optional. Peter clarifies the position and formulates a future action to resolve this by having an email distributed to all staff. In this instance, Peter, who is the SOM of the team and traditionally is placed in the role of Chair and performs as a news deliverer, finds himself in the role of a news recipient. He employs a Formulation to react to the debate thus far, agrees future action and moves the meeting forward.

The following three extracts provide further examples of turns (underlined) in which SOMs assumed the role of news recipients and used Formulations to progress the agenda of the meeting:

Data Sample 9.1-2: Fantastic! So, we've got one volunteer?

ITUG01_T38_Sharin_F_Active listening and moving forward

37 **Duncan** = Oh I I've got no problem with it
 38 **Sharin** Fantastic! So, we've got ONE volunteer? (11:00)

Data Sample 9.1-3: Yes, you said

ITUG01_T104_Sharin_F_Active listening and moving forward

101 **Sharin** Ok, sure (0.3) Mike, can I come back to you on- - ?
 102 **Mike** uhh (30:00)(0.8) /?/ uh (0.5) I had another =
 103 **Alistair** = /?/ question [/?/] (0.7)
 104 **Sharin** Yes, [you said], (0.3) prior- (0.2) prioritisation [[of- -]]

Data Sample 9.1-4: As a spare PC

ITUG01_T124_Sharin_Active listening and moving forward

123 **Amanda** = as an extra, (0.2) yeah, because =124 **Sharin** = as a spare PC, just in case you have a temp. or whatever

Other meeting participants acted by default as news recipients by default and they took the opportunity to formulate on the past talk. Data Sample 9.1-5 and Data Sample 9.1-6 (below) illustrate how such formulating activity was undertaken. In the first case, the response is supportive and confirmatory in nature resulting in a short exchange. The second challenges the preceding contribution, formulates a counter-view, and has the potential to extend the turn and re-route the discussion.

Data Sample 9.1-5: Somebody who is responsible

REG36_T23_Roxanne_F_Engagement and agreement

22 **Peter** ... (0.2) BUT (f), (0.2) I'm -- I ABSOLUTELY THINK, that we need somebody who is responsible for (0.2) =23 **Roxanne** =Managing =**Data Sample 9.1-6: You are not given an alternative**

ITUG01_T185_Amanda_Engagement and disagreement

185 **Amanda** [It it's just because] when you don't know, so, (0.2) you say, oh IT don't support it, ok, (0.2) who the -- nobody knows (0.3) who supports WHAT, you are not given an [ALTERNATIVE, I mean]

The first notable feature of Formulations in meetings is that when these were provided by news recipients, they tended to be short. They were realised mainly as completing the contribution of the previous speaker (e.g., Data Sample 9.1-1, Data Sample 9.1-5)⁷¹, or as re-stating and reformulating what has been said in the meeting (e.g., Data Sample 9.1-2, Data Sample 9.1-3, Data Sample 9.1-4, Data Sample 9.1-6). The impact of these short Formulations could be both positive, building the basis for consensus (e.g., Data Sample 9.1-4, Data Sample 9.1-5)⁷² and moving the agenda forward (e.g., Data Sample 9.1-1, Data Sample 9.1-2, Data Sample 9.1-3)⁷³ or negative, initiating or sustaining disputes as in the case of Amanda's contribution in ITUG01_T185 (e.g., Data Sample 9.1-6).⁷⁴ Formulations produced by news recipients could thus contain both gists and upshots and their role may be described as one of constituting "clarifications, or demonstrations of

⁷¹ The use of completions in formulating collective statements has been also observed and analysed by Díaz *et al.* (1996).

⁷² Facilitation of common agreement in meetings talk was also observed and analysed by Barnes (2007).

⁷³ Analogous to "action formulations" described by Gafaranga and Britten (2004).

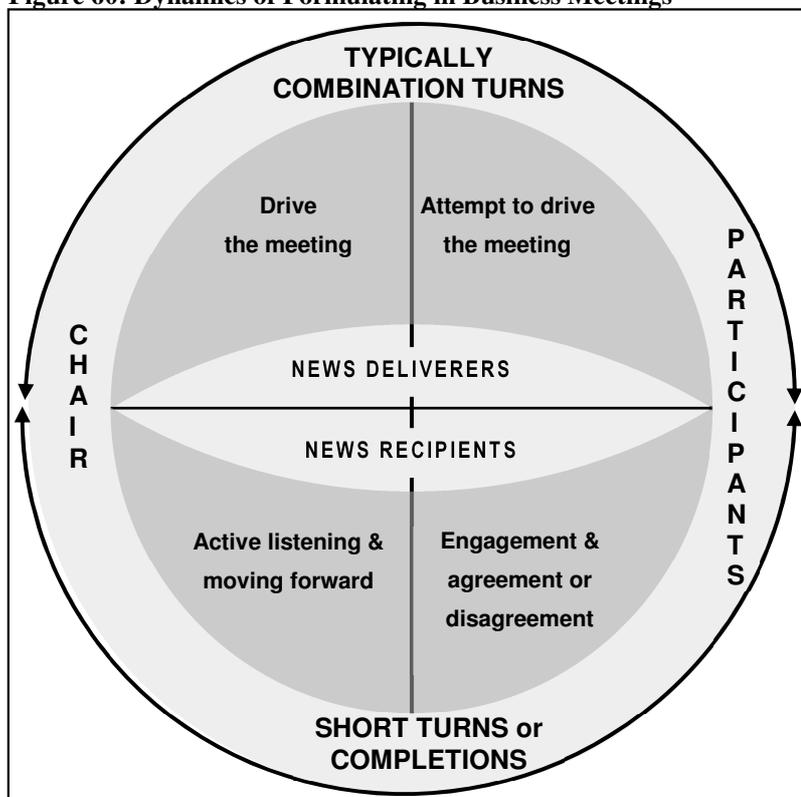
⁷⁴ The role of Formulations in disputes has recently been discussed, for example, by van der Houwen (2009).

comprehension or in-touchness (*sic*) with the talk thus far” (Heritage and Watson, 1979: 130).

The second and rather subtle point about Formulations used in the business meetings analysed was that when SOMs were acting as news recipients, they often took the opportunity to build on the initial Formulation. By doing so, they effectively extended their turn and created the potential to re-direct the agenda back to where they wanted it to be. Such dynamics of Formulations therefore enabled the speaker to take back the floor, extend their turn and utilise both Accounts and Explanations as they continued to construct a shared sense of the issue at hand and the actions required to address this. To maintain the coherence of these complex messages and retain the interest of the news recipients, speakers also self-formulated, in effect not offering or allowing potential interruptions from other participants. This observation is expanded in Section 9.2.4

Figure 60 (below) illustrates the dynamics of formulating in business meetings and the fluidity with which SOMs moved seamlessly from the role of news deliverers to that of news recipients, and *vice versa*.

Figure 60: Dynamics of Formulating in Business Meetings



The diagram thus encapsulates the findings of the data analysis and incorporates these with the conversational behaviour which the researcher observed in the meetings. It firstly considers all possible roles that meeting participants assumed when undertaking formulating activity in meetings. Secondly, the model acknowledges a differing length of turn dependent upon the speaker's role as it began to emerge from the analysis of the data. By considering the speaker's role and the length of their turn, the diagram illustrates the fluidity with which individuals moved from one role to another and could extend their turn in order to influence and drive the meeting.

The type of formulating activity with which the current thesis is concerned is located in the top half of the semi-circle – Formulations made by news deliverers – as these Formulations established the foundations of the decision-making talk in meetings. Formulations performed in the short turns then drew on this activity and were a show-case both of how the Chair coordinated the meeting's talk into action and how the group responded to this.

Data Sample 9.1-7 (below) illustrates how Formulations of news deliverers always unfolded with the next, new part of the meeting and how speakers embedded these in long turns.

Data Sample 9.1-7 To characterise this

REG36_155_Peter_F(SC)

155 **Peter** [to characterise all of this,] (1) just one thing to characterise (0.2) this, (0.3) umm (0.4) you you won't quite have picked up, you may have written down on bits of paper, you might not have necessarily picked it up, that uh (0.2) we're talking about (31:20) an INFLUENCING and a DELIVERY and uh and (0.3) a bi - a BIDDING team, (0.3) which is IDB just a little joke there, (laughs) (0.4) [<|> (smiles)] so it's our own version of IDB, ok

In turn T155 Peter, the REG team SOM, acts as a news deliverer and uses a Formulation to close an informal discussion in order to re-route the meeting back to focusing on the role of the newly restructured team. Interestingly, part of Peter's Formulation includes an in joke that only the team would understand: the initials of a proposed team structure are the same as the strategy employed by an external business support organisation in order to separate the programmes' delivery from the Chamber. Although this Formulation is humorous, it still emphasises the seriousness of and the necessity for change, and places Peter in the position to drive the meeting forward.

In principle, speakers always aimed, by embedding Formulations into their talk, either to make a point, to propose an action or to formulate a decision. Formulations made by news deliverers could be undertaken by all meeting participants. However, for SOMs Formulations presented a vehicle through which to deliver news or cornerstone decisions, especially if these were unpleasant or potentially disputable. The dynamics of Formulations realised by news deliverers in Combination turns (C) were therefore very different from Formulations in short turns; Formulations by news deliverers either drove the meeting forward or at least attempted to do so.

In order to undertake the analysis, the functions of Formulations as observed in the long turns were described and developed into three different yet related categories: 1) **sense construction (SC)**, 2) **formulating a proposal (FP)**, and 3) **formulating a proposal – decision (FPD)**. Figure 61 provides examples of each of the three types of Formulations, all selected from meeting REG36:

Figure 61: Formulation Types in Business Meetings

FORMULATION	FORMULATION – ORIGINAL TEXT
F1: Sense construction (SC)	36 <Peter> ... I mean, (0.4) you know, I I I would say a number of things about this, and then, I might I might just shut up, uh (0.8) [<R>,<K> (smile)] (14:40) which is the - - (0.4) I think it gives, (1) I think it gives people (0.8) both (0.6) a bit of more clarity, (0.6) but also some (0.6) more opportunity, as well, in a way, ...
F2: Formulating a proposal (FP)	30 <Peter> ... I mean, clearly, I do (0.2) quite a LOT of that, (0.2) but in a WAY, I'm (0.2) I'm - - (0.2) this this would make it much clearer for me, to say, well, actually, what what the team REALLY needs from me, (0.4) is to be doing that influencing work. (0.4) And so, I am NOT writing the bids, which is probably, which is DEFINITELY not the right thing for me to do, (laughs) (self-reflecting) I'll contribute to them, (09:40) but writing them is probably not the right thing, ...
F3: Formulating a proposal-decision (FPD)	32 <Peter> ... (0.3) what this CHART is, is a chart of structure, so, (0.4) there's obviously there's me, and there's two (0.2) delivery managers, (0.2) then there are (0.5) managers managers, (11:20) (0.2) and then, and then, (0.2) I mean, there's FOUR (0.5) four kind of (0.2) levels (0.2) in there, (0.2) u:h (0.6) and (1) well, I - - (0.2) uh in in /neutracy/, (0.3) openness and honesty, (0.2) umm (0.2) what I'm therefore suggesting, is that (0.7) (11:40) Samuel (0.4) and Ben, become the delivery manager, and the influencing and bidding manager, (0.2) uh (0.5) and I've talked to them, (0.2) so, they know (0.4) uh what's happening, (0.3) ...

Conceptually, the proposed coding is not new. The category of Sense construction (SC) recognises the general function of Formulations of gist in talk as it was established and defined by Heritage and Watson (1979: 136-7):

[F]ormulations invoke and initiate a consultative “reflection” on the whole, or some part of the “rest” of the conversation. ... In that, formulations involve members in the collaborative redemonstration of the sense of gist of a conversation, they occasion “instanced fixing” or “reading” or “redemonstration” of the self-descriptive properties of conversation.

More recently, for example, Gafaranga and Britten (2004) applied Heritage and Watson's (*ibid.*) observations to the examination of Formulations in general practice consultations. In their research, Gafaranga and Britten (*ibid.*) propose the categories of formulating summaries and action formulations as two types of Formulations routinely accomplished in doctor-patient interactions and as being instrumental in achieving mutuality in and concrete outcomes of the consultations.

The further two sub-categories developed for this thesis – Formulating a proposal (FP) and formulating a proposal-decision (FPD) build on Gafaranga and Britten's (*ibid.*) idea of action formulations and refine this into formulating a proposal and formulating a proposal-decision. The FPD category was used to grant exclusivity to those formulating moves that resulted in the making of decisions.

The following section reports the results of the Data Set Two macro- and micro-analyses and discusses the specific ways in which Formulations influenced the decision process in meetings. The three types of Formulations were applied as part of the micro-analysis; the results, together with the accompanying discussion, are presented in Sections 9.2.3 and 9.2.4.

9.2. Data Analysis

The analysis replicated the macro-/micro-methodology set out in Chapter Two, and applied to the analysis of Explanations and Accounts in the two previous chapters. Formulations in meetings were observed to fulfil a number of roles. These have been summarised in Section 9.1. The most important links between Formulations and decisions were found embedded in the long turns of the meeting, therefore these turns were analysed in detail..

The data analysis examines a set of meetings discussions that took place between the REG and ITUG SOMs and the teams, and summarises the joint role of the three practices in managing the decision process at times of organisational change. The results of the **macro-analysis** continued to confirm the link between Formulations and decisions. In addition, the results were reviewed in the context of the two complementary practices, and characterised the degree to which Formulations integrated with Explanations and Accounts to facilitate the decision process.

The **micro-analysis** focused exclusively on the role of Formulations in extended Combination turns (C) as they were performed by SOMs.

9.2.1 Macro-analysis: Results

Interactional matrices of Formulations presented in Figure 62 and Figure 63 complete the macro-analysis of REG36 and ITUG01 meetings commenced in Section 6.2 and further sustained in Sections 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 8.2.1, and 8.2.2. They repeat the visual representation of the practice in meetings, and this is performed for Formulations occurring both in singular long turns (F) and in Combination turns (C). In addition, the matrices record decisions made in the meetings and the participation of the individual speakers. The results below unify the analyses and consolidate the propositions made about the interrelation of all three practices. Therefore, the results will also be reviewed also in relation to Explanations and Accounts.

Figure 62: Macro-Analysis_REG36_Formulations

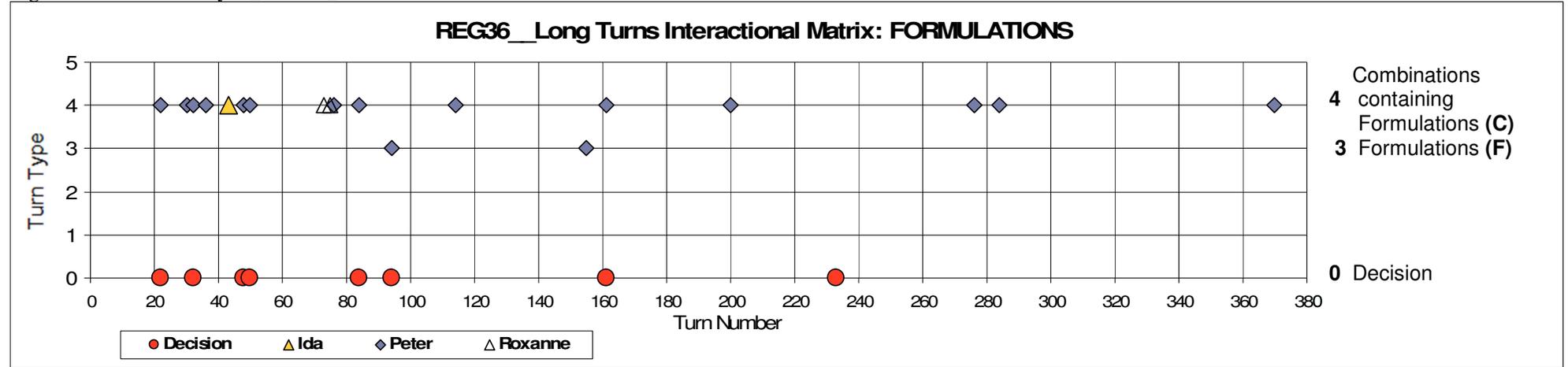
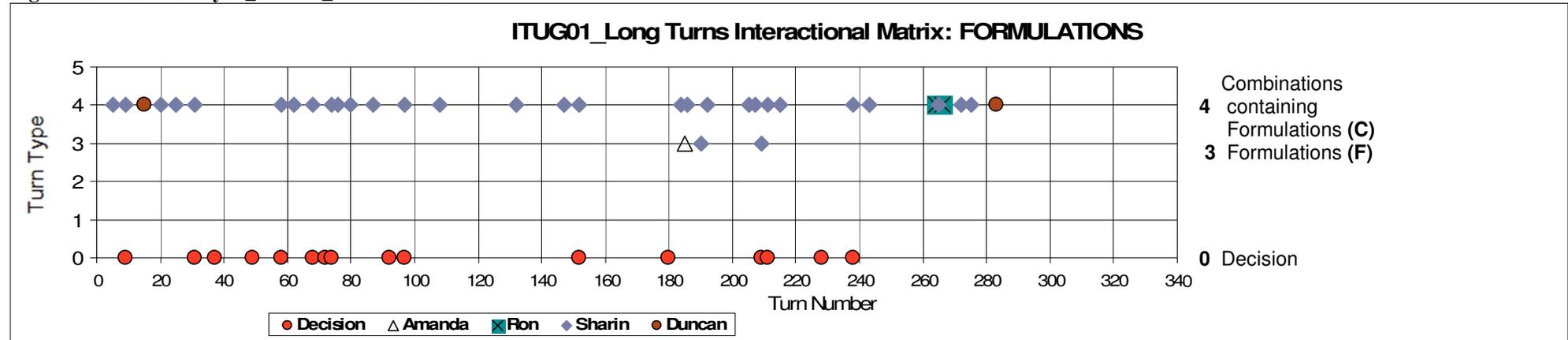


Figure 63: Macro-analysis_REG36_Formulations



The macro-analysis of Formulations in the long turns in the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings mapped the clustering, the authorship, and the alignment of the practice with decisions. All of these characterised the decision-making undertaken in the two meetings and a number of observations have been made:

Firstly, the clustering of Formulations in individual long turns was relatively rare, with two Formulations (F) in REG36 and three in ITUG01. In contrast, Formulations were heavily represented in Combination turns (C). They occurred in seventeen of the twenty Combination (C) turns in REG36, and in all but one – T182 – of the thirty-seven Combination turns (C) within ITUG01.

Secondly, the clustering of Formulations in Combination turns (C) was heaviest in those parts of the meeting where decisions also occurred. This trend is noticeable in the REG36 chart (Figure 62) between turns T22-161, and in the ITUG01 chart Figure 63) between turns T9-238. Of the seven decisions made in short turns, these still resulted from debate conducted in the extended turns. These decisions are plotted in the charts in turns T161 and T233 in the REG36, and in turns T37, T49, T72, T92, and T180 in the ITUG01.

Thirdly, Formulations and decisions were closely aligned. In both meetings, all decisions made in Combination turns (C) – twelve in total in each meeting – constituted a Formulation or were embedded in a formulating stretch of talk. Examples include turns T32, T84, and T161 in REG36 or turn T97 in ITUG01. Those Formulations also constituted decisions made in short turns as these drew on the talk thus far, and sometimes on discussions and policies agreed previously or externally to the meeting. Formulations that progressed to decisions thus marked the moment in the meeting when talk was transformed to action.

Fourthly, when the matrices of the three practices were compared, both the frequency and occurrence of Formulations and Accounts were very similar (*see* Figure 45, Figure 46, Figure 54, and Figure 55). Of the twenty Combination turns (C) in meeting REG36, seventeen contained a Formulation. Thirteen of these also contained an Account. All ten decisions were made in six extended turns (T22, T32, T48, T50, T84, and T161) and all contained both a Formulation and an Account (*see* Figure 54 and Figure 55). The situation was similar in the ITUG01 meeting, in which all but one decision (T152; an FE sequence) made in Combination turns (C) were also

preceded or immediately followed with an Account. In contrast, Explanations were more randomly dispersed across the meetings. With the one exception mentioned (in ITUG01) no Explanations occurred in the immediate vicinity of any decisions.

The closing of the formulating activity with a decision was, in both meetings, performed exclusively by SOMs. In both meetings, SOMs understood their executive power and embedded Formulations in extended decision-making turns. On a few occasions, other meeting members, namely, Roxanne and Ida in REG36 and Duncan and Ron in ITUG01, produced Combination turns (C) containing a Formulation. However, speakers were not in a position to progress these to become more than decision proposals.

Finally, in both meetings, the clustering of Formulations and decisions was concentrated in the first 70% of the meeting; in other words, the final part of the meeting was not focused on pressing the agenda forward, but was dedicated to the discussion of any other business. The distribution of Formulations therefore reflected the purpose of the meeting – an announcement of a cornerstone decision and its communication to the team (REG36), and an agenda-driven meeting (ITUG01) in which the individual discussion points were methodically concluded with a Formulation or a decision.

9.2.2 Implications of the Macro-analysis

The findings of the macro-analysis discussed above may be re-represented as shown in Figure 64 and Figure 65 (below). The presence, occurrence and authorship of Formulations in REG36 and ITUG01 have been commented upon, as has the interrelation of the three practices and decision-making. It therefore remains to draw implications regarding the impact of the individual practices on decision-making.

Figure 64: REG36 and ITUG01 – Macro-analysis of Formulations in Combination Turns

Macro-analysis of Formulations in Combination Turns		
Parameter	REG36	ITUG01
No. of C Turns	20	37
No. of C Turns containing a Formulation	17	36
No. of C Turns containing a Formulation performed by SOMs	14	30
No. of decisions made in C turns	12	12
No. of C turns in which decisions were made	6	11
No. of decisions made in C turns with Fs	All (12)	All (12)
No. of decisions made in C turns with As	All (6)	10
No. of decisions made in C turns with Es	0	1
No. of decisions made in short turns	2	5
No. of decisions made in short turns with Fs	2	5

Figure 65: Long Turns: The Move from Talk to Decision

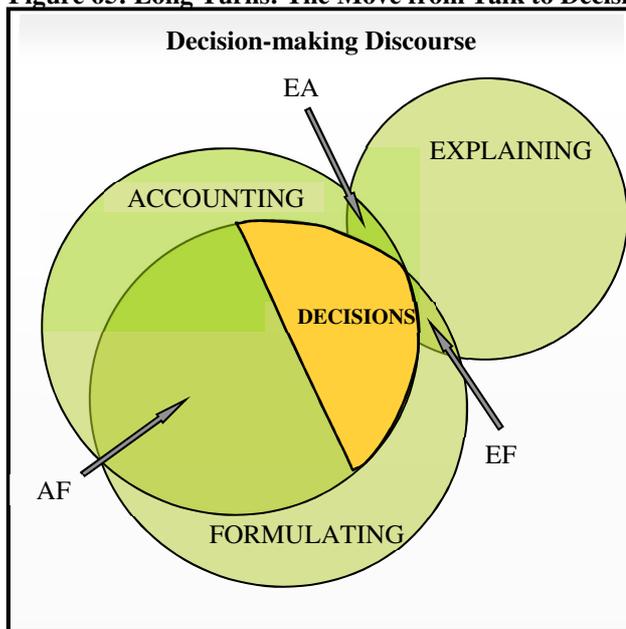


Figure 64 highlights the dominance of SOMs in using Formulations in meetings, the close association between Formulations and decisions, and the minimal association of Explanations at the point of making the decision in the meeting. It confirms a direct interconnection of decisions with Formulations and Accounts. Apart from one exception, either practice was always present in the immediate vicinity of decisions made in the meetings. Based on the actual results of the data analysis, Figure 65 adjusts a conceptual proposition introduced in Section 3.3.2 (see Figure 17) to reflect the prevalence of the AF combination at the point of making decisions in meetings. The findings summarised in Figure 64 clearly cast

Explanations in a supporting role used predominantly early in the decision process. Figure 65 represents this visually and emphasises the role Formulations and Accounts play in that progressing talk to decisions. Although the interrelation of the three practices in constituting the decision process in meetings is still argued for, Figure 65 suggests that the impact of Explanations lies in the initial phases of developing the argument for decisions made in meetings. That is not to say that Explanations did not influence the discursive construction of decision-making in meetings; this would be over-simplistic. Such a claim has already been argued against by means of the micro-analysis of Explanations reported in Chapter Six. The analysis therefore emphasises the role of Explanations to be predominantly facilitative and normalising that may – but do not need to be – exploited or drawn on in the decision process.

Finally, the repeated collaboration of Accounts and Formulations and their close proximity to subsequent decisions suggest that decisions were more a product of the manager's ability to use the practices effectively to develop a line of argument and were less a result of a rational choice among alternatives. Such finding would support the debate arguing against systematic decision-making (*see* Section 1.1.1) as this. This approach to decision-making underplays the importance of discourse and does not take account of the differing levels of skills of the meetings participants to influence this through the use of the three practices. Thus the patterning in which Accounts, Formulations and decisions unfolded in the discourse reflected the character of the talk in meetings and of how the practices contributed to the making of decisions. Whether this may indeed be the case is further explored in Section 9.2.3.

9.2.3 Micro-analysis: Results

The methodology used for the micro-analysis (*see* Section 2.3.4) was replicated for a third time in order to examine Formulations employed in the REG36 and ITUG01 meetings. The analysis established the role performed by Formulations both as singular turns (F) and as part of the Combination turns (C). It determined firstly, whether the Formulations were directly linked to decisions made in the meetings; secondly, whether they in some way influenced or informed the decisions made, and thirdly, how the practice of using Formulations achieved this. Where decisions were

made, the impact of Formulations was recorded in either a 'yes' or a 'no' category. The function of the respective Formulation was set as a verbal descriptor linking the Formulation back to the context of the meeting. Findings from REG36 and ITUG01 are summarised in Figure 66, Figure 67, Figure 68, and Figure 69. Four key observations were made; a commentary follows.

Figure 66: Formulations in REG36 – Singular Turns (F)

Formulations in Meeting REG36 - Singular Turns (F)									
PRACTICE	TYPE	ROLE of SPEAKER (NR/ND)	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
F	FPD	NR	94	10	Peter	T94	Slab stone	YES	Formulating an action
F	SC	ND	155	20	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	Formulation emphasising the message contained in the cornerstone decision (announced in T22) and building team identity through humour

Figure 67: Formulations in ITUG01 – Singular Turns (F)

Formulations in Meeting ITUG01 - Singular Turns (F)									
PRACTICE	TYPE	ROLE of SPEAKER (NR/ND)	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
F	SC	NR	185	10	Amanda	T180	Slab stone	YES	characterising talk thus far, re-positioning the argument
F	FP	NR	190	15	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	formulating a proposal for action, summarising the boundaries and the type of support that will be provided if requested
F	FPD	ND	209	10	Sharin	T209	Slab stone	YES	formulating a decision

Figure 68: Formulations in REG36 – Combination Turns (C) part 1/2⁷⁵

Formulations in Meeting REG36 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 1/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	ROLE of SPEAKER	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	SC(F1-6), FP(F7), FPD (F8) FP (F9) SC (F10) FP (F11)	AF1 F2AF3EF4 F5F6AF7AF8 (D)ZF9F10F11	ND	22	390	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	F1 - formulating the gist by summarising what has been agreed prior to the meeting or externally (away day); F2 - summarising the current position, setting out the implications for the team future, focusing the talk (upshot); F3 - formulating the issue/problem (budgeting and future operations), building towards a decision; F4 - drawing an implication, creating a logical link between the problem and an action, creating the need for action; F5 - formulating a personal opinion; professional interpretation of the situation; F6 - synthesis of F4 and F5, starting with a summary 'we're NOT ready', F6 combines the two previous positions and funnels the discussion further to the decision; F7 - formulating a decision proposal, starts to paint a new reality (undertaken in the subsequent Account); F8 - announcing a cornerstone decision; F9 - F11 - formulating a decision proposal, F9 - setting out the change (outlining a new structure, new ways of working, presented as an opinion, proposal), F10 - clarifying what the change means, Peter emphasises how he anticipates the team will work in future, F11 - formulating a slab stone decision and presenting it as a proposal
C	FP(F1),SC(F2-3)	EF1 F2AF3	ND	30	135	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	F1 - formulating the priorities underpinning the decision (influencing and bidding); F2 - drawing implications, formulating the role of the senior manager, presenting it as a personal opinion; F3 - closing the turn by summarising the proposal, distributing a document setting out the new team structure
C	FPD(F1),SC(F2)	AF1 (4D)AF2	ND	32	190	Peter	T32	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating individual roles within the new team structure, translating the cornerstone decision into four further actions; F2 - characterising work roles that still need to be finalised and placed within the new team structure
C	SC(F1-5)	AF1 AF2F3AF4 AF5	ND	36	180	Peter	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	YES	F1-F5 formulating, acknowledging and moderating individual concerns resulting from the natural reaction to change and from the potential loss of personal security; emphasised values and key messages - clarity and opportunity (F1), structuring (F2), longer-term perspective (F3), opportunity to grow and progress (F4), alignment with organisational goals (F5)
C	SC	EF	NR	43	20	Ida	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	NO	Formulation mirroring one of the values emphasised in the previous C turn (T36) - opportunity

⁷⁵ Key to the abbreviated headings in Figures 68-71: PR. = practice; L = length of the turn in seconds; REF. DEC. = reference to decision; IMP = impact on decision-making

Figure 68: Formulations in REG36 – Combination Turns (C) part 2/2

Formulations in Meeting REG36 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 2/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	ROLE of SPEAKER	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	FP(F1),FPD(F2)	ZF1AF2(D)A	ND	48	45	Peter	T48	Slab stone	YES	F1 - setting out the implementation procedure, re-focusing back exclusively on the team re-structure; F2 - establishing the communication process
C	FPD	ZF(D)A	ND	50	20	Peter	T50	Slab stone	YES	Deciding on the time scale of how the information will be disseminated to the wider team, formulating it as a proposal with a request for co-operation
C	SC(F1-F2)	AF1AF2	NR	73	15	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	Formulating a professional view, providing a counter-view to the proposed slabstone decision (T32, establishment of a new role within the team)
C	SC	AF	NR	75	40	Roxanne	T32	Slab stone	NO	Re-formulating the rationale for the opposing view, upholding a position
C	SC(F1-2)	EF1AF2A	ND	76	85	Peter	T22, T32	Cornerstone, slab stone	YES	Re-routing the debate by returning to the cornerstone decisions and summarising the actual scope of change in relation to the one role debated (transformation and deletion)
C	SC(F1),FPD(F2-3)	F1AF2(2D)AF3(D)	ND	84	85	Peter	T22, T84	Cornerstone	YES	F1 - framing and structuring the subsequent talk; F2 -dividing responsibilities within the new team structure; F3 - formulating the order of the individual steps of implementation
C	SC	EAEF	ND	114	60	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	Formulation expanding an answer and drawing an implication for the team, stimulating a team action
C	FPD(F1-2),SC(F3)	F1(D)AF2(D)AF3	ND	161	40	Peter	T161	Slab stone	YES	F1-F2 - agreeing actions to implement the decision; F3 - closing the informative part of the meeting
C	SC	EF	ND	200	20	Peter	n/a	n/a	NO	Formulating a professional view, re-stating a proposal made
C	SC	EFZ	ND	276	50	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	Formulating a professional view of how the re-structured team should be positioned within the organisation, drawing implications regarding the team's future identity
C	SC	FE	ND	284	15	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	Formulating the challenge the team faces in the imminent future
C	FP	ZAF	ND	370	35	Peter	T22	Cornerstone	YES	Closing the meeting, formulating a request for co-operation

Figure 69: Formulations in ITUG01 – Combination Turns (C) part 1/2

Formulations in Meeting ITUG01 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 1/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	ROLE of SPEAKER	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	FP	EF	ND	5	40	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	F1 - formulating the gist by summarising the action agreed in the previous meeting; F2 - progressing the point by formulating a proposal for action
C	FPD(F1-2),SC(F3-4)	AF1(D)AF2(D)EAE F3AEAF4E	ND	9	220	Sharin	T9	Slab stone	YES	F1-F2 - formulating a proposal for action (shared I.T. area), the decision is communicated incrementally, consensus seeking; F3 - summarising progress to date, generalising,closing an agenda point; F4 - interpreting progress to date, closing an agenda point
C	FP	AF	NR	15	15	Duncan	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a proposal for action (I.T. consultations)
C	SC	AF	ND	20	30	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a tentative commitment
C	SC(F1),FP(F2)	F1EF2AE	ND	25	45	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating a shared goal for the group; F2 - formulating a proposal (group engagement)
C	FPD(F1),FP(F2)	EF1(D)AEAF2A	ND	31	75	Sharin	T31	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating an action (I.T. forum); F2 - formulating a proposal (Chair)
C	SC(F1-2), FPD(F3-4)	EF1AZ(Q)AEFF2 EZ(F3(D)AF4	ND	58	200	Sharin	T58	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating a summary of expected action (upshot); F2 - drawing the benefits of having new members staff; F3 - making a decision and formulating an action (disseminating the information); F4 - re-stating the decision
C	SC	EF	ND	62	15	Sharin	T58	Slab stone	YES	confirming and interpreting news delivered (new member of staff)
C	SC(F1),FPD(F2),FP(F3)	A1EF1EF2(D)AEF3	ND	68	225	Sharin	T68 (A2)	Slab stone	YES	F1 - summarising and interpreting the preceding Explanation, concluding an agenda point; F2 - reporting a decision made externally, drawing implications
C	SC	AF	NR	69	20	Amanda	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a professional view, evaluating (sense making)
C	FPD(F1),SC(F2)	F1(D)AF2AE	ND	74	90	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating a decision, upholding a stance; F2 - drawing implications
C	SC	EFA	ND	76	30	Sharin	T74	Slab stone	YES	characterising the benefits, drawing implications
C	SC	AF	ND	80	80	Sharin	T72, T74	Slab stone	YES	formulating the bottom-line of an argument, concluding an agenda point
C	FP	ZEFA	ND	83	45	Amanda	T92	Slab stone	YES	formulating a decision proposal
C	SC(F1-2),FP(F3-4),SC(F5)	EAEF1F2AF3AF4A F5	ND	87	130	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	F1 - drawing implications, making a new point; F2 - interpreting the position upheld; F3-F4 - formulating a proposal for action, encouraging group initiative; F5 - drawing implications, linking back to the question raised
C	FPD(F1-2)	EF1(D)AF2(D)Q	ND	97	50	Sharin	T97	Slab stone	YES	F1-F2 - formulating a decision, concluding an agenda point
C	SC(F1-2)	EF1EF2	ND	108	180	Sharin				F1 - summarising the work process, establishing the role of I.T. within that (gist); F2 - re-stating the position, linking it back to the question raised, concluding an agenda point
C	FP	EF	ND	132	25	Sharin				expressing commitment to action, specifying a way of working
C	SC	FA	ND	147	10	Sharin	T152	Slab stone	YES	turning down user's request by formulating the position of I.T. on the issue
C	FDP	F(D)E	ND	152	40	Sharin				formulating a final decision

Figure 69: Formulations in ITUG01 – Combination Turns (C) part 2/2

Formulations in Meeting ITUG01 - Combination Turns (C) - Part 2/2										
PR.	TYPE	SEQUENCE	ROLE of SPEAKER (NR/ND)	TURN	L (sec)	SPEAKER	REF. DEC. (Turn)	REF. DEC. (Type)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
C	SC(F1-2)	EF1AF2	ND	184	35	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	F1 - drawing an implication, clarifying the process for the users of the system; F2 - characterising the message thus far, concluding an agenda point without making a decision - cannot be made at this level
C	FP	ZAF	ND	186	45	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	defining the boundaries of I.T. support, re-stating a preferred way of working, proposing an action
C	SC(F1-2)	EF1EF2	ND	192	20	Sharin	T180	Slab stone	YES	F1 - summarising the options; F2 - preserving I.T.'s clear remit, upholding a position
C	FP	AF	ND	205	30	Sharin	T209, T211	Slab stone	YES	summarising the point, encouraging a way of thinking, proposing an action
C	SC(F1-2)	EAF1AF2	ND	207	80	Sharin	T209, T211	Slab stone	YES	F1 - drawing implications, defining roles taking on responsibility; F2 - summarising
C	FPD(F1),FP(F2)	F1(D)AF2	ND	211	30	Sharin	T211	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating a decision; F2 - fomulating a proposal for action
C	SC	AEAEFF	ND	215	100	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	answering a question by summarising and reinforcing the rationale constructed in the preceding A-E-A-E sequence
C	FP(F1),FPD(F2)	F1AF2(D)	ND	228	25	Sharin	T228	Slab stone	YES	F1 - formulating a proposal for action, brainstorming a decision with a condition; F2 - formulating the decision
C	FPD	AF(D)	ND	238	30	Sharin	T238	Slab stone	YES	repeating and confirming the decision
C	SC	EF	ND	243	60	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	clarifying a work process, drawing on an existing policy to formulate a general rule for action
C	FP	AFA	NR	264	50	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a professional view, endorsing the proposed plan for action (adoption of a new DMS)
C	SC(F1-3)	EAF1AF2F3	ND	265	125	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	F1 - formulating the bottom line, summarising the preferred direction; F2 - repeating the summary of the preferred direction; F3 - drawing an implication, linking back to the question, closing the agenda point
C	FP	AF	NR	266	25	Ron	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a proposal for action
C	SC	EZEF	ND	272	55	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating the bottom line, clarifying, generalising
C	SC	AF	ND	275	25	Sharin	n/a	n/a	n/a	emphasising the key point, formulating a closing statement
C	FP	EZF	NR	283	25	Duncan	n/a	n/a	n/a	formulating a decision proposal

Commentary on Figure 66, Figure 67, Figure 68, and Figure 69:

1] The micro-analysis recognised and coded three types of Formulations (*see* Section 9.1 for further detail): *sense construction* (SC), *formulating a proposal* (FP), and *formulating a proposal-decision* (FPD).⁷⁶ Of the three practices, Formulations were found to have influenced all decisions that were either made or announced in the meetings and each of these three Formulation types aided the decision-making in its respective manner.

Formulations of sense construction (SC) were essentially interpretative. They presented, repeated, emphasised, summarised or drew out the key messages upon which subsequent decision proposals or decisions were built. SCs prefaced new talk by creating links to prior or external events, agreements or decisions. They also interconnected closely with Explanations and Accounts either by merely re-stating these or by drawing implications from them. The re-formulating *de facto* re-worded the same information or message presented in the adjacent Explanation or Account in a more abridged and summative form. This formulating technique was found to be particularly effective in emphasising and upholding views presented. In addition, the implicative work of sense-constructing Formulations was particularly powerful in interpreting and transforming arguments and views raised in the discussion in the context of everyday organisational work and performance. SOMs were found to employ a considerable variety of Formulations of sense construction (SC); such Formulations were also in the repertoire of other meeting members.

Formulations of proposal (FP) constituted transitions from talk to decisions – or at least made the attempt to do so. They requested, encouraged, or prodded action. Although not always resulting in decisions, FPs reflected how participants processed information presented in the meeting, and how they oriented towards applying it within the remit of their respective work roles.

The act of Formulating proposal(s)-decisions (FPD) was, in the long turns, undertaken exclusively by SOMs: they had the executive power to progress proposals to decisions. All cornerstone decisions were made or announced as part of long turns. SOMs were skilful in building these up incrementally so that a decision

⁷⁶ See Section 9.1. for data examples.

could be made or implemented. The formulation of cornerstone decisions was therefore never an isolated initiative. Typically, it resulted from a close interaction of Accounts and Formulations. The embedding of decisions in sequences of Accounts is evident from both the findings given above and those presented in Section 7.2.3.

2] Formulations were featured in both singular turns (F), as summarised in Figure 66 and Figure 67, and in Combination turns (C), as summarised in Figure 68 and Figure 69. While Formulations as a singular practice were relatively rare in the long turns, formulating in Combination turns (C) was a routine practice. Such disparity of proportion was important in understanding the dynamics of the decision process in meetings. While not all Formulations resulted in decisions, all decisions were a product of formulating activity. This was also true of decisions made in short turns. However, Formulations in the short turns drew on the past talk of others and were thus predominantly completing, confirming, and finalising that which had already collaboratively been achieved; in contrast, the formulating work in the long turns was undertaken by members who were delivering new information and who were also using this new information to achieve further Formulations. Decisions made or announced as part of the long turns were thus an outcome of discursive work performed individually by news deliverers, whereas decisions produced in the short turns embodied action undertaken collaboratively.

As has been discussed (*see* Section 9.1), the roles of news deliverers and news receivers were not fixed. They were either conventionally pre-allocated according to the role of the speaker in the meeting, i.e., SOMs communicating information to the team or meeting members reporting back to the group. Roles would also emerge as the meeting progressed and individuals expressed specific points of view or volunteered information. This fluidity of roles was enacted in those turns in which participants took the initiative to build on the arguments, views or proposals of their co-members and to re-formulate these by adding to them new information. An example of such alteration is turn T209 in ITUG01, which occurred as a consequence of the exchange between Amanda and Sharin undertaken in turns T206 and T207.⁷⁷ In turn T209, Sharin formulates a decision and resolves Amanda's point raised in T206 – Data Sample 9.2-1 (below):

⁷⁷ Turns T206-T207 have been introduced in Section 0. in Data Sample 8.3-1.

Data Sample 9.2-1 Talk to IT directly

ITUG01_T209_Sharin_F(FPD)

<n Sharin> It it it depends on what you want. BUT (f), if it's an issue, talk to to IT DIRECTLY, (0.2) [*A*] Mhm] talk to ME directly, and say, we want to do this on the portal. THEN I can say to you, YES, (0.5) we can (0.2) do this, and I'll bring in Marketing with that. If it's an ISSUE.=

Turn T209 concludes the debate of this particular issue by determining the agency; that is, who would take responsibility for the proposed action. The change from a news receiver to a news deliverer was characteristic of the negotiation parts of the meeting, where a smooth securing of the role of a news deliverer was indicative of who ultimately drove the decision-making in the meeting.

3] A rather intriguing result to emerge from a close examination of Formulations in the meetings was the tracking of the regular characterisation and encapsulation of the talk through which Formulations developed proposals and assisted in the making of decisions. In the long Combination turns performed by SOMs, this was achieved mainly through the repeated formulating of the speaker's own talk, which resulted in the suspension of turn-taking by other meeting participants. Initial observations and findings on this complex discursive work are presented in Section 9.2.4.

4] Finally, the most important finding was that of the three practices examined Formulations were most closely aligned to and impacted on decisions. This resulted from the ability of Formulations to enable speakers to make proposals based on past talk and translate these into actions and decisions (*see* the two final columns of Figure 66, Figure 67, Figure 68, and Figure 69). Importantly, as with the other two practices, the impact of Formulations was also developed sequentially. Formulations that contributed to the decision-making in meetings⁷⁸ either completed the discourse work commenced by Explanations and Accounts, or took the opportunity to develop and expand upon the past talk to move the discussion forward. As the charts indicate, all Formulations realised by SOMs in the long turns either leading to or referencing decisions made or announced in the meeting were integrated within Explanations and Accounts. This sequential construction of reason and sense subsequently legitimised the shifts and transformations for which speakers used Formulations in their pursuit of decisions in the meetings.

In contrast, Formulations that appeared to make no impact on the decision-making in the meetings fell into one of three categories:

⁷⁸ Their impact is annotated with a 'yes' or a 'no'.

1. They were made by news receivers at times when decisions had already been made or when there was no will for them to be changed (e.g., REG36 T43, T73 and 75);
2. They were neither underpinning nor related to any decisions (e.g., REG36 T200);
3. The Formulation was weak: either gravely misinterpreting the talk thus far or insufficiently supported with evidence. Whether or not Formulations were identified as weak depended on how the group responded to them, i.e., whether the group was prepared to accept the point made in the Formulation. An example of such formulating work occurred in ITUG01 in T283, in which Duncan's decision proposal is not accepted since it is assessed to have little chance of success. Consider the exchange – Data Sample 9.2-2 (below):

Data Sample 9.2-2: So, we could actually go to them

ITUG01_T283_Duncan_FP

- 283 **Duncan** ... So, we could actually, GO to them, and basically say, (0.4) will you accept THIS, (71:40) (0.2) in terms of the AUDIT, (0.4) and see if they come back and say, YES.
- 284 **Sharin** Well, (0.2) (laughs) (p) (0.2) the easy (0.3) way out for them, is to say, (0.2) NO. (0.2) Keep all of your documents, and then we're we're STUFFED! you know, it's its' a - -, we will WORK with THEM, I'm sure, we'll be working with a NUMBER of [dif- -]

Sharin's pragmatic comment suggesting 'don't set us up for a fall' negates the proposition made by Duncan and through evaluation closes the proposed route of action. Whether Formulations shifted the talk towards decisions was thus, at all times, both sequentially organised and locally constructed.

9.2.4 Micro-analysis: Formulating Decisions in Complex Turns

Formulations are argued to complete the process of decision-making in discourse. The results of the micro-analysis reported in the previous section provided some evidence of how the use of Formulations in long turns assisted especially in two functions: in the construction of sense, and in the making and reporting of proposals and decisions. The current section focuses on demonstrating which features of Formulations speakers exploited when they undertook the formulating work and how, in the long turns, they self-formulated their own talk in order to maintain the turn or to progress the discussion.

The micro-analysis of turns REG36_T22 and ITUG01_T265 originally presented in Chapter Six introduced how Peter and Sharin, SOMs of the REG and ITUG teams,

used Formulations in long turns. In the extended turn REG36_T22, Peter employed eleven Formulations, in the course of which he announced one cornerstone decision (F9). His turn was substantially long and smooth. The first change of speaker took place after more than six minutes of continuous talk and was undertaken by Roxanne in the form of a completion (T23_Roxanne). In ITUG01_T265, Sharin's contribution proceeded in a similar fashion. Sharin used three Formulations, the last of which concluded the turn and was again followed with a confirmation by Ron (T266_Ron). Both Peter's and Sharin's contributions classified as long turns, in both Formulations occurred repeatedly, and both resulted in a confirmatory next turn. It may be asked, then, what features of Formulations SOMs drew on so effectively in progressing the meeting and in formulating decisions. Their Formulations have been examined from the perspective of structure, form and impact, and all Formulations discussed in this section are fully referenced in Appendix 9.1.

Firstly, SOMs were observed not only to formulate on current talk, but also to draw on past experience, meetings or events, as well as on facts that were presented or discussed in the meeting. The past experience or facts were a resource that created a feature of commonality, from which it was possible to draw the purpose or implications for the subsequent talk. A classic example of this formulating technique is provided by the first two Formulations of the REG36 meeting in Data Sample 9.2-3 (below):

Data Sample 9.2-3: Formulating on past experience - When we had the away day

REG36_T22C_Peter_F(SC)

- F1** ... Uh (0.5) (01:40) Because, when we had u:h (1) the AWAY DAY, obviously we went through, and we did quite a lot of work around, (0.7) eh our vision, and what we're trying to achieve, and some of the kind of the (0.4) BARRIERS, I suppose, as much as anything in- in terms of uh (0.2) uh (0.3) achieving that. (0.2)
- F2** And clearly, (0.2) I think , (0.2) one of the things that came very very clear from that, (02:00) was that (0.2) umm, (0.2) where we are NOW, we are in a- - (0.4) uh we're in - - we're in an ok position, in terms of (0.3) the things (0.2) that we've got (0.4) uh the the delivery, you know, oh six oh seven,

Formulation One preserves selected moments from the Away Day held by the team and confirms the day's outcomes as a team achievement. Formulation Two moves the talk towards preserving the outcome of the Away Day. It starts by describing the purpose of the meeting at hand. Peter sets out the purpose of the meeting as a selection of what the team experienced together; this is formulated as a new message. It links that with which the team is familiar – the Away Day, in this instance – to the new situation faced by the teams. The upshot Formulation creates an expectation for the speaker to continue and to provide further information.

Together, the Formulations become a starting point from which the meeting can be run. When unchallenged, this basis also becomes the point to which the meeting may revert if no progression is achieved, in effect drawing a line under the previous talk up to that point.

In this case, the juxtaposition of a gist with an upshot Formulation drawing on past events experienced by the team, and not solely on talk realised in the boundaries of a singular meeting, provided a very specific way of positioning the meeting and of setting the meeting objectives. Although not based on the immediately preceding talk, the Formulations still displayed the qualities of preserving, transforming, and deleting. In fact, Formulations could accomplish this very effectively since they had the advantage of the distance between the past event mentioned and the meeting at hand. This access to a wide range of shared experience and past talk was thus an ideal resource for participants to formulate, enabling coherence building and agreement in the meeting. Further instances of gist and upshot Formulations recycling or referring to shared experience were noted in REG36_T32_F2 and ITUG01_T58_F2.

This type of formulating work is possibly context specific to business meetings, classroom interactions, group therapy sessions, and the like. It draws on shared history, group, and organisational knowledge, from which it preserves the essence or shifts it towards a new interpretation. Such formulating work is especially relevant as it places the meeting's talk and its outcomes in the context of the interaction of the parties, creating for them a perspective that is likely to be shared. It is also inherently time consuming and creates long periods of uninterrupted talk from one speaker in a single turn.

A further feature of Formulations noted was that SOMs employed a substantial variety of forms through which summative or implicative statements were provided. Some of these were very brief, such as Formulation Three in REG36_T22:

Data Sample 9.2-4: Formulating on past talk – But fundamentally

REG36_T22C_Peter_F(FPD)

F3 (0.2) But FUNDAMENTALLY, the real issue becomes in oh seven oh eight,

Other Formulations were more elaborate and lengthy because they provided new or alternative interpretations of debated issues. These Formulations often occurred successively, as in the cases of Formulations Four and Five in REG36_T22 (*see*

Appendix 9.1), where they created focus in the debate, achieving this merely by restating or interpreting the preceding claim or argument.

The sequential ordering of Formulations within long turns often added complexity to the arguments being made by the Formulations. In order to prevent ambiguity and continuously to progress the thinking in the meeting, SOMs often took the time to synthesise the points thus far into one statement, explicitly concluding a particular train of thought. Formulation Six in REG36_T22 provides an example of such work; Peter is re-emphasising that the team is not ready to meet the demands of the subsequent year. It has the impact of bringing closure to this particular point in the meeting:

Data Sample 9.2-5: Formulating on past talk – I came to the conclusion

REG36_T22C_Peter_F(SC)

F6 And (0.2) umm, (0.5) I can't help it, I suppose in the end, I came to the conclusion that, (2) we are NOT! really (laughs) (self-reflective) I suppose, it's a simple answer, you know, it's a bit hit and miss,

Although the Formulation is not realised in the canonical form by being prefaced with a turn-inference marker (Barnes, 2007) 'so', it still creates a tight link between Peter's observation and his next contribution. The inferential shift is achieved here lexically through the use of collocations such as 'in the end' and 'I came to the conclusion that'. The Formulation thus creates a transition to the next part of talk, in which the issue of inadequate team structure will be addressed.

In addition to the length of each individual Formulation and the choices of lexis, Formulations also varied according to how speakers were able to emphasise the key points they were making. For example, Formulation Seven in Peter's turn T22 is structured as a decision proposal, in which Peter emphasises verbally all of the key principles underpinning the new team structure: 'MOVE to a structure', 'FOCUS around bidding', 'BIG area ... ALONGSIDE the BIDDING', 'INFLUENCING side'. Through emphasising, Peter created a focus to ensure that each person understood which particular phase the meeting had reached and how it was assumed, ensuring that they were all working towards a set goal. Emphasising the Formulation thus provided clarity and aided both the delivery and the reception of the talk in the long turn.

By focusing the attention of the news recipients on a few selected points, Formulations were, in fact, always reductionist. This feature of Formulations made them effective in funnelling the debate towards explicit outcomes and a resultant

closure. As described by Schegloff and Sacks (1973), closings pose a problem for conversationalists. Speakers therefore use a number of pre-closing techniques to arrive collaboratively at “a point where one speaker’s completion will not occasion another speaker’s talk, and that will not be heard as some speaker’s silence” (*ibid.*: 294-5). In transactionally relatively complex interactions such as business meetings, speakers frequently used Formulations to overcome the closing issue through the use of carefully structured long turns. Consider the formulating sequence (F1-3) undertaken by Sharin in Data Sample 9.2-6 (below):

Data Sample 9.2-6: Formulating on past talk – And that’s the challenge

ITUG01_T265C_Sharin_F(SC)

- F1** And that’s the challenge, we need to get a system in place, that (0.2) we’re ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about, WHAT (65:00) requirements is it going to address, (0.4) and the requirements definition, that is where we are struggling as a group, and and the document management group.
- ...
- F2** And that’s the (65:40) challenge now. It’s getting something that we could BUILD upon, and two three four five years’ time, we’d we’d be ABSOLUTELY (0.6) dependent on that system, (0.5) you’re with me? (0.2) And that’s where we’re now.
- F3** So, (0.2) THAT feedback, I guess, is what what is to be expected, [<R> Mhm] at this stage, unless we feed more to the team to say, ok, HERE’S what we plan to do, (66:00) what do you THINK. Uh (0.4) but we’re not at that stage yet. So we’ll uh- - =

The entire turn is composed as an EAF1AF2F3 sequence; all three Formulations are aimed to construct and manage the shared understanding of adopting a new technical solution. The pre-closing technique employed in the turn is: the formulation of an evaluation, ‘That’s the challenge’. This technique was frequently used in the long turns as it substituted evaluations normally produced by news receivers, should they have the opportunity to make these, and their turns were not suspended by the flow of the long turn. Other examples of short evaluations made by Peter and Sharin included ‘THAT’s the challenge’ and ‘THAT’S the DIFFERENCE’ in REG36_284; ‘So, (0.3) uh there you go, (laughs) (1) now you know! (2)’ in REG36_T161_F3; or ‘So, THAT’S that’s IN PLACE, umm (0.4) which is (0.5) an ACHIEVEMENT’ in ITUG01_T9_F3. Such “aphoristic formulations of conventional wisdoms”, as Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 306) term them, collectively evaluated all the preceding talk deleting issues that could, potentially, be contestable. Given that they typically articulated comments understood and shared by the constituents of the group, such types of Formulation were usually endorsed and rarely contested.

Other possible styles of formulating constituting the closing sections of talk listed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 317-8) include: the re-invocation of materials mentioned earlier in the conversation, re-involutions of the reason for initiating

the conversation, the making of arrangements, contrast marking, or the use of components that seem to give a 'signature' to the type of conversation. Data Sample 9.2-7 (below) provides a few occurrences of these styles used in the structuring of Formulations in business meetings:

Data Sample 9.2-7: Structuring Formulations

REG36_T161_Peter_F1 (re-invocation of materials mentioned earlier in the conversation)

= I will just talk to the other managers, so, if you can keep it - - ...

ITUG01_T201_Sharin_F1 (re-invocations of the reason for initiating the conversation)

U:h. (3) Just (0.6) just to go back to (0.5) the: role of this (0.2) this (0.2) uh group, (0.5) uh(46:00) (1.3)

REG36_T370_Peter_F1 (the making of arrangements)

(0.3) so, (0.2) if you could, (0.2) at LEAST until MONDAY, [<R> Monday] (0.3) and then then by which time I will have spoken to the other managers, (0.4)

ITUG01_T31_Sharin_F1 (the making of arrangements)

So, we'll do that, nearer the time.

ITUG01_T97_Sharin_F2 (the making of arrangements)

Uh so I'll I'll (0.4) I'll send an email out, (0.2) to remind people (10)

REG36_T36_Peter_F3 (contrast marking)

the OTHER thing I wanna say is,

REG36_T84_Peter_F1 (contrast marking)

Umm (0.8) The only the only other thing I wanna say,

REG36_T30_Peter_F3 (giving a 'signature')

(0.2) U:MM (0.8) so, THAT'S (f) what I'm THINKING (1), uh (0.2)

By using a particular component assisting in the closing of a section of talk, the speaker signalled the intention to close that part of the conversation and enable the transition to a new point. As Schegloff and Sacks (*ibid.*: 306) assert:

When such a formulation is offered by one party and agreed to by another, a topic may be seen (by them) to have been brought to a close.

Bringing a section of talk to a close is therefore possible only if there is no 'unfinished business' in the current turn which needs resolving or acknowledging.

Hence, one of the major roles of Formulations in meetings was their ability to bring effective closure to a specific topic or agenda point in the meeting. Closures were typically arrived at through the formulation of shared understanding, proposals or decisions. These presented a specific and definite outcome allowing a natural conclusion in the sense of team achievement, and it was precisely through

the formulating work that this desirable, yet not automatic, outcome could be established.

A further important observation regarding the use of Formulations was in the care taken by the SOMs in managing the transition to a new topic or agenda point, and in how the new topic was opened, discussed and concluded with the team in the course of a single meeting. It was observed that agenda points that were not terminated with Formulations or had poorly delivered Formulations either lacked the status of being resolved or had the potential to create contested arguments among the parties in talk. Such a situation occurred, for example, in ITUG01_T83-84 (already discussed in Section 7.2.4). In the circumstances of an imminent misunderstanding or a conflict, premature Formulating work was ineffective: it exaggerated the difference between the opposing views, thus making a topic even less acceptable to one party, and more vulnerable to challenge and attempts to interrupt the current speaker.

It seems from the data examined that Formulations were most influential precisely in the staged and careful build-up of the discussion towards the point at which the termination of an issue at hand could be initiated naturally in the sense specified by Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 294-5, quoted above). Turn T22 in REG36 provided a showcase of this in action, where an experienced manager developed and delivered a complex message using incrementally a combination of Formulations through which proposals and decisions were made. Their use was therefore deliberate and frequent. In order to facilitate a consensual agreement, Peter carefully built Formulations upon other complementing practices, namely upon one Explanation, four Accounts, and one Other (Chairing) turn.

The therefore necessary technique of 'self-formulation', i.e., a frequent use of Formulations immediately succeeding or duplicating the point or points made in the preceding stretch of talk, was typical of how SOMs maintained their turn. This self-formulating prevented the potential for interruption from other speakers and helped to keep the meeting on track by deleting or emphasising past talk. It was particularly noticeable in their structuring of long turns. Appendix 9.1 details a selection of formulating sequences employed by Peter and Sharin in their meetings. The data demonstrate both the variety and the careful structuring of Formulations in their build-up of shared sense and in the formulation of decisions.

Finally, the process of decision-making in meetings could hardly be completed without the ability of Formulations to make use of the previous talk and to then combine the synthesis of both Explanations and Accounts into a coherent message. This prepared the way for either a proposal or decision to be announced. The process was essential to decision-making in meetings; the analysis of the data repeatedly demonstrated the use of Formulations in achieving this. This transition from talk to action has been identified at the micro-level through both the FP and FPD codes (*see* Figure 66, Figure 67, Figure 68, and Figure 69).

Formulating may therefore be seen as ‘accomplishing’. On the one hand, it achieves the act of formulating proposals and decisions; on the other, it is closely integrated into the structure and content of the entire meeting, continually creating a shared sense and understanding. Its success rests equally on the skills and experience of the Formulation deliverer, the timing of the message, and the interactive and receptive disposition of its recipients. Although formulating is a frequent feature of talk, the way in which it enables the meeting’s participants to arrive at collective consensus, make decisions, and then move on should therefore not be taken for granted.

The current section glossed some of the effective uses of Formulations employed by two SOMs in meetings REG36 and ITUG01. The next section applies these observations to an interpretation of the role played by Formulations in the process of managing change in the organisation.

9.3. Managing Change: Formulations and their Influence on Decision-making

Traditionally, the theory of change management and its numerous models⁷⁹ describe the key processes that need to be addressed if organisations are to be successful in creating then shifting their focus towards their new vision. All of the models bring structure into how the change process may be analysed; all stress the importance of engaging with and communicating information to the members of the team to ensure

⁷⁹ Some of the change-management models frequently mentioned include Kotter’s integrative model of organisational dynamics, Nadler and Tushman’s Congruence model for organisational assessment, and Elizabeth Kübler Ross’s Five-stage change management model. *See* Section 1.2 for an introductory discussion.

their understanding of the change, to manage their personal uncertainty, to gain and unlock their existing organisational knowledge, and to change their behaviour and align this with the new organisational vision and ways of accomplishing work. Contrary to the wealth of literature addressing these principles of change management, little has been written to describe and explain the area of the current thesis: the actual language practices used during the implementation of change within an organisation.

The current section concludes the analysis of meetings data commenced in Sections 7.3 and 0 and continues to review Data Set Two for the occurrence of Formulations. The practice is examined both in relation to the surrounding Explanations and Accounts (*see* Figure 47, Figure 57, and Figure 58) and in terms of their role in the change-management process. Formulations in Data Set Two were micro-analysed in selected Combination turns (C). The findings are summarised in Figure 70 and Figure 71 (below) and a discussion follows:

Figure 70: Managing Change (REG): Formulations and their Influence on Decision-making

Managing Change (REG): Formulations and their Influence on Decision Making											
MEETING	PR	SEQUENCE	A TYPE	DISCUSSION POINT	TURN	L (sec)	SP.	REF. DEC. (Type)	REF. DEC. (Turn)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
REG28	C	EF1AF2AF3	FP(F1-3)	separation	50	120	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T50	YES	Peter reinforces the decision of the split and then in the 3 Formulations stresses the need for action from the team and that they need to plan for this now. Stresses the TEAM involvement through the use of we. Use of joint AF patterns, justification - proposal
REG29	C	EF1AF2EAF3EAF4E F5(unfinished)EAF6(D)	SC(F1-5),FPD	budget	1	230	Peter	1 Cornerstone announced	T76	YES	Peter uses 4 Formulations to summarise the budget position and the difficulties he is having in making it work. AF pattern of justifying why action is required; Formulation proposal (F3) explains the decision to increase budget costs; engages the team by stressing no cuts to the staffing budget.
REG30	C	ZEF1EF2EF3 (unfinished)	SC(F1-3)	away day	3	110	Ben	1 Slab stone reported	T3	NO	Demonstrates the involvement and understanding of the management team in the change process. Interestingly, Ben is delivering a report to the team and is setting out what will happen at the away day and no use of Accounts is required.
REG30	C	F1AF2(unfinished)	SC(F1-2)	away day	61	60	Peter	cornerstone - referred	previous debates; organisational re-structure	YES	F1 links to past discussions and re-phrases in a summary why vision is important to him. Guiding through change, managing and encouraging the process of vision drafting, stimulating team effort and group-wide cohesion
REG31	C	FE	FPD	separation test	3	20	Peter	1 Slab stone	T3	NO	Disseminates information from the SMT meeting, managing the change process. In F1 proposes an action for himself.
REG32	C	EF	SC	relocation	1	130	Peter	1 Cornerstone reported	T1	NO	Facilitates top-down information sharing, the cornerstone decision has been taken externally, is reported in the meeting. Uses a summary to close the turn.
REG32	C	F1AF2	SC,FP	relocation	26	15	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	F1 demonstrating understanding of the past comments, acknowledging uncertainty, hedging the call for action; F2 summarising next actions
REG33	C	ZF1F2(unfinished)A1F3 A2F4	FP,SC(F2-4)	vision	319	50	Peter	n/a	n/a	n/a	F1 acknowledging past speakers comments; F2 orienting the team towards priorities; F3 signalling action required from the team; F4 building on an Account stressing the need for clarity acknowledging uncertainty and projecting a scenario of action, facilitates process thinking within the team and developing the vision.
REG35	C	EF1EF2	FPD,FP	future enterprise	17	60	Samuel	1 Slab stone	T17	YES	The slab stone decision engages the team in the discussion, the opening Explanation sets out the framework for it. F1 launches the decision; F2 summarises the discussion and charts used. The debate is about thinking through a strategic business plan for the re-structured team.
REG35	C	AF	SC	future enterprise	243	60	Ben	n/a	n/a	n/a	The turn facilitates the planning of future strategy and the team's engagement in enterprise. The Account challenges current team initiatives and projects; indicates a personal view and inviting further discussion. The Formulation makes a point and proposes a way of working; it is not linked to any immediate decision.

Figure 71: Managing Change (ITUG): Formulations and their Influence on Decision-making

Managing Change (ITUG): Formulations and their Influence on Decision Making											
MEETING	PR.	SEQUENCE	A TYPE	DISCUSSION POINT	TURN	L (sec)	SP.	REF. DEC. (Type)	REF. DEC. (Turn)	IMP.	NOTES on the IMPACT
ITUG02	C	ZEF1EF2(D)AF3(D)A F4(D)EF5EF6(D)AF7A F8EEEEAZF9AF10	SC,FPD(F2-3),SC(F4-5),FPD(F6),FP(F7),SC(F8),FP(F9),SC(F10)	DMS	3	500	Marcus	3 Cornerstone reported, 1 slab stone	T3	YES	High use of Explanations clarifying specific points around the Data Management System and the use of consultants. Formulations are used in their sense-making capacity, formulating work is systematic, summarising the prior talk and making proposals for action.
ITUG03	C	EF1(Drep.)EF2EF3	SC(F1-3)	DMS	82	115	Sharin	1 Cornerstone reported	T82	NO	Facilitates top-down information sharing; the cornerstone decision has been taken externally. F1 categorises the previous talk; F2 reviews the implication of the past decision; F3 categorises the previous talk. EF combinations used to report outcomes of past meetings and their implications.
ITUG04	C	EF1F2	SC,FP	support helpdesk	19	40	Sharin	n/a	T36	YES	Facilitates information sharing across different functions, reports on the changes in and improvements to the system, summarising past talk.
ITUG05	C	EF1EF2	FP,FPD	user profile settings	21	70	Sharin	1 Slab stone	T21	YES	Reports on how the IT team has reviewed the problem of slow log-ins. F1 proposes a solution; a definite decision is made in F2.
ITUG06	C	EF1(Drep.)AF2	SC(F1-2)	separation	77	80	Sharin	1 Cornerstone reported	T77	NO	Facilitates top-down information sharing, the cornerstone decision has been taken externally, is reported in the meeting. F1 moving action up to SMT and F2 summarising past talk.

Figure 70 and Figure 71 clearly demonstrate that:

1. Change was enacted discursively through through closely-knit sequences of the three practices working together;
2. Thanks to their sense-constructing properties and the ability to propose, make, and confirm decisions, Formulations held a specific and indispensable discursive role in this process; they built the debate and created the vision of what the new organisation should or would become;
3. Formulations also encapsulated the surrounding explanatory and accounting sequences, acting as a catalyst in talk in moving the organisation forward towards its new vision and reality.

The role of Formulations in the change process will now be illustrated using a series of data extracts from the REG and ITUG teams.

The first data extract – Figure 71 (below) – extends the micro-analysis of the turn ITUG02_T3_Marcus commenced in Section 7.3,. In the turn, Marcus, one of the SOMs, updates the team on the adoption of a new document management system. Marcus's contribution is substantial and the use of Formulations throughout the turn is highly methodical. Ten Formulations are employed to segment the turn into comprehensible chunks, all of which are embedded in sequences of Explanations and Accounts. A closer inspection furnishes an interesting insight: the Formulations used in Marcus's turn contain all of the key messages of his talk and indicate the goals towards which Marcus is steering the conversation and its outcomes. In other words, Formulations encapsulate the turn in toto and they effectively provide the summative content of the turn. Consider Figure 72 - see Appendix 9.2 for a full transcript of this turn:

Figure 72: Managing Change: Use of Formulations in ITUG02_T3C_Marcus

MICRO.ITUG02.T03C	
PR.	ORIGINAL TEXT
Z	
E1	
F1(SC)	(0.6) Uh (0.2) but more IMPORTANTLY, it enabled us to see, that actually, (0.8) looking at (0.8) the way we manage documents, (0.6) there's two things we got to do. (0.2)
E2	
F2(FPD)	(1) So, (0.3) we've we've acknowledged the fact, that you need some sort of PROTOCOL, you need some sort of (0.3) RELATIONSHIP (0.2) map, to understand what you're doing, and what you should do about it. (1.1) <u>Now, (0.7) before we go into any solutions, we've decided that, actually what we REALLY need to do, is (24:40) have a thorough (0.3) FEASIBILITY study, (0.3) around what we're trying to do as an organisation.</u>
A1	
F3(FPD)	(0.5) So, (1.3) rather than come up with some actions, we think the first thing we need to do, is to get some feasibility. (0.3) The SECOND thing we've got to do, is REALLY embed this in what we want to do as a business. (2.3) <u>And therefore what we're proposing to do, we're getting the consultants back in on the: seventh of (0.4) (25:40) SEPTEMBER, (0.7) to do a presentation to (0.8) the: u:h (0.5) executives, through the STEERING group, (0.4) to kind of get them raise the game and to see what WE DO.</u>
A2	
F4(SC), D rep.	So we've kind of taken half-a-step backwards, I think, (0.2) with the intention of getting the ex on board, and getting them to commit, (0.2) number one to an understanding that this is a bigger issue than just fixing (1.2) scanning (0.4) or whatever, and secondly, that we need to spend a little bit of money on that (27:20) feasibility study to get it right, (0.8) and that we need to go outside the business to get that. (0.3)
E3	
F5(SC)	(1) However, what it HASNT DONE, (0.2) all of that, is taken away some of the other ISSUES, that that we still GOT as a business, that that we kind of KNOW, but we can never kind of put our finger on,
E4	
F6(FPD)	<u>So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, is (0.4) how MIGHT you approach this idea about the big picture, in terms of - - (0.2) uh (0.4) you know, where where you THINK your reference points are (28:40) for managing documents.</u>
A3	
F7(FP)	(0.5) So it would be useful if you can go back to your teams, to kind of get the scope of that, and secondly (0.2) (29:00) u:h a reinforcement to the fact, that this IS gonna be on the horizon, and it WILL grow, we WILL to have (sic) involve more people, we WILL have to do some data RESEARCH, as well! (0.2)
A4	
F8(SC)	So it depends a little bit on how exec go with it,
E5	
E6	
E7	
A5	
Z	
F9(FP)	so (0.2) we got to bring about a culture change where everybody is actually lined up to do (taps the table) this, before we spend (30:40) ANY amount of money,
A6	
F10(SC)	(0.2) so, (0.2) that's a kind of a long speech, but that brings us up to date on where we are. So we expect some feedback (31:00) after the seventh of September.

Figure 72 extracts all Formulations from turn ITUG02_T3_Marcus, and also retains information about the sequence of the practices as applied by Marcus throughout his turn. The underlined text denotes the decisions reported (F2-4) or made (F6) in the turn. The reported decisions inform the team about the strategic steps taken by senior management towards the adoption of a new system. The final decision (F6) concerns preparing the grounds for a smooth and effective implementation of the new system. It is formulated as a request inviting all present to become ambassadors for their teams and to adopt responsibility for the necessary data collection and analysis (F7).

Formulations in the turn adopt the role of guiding through change. They articulate the main messages revolving consistently around the need to introduce change and to manage it strategically. The reporting of decisions made by senior management is motivated and purposeful, creating the necessary involvement in the change and stimulating action that the team is subsequently invited to take or, being empowered, they volunteer to undertake this independently. Turn ITUG02_T3 provides an illustrative example of this work. It is therefore possible to observe this process of guiding change through an examination of Formulations and their sequential organisation in talk. Consider the F6-A3-F7 sequence:

Data Sample 9.3-1: Guiding through change – creating engagement

ITUG02_T3C_Marcus

3 <n Marcus> ... **F6**→So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, is (0.4) how MIGHT you approach this idea about the big picture, in terms of - - (0.2) uh (0.4) you know, where where you THINK your reference points are (28:40) for managing documents, **A3**→ 'cause it's easy for us all to say, there are no company protocol (sic), (0.2) uh but actually, we all DO things, (0.6) we all DO create, (0.2) store, retrieve, (0.2) uh handle (0.2) documents, files, whatever, (0.4) all the time_ **F7**→ (0.5) So it would be useful if you can go back to your teams, to kind of get the scope of that, and secondly (0.2) (29:00) u:h a reinforcement to the fact, that this IS gonna be on the horizon, and it WILL grow, we WILL to have (sic) involve more people, we WILL have to do some data RESEARCH, as well! (0.2) [<A> mhm]

In the sequence, Marcus makes a specific call for action (F6). He immediately legitimises it through a rationale grounded in the organisation-wide work practice of document processing and administration (A3). Subsequently, the decision formulated in F6 as an instruction is recast into a request (F7) that reinforces the need for the ITUG members to liaise with their teams and making them aware of the forthcoming change. The sequence fulfils two functions: it engages with the ITUG members by stimulating them to evaluate the talk (Account), and it focuses on the achievement of goals by making sense of the talk and articulating what needs to be done (Formulations). Further examples of this 'sandwich-like' argumentation are provided in Appendix 9.2.

In the sequential organisation of the three practices, Formulations served incrementally to progress the change. The factuality of Explanations provided the baseline from which Accounts and Formulations developed further discussions around change. The underlying themes of change remained the same; they included the expressing of confidence in the need for change, acknowledging uncertainty, being definite about the milestones of change, and advocating engagement and team working as prerequisites for organisational success. These were all spelled out in the accompanying Accounts, in which they were selectively expanded and tailored to

the content of a particular discussion (*see* Section 0). Formulations subsequently articulated the process and the principles according to which the change was to be implemented. For example, the following A-F sequence establishes a link between the need for change and the necessity of strategic investment:

Data Sample 9.3-2: Guiding through change – creating links

ITUG02_T3C_Marcus

3 <n Marcus> ... **A5**→(0.2) 'cause it's it's also about change management process (30:20) isn't it (1.7) we as an organisation are not very good A: at making decisions saying everybody will do this THIS (ff) (pounds the table loudly), and sticking to it, uh we're even worse at deciding what the THIS IS (pounces the table). ... **F9**→so (0.2) we got to bring about a culture change where everybody is actually lined up to do (taps the table) this, before we spend (30:40) ANY amount of money,

This approach of integrating the core themes with implications specific to the organisation continually generated organisation-wide involvement when the news recipients had absorbed both the gist of the discussion and a prediction of future direction.

In turn ITUG02_T3, this sustained orientation towards the effective delivery of the key messages is noticeable, for example, through the use of the inclusive 'we'. Throughout the turn, 'we' refers to four different entities: 1) 'we' as senior management who bear the responsibility for driving the change; 2) 'we' as Sharin, Marcus and another SOM who externally sought an expert opinion; 3) 'we' as an ITUG team who have to adopt the responsibility for involving staff in piloting the data and document search; and 4) 'we' as all members of the organisation. The referential boundaries among these are fluidly transgressed and never explicitly marked. This use of the inclusive 'we' was rhetorical. It was typically employed for its effect of diffusing the notion of organisational hierarchy and assisted in stimulating involvement. The self-formulating work exhibited in Marcus's turn ITUG02_T3 thus provided an insight into the structuring of news delivery at the time of change.

To obtain a longitudinal view of Formulations employed in the change management discourse, a sequence of meeting extracts recorded in the REG team over the period of eight weeks will now be reviewed. The extracts are presented chronologically over this eight-week period.

In the weekly meetings of the team, the topics⁸⁰ in all eight meetings (week 28 – week 36) revolved around aspects of organisational change. A progression could be observed both through the themes of change and through the extent to which issues were clarified and progressed in terms of their implementation. Consider the following examples:

In REG28_50, the first Formulation (F1) summarises the core external decision – the team needs to restructure:

Data Sample 9.3-3: The separation process – core decisions

REG28_T50_Peter

50 <n Peter> ... **F1**→well, [l>A:h] (0.2) from the first of April THIS year, [R>Yeah] not NEXT year, from the April of this year [R> we're supposed to be separated] the THE THEORY is, we are supposed to be separated, (13:00),
 ...**F2**→I think we need to sit down [R>Look at that individually] I think we need to put some TIME into this
 ...**F3**→so, I think, (0.8) no I think we should do that as a (0.3) TEAM, [R>Mhm] frankly, rather than you know, just TO enterprise, [S>mhm
 ...**F4**→ (0.2) well, we need to just, I think we need to get back to it.

Peter's emphasis on "THIS year" stresses the importance of the change and the fact that it is imminent. This sets the context for the current phase of talk; it also links back to previous team discussions regarding the separation within the organisation, offering that as a starting point for Peter's future talk. The two other Formulations (F2-3) expand and share Peter's thinking and commitment to setting quality time aside in order to shape prospective proposals and turn them into action. Peter is careful, too, to ensure the team is central to this emphasising "I think we need to", "so, I think (0.8), no I think we" self-correcting his Formulation in order to engage the whole team. Interestingly, Peter makes the same use of the inclusive 'we' as has Marcus in ITUG02_T3, described above. The final Formulation (F4) brings Peter's turn to an end, creates a natural place for transition, and invites the team to respond to his proposal.

Moving forward in the meeting demonstrates the transition from talk to action and how the theme of separation has been progressed to undertaking an Away Day.

Data Sample 9.3-4: The separation process – from talk to action

REG28_T104-6

104 <n Roxanne> [You don't know where you're going if you don't - - you can't see your vision]
 105 <n Ben> [When do you - - uh (0.4) do you want me to sort out the (0.2) arrangements for it_] (0.5)
 106 <n Peter> Absolutely, I mean that'd be great, I mean, I need somebody to sort out [the arrangements/ for it]

⁸⁰ See Figure 70

In turn T104, Roxanne reformulates the need for clarity and action necessary for going forward. This Formulation manifests intellectual involvement with the change imposed upon the team. Ben's turn T105 subsequently volunteers an explicit proposal to undertake the work of organising an Away Day, at which the team will be able to discuss their vision for the future. Peter endorses the proposal and confirms the decision (T106).

Meeting REG30 already features the theme of the Away Day as a central agenda point. Much of the meeting's talk is performed by Ben updating the team on the plans for the Away Day. Peter uses the closure of the topic as an opportunity to reinforce the need for thinking as freely as possible and re-affirming the change process.

Data Sample 9.3-5: The Away Day

REG30_T61_Peter

61 <n Peter> **F1**→= [But I think,] [<R>Mhm] this is - - for ME, this is about (0.2) thinking BEYOND that, [Mhm] **A1**→=I mean, I I ACCEPT, you know, in the short term, that there's no doubt about it, that people are gonna be unsettled, and UNSURE, and then, you know, they're quite right to be, (0.5) uh but because there're so many things going on, (0.2) (27:40) BUT (0.2) if we can understand, (0.5) and and have a kind of JOINT, SHARED, as much as anything, not such as having a vision, but something which is a SHARED VISION (0.2) about where we're trying to get to, (0.4) uh and some of the building blocks to do that, (0.5) uh and the PRESSURES, I mean, that's what the reality check's about the pressures, isn't it, if we've GOT a SHARED kind of (28:00) knowledge around that, then it DOES give us a chance to (1) uh kind of WITHSTAND some of that stuff, 'cause actually no, al that's - - that's short term, you know, we we know where we're going, (0.2) that's short term, and we know, and - - I mean, you know, part of it, of course, something like that (pp) (2.2) AFTER the twenty-third is to be - - I mean, if we talk about it now, (28:20) is about talking to other teams, (0.2) and talking to (name of Senior Manager), (0.2) and, you know, (0.2) and and [Mhm (p)] just to say, this is this is OUR VIEW, you know, **F2 (unfinished)**→this is what we - - (0.7) and [Mhm (p)] (1.2) All righty (p)

Peter's initial Formulation enables him to maintain the floor and to provide an off-the-cuff personal view of change and its impact on individuals. He concludes the turn with a weak unfinished Formulation, "this is what we-- (0.7) and [Mhm (p) (1.2)] All righty (p)" almost as if his thinking has moved forward to the next agenda item, after which a small talk breaks out. A couple of turns later, Samuel takes the opportunity to launch a new topic – VAT:

Data Sample 9.3-6: VAT

REG30_T73-6

73 <n Samuel> /VAT?/ (pp)
 74 <n Roxanne> You could be eggs - - (laughs) (pp)
 75 <n Ben> Yeah (pp) (smiles)
 76 <n Peter> Oh, yeah, V.A.T., (0.2) uh: RIGHT

Meeting REG33 continues the theme of developing the new vision. It takes place after the Away Day, where the idea of the creation of a new identity was suggested:

Data Sample 9.3-7: Vision – thinking it through

REG33_T319_Peter

319 <n Peter> Z→Yeah, we might do, ... F1→let's not let's not pre-judge any of that, ... I think the KEY (0.2) bit for me, A1→which is why I think we need this SHEET, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] although, you know, it's only a bit of paper, after all, F2→ (0.4) uhm (0.2) but the key for me, I think, (0.2) is just to be clear on what our process is from here, A2→I'm not hundred per cent clear on what our process is from here, (0.8) I think, it's (0.4) (51:40) it's two minutes to ten! So, I don't think we're going to get that clear, and I am a man, so I think, I want a bit of time, [<R> (laughs) (pp)] so, I can't (0.2) COPE with that, [<S> Mhm (smiles)] BUT, (0.2) if we get that bit of paper done, and then we (0.6) u:h (1) and then we (0.2) have another discussion about it, then, (0.4) I would like that that we have a clarified vision perhaps, (0.2) that will start to help us, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] (52:00) in terms of working through all that, because we can say, (0.2) THIS is where we're trying to get to, (0.2) this is the kind of the stuff what we're doing NOW, (0.2) this is what is coming up on the horizon, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] we can start to kind of get our message, F3→ well, it's - - we're trying to encapsulate that, (0.4) you know, what what we - - what KIND of organisation we wanna be representing ourselves as =

Peter commences the turn with “yeah, we might do” linking back to the past discussion point to demonstrate his engagement, after which he launches a Formulation (F1). The Formulation is aimed to gain control of the new point “I think the KEY bit for me”. It stresses KEY yet leaves this unfinished; it then progresses smoothly to an Account (A1) to justify the need for a “bit of paper” before reconnecting with the message through a further Formulation repeating ‘key’: “but the key for me, I think, (0.2) is just to be clear on what the our process is from here.” After this, Peter again moves into an extended Account expressing his ideas that he closes with Formulation Three (F3). This time the Formulation takes the form of a rhetorical question “what KIND of organisation we wanna be representing ourselves as=”.

Peter’s driving the change forward, and his asking the questions on the vision and how this needs to be communicated, prompts Maria to take the opportunity to formulate a proposal:

Data Sample 9.3-8: Vision – Declining a proposal

REG33_T320-1

320 <n Maria> = Is it worth doing another Away Day, where we go through some stakeholder, (52:20) [about what - -]

321 <n Peter> [quite possibly, but not] not right now [[[laughs) (f) /I couldn't cope with it anyway/]]

The proposal is composed in the form of a question, to which Peter responds negatively. The exchange demonstrates the adjacency pairing of a Formulation with a non-confirmation. There is a brief exchange of ideas and debate between Maria, who is still pushing the idea of another Away Day, and Peter, who is resisting. Peter asserts himself through the question “...are we done on that?” at the end of the turn T326:

Data Sample 9.3-9: Vision – a team action

REG33_T324-8

- 324 <n Roxanne> = What the message is going to be and how we have to (0.2) DELIVER it =
325 <n Maria> = and how (52:40) we manage to get it so it works across =
326 <n Peter> = Maybe so, (0.5) but that's furth- - that's in the future, [<Ma> Yeah (p)] and I don't know at the moment, I don't, I just don't know. Uhm (1.4) are we done on that?
327 <n Ben> I'll write that up.
328 <n Peter> Thank you very much, Ben, (0.5) and I'll have another go with it. (0.2) I have got a couple of AOB, do you have any other AOB?

After this, Ben takes the opportunity to formulate a proposal in the form of a statement and Peter confirms the action. A decision is made and the debate is concluded with a specific outcome. The meeting finishes a few minutes later.

The present section has described what organisations do when they try to move from point A to point B as quickly and effectively as possible in order that any disruption of the business, to the customers or of services offered is minimised. The indispensable role of Formulations in this process rests in their ability to encapsulate the key messages the organisation seeks to drive through, then to generate the action and decisions necessary to accomplishing this. It has further been illustrated that, at all times, it is in the interest of the organisation to mitigate unnecessary internal resistance; rather, its interest is to sustain and manage communication with their staff in order to guide them through change and to gain their support for the implementation of the decisions underpinning the change.

Finally, the analysis of the discourse data demonstrated that by mapping the occurrence of Formulations in the meetings, it is possible to follow the decision-making process as it evolved over time. A review of consecutive meetings has shown how, in line with Change Management theories, communication enabled change to be initiated, managed, and implemented. SOMs were highly effective in using Formulations as part of a planned and co-ordinated strategy in the delivery of key messages and it was through discussion and action that the vision and the understanding of the new work roles developed. A longitudinal set of meetings may thus indicate the extent to which the notion of change is becoming internalised and how it progresses to coordinated action undertaken by the team.

9.4. Conclusions

Ultimate solutions to problems are rational; the process of finding them is not.

(William J.J. Gordon, 1961:11, quoted in Hicks, 1995)

Chapter Nine has completed the analysis of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations undertaken in order to establish their role in the process of decision-making in business meetings. Formulations have been identified as: 1) interacting and complementing the factuality and relevance of Explanations, and 2) heavily exploiting the sequential nature and the normalising impact of Accounts. These effects of Formulations formed the basis for proposing, articulating, or making of decisions that were grounded in fact and embedded in the new context of the changing organisation.

The analysis identified Formulations as contributing directly to the decision-making process. They were often used to frame a proposition, offer a solution, and make decisions. Formulations thus served an important role of helping the team to organise and structure their thoughts. They also clarified which information was to be considered further in evaluating and adopting proposed courses of action. The analysis discussed the specific roles of news deliverers and news recipients, as well as the fluidity with which both contributed to the discourse of the decision-making process. The role of Chair, thus the role of news deliverer, was confirmed to be predominant in the offering and making of decisions in the meetings.

In the long turns, Formulations were observed to interact closely with the two other discursive practices – Explanations and Accounts. Formulations acted as the summarisers of talk, discarding information no longer appropriate, and taking forward those parts of the discussion that moved the meeting towards a specific outcome or a decision. The fixative and sense-constructing properties of Formulations therefore played a key role in both stressing and maintaining messages that were to be constituting or advancing the discussion.

Finally, it was demonstrated that the practice of formulating in business meetings is developed incrementally – one step at a time, with the purpose of building towards a proposal for action or a decision. In order to achieve such incremental progression, speakers took the opportunity to self-formulate, building the argument layer upon layer in order to create consensus and prepare the way for decisions. Self-formulation

in effect acted as a ‘conversation’ in which the speaker performed both the role of a news deliverer and a news recipient in order to maintain the floor and communicate complex messages. This property was heavily drawn on in the discourse of the meetings in the context of change management and is reviewed in the analysis reported in Section 9.3

In sum, it is clear that Formulations, as a practice in their own right, perform a number of tasks that create the potential for both proposals and decisions to flourish. It has, however, emerged from the data that the dynamic inter-relationship among all three practices, when combined, creates the optimal conditions for the decision process to develop. Due to the complexity and symbiotic nature of the practices, it is necessary to extend the time taken by speakers to deploy these effectively. Long turns therefore provide the clues for the observer as to where they should direct their research. Long, complex turns therefore created the focus of the analysis undertaken and resulted in the findings reported in the present thesis.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

The present thesis set out to examine the process of decision-making in internal meetings by undertaking an analysis of the talk that surrounds this. It anchored its analysis on a single core claim: decision-making enacted in meetings is a situated socio-linguistic process and may therefore be understood and interpreted through its constituting discourse. It further asserted that three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – are continually present in the meetings discourse and assist in progressing talk to action. On completing the analyses and on careful deliberation of the decision-making theme, it will be concluded here that the original proposition was correct and that additional insights into both the decision-making process in meetings and how the three discursive practices achieve this have been obtained.

The role of this thesis-concluding chapter is therefore to summarise the findings obtained in the course of the analysis undertaken and to open the thesis out in order to contribute to the debate of themes relevant to future linguistic studies of decision-making. In order to present the conclusions progressively, the Chapter has been structured into four sub-sections. These address, firstly, the three pragmatic themes underpinning the present thesis: meetings, decision-making, and organisational change; secondly, they re-evaluate the proposition to analyse decision-making in meetings *via* the mapping and interpretation of three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations; thirdly, the Chapter establishes the contribution achieved by the current thesis; and, finally, it appraises the overall outcome of the research undertaken in the context of the work achieved and its potential for future research.

10.1. Meetings, Decision-making, and Organisational Change: Volcanoes Just Are

The first conclusion to be drawn is that decision-making and organisational change are symbiotic, integral and existing as a consequence of each other. The purpose of the thesis was not to decide which came first; the decision to change or a change

forcing decisions to be made. Both are equally relevant. When a decision is made and implemented, change occurs; it often requires organisations to do things differently. In turn, often when enacting change, organisations are required to make decisions to ensure change is implemented, perpetuating the change/decision-making cycle. An extreme example of change is remembering that volcanoes just do sometimes erupt with severe consequences, yet people are free to decide not to live next to one. What is important to recognise, is that both decisions and change are part of organisational life. Often they are immediate and unexpected, impacting equally upon the *status quo* of the organisation. Organisations react to decisions and change, and much of this interaction occurs in workplace meetings in which action is driven by the verbal exchanges of the participants.

In this study, as a result of working with three operational teams of the host organisation over the period of one year, business meetings were defined as: planned or agreed communicative workplace interactions that take place as single events and during which a group of individuals comes together to pursue a business purpose through talk. It was observed that through meetings discussions the teams routinely communicated and facilitated the achievement of their operational goals. While carrying out their day-to-day activity, the teams also had to adapt to and manage external factors and pressures that would fundamentally change how they did business. This stimulated high levels of discussion, planning, and – ultimately – the making of decisions.

The thesis demonstrated that meetings are established as routinely-held forums of organisational life and performance; as such, they may be significantly diverse. Organisations use them, for example, to make decisions, agree future action, initiate change, implement best practice, negotiate power, or establish rules and order. Irrespective of their type and core purpose⁸¹, however, meetings always function as communicative events. That is, verbal interaction is central to their existence and to whether they will be run successfully or fruitlessly.

In turn, decisions made or announced in meetings were formulated as explicit summaries of action to be taken. At times of organisational change, the emergence of decisions was strongly associated with a concrete point in time that indicated an end to the mental process of pondering, deliberating, and choosing from a range of

⁸¹ See Figure 11 and Figure 12.

solutions available. Similarly to when hot lava is running down a mountainside, the necessity to take action, and hence make decisions within a specified deadline, prevented there being the luxury of sitting back and considering slowly all of the ‘what-to-do’ and ‘how-to-survive’ options. Organisational members were expected to react immediately to the on-going change and to adapt their work practice accordingly. Meetings ultimately provided one of the few opportunities when it was possible collaboratively to consider, discuss, and agree the making of the best decision available.

The reported analysis thus documented the discursive importance of meetings in providing the environment for progressing talk to action. Meetings were indispensable to the decision-making process regardless of whether the decision was made prior to the meeting, or whether it was arrived at through talk during the course of the meeting. In the case of the former, the meeting provided the venue where managers could obtain from their teams full support for the decisions made at a higher, executive level of the organisation. In the latter, the meetings discussion created an official platform for the sharing and exchange of ideas, information, and experience, which in turn affected the result of the team’s decision-making. In both scenarios, however, the outcome depended on the quality and content of the meeting’s interaction, that is, on how the meeting was undertaken discursively.

Furthermore, it was illustrated that the discursive management of the decision-making process reflected the nature and complexity of decisions made or announced in the meetings. Internal decisions were observed to vary in their significance, importance and potential impact. Within operational meetings, where the remit was relatively wide, both business decisions which progressed the work of the team and social decisions which maintained team cohesion and team spirit were identified. While social decisions had little impact on the operations of the teams, business decisions could fundamentally change the way in which the teams did business. The analysis addressed this pragmatic aspect of decision-making⁸². Only business decisions were considered; they were examined under the categories of fundamental, ‘cornerstone’ decisions, operational ‘slab-stone’ decisions, and ‘stepping-stone’ decisions that enabled the work of the team or individual projects to progress and evolve.

⁸² Cf. Section 3.3.1

The findings of the analysis illuminated two important aspects regarding the relationship among meetings, decision-making, and organisational change. Firstly, meetings were found to facilitate decision-making by means that surpass those of providing an opportunity of gathering to discuss work. Engaging the participants in the change process by means of their attendance, the organisation could manage potential resistance and uncertainty. Secondly, the open formulation of decisions in meetings created a smooth route of progression from ‘talking to decision-making’. Notably, and in agreement with one of the key arguments sustained throughout the present thesis, this advancement of organisational action was possible not necessarily because a decision taken was the optimal one – there exists neither a guarantee nor a method for such a result to be obtained – but because the decision reached at that point in time was considered the most appropriate or the most pragmatic by everyone present at the meeting.

In sum, perhaps the main power of meetings was observed in their ability to shift the perspectives of individuals through discourse within real time and in the official environment of the meeting. When decisions were taken in meetings, this progression was most notable. Decision-making discussions shifted the shared understanding of issues at hand. More importantly, once a decision was made, organisational members were corporately responsible for whatever it was, providing they were part of the meeting. Meetings thus created a record of what could be termed an accountable social action: the individuals’ attendance at the meeting implied their accountability and committed them to action, unless they were explicitly vocal to the converse.

Through engagement, meetings therefore changed the constellation of organisational life and progressed its action. Often, it was not the decisions that determined the importance or the quality of meetings as much as the fact that a particular meeting took place. Capturing a record of the immediacy and sequential unfolding of the multi-party interaction in meetings provided clues as to how decisions were enacted in the organisation. The next section introduces the main insights obtained through the analysis of the discursive undertaking of the decision-making process in meetings.

10.2. The practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations: Illuminating the Visible

[D]iscourse is constructive and a form of social action, further this is a form of action with regularity and pattern to it. One of the interests of social scientists engaged in discourse research is to clarify the orderly practices involved and the implications of these for the conduct of social life.

(Wetherell *et al.*, 2001/2010: 22)

It has been demonstrated why discursive undertakings in meetings bear critical implications for how decisions are made in organisations and for how personal accountability is dynamically distributed and sustained. Illuminating the visible encapsulates the spirit of the research reported: the focus on discursive practices that speakers collectively draw on as these provide a source of regularity explaining the order and pattern of social action (Wetherell *et al.*, 2010: 18). The present thesis examined the discursive practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. They were found to be closely associated with the decision-making process. Their examination brought a degree of understanding of how the conversational ‘substance’ of the decision process was developed and maintained in business meetings. Furthermore, the analysis of their combined use illuminated the discourse behind reasoning techniques employed in organisational decision-making and in the allocation both of human and of financial resources. The present section will now summarise the findings.

First of all, the exquisite nature of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations lay in their entirely unprepossessing and common characters, rather than in their being extraordinary. As the analysis demonstrated, the practices were continually present in the meetings data, to the point that many speakers were unconsciously competent in their use. Some speakers exploited the properties of the practices better than did others, and some were also more skilful in combining their overall impact on the talk at hand. The practices formed part of their ‘competency portfolio’ to perform their professional role.

Individually, each of the three practices infused meetings conversations with particular, talk-progressing qualities. These ensured the participation of meetings members and cued certain interactional patterns that members were expected to follow or typically followed. Explanations were used for their ability to provide

factuality and relevance, often reflecting the specialist role of the speaker; they also built an information pool on which the group could draw in their opinion-forming or decision-making discussions. Accounts, in contrast, created a shared vision of reality, justified a course of action, provided logical reasoning, and also acted as mitigating or softening devices among meeting participants. In addition, Accounts required participants to evaluate what was being said and, by implication, engaged them in the debate. Finally, Formulations acted as in-meeting editors, creating a progressive sense of understanding by summarising key points, maintaining specific themes, and discarding those no longer relevant. Through the act of proposals, Formulations closed down topics or made decisions.

The analysis further established that in multi-party talk the dynamics of each practice were slightly different from those reported in the traditional body of research into dual discourse situations. Explanations, particularly if they were delivered by a 'specialist', were often accepted as fact and remained unchallenged. The second-party evaluation of Accounts was typically delayed or deferred in order that more information be presented. Lastly, in order to avoid the need for second party Formulations, speakers delivering an extended contribution structured their turn into sizeable chunks, in between which they regularly self-formulated on the talk thus far. Such use of the three discursive practices had the effect of minimising the potential for interruption and assisted the speakers in maintaining or extending their turn. In multi-party interactions, these dynamics continuously contributed to the sense construction of the on-going conversation. Speakers who could use them effectively had a greater chance of influencing the discursive undertaking of the decision-making process.

Importantly for decision-making, the analysis established that the three discursive practices integrated and complemented each other. Their orderly and interrelated use as they combined to form long stretches of talk enabled speakers to hold the floor in order to build and communicate complex ideas, proposals, and decisions. Through the examination of the long turns and the discursive practices employed within these, the thesis was able to draw conclusions regarding the repeated patterning of the practices to maintain turns and of the conversational dominance of senior managers (SOMs) in meetings.

The analysis identified repeated examples of turns opening with an Explanation-Account pattern enabling the speaker to base their intended Account on a factual basis before continuing. The Account-Formulation pattern had the effect of progressing an idea incrementally when speakers first made a justification then formulated what this meant. Ultimately, doing so led to the launching of a proposal for action or the communication of a decision. It was also observed that SOMs used these approaches either to launch their own turn or to interrupt and take over another speaker's turn. This was, for example, the case of an SOM's using an Explanation to respond to another speaker's point then launching an Account of their own. Such conversational behaviour had the impact of increasing the length of time that the SOMs spoke in the meetings as well as increasing the percentage of long turns that they delivered. In long turns, the mutual complementarity of the discursive practices was instrumental in creating the conditions for a structured, systematic building of the argument, and in the formulation of logical and reasoned proposals for action. The practices thus, in effect, progressed the meeting from talk to action.

Focusing the research on the analysis of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations has illuminated the process of decision-making in two ways. Firstly, it demonstrated how discourse provides insights into the “‘nature, function and execution’ of the business-embedded professional practice”⁸³. Secondly, it contributed to the understanding of those discursive practices that are habitually employed in business meetings; previously, though, their role had either not been considered in relation to decision-making or had been regarded as less significant than it actually is.

Specifically, the study determined that the professional practice of organisational decision-making was enacted in the long turns and it was possible to draw conclusions regarding both the professional conduct and the conversational dominance and influence of senior managers (SOMs). In the meetings, SOMs extended their turns systematically to coordinate the debate of key objectives of the meeting. Their contributions characteristically featured a higher number of Formulations. SOMs were also methodical in combining the three practices to make, announce, or agree decisions. Long turns provided by project managers and other

⁸³Handford (2010: 66) citing Bhatia (2008: 172).

meeting participants typically represented contributions of ‘knowledge experts or specialists’, providing insights into specific agenda topics as part of the meeting.

It was demonstrated that although it would have been entirely possible for SOMs to make decisions without resorting to long discussions or persuasive arguments, they in most cases chose not to do so. Instead, SOMs understood, had been taught or had learned through experience that particular styles of discourse were effective in working with the team; either consciously or unconsciously, SOMs created a shared base of knowledge, a reasoned argument, then generated a consensus among the team. Such conversational management made it easier subsequently to justify a course of action and to announce decisions.

The dominance of SOMs in the decision-making process was not the primary focus of the study. However, it became clear from the examination of the discursive dynamics of the meetings that it constituted a key feature. A close analysis of the targeted and combined use of the three practices in the extended meeting turns thus helped to determine and interpret a strong example of discourse as defining professional practice at work. This offered an insight into how managers do their job and perhaps how consultants get their message across.

In the context of the present thesis, this finding regarding the conversational dominance of SOMs has implications for the decision-making process. Often, the impression given by the semi-formal business meetings is one of openness and fairness, where all individuals have an equal opportunity to present their views and opinions if they choose to do so, i.e., that the meeting is an open forum for discussion or a debate. The reality, however, that emerged from the analysis of the data, indicates that this is not necessarily the case. SOMs dominated the discussions, particularly in the use of long turns and in the making of decisions. The making of decisions was perhaps not a surprise, given that it is often the purpose of managers in operational business meetings to ratify or confirm decisions. Their share of the discourse was, nevertheless, large – and was inconsistent with their apparent ‘self-perception’ of operating in an open and inclusive fashion.

To conclude, it may seem ill-founded to interpret professional practices, such as decision-making, through authentic conversational data. Workplace conversations are, however, constitutive of the professional and social conduct within which they

exist; they both shape and reflect the patterns of social and professional interaction.⁸⁴ Discursive practices are, unlike professional and social practices that operate in the meetings as higher-order and non-textual elements, identifiable in the meetings transcripts. They are, as Handford (2010: 66-7) asserts, manifested textually in the transcripts as “recurrent patterns of linguistic behaviour” and are therefore “decipherable”. Analytical insights obtained through an examination of discourse therefore provide a way to build progressively an understanding of how such interactions unfold in the context of a particular organisation.

While organisations are usually clear on which professional and social roles need to be represented, how these are performed discursively is rarely monitored and considered. Competent use of discursive practices is typically assumed. However, such conjecture should certainly not be taken for granted. As the analysis of meetings data confirmed, the effect to which speakers were able to use the discursive practices did not always cohere with the assumed level of professionalism affiliated with the role they had in the organisation.⁸⁵ In contrast, speakers who skilfully employed the discursive practices to steer or contribute to the meeting conducted themselves more professionally and, as a result, had a greater chance of influencing the outcome of the meeting.

The analysis illuminated the discursive practices of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations: the decision-making properties of the practices and the discursive mechanism of how they affect the progression of a meeting. It, however, offered no how-to-do, mechanistic recipe for ‘cooking’ decisions in meetings. As demonstrated, the use of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations needs always to be considered in each respective situation, and their effective combined use will be dependent upon the purpose of the actual meeting. Understanding this factor and also being aware of the specific roles of the practices in talk may then have an empowering implication for the discursive undertaking of the decision process in meetings: it may change how meetings participants view their role, including their ability to influence and challenge decisions and how they behave as a consequence; that is, it may affect their professional practice and conduct in meetings.

⁸⁴ Bhatia (2008), for example, conceptualises this close and hierarchical relationship among discursive, professional, and social practices through a model of discourse spaces (introduced in Section 2.3.2) and Handford (2010) embraces an identical argument in a model integrating the practices (discursive, professional and social), text, and context.

⁸⁵ *cf.* finding of the analysis of Meeting Two presented in Section 5.2.2

10.3. Research Contribution

The research questions addressed the theme of decision-making in workplace, business meetings. It sought, by undertaking a linguistic-based empirical study, to contribute insights into the fields of Discourse Studies and Management Theory, both of which deal with this theme and are therefore closely connected. Such an approach is neither new nor at odds with recent research aiming to advance the understanding of topics that examine the nature of human organisation and action – topics that are inherently interdisciplinary.⁸⁶ This integration of disciplines originates in the increasingly widely accepted and much-quoted thought that “institutions are talked into being” (Heritage, 1984b: 290); a notion that was, for example, more recently also glossed in the foreword to the *Special Issue* on “New Directions in Organizational Communication Research”:

[C]ommunication is constitutive of organization, communication is not simply one of many factors involved in organizing; rather, it is the means by which organizations are established, composed, designed, and sustained. (Clark et al., 2008: Foreword)

The action orientation of spoken discourse and its ability to mediate between individuals and organisations in order to get work done were also central to the research enquiry pursued in the present thesis. The study undertook research into the language of business meetings by means of an analysis of three discursive practices: Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations. On reflection of the work completed, the two research questions posed at the outset of the thesis and the overall research contribution will now be summarised.

Research Question One: Why were three discursive practices – Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations – so heavily employed in the meetings talk performed by the teams at times of organisational change?

Organisational change created the context for both the operational meetings and the discourse patterns that occurred within these. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations presented the most exploited discourse resources in these meetings and their combined use was found to be integral to how decisions were made or announced in the meetings. Without exception, all strategic decisions were discursively enacted through the use of these three discursive practices.

⁸⁶ See cf. Llewellyn and Hindmarsh (2010: 3-45) for an extended debate of this topic.

The recurrence in the talk of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations derived from the dual purpose of the meetings: to enact an organisation-wide change, and to facilitate the process of decision-making. In the context of change, the three practices enabled complex ideas and proposals to be communicated. As constituents of the decision-making process, the practices were exploited for their action-oriented and talk-progressing qualities. They ensured an incremental build-up of coherence and sense-construction in the discussions, and managers also used them to progress the meetings agenda. At an organisational level, the practices had the effect of eliminating or minimising potential conflict, particularly important at times of change.

The individual properties of the practices⁸⁷ were effective especially in managing the elements of uncertainty and resistance, two of the potentially greatest inhibitors to the change process. Explanations were employed for their ability to disseminate information on neutral grounds; Accounts created a new reality and normalised it in the context of the changing organisation; and Formulations articulated the key messages and decisions that had to be accepted across the whole organisation in order for the change to take effect.

In addition, the high frequency of the practices in the meetings corresponded with the generic structure and expected progression of the meetings. The meetings purpose set a concrete target regarding the required or anticipated outcome. This in turn determined the rules of how the meeting participants should behave in terms of their conversational conduct. Specifically, when decisions had to be announced, made or implemented, it was considered almost mandatory that factual information would be pooled, participants' views evaluated, and conclusions from the respective debates clearly articulated and even minuted. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations fitted in with these expectations. They facilitated the development of the individual parts of the meeting, as well as undertaking discursively the professional roles held by the participants.

In sum, the frequent and strategic use of the practices was thus confirmed through their affiliation with both the process of change and decision-making. As argued in Section 10.1, change and decision-making existed in a close symbiotic relationship: change pervaded the organisation in the form of an underlying discourse theme,

⁸⁷ See Sections 7.3., 8.3., and 9.3. for a fuller description of the properties of each of the practices.

evoked every time the organisation needed to activate resources or give reasons for their allocation. In the words of Iedema and Scheeres (2009: 82), for modern organisations, “change has become the ‘name of the game’”. Launched as a necessity to react to the dynamic market forces, change is presented as a given. Within its tenets it becomes easier to announce or implement organisational re-structuring or make other, fundamental business decisions. Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations created the discursive mechanism for the co-existence and successful working of these processes. That is, decision-making and change were in fact talked into being through an effective use of the three discursive practices.

Research Question Two: How, when, and where were Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations employed in meetings, and how did they contribute to the process of the team decision-making?

The practices are continually present in talk either singularly or in combinations. It was typically the combined use of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations which constituted the long turns in the meetings. Such extended contributions were identified as significant, with decisions occurring within or in the vicinity of these long turns. Each practice fulfilled its own role in constructing the sense-making necessary to the articulation of proposals and decisions. When combined and organised sequentially into certain patterns, the practices increased their impact and aided the speaker in the strategic organisation of their contribution. Specifically, the patterns to have emerged as analytically interesting included the positioning of Explanations at the start of Combination turns, where they established the factuality and relevance of the ensuing contribution; it was followed by the chaining of Accounts and Formulations, incrementally building the debate, summarising it at key points, then moving to the next accounting sequence or making a decision.

Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations were constitutive of the majority of long turns featured in the meetings analysed. It may be asked why this was the case. Two answers proposed by this study are:

- The practices drove discursively the process of change that was ongoing in the organisation at the time. The three practices enabled long turns to be maintained in order for speakers, in this thesis predominantly SOMs, to convey messages and arguments central to the implementation of change;

- The reduction in the use of discourse to selected practices paralleled that observed by Heritage (2004: 110-115) in institutional discourse. The need for talk to be considered acceptable and meaningful in the context of operational meetings and their limited time constrained the type of talk produced in meetings. Speakers therefore streamlined their talk by using such discursive practices that were effective in sharing information, developing professional views, and moving the debate forward.

Overall, the present thesis contributed to the understanding of the decision-making process in three ways:

Firstly, the thesis conceptualised the link between decision-making, organisational change, and discourse, and determined an approach for the undertaking of a linguistic analysis of the research theme. It conceptualised the theme researched through combining general models describing either business, change or discourse-analytic processes specific to decision-making. When expanded to accommodate the discourse perspective on decision-making, the models assisted in determining both the textual boundaries and the approach to the processing of the transcribed data that would be subjected to a closer analysis. For example, Handy's purposes of meetings when overlain with the expected types of decisions indicated a greater likelihood of business decisions at the operational and strategic levels; the IPO model identified the context in which meetings took place and an approximation of when a decision could be made, and Bhatia's multi-perspective model of discourse spaces aided the design of the dual macro-/micro-approach towards the analysis.

Secondly, it advanced the application of CA by developing a modified CA approach towards the analysis of decision-making dynamics in business meetings. By targeting long turns, as opposed to taking the traditionally narrow focus on conversational data, the analysis enabled the processing of a relatively large volume of transcripts as well as the examination of the sequential nature of the practices as they were employed in talk. The methodology included the production of interactional matrices, an analysis of the turn-by-turn organisation of meetings talk in relation to business decisions that were made or announced in the meetings, deconstruction of extended turns into their constituent practices, and an examination of their individual roles and their combined use in the meetings. In order to allow for a systematic interpretation of the practices in their connection to decision-making, the analysis

also developed a set of sub-codes describing the specific functions of each practice (*see* Section 2.3.4).

Thirdly, the study generated some novel findings regarding the roles of the three discursive practices and their relationship(s) to decision-making. It clarified and enhanced the role of Explanations in that a distinction was drawn between Explanations and Accounts, demonstrating the related yet substantially diverse functions each performed in the decision-making process in business meetings. Also, the findings furthered the established communicative roles of Accounts and Formulations. These specifically provide insight into the combined effect of the two practices resulting from their repeated use in the meetings (*see* Figure 56) and into the differences in the dynamic use of Formulations by SOMs and by other meeting participants (*see* Figure 60). Throughout the report, graphs and tables reviewing and summarising the interactional dynamics in the meetings, or demonstrating visually the sequential and interactive properties of the three practices have been provided.

The practical application of the findings may therefore be assumed as essentially twofold. One practical strand leads back to the environment of business organisations where, in the spirit of “partnership research”,⁸⁸ the findings may be contested, re-visited, and further honed in the context of authentic business interactions. Such an initiative will help to raise the profile and significance of talk as constituting an integral part of organisational models and perhaps be deserving of greater consideration in these in the future. Collaboration with partnership organisations will also nurture what may later become the second, the applied, use of the CA insights obtained: to interpret and describe the communicative behaviours associated with the act of decision-making in such a way that the research findings may inform communication teaching and training.

⁸⁸ The term “partnership research” has been explained and advocated, for example, by Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2001, 2002). Also, Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 2) evoke a similar notion in their argument for grounding the workplace communication research in “ethics of practical relevance”, as discussed in Section 0.

10.4. Limitations and Future Direction

The research undertaken considered yet chose not to incorporate a number of features that could have enhanced the robustness and validity of the research findings presented. These might be listed as:

- The breadth and diversity of data collected and analysed: although the study adopted a longitudinal approach, collecting and analysing a relatively large volume of spoken data, its focus was limited to three teams within one organisation; the findings therefore are representative solely of the communication practices embedded in one organisation.
- Decision-making was approached *via* an analysis of audio data: although these are considered to be primary by CA, interesting further insights might have been obtained through an analysis of a multi-modal research corpus.
- The tools developed for the analyses of the interactional behaviours in the meetings were designed empirically and the processing of the data was in the main undertaken manually: this was highly labour-intensive as was the transcription and coding of the multi-party spoken data; should the study be replicated on a larger scale, it would be worth considering the technological possibilities of adopting or developing software to assist with elements of the analysis.
- The findings regarding the power distribution in meetings, such as the discursive dominance and influence of SOMs described in Section 10.2, possibly mirror those likely to be obtained by applying the top-down, analytical approach of CDA (Fairclough, 1992): comparing the approaches of CA and CDA and re-considering the strengths of their complementary views could provide further insights into the construction of decision-making in meetings.
- Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations have predominantly been examined in terms of their sequential unfolding and organisation in meetings, whereas less attention was paid to elaborating their other discursive properties in greater detail. It was, however, noticed throughout the research that individual participants create for themselves specific conversational

habits that present inherent constituents of the communication practices they use in meetings. These include, for example, expressions of listing (e.g., “Two points, ...”), gisting (e.g., “And so, ...”; “What I (don’t) think this means is, ...”) or emphasising (“And clearly,...”; “I absolutely think”; “And one thought”). As these features contribute lexically to the construction of sense and reason in meetings, they might provide additional facets of refining the construction and use of the practices in naturally occurring talk. These features could also be explored more systematically using corpus-based analysis.

- Finally, the identification of the three practices and of their respective roles in the decision-making process was a major finding of the research undertaken. Individually, Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations represent substantial topics of study. Future work would therefore benefit from exploring in greater detail their impact within talk.

The overall aim of the project was exploratory in determining if it was possible to map the decision-making process by understanding how three discursive practices operate in talk, thus to have gone down any of the above avenues could have been premature. The findings, albeit novel, will continue to benefit from further debate and refinement, within which some of the current limitations may present opportunities for future work to be undertaken. A number of these is set out below:

- Being situated in the context of organisational change, the findings could be of interest to researchers who explore Change Management Theory and the role of communication in facilitating the change process. As touched upon in Chapter One, talk and communication in change models are conventionally acknowledged to be important, yet there is usually no detailed appreciation of how this talk could, if used properly, facilitate the change process. Specifically, the present thesis has provided concrete examples of how the three discursive practices made the shift from discussion to action and how they were used by SOMs in guiding teams through change.
- A similar comment also applies to Management and Decision-making Theory, as discussed in Section 1.1. Talk is an important factor progressing various stages of decision-making models and facilitating the decision

process; a deeper insight into the use of particular discourse techniques that assist the decision-making is, however, rarely provided.

- Having identified three particular discursive practices that assist in the decision-making process creates the scope to develop and improve on existing management training programmes around effective communication, negotiating, influencing, and decision-making. For example, while the IPO model introduced in Section 2.3.1 or Handy's model of meetings purposes introduced in Section 3.2.1 provide graphic illustrations of how meetings operate in the context of organisations, the findings of the present research may further demonstrate how discourse enacts change within these.
- Discursively, the findings invite further research expanding on the notion of the fluidity of roles in business meetings. Specifically, to explore how speakers, and SOMs in particular, move seamlessly between being both information givers and information receivers. Determining the mechanisms of how the three discursive practices assist in making such shifts and how they enable experienced speakers to maintain and extend their turn has the potential to inform future management training.
- Finally, throughout the research it was noted that individuals had particular styles which they continually used in their extended stretches of discourse. A further area of potential research might be to develop a record and analysis of such interactional styles and to explore which of these contributes most effectively to the discursive undertaking of the decision process in meetings.

To conclude, the research reported has taken the first step towards appraising and confirming the rationale for examining socio-linguistic processes, such as decision-making, through their constituting discourse. Analytically, the thesis has expanded the existing CA methodology and applied it to the examination of authentic multi-party meetings data. The approach was innovative in that it considered extended stretches of talk and examined these in the situated environment of ongoing organisational change. The analysis confirmed the role and combined effect of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in the meetings conversations and established the link between the practices and decision-making. Based on the body of data collected over the period of one year, the study generated a set of findings that

have the potential to be further expanded by various research disciplines. In sum, the analysis undertaken has demonstrated that the examination of discourse is highly revealing of the social world around us and is therefore most exciting to explore.

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Appendices

Appendix 2.1: Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed

Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed (Data Set One)												
Meeting	Data Set	Meeting Code	Transcript Code	Start Time	Finish Time	Length of Interaction	Date recorded	Venue	No. of part.	Male	Female	Pseudonym
REG14	1											
		REG14_001940	REG14_000000MV	0:00:00	0:19:40	0:19:40	07.09.2005	Meeting room	7	5	2	Ben (Chair), Dough (guest - CEO), Andrew, Roxanne, Mark, Maria, Kevin
REG15	1											
		REG15_001007	REG15_000000MV	0:00:00	0:10:07	0:10:07	14.09.2005	Meeting room	6	3	3	Samuel (Chair), Karyn (visitor - Marketing Manager), Roxanne, Mark, Maria, Ben
ITA05	1											
		ITA05_011143	ITA05_003017MV	0:30:17	1:11:43	0:41:26	15.06.2005	Meeting room	5	3	2	Adam (Chair), Julia, Max, Sam, Dee (visitor - external contractor)
ITA18	1											
		ITA18_004722	ITA18_001511MV	0:15:11	0:47:22	0:32:11	03.11.2005	Meeting room	6	4	2	Joseph (Chair), Max, Sam, Rachel, Zak, Dee (visitor - external contractor)
					TOTAL	1:43:24						

Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed (Data Set Two - 1/3)

Meeting	Data Set	Meeting Code	Transcript Code	Start Time	Finish Time	Length of Interaction	Date recorded	Venue	No. of part.	Male	Female	Pseudonym
REG28	2						26.01.2006					
		DE	REG28_000957DE	0:09:57	0:37:20	0:27:23		Meeting room	7	4	3	Peter (Chair), Ben, Maria, Roxanne, Mike, Ida, Samuel,
REG29	2						01.02.2006					
		DE	REG29_004100DE	0:41:00	1:03:12	0:22:12		Meeting room	7	6	3	Peter (Chair), Ben, Samuel, Roxanne, Ida, Mike, (Maria, Andrew, Kevin – join later)
REG30	2						08.02.2006					
		DE	REG30_001700DE	0:17:00	0:29:16	0:12:16		Meeting room	7	6	1	Peter (Chair), Ben, Samuel, Roxanne, Mike, Kevin, Andrew
REG31	2						16.02.2006					
		DE	REG31_001433DE	0:14:33	0:17:07	0:02:34		Meeting room	6	4	2	Peter (Chair), Ben, Samuel, Roxanne, Ida, Mike
REG32	2						22.02.2006					
		DE	REG32_001247DE	0:12:47	0:20:49	0:08:02		Meeting room	9	6	3	Peter (Chair), Ben, Samuel, Roxanne, Ida, Mike, Maria, Kevin, Andrew
REG33	2						01.03.2006					
		DE	REG33_003020DE	0:30:20	0:55:00	0:24:40		Meeting room	8	5	3	Peter (Chair), Ben, Samuel, Roxanne, Ida, Mike, Maria, Andrew
REG34	2						08.03.2006					
		DE	REG34_000303DE	0:03:03	0:09:00	0:05:57		Meeting room	7	4	3	Samuel (Chair), Ben, Roxanne, Ida, Kevin, Maria, Andrew
REG35	2						22.03.2006					
		DE	REG35_002040DE	0:20:40	0:54:00	0:33:20		Meeting room	7	5	2	Samuel (Chair), Ben, Roxanne, Ida, Kevin, Mike, Andrew
REG36	2											
		REG36_005550	REG36_000000M	0:00:00	0:55:50	0:55:50	29.03.2006	Meeting room	5	4	1	Peter (Chair), Andrew, Ben, Kevin, Roxanne
					TOTAL	3:12:14						

Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed (Data Set Two - 2/3)

Meeting	Data Set	Meeting Code	Transcript Code	Start Time	Finish Time	Length of Interaction	Date recorded	Venue	No. of part.	Male	Female	Pseudonym
ITUG01	2											
		ITUG01_011727	ITUG01_000140M	0:01:40	1:17:27	1:15:47	22.06.2005	Meeting room	10	7	3	Sharin (Chair), Liz (minutes), Alistair, Amanda, Mike, Steve, Duncan, Ron, Cohen, Bridget
ITUG02	2											
		ITUG02_012921					16.08.2005	Meeting room	11	9	2	Marcus (Chair), Liz (minutes), Sharin, Alistair, Amanda, Mike, Steve, Duncan, Ron, Cohen, George
		DE	ITUG01_002220DE	0:22:20	0:33:07	0:10:47						
		DE	ITUG01_003858DE	0:38:58	0:41:12	0:02:14						
		DE	ITUG01_004606DE	0:46:06	0:49:20	0:03:14						
		DE	ITUG01_004943DE	0:49:43	0:51:26	0:01:43						
		DE	ITUG01_005133DE	0:51:33	0:53:42	0:02:09						
		DE	ITUG01_005816DE	0:58:16	1:01:28	0:03:12						
			ITUG01_010234DE	1:02:34	1:05:18	0:02:44						
ITUG03	2											
		ITUG03_005250					11.10.2005	Meeting Room	9	7	2	Mike (Chair), Liz (minutes), Sharin, Alistair, Amanda, Steve, Duncan, Ron, Cohen
		DE	ITUG02_001947DE	0:19:47	0:23:30	0:03:43						
		DE	ITUG02_002540DE	0:25:40	0:28:21	0:02:41						
		DE	ITUG02_003043DE	0:30:43	0:31:34	0:00:51						
		DE	ITUG02_003328DE	0:33:28	0:39:22	0:05:54						
		DE	ITUG02_004140DE	0:41:40	0:43:03	0:01:23						
		DE	ITUG02_004549DE	0:45:49	0:50:27	0:04:38						

Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed (Data Set Two - 3/3)												
Meeting	Data Set	Meeting Code	Transcript Code	Start Time	Finish Time	Length of Interaction	Date recorded	Venue	No. of part.	Male	Female	Pseudonym
ITUG04	2											
		ITUG04_010718					07.12.2005	Meeting Room	9	7	2	Marcus (Chair), Liz (minutes), Sharin, Alistair, Amanda, Mike, Steve, Ron, Cohen
			ITUG04_001548DE	0:15:48	0:28:53	0:13:05						
			ITUG04_004201DE	0:42:01	0:46:46	0:04:45						
			ITUG04_005228DE	0:52:28	1:06:56	0:14:28						
ITUG05	2											
		ITUG05_003151					01.02.2006	Meeting Room	8	6	2	Marcus (Chair), Liz (minutes), Sharin, Alistair, Amanda, George, Mike, Cohen, Duncan, Ron, Steve
			ITUG05_000640DE	0:06:40	0:11:20	0:04:40						
ITUG06	2											
		ITUG06_005535					28.03.2006	Meeting Room	8	7	1	Marcus (Chair), Sharin, Alistair, Amanda, Cohen, Liz, Ron, Steve
			ITUG06_000248DE	0:02:48	0:09:14	0:06:26						
			ITUG06_003520DE	0:35:20	0:49:28	0:14:08						
			ITUG06_005239DE	0:52:39	0:55:05	0:02:26						
					TOTAL	3:00:58						

Data Overview – Meetings Transcribed (Other Supplementary)												
Meeting	Data Set	Meeting Code	Transcript Code	Start Time	Finish Time	Length of Interaction	Date recorded	Venue	No. of part.	Male	Female	Pseudonym
REG05	Other	DE	REG05_00000DE01	0:00:00	0:02:00	0:02:00	29.06.2005	Meeting Room	7	4	2	Peter (Chair), Ben, Maria, Mike, Kevin, Roxanne, Samuel
REG10	Other	DE	REG10_00000DE01	0:00:00	0:02:04	0:02:04	03.08.2005	Meeting Room	6	4	2	Ben (Chair), Kevin, Maria, Mike, Roxanne, Samuel
REG16	Other	DE	REG16_00000DE01	0:00:00	0:01:04	0:01:04	21.09.2005	Meeting Room	9	6	3	Peter (Chair), Andrew, Ben, Ida, Maria, Mike, Kevin, Roxanne, Samuel
					TOTAL	0:05:08						

Appendix 2.2: Transcription Conventions

Transcription Conventions

<Name >	speakers' names or other identification at the beginning of a turn
.	falling intonation at end of a turn, or at the end of a tone unit ('sentence') within a turn
,	slightly rising intonation at end of a turn, or at the end of a tone unit within a turn, e.g. showing continuation
?	high rising intonation at end of a turn or "sentence"
!	animated intonation
:	colon following vowel indicates elongated vowel sound
::	extra colon indicates longer elongation
(1.5)	noticeable pause or break between or within utterances, length indicated in seconds given in round brackets/parentheses
-	truncated, unfinished word
--	sound abruptly cut off - false start (but not an unfinished word)
CAPS	emphatic stress
/ /	words between slashes show uncertain transcription, transcriber's best guess
/?/	indicates inaudible word: one ? substitutes for up to one word
/??/	indicates inaudible utterances of more than one word
[onset of overlapping or simultaneous speech
]	end of overlapping or simultaneous speech
[[onset of second consecutive overlapping or simultaneous speech

-]]** end of second consecutive overlapping or simultaneous speech
- []** utterances or back-channel responses interjected by a speaker/speakers within another speaker's turn
- ()** non-linguistic information, e.g., pauses, speakers' gestures, actions, time intervals, anonymised identities
- (10:20)** time markers, every 20 seconds
- (laughs)** indicates laughter by one speaker
- (all laugh)** indicates general laughter in multi-party interactions
- (laugh)** specific speakers
- (p)** *piano*
- (pp)** pianissimo
- (f)** *forte*
- (ff)** fortissimo

Use of standard contractions, e.g., isn't, aren't, hasn't, haven't, hadn't, don't, doesn't, didn't, won't, shan't, shouldn't, wouldn't, couldn't, needn't, mustn't, yeah, 'til

Use of non-standard contractions: gonna, dunno, wanna, ain't, 'cos, gotta

**Appendix 6.1: A Textual Analysis of Turns REG36_T22C and
ITUG01_T265C**

1) Meeting REG36_T22C: Textual analysis

MICRO_REG36_T22C - Part 1/4					
PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
A1	REF	YES	sets the scene, introduces the idea something important is going to happen	A tactical use of an Account to open the meeting	Uh (1.5) to be honest, it's- it's a bit of a sh- shame, there aren't so many people here today, (laughs) (self-reflecting) (0.2) because I did wanna announce something, and uh it would be (01:20) quite nice, for everyone, but at least, (0.3) perhaps a FEW MORE, to be here. Eh, where's Maria? Do you know where Maria is [<R> Ye:ah_] I spoke to her yesterday on the phone, but (1) (has a sip of coffee) I didn't- -, no, I meant to ASK her when I was on the phone, but you know, I was a bit (0.2) stressed, at the time, (0.2) so, I didn't, but eh (0.2), and Mike's off, isn't he, and Samuel's off, I suppose that's everyone, isn't it actually. [<A> Mhm] T hat's pretty much everyone, isn't it, actually. [<A> Mhm] [<K> /T hat's it/] Uh (0.5) (01:40)
F1	SC	YES	gist, summarises what has been agreed prior to the meeting or externally	The use of Formulation in helping to build towards the decision	Because, when we had u:h (1) the AWAY DAY, obviously we went through, and we did quite a lot of work around, (0.7) eh our vision, and what we're trying to achieve, and some of the kind of the (0.4) BARRIERS, I suppose, as much as anything in- in terms of uh (0.2) uh (0.3) achieving that. (0.2)
F2	SC	YES	upshot, sets out current implications for team future	The use of Formulation in helping to build towards the decision	And clearly, (0.2) I think , (0.2) one of the things that came very very clear from that, (02:00) was that (0.2) umm , (0.2) where we are NOW, we are in a- - (0.4) uh we're in - - we're in an ok position, in terms of (0.3) the things (0.2) that we've got (0.4) uh the the delivery, you know, oh six oh seven,
A2	MPO	YES	acknowledging a counterargument, the perspective most likely representing the views of the team, creating an awareness that there are still long-term underpinning issues	The choice and use of language to demonstrate a personal view	and I mean, you know, we haven't done the BUDGET , you know, well, it's ok budget process thinking, well, it looks ok, it's TOUGH, (0.2) you know, it's not not not gonna be easy, (02:20) (0.2) 'nd there is some things in there that we haven't got yet, but let's draw a gla- veil over that for a minute.
F3	SC	YES	restating the problem	Bulding towards a decision - repetition	(0.2) But FUNDAMENT ALLY, the real issue becomes in oh seven oh eight,
E1	SOF	YES	re-emphasising the problem by providing factual info about contracting position and potential	Bulding towards a decision - providing factual information	because actually in oh seven oh EIGHT , the SRB6 comes - - has come to an end, eh (national business support organisation) money obviously comes to an end, not that there's a lot of that available for us this year, there's a (02:40) little bit. (0.2) Uh uh, you know, we've got some some SCOPE, to do some things around that this year.

MICRO_REG36_T22C - Part 2/4

PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
F4	SC	YES	F drawing an implication, creates a logical link between the problem and the proposed decision	Creating the need for action.	But in in oh seven oh eight, all these things start to disappear, so, (0.2) our ABILITY to BID, and our ABILITY to WORK on, those (0.2) who are (0.5) putting, y'know potential funding opportunities out there, uh (03:00) and try, and INFLUENCE, and and and MANAGE, what THEY come up with, STRUCTURE those opportunities, umm ALL that stuff is REALLY REALLY VITAL.
F5	SC	YES	F of Peter's thinking, Peter's professional interpretation of the situation	Providing a personal view on the issue at hand.	(1) So, I GOT to thinking, (0.2) well, (0.2) umm to what extent are we - as we are NOW, the way we are structured, and the way we we sit as a team, GEARED towards (03:20) (0.7) DEALING with that situation, and actually GETTING those bits together, you know, WHO'S responsible, how we're gonna make these things happen.
F6	SC	YES	F1 + F2, synthesis of the information presented to date with a start summary 'we're NOT ready', F combining the two previous positions and funnelling the discussion further to the decision	Synthesising - use of 'metaformulations'.	And (0.2) umm, (0.5) I can't help it, I suppose in the end, I came to the conclusion that, (2) we are NOT! really (laughs) (self-reflective) I suppose, it's a simple answer, you know, it's a bit hit and miss,
A3	MPO	YES	giving a specific example of the inefficiencies of the current team structure	Exemplifying.	you know, I - for example, (03:40) I am writing a bid on regeneration capital in the East, (0.2) and Samuel and Maria are writing it on the West, (0.2) and, you know, and then there's NRF, well, I've done a bit of the stuff into NRF, but you know, who else has really been involved on that, you get a little bit of Samuel, a little bit of the enterprise side, umm (0.2) you know, (0.5) there's a whole string of things, aren't there,
F7	FP	YES	Decision proposal, starts to paint a new reality	Drawing implications.	and I think, you know, whi- - what (0.2) struck me most forcibly, (04:00) was that (1.5.) what (0.7) what I think we need to do, (0.7) is to MOVE to a structure, that enables us (0.2) to to have some real FOCUS around bidding, (0.2) and and I I think the other kind of BIG area, which is- - sits ALONGSIDE the bidding, uh (0.3) but is- - you know, is is a separate process (04:20) in itself, but but sits very close to the bidding, (0.4) is (0.2) the kind of influencing (0.2) side, which is around that kind of going being involved on the strategic groups, (0.2) talking to the councillors, (0.2) talking to- -, (0.2) you know, people in city councils, on- - so that it enables us to get access to things. (0.2)

MICRO_REG36_T22C - Part 3/4

PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
A4	MPO	YES	Re-emphasising the inefficiencies of the team and stressing his resolve to address this, A progressing into F, followed by a decision. The A prepares the team for the announcement of the decision and aims to smooth the way for the acceptance of the decision by the team	Bridging the now with what needs to be changed.	And I mean I think, you know, probably if you look back in time, as well, you probably see some things like, (04:40) (0.3) like Enterprise Cities, (0.2) is a good example, where, (0.3) you know, we made a bit of an effort, really, but there wasn't really a FOCUS, you know, within the team, because, you know, (0.2) WELL, (0.2) the REALITY is, (0.3) the way we're structured at the moment, if you think about THOSE ROLES, (0.2) those kind of bidding and and delivery sort of roles, (0.2) is that, it - it sits in everyone's JOB, (f) doesn't it? Everyone's got (05:00) a bit of bidding, and a bit of delivery (laughs) (self-reflecting), and (0.2) at the end of the DAY, you know, (0.2) the delivery is always gonna WIN, 'cause (0.2) that's there, (0.2) you've a contract, [Mhm] you know, and they are cracking the whip, they wanna see the outputs, and they wanna see the spend, and you know, we gotta do this form, we gonna get that done by this date, (0.2) so, the bidding kind of drifts (0.5) a little bit, (0.2) and the
F8	FPD	YES	Cornerstone DECISION	Announcing a cornerstone decision.	(0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) which is a little bit scary, (laughs) [(all laugh)] for all of us_
Z1		YES	META language, provides a route map for the next part of the meeting discussion, Peter starts to open the debate	Discourse guiding.	Um m, (0.5) but, (0.4) (06:00) what I wanna do today, what I'm gonna do today, (0.2) is to share with you, (0.5) where I - where - - what I think uh we should be doing, um m, (0.5) and how I think, how we should DO it.

MICRO_REG36_T22C - Part 4/4

PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
F9	FP	YES	outlining a new structure, new ways of working, presented as an opinion, proposal	Setting out the change.	(0.4) Uh, (1) FUNDAMENTALLY, (0.2) I think, (0.2) we should have, uh (06:20) (0.5) TWO TEAMS within the (0.2) the (0.5) department, whatever you wanna call it, (0.5) uh (0.2) ONE focusing on delivery, (0.2) and getting the delivery th- done, (0.2) so, you've got managers there responsible for (0.2) ALL of the delivery contracts, that we have, (0.5) and then, (0.4) a bidding and influencing (06:40) TEAM, (1) with the bidding and influencing managers, so a manager on both of those, and a and a list of uh (0.4) uh (0.4) you know, the kind of, s- - so- - some ind- - individuals in there, as much as anything, that are FOCUSED on (0.5) the people who work with partnerships, (0.2) and people who work with the: you know, (07:00) all the relationship development side.
F10	SC	YES	Peter re-emphasises how he anticipates the team will work in future	Being clear on what the change means, what you want from people.	(0.8) NOW, (0.3) I mean, I THINK, (0.3) THAT'S NOT to say (f), that (0.2) there wouldn't be (0.2) lots of this going on, I mean, CLEARLY, there WOULD, (0.2) and and I mean, I think, for example, the bidding, for instance, is an example, (0.2) um m (0.4) what we CAN'T do, (0.4) is (0.2) say, RIGHT, (0.2) (07:20) well, THAT person does all the bidding, and they're gonna write all the bids, 'cause that's clearly NOT gonna work, [<R> Mhm] you know, I mean, it it clearly COULDN'T work, because, (0.2) one individual couldn't have all of the knowledge [<R> Mhm] around (0.7) ALL of the different aspects of what we DO, (0.2)
F11	FP	YES	Unfinished decision presented as a proposal	Being definite in what you say.	BUT (f), (0.2) I'm - - I ABSOLUTELY THINK, that we need somebody who is responsible for (0.2) =

2) Meeting ITUG01_T265C: Textual analysis

MICRO_ITUG01_T265C - Part 1/2					
PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
E1	EXP	NO	Acknowledging the existence of a technical solution, explaining a technical solution does not stand alone, and asserting that the organisation now needs to define its document management requirements in greater detail in order to select the specific technical solution to meet these.	Challenging people to think wider, use of a formulaic expression to emphasise the key message	Uh (0.3) (64:00) TECHNICALLY, technically, the the technology is - - has advanced SO MUCH, in terms of document management, (0.3) SO MUCH, that (0.2) if you if you GO for a DEMO, and HAVE a LOOK at systems, you think, WHOA! You know, this will do everything I want it to do. Technical, so technical solutions, we we are spoilt for choice. There are so many choices out there, that we could that we could look into, and implement in place. (64:20) And as I said, (0.2), I think I mentioned it earlier, it would be a piece of cake, from the I.T. perspective, to just grab a system, (0.2) get a server, get tons of disk space, (0.2) and say to people, scan and (0.2) store your data, whatever. [<A> Mhm] That's that's the EASY bit.
A1	REF	NO	Bridging the expectations of the group with the reality of how technical solutions work and advocating the decision on the new system is deferred.	Introducing another level of complexity, inviting involvement from the users; using language to paint the complexity of a solution and that it will require a great deal of effort and buy-in if it is to succeed	The the more CHALLENGING bit IS, (0.2) to understand EXACTLY how you want to use it, and how we can make it EASY for you to use, in terms of (0.2) STORING your data, (64:40) INDEXING them correctly, 'cause (0.2) you will have thousands and thousands of documents to store in there. [<R> Mhm] Because you don't want to be spending time THEN (f), when it comes to the CRUNCH, [<R> Yeah] and you want to to LOOK at the client's file, spend two hours searching for it, because then, we haven't achieved much.
F1	SC	NO	Formulating the bottom line, summarising the preferred direction	Putting forward a clear view of the discussed matter.	And that's the challenge, we need to get a system in place, that (0.2) we're ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about, WHAT (65:00) requirements is it going to address, (0.4) and the requirements definition, that is where we are struggling as a group, and and the document management group.

MICRO_ITUG01_T265C - Part 2/2

PR.	Sub-code	IMPACT on DM	FUNCTION	NOTES on the IMPACT	Original Text
A2	REF	NO	Bridging understanding across the organisation, Using language to communicate arguments generating trust.	Assessing progress, comparing between now and in the future, engaging the group, facilitates the 'talking through' change	Uh (0.4) but we're MAKING some progress, and and we're CONFIDENT, you know, if we get the BACKING of the executive board, in terms of (0.2) spending MONEY on this system, uh (0.2) then, we will have a system in place, which will (0.8) absolutely (65:20) (0.2) make it easier for people, (0.2) DEFINITELY, it will, (0.2) it will, NO DOUBT, be an improvement to the current system, because the current system is just chaos. (0.2) [<A> Mhm] So, any system will be better. But we REALLY want to get it ABSOLUTELY right. So, (0.4) in in a year's time, we could (0.2) SCALE that up, and expand on the usage, without having to say, oh, (0.3) the system's no good, we can't do any more, the Chamber has to go somewhere else.
F2	SC	NO	Repeating the summary of the preferred direction	Being explicit in communicating the key message.	And that's the (65:40) challenge now. It's getting something that we could BUILD upon, and two three four five years' time, we'd we'd be ABSOLUTELY (0.6) dependent on that system, (0.5) you're with me? (0.2) And that's where we're now.
F3	SC	NO	Drawing an implication, linking back to the question, closing the agenda point	Linking back to close a query	So, (0.2) THAT feedback, I guess, is what what is to be expected, [<R> Mhm] at this stage, unless we feed more to the team to say, ok, HERE'S what we plan to do, (66:00) what do you THINK. Uh (0.4) but we're not at that stage yet. So we'll uh - - =

Appendix 7.1: Singular Explanations - REG36 and ITUG01

Textual Evidence

Example of sequencing of Explanations in singular turns; feeds into the decision process: T67 – proposes an alternative view on the planned role; T71 – comments on the planned role by providing insight into the current work process

DS01_REG36: Sequencing of Explanations in Singular Turns (SOF/EXP – EXP)

- 67 <n Andrew> I think /??/ (22:00) if (name of aforementioned colleague) is away, (0.8) she's got no back up, (0.2) whereas if there's an admin support there, [<P> That's a good point] as a SECONDEE, (0.2) not secondee, I mean SECOND, really, [<P> Yeah, I know what you're saying] It might not mean ALL the admin functions are removed to (name of aforementioned colleague), it may be worth looking (0.4) at (0.2) aligning one MORE closely.
- 68 <n Peter> Mhm, (0.2) I know, [you are right]
- 69 <n Andrew> [Perhaps it's] a fifty fifty (22:20), perhaps it's a, well, (0.2) can't we really do it fifty-fifty_
- 70 <n Peter> Ye:::ah (sighs) (f), l- - (laughs) (self-reflective)
- 71 <n Roxanne> But, I mean I think the - - (0.4) THAT (0.2) THAT generally, or at the way it works at the moment, and the only way that it can work is that, if (0.3) if anything happens there, then it has to go (0.2) uh the other way, so it becomes the project manager's responsibility, [Mhm (p)] to make sure, that their claims are done and go in (22:40) u:hh (1)
- 72 <n Ben> Mhm (pp) It's also [looking - -]

Example of reporting back to the team; no impact on decision-making in the meeting.

DS02_REG36: Explanations in Singular Turns (REP)

- 122 <n Peter> I've heard (0.5) it might be gossip, but I (0.2) I thought this was kind of, I I thought - - maybe it was announced when I wasn't there, (0.3) umm that we're gonna hear about the (0.3) CONTRACT in relation to the Business Link, (0.3) on April the twenty-fifth [or - -]

Example of reflecting on the changes in the business environment; no impact on decision-making in the meeting.

DS03_REG36: Explanations in Singular Turns (EXP)

- 320 <n Peter> Yeah (1) but it's interesting, isn't it, (0.4) and we're starting to get - - I don't know if you have seen, Roxanne, we're starting to get these enterprise CITY (0.2) things, coming out, there was the the (name of different ethnic minority organisation), (0.2) but uh it wasn't (name of aforementioned ethnic minority organisation), it was just (45:40) (0.4) we thought it was (name of aforementioned ethnic minority organisation), (0.2) it was ACTUALLY, City Council City Council City Council and (name of aforementioned ethnic minority organisation) at the end of it, (0.2) [<K> (laughs) (pp)] umm (0.2) and (1.2) and there's (0.2) with all the Dragon's Den, GARBAGE in it, (0.5) and (1) [there's a (name another external ethnic minority organisation), one as well]

Example of sequencing of Explanations in singular turns; directly links to a decision made in T152; T130 – sets out the process of PC replacements and resource allocation; T133 – clarification of a request

DS04_ITUG01: Sequencing of Explanations in Singular Turns (SOF - SOF)

- 130 <n Sharin> [No, it'll be it'll be NO COST] to you, or ANYBODY. (0.2). It'll be no cost to you. (0.2) If you TELL us, your requirements for having a spare, in fact, we would be DELIGHTED to use the: the PCs (35:20) that we we we recycle. Because (0.2) we have a: (0.2) a STRUCTURED upgrade programme, so, we don't pick and choose as we go along, it's all done =
- 131 <n Amanda> = uh No - - =
- 132 <n Sharin> = I UNDERSTAND, and then, what we DO, (0.2) when we (0.2) when we (0.2) upgrade a department, [<A> Mhm] (0.3) we take the old hardware, (0.2) we REBUILD what is (0.2) GOOD for use, and use it somewhere else, (0.2) [<A> Ok] and the REST, (35:40) we give to CHARITY, (0.2) ok? (0.2) So, you will HELP us to say, well, (0.2) the ones that you're giving to charity, give me one of them, (0.2) I want it on the DESK, (0.2) in the corner somewhere, if you can if you can provide the space, and we'll build this up, and put (sic) it for you, we would be delighted to do that.
- 133 <n Amanda> Well, we're not talking so much about recycling, it's more like what (0.2) uh (Chamber department) had in their office, you know, (36:00) the new station, they had there, (0.2) been used for a project, and (0.2) because she had it on the special reduced price, (2) [something like that]
- 134 <n Sharin> [Oh, what you're talking about] the FIVE [[PCs? that- -]] (0.2) the data search
- 135 <n Amanda> [[Yeah]]

Example of work process clarification, links to decisions made in T209 and T211

DS05_: Explanations in singular turns (SOF)

- 217 <n Sharin> = that h- HAS to be (0.2) uh uh AGREED by Marketing (0.2) and THE: department concerned. If they say, NO, we want it (0.2) SEPARATE, (0.2) uh but (0.2) fine give it the same (0.2) style, look and feel, whatever, (0.2) or we want it we want it separate, (0.2) ABSOLUTELY SEPARATE, (0.2) that's fine, you know, we we we IMPLEMENT what's been AGREED BY (0.2) (55:20) the department and the Marketing department (4)

Example of reporting back.

DS06_ITUG01: Explanations in Singular Turns (REP)

- 240 <n Steve> On a more general point, uh (0.8) particularly in the last couple of months, there was, you know, some performance issues, it's just intermittent, and uh sometimes things are a bit slower. It's those kind of (59:20) things, which you encourage /that we logged/ (0.2) uh as when they've happened, and sometimes you wait half an hour, and it's fine again, and sometimes it'll be all the systems like uh we use (0.2) financial database Dream, (0.2) sometimes it would be Word, Excel, (0.2) and and email, and everything seems to be slowing when you're doing attachments, and things like that, and sometimes you (0.2) restart, and it's fine, (0.2) but often /you'd be having it happening/ across the whole department (59:40) [<S> Yes], is that something you (0.2) would generally encourage to be logged on the support desk?

Appendix 7.2: Explanations in Complex Turns: REG36 and ITUG01 Textual Evidence

DS01_REG36_T30_Peter_E(SOF)

30 <n Peter> *Yeah, I mean that that was the - - this is the: uh (0.4) this is this is the chart, (0.3) which comes out, the (name of budget local fund) money comes out of number one, surprisingly enough, because we've GOT it (laughs) (f) (self-reflecting) (09:00) 'cause it's sitting in a in the coffers! (0.4) So, (0.2) uh I mean I THINK there's (0.4) uh (0.4) so there's, (0.4) so there' (0.2) some PRIORITIES around there, (0.4) and I mean, if you look at (0.4) those, you can start to say, well, ACTUALLY, you know, there's there's some priorities there in terms of what we need to, uh (0.2) what we need to focus on, uh (0.7) (09:20) and I THINK on the (0.5) on the INFLUENCING side, I mean, clearly, I do (0.2) quite a LOT of that, (0.2) but in a WAY, I'm (0.2) I'm - - (0.2) this this would make it much clearer for me, to say, well, actually, what what the team REALLY needs from me, (0.4) is to be doing that influencing work. (0.4) And so, I am NOT writing the bids, which is probably, which is DEFINITELY not the right thing for me to do, (laughs) (self-reflecting) I'll contribute to them, (09:40) but writing them is probably not the right thing, because (0.4) if you want them written this year, (0.2) then (0.2) it ain't gonna happen, (0.4) so, (0.2) you know, (0.2) that's life, so, (0.3) I think, the (1.4) THAT THAT makes sense to me, in terms of saying, well, (0.2) there's a real focus (0.4) from m- - MY time, in terms of (0.4) the influencing, and focusing on, (10:00) (0.2) you know, for example, I mean yesterday, we had an NRF meeting, and, no, I beg your pardon, (0.4) on Monday, (0.2) we had the NRF meeting, (0.4) umm (0.2) because that's going very very BADLY, (laughs) as it happens, (0.2) umm NOT for US (f), (0.2) particularly, I mean, is - - w- - we - - if it would go badly for US, if it would go badly for EVERYONE, but it's the whole NRF plan is is is somewhere in doubt, at the moment, (0.3) but THAT, (10:20) (0.3) you know, making sure that OUT (f) of THAT, if it is successful, and when it does go through, to where it needs to, which it SHOULD do, (0.2) that we get our half-million a YEAR out of this key thing, you know, that's that's, (0.2) so, THEN, that's not a BIDDING thing, it MIGHT be a bidding thing, at some stage, but its' certainly - -, it's actually about saying, you know, working with (name of national organisation), and working with all them lot to kinda get it, to get it right, (10:40) (0.2) U:MM (0.8) so, THAT'S (f) what I'm THINKING (1), uh (0.2) and LET me give you a piece of paper, (0.5) which starts to say, (0.5) uh (1) uh, (0.5) can you take one (p), and pass them round, (p) which is kind of the - - (0.4) this is the: the: (0.4) honest, and open, (11:00) (0.2) and everything, (0.2) to everybody, (0.3) in one place (laughs) (self-reflective) =*

DS02_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, REP/SOF

83 <n Amanda> *Well, I have been asked to raise something, I don't know if it's connected to the server, or is it (0.2) another issue, (0.3) for REMOTE ACCESS, (0.2) when people (0.2) u:h fail to log in, (0.2) because of something - -, the system is down, (0.2) or something like that, (0.3) there is NO WAY they know if (0.4) (25:00) the (0.2) fault is from their end, or is it the main thing here, [<A> /?/] (0.2) yeah, and when they call in, (0.3) the IT, and nobody's there to answer the phone, they don't know, and (0.2) uh (0.2) It's been suggested that, if there is something MAJOR like this happening, (0.3) that IT let (0.2) (25:20) RECEPTION knows, (sic) that it is a major fault, because we know internally, that the system's down, (0.2) is DOWN, (0.2) we get an [email, please log off, the system is down]*

84 <n Alistair> *[Are they calling the support desk phone number? /?/] (0.5) See, if they call MY number, [<A> Mhm] I may not answer that, 'cause I might be in meetings], but if they call the SUPPORT DESK number, it RINGS, (0.2) (25:40) and one of us will answer it.*

85 <n Sharin> *Can I can I - - from a from a (0.5) to- - today's meeting, (0.2) can I just so we we don't go into different directions, [<A> Mhm] if that's ok. (0.2) From the IT update perspective, (0.3) I don't think we have any any other major development, that we need to UPDATE you on THAT. (0.2) But do you have any questions, on what I've said SO FAR, (0.3) and (26:00) then we could we could throw throw the discussion open, [<A> Ok] for for that kind of requirements, if that's ok. (2) Ok. (0.2) Uh uh Mike, if you don't mind, if we start with Amanda's question, (0.2) on on the: uh =*

86 <n Amanda> *= Remote [access]*

87 <n Sharin> *[Remote] access. Uh (2) with the remote access, uh (0.2) there (26:20) are a number of of (0.3) STEPS, between the user (0.2) at HOME (0.2) to our server, (0.2) [<A> Mhm] and*

and and the WORST of ALL is, is actually, (0.2) the: connection (0.3) to the: to the: (0.3) INTERNET from our building, (0.2) to the world out there, uh (0.3) and we (26:40) have had (0.4) FOUR (0.8) uh incidents of of downtime, (0.2) on THAT connection, (0.2) [<A> Mhm], and we are NOT (0.2) not absolutely- - we're not happy with with with THAT level of service, and we've complained to the to the provider, that's (name of a company) to say, (0.2) it's not ACCEPTABLE that we lose that connection, (0.3) because nowadays we're absolutely (27:00) DEPENDENT on that connection, (0.2) email, (0.2) Internet, (0.2) [<A> Mhm, email as well] remote access, and all that contained. Uh (0.2) and what we DO, (0.2) as soon as THAT fails, (0.2) or as soon as WE KNOW, (0.2) the service is not up and running, (0.2) we email internally and say, (0.3) be aware, (0.2) [<A> Mhm] it's going to be down, or UPDATE you when it's back up. (0.2) Uh (0.2) hopefully reception (27:20) (0.2) will receive that email as well, and they will be able to answer that question, [<A> Mhm] BUT, (0.2) it would be (0.3) ei (0.2) impractical, (0.2) and I DON'T think, the reception guys will ACCEPT (0.2) that they will be OUR (0.2) FRONT LINE, for IT, uh (0.3) [<A> Mhm] for us to go and say to them, (0.2) when something fails, (0.2) you'd need to tell users. But what (0.2) the point /was/ that I was making, (27:40) (0.2) the support desk telephone, (0.2) I ABSOLUTELY and categorically INSIST, (0.2) with with the team, that THIS TELEPHONE, (0.2) is manned, between EIGHT and FIVE-thirty, (0.2) EVERY day. (0.2) N- - I (emphasised) take calls of the support desk, if if the support guys are busy, (0.2) I take calls MYSELF! [<A> Mhm] And everybody, everybody in the team is instructed, to (28:00) PICK up the call (0.2) for the support desk. So, if EVER, (0.2) you call the support desk, (0.2) and you don't get a call, (0.2) you RAISE that problem, (0.2) because it's not acceptable to lose (0.2) ONE call, (0.2) and that is our target as as a team. So, (0.3) if external users, or other users, uh remotely, can't get access, and they call the support desk, and they don't get an answer, (0.3) (28:20) I'd like to know about that. (0.2) [<A> ok (p)] Because they should get an answer IMMEDIATELY, (0.2) and then we can [update them]

...

97 <n Sharin>

Actually, (29:00) the the the support- - (0.2) the user support (0.2) PROCEDURE, (0.2) that we put together (0.2) on day ONE, (0.2) about eighteen months ago now, (0.3) uh on the Intranet, (0.2) contains the telephone number, (0.2) uh for all- - So, what we'll do, (0.2) will send an EMAIL, to REMIND people to LOOK at THAT document, basically. (0.2) Because it contains (0.2) HOW people should (0.2) (29:20) acquire, or request uh support, and how support is delivered, (0.2) and all the contact details are in there, (0.4) Uh so I'll I'll (0.4) I'll send an email out, (0.2) to remind people (10) (29:40) (5) Amanda, does that answer your question?

DS03_REG36: Explanations in Complex Turns, EXP

76 <n Peter>

WELL, (0.3) I mu- - I would say, that uh project managers (0.3) are responsible, [<R> Yeah (p)] you know, they're responsible, because, they are, (0.3) the project managers are responsible for (0.3) THAT particular (0.3) cl- -, THAT particular funding stream, [<R> Yeah] (0.3) and all the things around that funding stream, (0.4) (name of aforementioned colleague)'s role is to make sure that (0.6) u:h (0.5) the claims (24:00) are done EFFECTIVELY, (0.4) and (0.2) uh (0.3) to PHYSICALLY pull those things (0.3) pull those things together, [<R> Yeah] u:h (0.6) I mean I am trying to think of it as it happens NOW, really, and I and I think, (0.3) what's (0.4) what is CHANGING HERE, uh (0.8) is (0.5) HER (0.3) kind of line management, I suppose, is the thing (24:20) is the ONE thing that's is changing [<R> Yeah] in there, (0.4) now, (0.5) I suppose, (1) WELL, I mean I would look FRANKLY (f) to the relationship between her and sh- - and the delivery manager [<R> Yeah] role really /?/?/, (0.2) THAT for me is the key relationship, because (1) you know, THAT (f) delivery manager is responsible for nothing else (0.2) other than [<R> delivering, yeah] for bri- - bringing, you know, for delivering, (24:40) the the spend, and the outputs, (0.3) THAT'S it, (0.5) [<A> Mhm (p)] you know, and all the evidence [<R> Mhm (p)] that goes with that, (0.2) is PART and parcel of that, (0.4) everything HANGS off that, (0.5) [<R> Yeah] and so, you know, (0.2) WELL, I mean they got to work as a team, I mean I think, (0.3) you know, (0.2) all - - I mean I think there's a lot of the issues, for lot of the things here, this is - - you know, where do we want to go with this, (0.4) as we are NOW, (0.5) [<R> Yeah (pp)] or we (0.2) we CHANGE it in a DIFFERENT way, (25:00) I - - you know, we do it by area, so actually, we'll have a West and East team, North and the South, whatever, [but whatev- -]

DS04_REG36: Explanations in Complex Turns, SOF

200 <n Peter> *Yeah, (name of external ethnic minority organisation) members are already members of the Chamber, because that's THAT was one of the things they get, as being a members of (name of external ethnic minority organisation), one of the things that they get is they get as members, is the membership of the Chamber! (1.5) but CLEARLY, they're one removed, really, they're a separate entity, you know, well, we're - - I'm saying, bring them in, make them a section in the Chamber (1) staff (pp) (3) (35:40)*

DS05_REG36: Explanations in Complex Turns, SOF

274 <n Peter> *Well, if you've SEEN, (0.2) I've circulated it, but how - - /I don't know if you've only just seen/, the (name of colleague) (0.4) booklet, (0.8) have you seen it? (0.4) it (0.2) it's STAGGERING, (0.2) it it I I don't know how much it COST them, (0.2) but it's like a fold-out booklet, and all PAGES, and all FANCY photographs, you know, those kind of (0.4) ARTY kind of photographs, where like BLACK and white, (40:40) you know, and there's like a (0.2) ha - coup- - hand, shaking hands, or you know, something on, you know (0.2) and they're all THEMES, you know, (0.8) it's CIRCULATING, you will SEE it, (0.2) what they call it, (name of respective team) something like that, something like that, [<l> Mhm (pp)] (0.4) mhm (0.2) yeah, something like that, (acronym of team's name), I'm sure (41:00) it's (acronym of team's name), it's the initials =*

DS06_REG36: Explanations in Complex Turns, REP

276 <n Peter> *Yeah, something like that. (0.2) And uh (2.2) it's clearly, (0.3) you know, I mean, (0.2) they they they - - what they've they've DONE, it says something like, PART OF (place name) Chamer of Commerce, they've got that, (0.2) I thought, that's what WE want, we wanna be PART OF (place name) Chamber of Commerce, (0.5) I quite like that, (41:20) it makes sense, (0.2) then we can have a SEPARATE IDENTITY, (0.2) but be part of, something we're HOOKED into the mainstream, but we - - , (0.3) you know, we we we quite clearly have a slight- - slightly separate identity to it, (0.2) because I think it's all we need, (1) u:h (1.2) SO, THAT was quite interesting, (0.8) but that's coming round, you'll see it. (41:40) (0.8) It IS amazing, I mean, you know, I DON't like it, but (0.4), you know, it it it's (1) it's quite - - (0.6) you WOULDN'T KNOW, (0.5) you know, you wouldn't know, /yeah, it's/ (name of aforementioned colleague) (laughs) (p) (self-reflective), (1) you know, all those things (0.6)*

DS07_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, REP

9 <n Sharin> *So I think that would be, I did I did suggest that to Marcus at the time, and he was happy with that. [<L> Yeah] So, if the group is happy with this, [<L> Yeah] (0.2) we'll (0.2) put an area for the IT user group, where we can put our documents in there, so, (0.2) anybody in the company can see it. (03:00) And uh we'll put the terms of reference there as well. So, we'll get on with it, (0.3) and and do that. (8) Uh, (0.2) I am not sure, if you've got a copy of the minutes in front of you guys, but u:h (0.8) there was some (03:20) talk about (1) mobile technology (0.2) at the time, and we talked about trials of (0.4) Blackberries and PDAs, (0.2) these were completed, (0.2) recommendations were to go for Blackberries, (0.2) uh we have asked senior managers across the company for their requirements, (0.2) uh and we've had (0.2) uh twenty requests, for twenty - - (03:40) a total of twenty-five devices to be circulated, (0.2) uh within the company. So, we've ordered these from our (0.2) mobile supplier? and they should be within the next couple of weeks, (0.2) and they will be forwarded to (0.4) uh the members of staff, who were nominated for these. Uh these are for, (0.2) clearly for, (0.2) receiving emails remotely. (04:00) (2) The BUSINESS CONTINUITY plan was mentioned in the last meeting as well, and we said they were- - it was almost complete. Well, it is now complete. Uh, (0.2) we have signed the contract with (company name) (emphasised), who are now part of (name of company) (emphasised) for disaster recovery. Uh the plan itself (0.2) as a document is complete, and will be (04:20) published IMMEDIATELY. It will be on the Intranet, for anyone to have a look at, and it will be sent to (0.2) uh partners uh uh uh such as the: (0.2) (name of a business partner organisation), and other organisations, (0.2) (name of a business partner organisation) and so on. Uh and it will be (0.2) uh handed over to, also, all the: members (04:40) of the: business continuity (0.2) project team. (0.4) So, THAT'S that's IN PLACE, umm (0.4) which is (0.5) an ACHIEVEMENT, because I think it will- - it took us over a year to get here, (0.2) but it will (0.5) satisfy uh (0.4) major (05:00) requirements, (0.2)*

uh in terms of legal requirements, and also (0.2) as a Chamber, uh it will be a good a good uh thing to HAVE. (1.5) DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT system. We talked, in fact we had a meeting, just before this one, (0.2) HERE, uh and again, we're making some progress, (0.2) u:h a bit painful and a bit slow, (05:20) but we are determined to GET it RIGHT. (0.2) Uh, in the first instance, we did not want to jump in and implement the system, when people don't have any (0.2) uh FAITH uh in the system, because culturally will -- that would be counterproductive, and people will not (0.2) be HAPPY to adopt (0.2) a document management system. SO, we're working on THIS, but as I've said, the progress is very slow, (0.2) (05:40) we'll be ENLISTING external help, in terms of uh (0.4) (0.2) uh consultancy work, to see whether (0.3) they can help assist us, in in going in the right direction. (0.6) We talked about the: PO system, ONLINE, purchase order system, uh (0.5) I think you can see the grey (06:00) hair, on Steve, (0.2) if you look carefully, [<Mi> (laughs)] uh and he's got the last two months, trying to get it, with the support from IT, to get it in place. We had some MAJOR teething problems, uh NOT internal but externally, from the external supplier of the system. (0.2) Uh, we have escalated our (06:20) (0.5) COMPLAINTS, (0.2) our SCREAMS, to the highest level in the company, (0.2) in fact, (0.2) to the: (0.2) managing director. (0.2) Uh it's still ongoing, BUT uh (0.2) =

DS08_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, EXP

76 <n Sharin> We do, we do, BUT, what- - my- - our- - my instruction to the support desk team is, (0.2) if a user calls and says, I've got a problem whatever. (0.2) The first once or (0.2) twice, (0.2) the first couple of (23:00) times, (0.2) the user calls, (0.2) say to the user, YES, I'll LOG it on there- on your behalf, but can you, please, in the future, log it yourself. (0.2) It saves US time, it saves YOU time, (0.2) [<M> Mhm] to do it that way. Uh so, we do encourage people to log it. Uh but if if if users are finding it IMPRACTICAL, to do so, then, then, we can ALWAYS address that. (3) (23:20)

DS09_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, EXP

108 <n Sharin> Yes. (0.3) PRIORITISATION. (0.2) Uh, (0.2) we ask (0.3) uh (0.4) senior managers, (0.2) through the IT steering group, (0.2) to (0.2) prioritise, (0.3) the development of modules. (0.3) So, WHAT we DO, (0.2) uh, in IT is, (0.2) we LIST (0.2) the business groups, (0.2) and say, (0.2) we want to devel- to develop (30:40) in the next six months, (0.2) uhh (0.2) the following (0.2) three or four modules, (0.2) or within the next- - uh, in fact, the REMAINDER of all the modules, we list them all together there. Uh (0.5) we (0.2) ASK (0.2) the IT (0.2) uh steering group, (0.2) and IN PARTICULAR, in the IT steering group is going to be, uh (name of one of the CEOs), because he is (0.3) uh managing (31:00) (0.2) the: business uh, (0.3) [<A> Operations] yeah, Operations, uh and uh we ask (0.2) uh (name of a senior manager), he- -who is (0.3) the: Business (0.2) Planning (0.2) Manager_ (0.2) so, (0.2) uh (0.2) and we liaise with (0.2) senior managers as WELL. And then, (0.2) THEY tell us, you tackle this first, this second, this third, (31:20) and whatever. And that's how we prioritise it. So, as far as IT is CONCERNED (f), uh we do NOT, OTHER THAN, uh (0.2) put the LIST TOGETHER, (0.2) we do not, actually, prioritise, (0.2) we take (0.2) senior managers', and (0.2) directors' (0.2) input, (0.2) and tailor it do that (p). Uhh (0.2) in terms of (0.2) uh CHANGE requests, (0.2) (31:40) uh (0.5) IDEALLY, IDEALLY, we ask users to fill in, uh the change request form, which is on the (0.2) Intranet, (0.3) to say (0.2) uh we want to change, (0.2) or make changes, (0.2) to our module in Impact, in FACT, (0.2) not just Impact, (0.2) uh uh (0.2) the: WEBSITES, as well, uh (0.2) (32:00) to say, we need those requirements, AND their justification, for WHY, (0.2) this is needed. Uh then we talk to to to to the (0.2) initiator of the change request, (0.2) and agree, (0.2) a time scale. Uh (0.5) we TENDED in the past, because we focused on the main (0.2) development WORK, to (0.2) put the change request (0.2) ASIDE, (32:20) and think, we'll do it, (0.2) in a couple of months' time. (0.2) (0.2) Uh we have, uh (0.2) following feedback from users, and management, we have CHANGED that now. Uh, when a change request is required, it's actually (0.2) uh (0.2) ASSESSED in terms of the: (0.2) BUSINESS IMPACT, is that something (0.2) we REALLY ought to do TOMORROW, (0.2) (32:40) or can user, the user live without it for a couple of weeks, (0.2) or can it wait until there is ANOTHER, (0.2) uh development phase, (0.2) in three months' time. And then, (0.2) we decide WITH the user, (0.2) which category it falls under, (0.2) and then we can get on with it, and do it. Uh (0.2) hence we wanted to CLEAR, the back- - BACKLOG of of all the: (0.2) change requests, that we have (0.2) accumulated (33:00) over the: last six to nine months. (0.2) Uh and hopefully by JULY, we would (0.2) have a: BETTER (0.3) start

on tackling the change requests. (0.2) So, the answer to your question is, on the Intranet, (0.2) there's a FORM (0.2) for a change request under Impact, (0.2) we can tell you where it is_ (0.2) uh if you like (p), (0.2) and (33:20) it's just a matter of =

DS10_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, SOF

182 <n Sharin> [That is exactly - - that is EXACTLY WHY, that's] that's exactly why, (41:40) IT DO NOT interfere (0.2) with equipment (0.2) that are NOT (0.2) bought by the Chamber, (0.2) because Health and Safety, (0.2) uh Insurance, everything else comes into play, (0.2) and we just don't want to be tangled into this. We do, in fact YESTERDAY, (0.2) I asked one of my guys, to go down, and help, an external (0.2) VISITOR, (42:00) in the UK online room, (0.2) because he had a problem with the video (0.3) [<A> Mhm] recorder. It's not our role to HELP them, (0.2) but we don't (0.4) hide behind the wall and say, we are not helping. We try and help, but up to a point. (0.2) The UK online room in PARTICULAR, (0.3) the actual- - the equipment in there (0.3) is (0.5) (42:20) owned by - (0.2) =

DS11_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, SOF

184 <n Sharin> [It it it belongs to uh] (0.2) [<A> (first name, member of other team)], but it's it's not an IT, [<A> (first name, aforementioned) /?/] yeah, it's it's not, it's not it's not an IT. But we (42:40) we we link it, it's actually, they will do a boot, so we link it to our NETWORK, so you can log in_(0.2) to to these PCs, we try and maintain them as much as we can, (0.2) [<A> Mhm] but if they FAIL, we're not going to replace them, (0.2) UNLESS there is a PROGRAMME- - if we are told to set - -, you know, it's our responsibility to to (0.2) FURNISH that room with equipment, then we'll DO it.(43:00) [<A> Mhm] But at this stage, it is (0.4) a grey area, [that's all- -]

DS12_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, EXP

265 <n Sharin> Uh (0.3) (64:00) TECHNICALLY, technically, the the technology is - - has advanced SO MUCH, in terms of document management, (0.3) SO MUCH, that (0.2) if you if you GO for for a DEMO, and HAVE a LOOK at systems, you think, WHOA! You know, this will do everything I want it to do. Technical, so technical solutions, we we are spoilt for choice. There are so many choices out there, that we could that we could look into, and implement in place. (64:20) And as I said, (0.2), I think I mentioned it earlier, it would be a piece of cake, from the IT perspective, to just grab a system, (0.2) get a server, get tons of disk space, (0.2) and say to people, scan and (0.2) store your data, whatever. [<A> Mhm] That's that's the EASY bit. The the more CHALLENGING bit IS, (0.2) to understand EXACTLY how you want to use it, and how we can make it EASY for you to use, in terms of (0.2) STORING your data, (64:40) INDEXING them correctly, 'cause (0.2) you will have thousands and thousands of documents to store in there. [<R> Mhm] Because you don't want to be spending time THEN (f), when it comes to the CRUNCH, [<R> Yeah] and you want to to LOOK at the client's file, spend two hours searching for it, because then, we haven't achieved much. And that's the challenge, we need to get a system in place, that (0.2) we're ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about, WHAT (65:00) requirements is it going to address, (0.4) and the requirements definition, that is where we are struggling as a group, and and the document management group. Uh (0.4) but we're MAKING some progress, and and we're CONFIDENT, you know, if we get the BACKING of the executive board, in terms of (0.2) spending MONEY on this system, uh (0.2) then, we will have a system in place, which will (0.8) absolutely (65:20) (0.2) make it easier for people, (0.2) DEFINITELY, it will, (0.2) it will, NO DOUBT, be an improvement to the current system, because the current system is just chaos. (0.2) [<A> Mhm] So, any system will be better. But we REALLY want to get it ABSOLUTELY right. So, (0.4) in in a year's time, we could (0.2) SCALE that up, and expand on the usage, without having to say, oh, (0.3) the system's no good, we can't do any more, the Chamber has to go somewhere else. And that's the (65:40) challenge now. It's getting something that we could BUILD upon, and two three four five years' time, we'd we'd be ABSOLUTELY (0.6) dependent on that system, (0.5) you're with me? (0.2) And that's where we're now. Uh (0.4) So, (0.2) THAT feedback, I guess, is what what is to be expected, [<R> Mhm] at this stage, unless we feed more to the team to say, ok, HERE'S what we plan to do, (66:00) what do you THINK. Uh (0.4) but we're not at that stage yet. So we'll uh- - =

DS13_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, EXP/REP

272 <n Sharin> *is it is it- -, SERIOUSLY, I mean, I mean, [*

DS14_ITUG01: Explanations in Complex Turns, SOF

283 <n Duncan> *Well, just wondering, (0.4) on the: (0.2) retention of documents, (71:20) u:hkh (1.5) I mean that, in THEORY, of course, all our (Chamber department) funding now comes through, or virtually all our (aforementioned Chamber department), now comes from (regional funding body). We could (0.2) get (0.2) (aforementioned regional funding body), (0.4) to approve that document management system. (0.4) So, we could actually, GO to them, and basically say, (0.4) will you accept THIS, (71:40) (0.2) in terms of the AUDIT, (0.4) and see if they come back and say, YES.*

Appendix 7.3: Managing Change: Explanations and their Influence on Decision-making

ITUG02: Managing Change: Explanations and their Influence on Decision-making

3 <n Marcus>

Z→ [Well, I think] that's probably the next thing, Document Management, and a quick update on (0.5) on what we're doing there (0.6) (coughs) **E1**→uh (0.8) Sharin, (name surname, senior manager) and I went to see some consultants on a training course they ran, which was very helpful, because (0.4) their basic PREMISE was one where if you're trying to manage documents, (23:00) (0.4) there's a STACK of questions upfront, that (0.4) is worth sorting out, before you get ANYWHERE near (0.4) solutions, (0.2) scanning, uh digitising everything, whatever, (0.8) uh (0.2) which includes some fairly basic things, like you know, why do you keep documents, why do you keep records, what's is a rec- what is the difference between a record and a document, all sorts of things that actually set (23:20) a BETTER framework, to say, well, WHY DO YOU KEEP DOCUMENTS? Why do you create them, why do you keep them, why do you store them, how do you retrieve them. **F1**→ (0.6) **Uh (0.2) but more IMPORTANTLY, it enabled us to see, that actually, (0.8) looking at (0.8) the way we manage documents, (0.6) there's two things we got to do. (0.2) E2**→Firstly, is really (23:40) understand what we're trying to do as a business, (0.8) for (0.4) managing our documents. We we've come at it, if you like, from several different angles, (0.8) u:h (0.2) one of which is the MOVE, (0.7) we know we got to start thinking about archiving, or moving, or potentially when we move, there will be less space, (0.2) so we need to think intelligently about stuff we want on our DESK, and stuff we DON'T want on our desk, (24:00) that's quite critical, and that's that's that's EFFECTIVENESS, isn't it, and efficiency. (0.4) And then secondly, it's about whether we as an organisation, are making the most out of (0.4) TEAMWORKING, (0.2) to say, well, actually when we create a record, which might be a CUSTOMER record, (1.4) probably each of our separate departments, (0.8) uh with the- -probably with the exception of Finance, (24:20) because you don't keep customer records in that sense, (0.4) could do our own thing. **F2**→ (1) **So, (0.3) we've we've acknowledged the fact, that you need some sort of PROTOCOL, you need some sort of (0.3) RELATIONSHIP (0.2) map, to understand what you're doing, and what you should do about it. (1.1) Now, (0.7) before we go into any solutions, we've decided that, actually what we REALLY need to do, is (24:40) have a thorough (0.3) FEASIBILITY study, (0.3) around what we're trying to do as an organisation. A1**→We're trying to get some consultancy to help us DO that, uh (0.7) because we don't know what we DON'T KNOW. (0.8) And actually, uh (0.2) if we don't take a STRATEGIC view of all this, the DANGER is, we could take ANY route that might help us in the short term, scanning documents might (0.5) shift everything onto (25:00) some digital framework or microfiche, (0.4) and actually might get rid of PAPER, but might not actually HELP us in the long, in terms of coordinating records, getting SINGLE-client records together, for example, uh (0.6) working more COLLABORATIVELY to say, we're working with a client, or programme, or even in FINANCES, that a single piece of information can be accessed (25:20) through EVERYBODY, in the SAME WAY, so that we actually all know what we are doing. **F3**→ (0.5) **So, (1.3) rather than come up with some actions, we think the first thing we need to do, is to get some feasibility. (0.3) The SECOND thing we've got to do, is REALLY embed this in what we want to do as a business. (2.3) And therefore what we're proposing to do, we're getting the consultants back in on the: seventh of (0.4) (25:40) SEPTEMBER, (0.7) to do a presentation to (0.8) the: u:h (0.5) executives, through the STEERING group, (0.4) to kind of get them raise the game and to see what WE DO, A2**→when Sharin, (name of aforementioned senior manager) and I went away, which is kind of look at the big picture, (0.4) like where my document management fit (sic) within, (0.8) you know, CORPORATE objectives within (0.2) TECHNOLOGY (26:00) objectives and all the rest of it, and is actually having the sense of (0.2) uh (0.4) what it's all about, and the REALITY is, I'm hoping, that the steering group will say, what we said was crikey, we actually DON'T know where

we ARE, and we DON'T know where we wanna BE, (0.3) and therefore the point of a feasibility study is to start (0.3) doing some some work on, well, (0.2) what sort of scale is the problem, how many records (26:20) DO we create, (0.2) retrieve, move about, access, (0.2) you know, what is the scale of it, what is the: OPPORTUNITY for us in terms of u:h (0.2) efficiency, saving money, saving effort, (0.2) and also, what is the cost of doing it, (0.3) 'cause (0.2) the FINAL thing we - - they did, was uh a sort of (0.2) SHOWCASE of all the potential (26:40) suppliers out there, and believe you me, there are a MILLION and one suppliers out there who've all got their little angle on, how to manage your documents better, (0.3) and we did get a presentation from firm who had a SOFTWARE application, which was about, (0.2) fundamentally about a DESKTOP (f) organisation, wasn't it, like [F4→So we've kind of taken half-a-step backwards, I think, (0.2) with the intention of getting the ex on board, and getting them to commit, (0.2) number one to an understanding that this is a bigger issue than just fixing (1.2) scanning (0.4) or whatever, and secondly, that we need to spend a little bit of money on that (27:20) feasibility study to get it right, (0.8) and that we need to go outside the business to get that. (0.3) **E3**→So the idea is on the seventh of September, we'll have a short presentation from the consultants, (0.2) kind of, giving a bit of exposure to the big PICTURE and getting the executive to say, YEAH, ok, u:h we NEED to take some action on that, it seems to be the right thing to do, is to do the feasibility study, and here is a BUDGET to DO it_ (27:40) (0.3) u:h and then we're gonna spend the rest of that DAY (0.2) with the: (0.2) uh document management system working GROUP, (0.2) trying to SCOPE THAT OUT what we need to do in terms of information, shaping it, putting a plan together, (0.2) uh (0.2) before we actually write a cheque for somebody to go 'n have lot of money (0.4) uh from us. Does that make sense? (28:00) (1) [F5→ (1) **However, what it HASN'T DONE, (0.2) all of that, is taken away some of the other ISSUES, that that we still GOT as a business, that that we kind of KNOW, but we can never kind of put our finger on, E4**→like, you know, are we being as efficient as we can around managing our documents, are we looking at simple protocols that might improve (0.2) the way we work, the way we create files, the way we share files, (28:20) uh (0.2) and the the MOVE, although it's been put BACK, (0.2) u:h is still looms as being something that will force the pace, and will get people to think about it. **F6**→So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, is (0.4) how MIGHT you approach this idea about the big picture, in terms of - - (0.2) uh (0.4) you know, where where you THINK your reference points are (28:40) for managing documents, A3→ 'cause it's easy for us all to say, there are no company protocol (sic), (0.2) uh but actually, we all DO things, (0.6) we all DO create, (0.2) store, retrieve, (0.2) uh handle (0.2) documents, files, whatever, (0.4) all the time_ **F7**→ (0.5) **So it would be useful if you can go back to your teams, to kind of get the scope of that, and secondly (0.2) (29:00) u:h a reinforcement to the fact, that this IS gonna be on the horizon, and it WILL grow, we WILL to have (sic) involve more people, we WILL have to do some data RESEARCH, as well! (0.2) [→so, you know, actually, (0.5) if if these consultants came to us, and said, well, how many documents have you GOT, (1.5) that you might create in a YEAR, (0.5) I, personally, would have the trouble getting and coming up with a number. (29:20) (0.4) I mean the only way we can do that, is a bit of data gathering, so we will be involving the group to go back and say, (0.4) uh (0.2) you know, what's the scale of all this. Does that make sense? (0.2) [F8**→**So it depends a little bit on how exec go with it, E5**→Sharin has been doing his best to warm them up, so that it is not a surprise, (0.2) and (0.2) clearly there is an UNDERSTANDING, that, you know, we can't do this INTERNALLY, we can't do it SMARTLY (29:40) internally, (0.2) **E6**→the FINAL thing to say, is that whenever the consultants kind of tried to get us a MARKER for what it's at, they talked very much in terms of a three-year plan, (1) **E7**→uh (0.4) this - - you know, were thinking, well, if we could bring about some changes, we got the move, we could (0.2) make some decisions about maybe buying some (0.2) different technology, maybe getting a scanning (30:00) protocol, you know, getting a set of words about how to create a file, (0.2) cr- - uh using some software that stop people

creating a new client file if one already existed somewhere else, those are all things are very doable in the SHORT term, but I think, it's CONVINCED us that we need to go back, and it may be (0.2) year TWO? before we start seeing some real BENEFITS (0.3) coming through, (0.2) **A5**→ 'cause it's it's also about change management process (30:20) isn't it (1.7) we as an organisation are not very good A: at making decisions saying everybody will do this THIS (ff) (pounces the table loudly), and sticking to it, uh we're even worse at deciding what the THIS IS (pounces the table). **Z**→So, (0.2) does that make SENSE_ and I'm getting some smiles, so you do understand what I mean, [(all laugh)] **F9**→**so (0.2) we got to bring about a culture change where everybody is actually lined up to do (taps the table) this, before we spend (30:40) ANY amount of money, A6**→and FRANKLY, some of the stories we've heard, is that people can spend (0.2) uh, you know, ZILLIONS on technology and software, to achieve these kind of things, and for some firms it works brilliantly_ (0.2) but we ain't in that market, (0.2) we've got to have a solution that's gonna work for us, **F10**→**(0.2) so, (0.2) that's a kind of a long speech, but that brings us up to date on where we are. So we expect some feedback (31:00) after the seventh of September.**

Appendix 8.1: Chaining of Accounts in Complex Turns: REG36 and ITUG01 Textual Evidence

DS01_REG36_T22C_Peter

Example of how the content of chained Accounts creates the coherence of a decisional path and has a cumulative impact on the listeners' evaluation of an announced cornerstone decision; the sequential organisation of the practices in the entire turn is AFF AFEFFFAFAF(D) ZFFF (divided into three parts).

MICRO_REG36_T22C: Part 1/3, setting the scene		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
A1	sets the scene, introduces the idea something important is going to happen	Uh (1.5) to be honest, it's- it's a bit of a sh- shame, there aren't so many people here today, (laughs) (self-reflecting) (0.2) because I did wanna announce something, and uh it would be (01:20) quite nice, for everyone, but at least, (0.3) perhaps a FEW MORE, to be here. Eh, where's Maria? Do you know where Maria is [<R> Ye:ah_] I spoke to her yesterday on the phone, but (1) (has a sip of coffee) I didn't- -, no, I meant to ASK her when I was on the phone, but you know, I was a bit (0.2) stressed, at the time, (0.2) so, I didn't, but eh (0.2), and Mike's off, isn't he, and Samuel's off, I suppose that's everyone, isn't it actually. [<A> Mhm] That's pretty much everyone, isn't it, actually. [<A> Mhm] [<K> /That's it/]
F	gist, summarises what has been agreed prior to the meeting or externally	Uh (0.5) (01:40) Because, when we had u:h (1) the AWAY DAY, obviously we went through, and we did quite a lot of work around, (0.7) eh our vision, and what we're trying to achieve, and some of the kind of the (0.4) BARRIERS, I suppose, as much as anything in- in terms of uh (0.2) uh (0.3) achieving that. (0.2)
F	upshot, sets out current implications for team future	And clearly, (0.2) I think , (0.2) one of the things that came very very clear from that, (02:00) was that (0.2) umm , (0.2) where we are NOW, we are in a- - (0.4) uh we're in - - we're in an ok position, in terms of (0.3) the things (0.2) that we've got (0.4) uh the the delivery, you know, oh six oh seven,

MICRO_REG36_T22C: Part 2/3, building towards a decision		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
A2	acknowledging a counterargument, the perspective most likely representing the views of the team, creating an awareness that there are still long-term underpinning	and I mean, you know, we haven't done the BUDGET, you know, well, it's ok budget process thinking, well, it looks ok, it's TOUGH, (0.2) you know, it's not not not gonna be easy, (02:20) (0.2) 'nd there is some things in there that we haven't got yet, but let's draw a gla- veil over that for a minute.
F	restating the problem	(0.2) But FUNDAMENTALLY, the real issue becomes in oh seven oh eight,
E	re-emphasising the problem by providing factual info about contracting position and	because actually in oh seven oh EIGHT, the SRB6 comes - - has come to an end, eh (national business support organisation) money obviously comes to an end, not that there's a lot of that available for us this year, there's a (02:40) little bit. (0.2) Uh uh, you know, we've got some some SCOPE, to do some things around that this year.
F	F drawing an implication, creates a logical link between the problem and the proposed decision	But in in oh seven oh eight, all these things start to disappear, so, (0.2) our ABILITY to BID, and our ABILITY to WORK on, those (0.2) who are (0.5) putting, y'know potential funding opportunities out there, uh (03:00) and try, and INFLUENCE, and and and MANAGE, what THEY come up with, STRUCTURE those opportunities, umm ALL that stuff is REALLY REALLY VITAL.
F	F of Peter's thinking, Peter's professional interpretation of the situation	(1) So, I GOT to thinking, (0.2) well, (0.2) umm to what extent are we - - as we are NOW, the way we are structured, and the way we we sit as a team, GEARED towards (03:20) (0.7) DEALING with that situation, and actually GETTING those bits together, you know, WHO'S responsible, how we're gonna make these things happen.
F	F1 + F2, synthesis of the information presented to date with a start summary 'we're NOT ready', F combining the two previous positions and funnelling the discussion further to the	And (0.2) umm, (0.5) I can't help it, I suppose in the end, I came to the conclusion that, (2) we are NOT! really (laughs) (self-reflective) I suppose, it's a simple answer, you know, it's a bit hit and miss,
A3	giving a specific example of the inefficiencies of the current team structure	you know, I - - for example, (03:40) I am writing a bid on regeneration capital in the East, (0.2) and Samuel and Maria are writing it on the West, (0.2) and, you know, and then there's NRF, well, I've done a bit of the stuff into NRF, but you know, who else has really been involved on that, you get a little bit of Samuel, a little bit of the enterprise side, umm (0.2) you know, (0.5) there's a whole string of things, aren't there,
F	Decision proposal, starts to paint a new reality	and I think, you know, whi- - what (0.2) struck me most forcibly, (04:00) was that (1.5.) what (0.7) what I think we need to do, (0.7) is to MOVE to a structure, that enables us (0.2) to to have some real FOCUS around bidding, (0.2) and and I I think the other kind of BIG area, which is- - sits ALONGSIDE the bidding, uh (0.3) but is- - you know, is a separate process (04:20) in itself, but but sits very close to the bidding, (0.4) is (0.2) the kind of influencing (0.2) side, which is around that kind of going being involved on the strategic groups, (0.2) talking to the councillors, (0.2) talking to- - (0.2) you know, people in city councils, on- - so that it enables us to get access to things. (0.2)
A4	Re-emphasising the inefficiencies of the team and stressing his resolve to address this, Account progressing into F and Decision. The Account prepares the team for the announcement of the decision and aims to smooth the way for the acceptance of the decision by the team	And I mean I think, you know, probably if you look back in time, as well, you probably see some things like, (04:40) (0.3) like Enterprise Cities, (0.2) is a good example, where, (0.3) you know, we made a bit of an effort, really, but there wasn't really a FOCUS, you know, within the team, because, you know, (0.2) WELL, (0.2) the REALITY is, (0.3) the way we're structured at the moment, if you think about THOSE ROLES, (0.2) those kind of bidding and and delivery sort of roles, (0.2) is that, it- - it sits in everyone's JOB, (f) doesn't it? Everyone's got (05:00) a bit of bidding, and a bit of delivery (laughs) (self-reflecting), and (0.2) at the end of the DAY, you know, (0.2) the delivery is always gonna WIN, 'cause (0.2) that's there, (0.2) you've a contract, [Mhm] you know, and they are cracking the whip, they wanna see the outputs, and they wanna see the spend, and you know, we gotta do this form, we gonna get that done by this date, (0.2) so, the bidding kind of drifts (0.5) a little bit, (0.2) and the influencing the influencing doesn't get a look in, you know, (05:20) it doesn't
F	Cornerstone DECISION	(0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO, (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to restructure the team, (0.7) which is a little bit scary, (laughs) [(all laugh)] for all of us_

MICRO_REG36_T22C: Part 3/3, setting out the change		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
Z	META language, provides a route map for the next part of the meeting discussion, Peter starts to open the debate	Umm, (0.5) but, (0.4) (06:00) what I wanna do today, what I'm gonna do today, (0.2) is to share with you, (0.5) where I - where - - what I think uh we should be doing, umm, (0.5) and how I think, how we should DO it.
F	outlining a new structure, new ways of working, presented as an opinion, proposal	(0.4) Uh, (1) FUNDAMENTALLY, (0.2) I think, (0.2) we should have, uh (06:20) (0.5) TWO TEAMS within the (0.2) the (0.5) department, whatever you wanna call it, (0.5) uh (0.2) ONE focusing on delivery, (0.2) and getting the delivery th- done, (0.2) so, you've got managers there responsible for (0.2) ALL of the delivery contracts, that we have, (0.5) and then, (0.4) a bidding and influencing (06:40) TEAM, (1) with the bidding and influencing managers, so a manager on both of those, and a and a list of uh (0.4) uh (0.4) you know, the kind of, s- - so- - some ind- - individuals in there, as much as anything, that are FOCUSED on (0.5) the people who work with partnerships, (0.2) and people who work with the: you know, (07:00) all the relationship development side.
F	Peter re-emphasises how he anticipates the team will work in future	(0.8) NOW, (0.3) I mean, I THINK, (0.3) THAT'S NOT to say (f), that (0.2) there wouldn't be (0.2) lots of this going on, I mean, CLEARLY, there WOULD, (0.2) and and I mean, I think, for example, the bidding, for instance, is an example, (0.2) umm (0.4) what we CAN'T do, (0.4) is (0.2) say, RIGHT, (0.2) (07:20) well, THAT person does all the bidding, and they're gonna write all the bids, 'cause that's clearly NOT gonna work, [<R> Mhm] you know, I mean, it it clearly COULDN'T work, because, (0.2) one individual couldn't have all of the knowledge [<R> Mhm] around (0.7) ALL of the different aspects of what we DO, (0.2)
F	Slab stone DECISION presented as a proposal	BUT (f), (0.2) I'm - - I ABSOLUTELY THINK, that we need somebody who is responsible for (0.2) =

DS02_ITUG01_T265C_Sharin

Example of how the chaining of Accounts incrementally stimulates the process of identification with a decision reported in the meeting; the sequential organisation of the practices in the turn illustrates the E-A, A-F sequencing of the practices in extended combination turns.

MICRO_ITUG01_T265C		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
E	Acknowledging the existence of a technical solution, explaining a technical solution does not stand alone, and asserting that the organisation now needs to define its document management requirements in greater detail in order to select the specific technical solution to meet these.	Uh (0.3) (64:00) TECHNICALLY, technically, ... (An <i>Explanation already glossed in full in Section 5.3.1</i>)
A1	Bridging the expectations of the group with the reality of how technical solutions work and advocating the decision on the new system is deferred.	The the more CHALLENGING bit IS, (0.2) to understand EXACTLY how you want to use it, and how we can make it EASY for you to use, in terms of (0.2) STORING your data, (64:40) INDEXING them correctly, 'cause (0.2) you will have thousands and thousands of documents to store in there. [<R> Mhm] Because you don't want to be spending time THEN (f), when it comes to the CRUNCH, [<R> Yeah] and you want to to to LOOK at the client's file, spend two hours searching for it, because then, we haven't achieved much.
F	Drawing conclusions	And that's the challenge, we need to get a system in place, that (0.2) we're ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about, WHAT (65:00) requirements is it going to address, (0.4) and the requirements definition, that is where we are struggling as a group, and and the document management group.
A2	Bridging understanding across the organisation.	Uh (0.4) but we're MAKING some progress, and and we're CONFIDENT, you know, if we get the BACKING of the executive board, in terms of (0.2) spending MONEY on this system, uh (0.2) then, we will have a system in place, which will (0.8) absolutely (65:20) (0.2) make it easier for people, (0.2) DEFINITELY, it will, (0.2) it will, NO DOUBT, be an improvement to the current system, because the current system is just chaos. (0.2) [<A> Mhm] So, any system will be better. But we REALLY want to get it ABSOLUTELY right. So, (0.4) in in a year's time, we could (0.2) SCALE that up, and expand on the usage, without having to say, oh, (0.3) the system is no good, we can't do any more, the
F	Drawing conclusions	And that's the (65:40) challenge now. It's getting something that we could BUILD upon, and two three four five years' time, we'd we'd be ABSOLUTELY (0.6) dependent on that system, (0.5) you're with me? (0.2) And that's where we're now.
F	Closing a query	So, (0.2) THAT feedback, I guess, is what what is to be expected, [<R> Mhm] at this stage, unless we feed more to the team to say, ok, HERE'S what we plan to do, (66:00) what do you THINK. Uh (0.4) but we're not at that stage yet. So we'll uh - - =

DS03

Examples of how a series of mini-accounts, all building upon each other, systematically underpin adjacent Formulations; the A-F juxtaposition illustrates the transition from an Account to a Formulation/Decision.

DS03_REG36

- 30 <n Peter> ... **A1**→ (10:00) (0.2) you know, for example, I mean yesterday, we had an NRF meeting, and, no, I beg your pardon, (0.4) on Monday, (0.2) we had the NRF meeting, (0.4) umm (0.2) because that's going very very BADLY, (laughs) as it happens, (0.2) umm NOT for US (f), (0.2) particularly, I mean, is - - w - - we - - if it would go badly for US, if it would go badly for EVERYONE, but it's the whole NRF plan is is somewhere in doubt, at the moment, (0.3) but THAT, (10:20) (0.3) you know, making sure that OUT (f) of THAT, if it is successful, and when it does go through, to where it needs to, which it SHOULD do, (0.2) that we get our half-million a YEAR out of this key thing, you know, that's that's, (0.2) so, THEN, that's not a BIDDING thing, it MIGHT be a bidding thing, at some stage, but its' certainly - -, it's actually about saying, you know, working with (name of national organisation), and working with all them lot to kinda get it, to get it right, (10:40) **F**→ (0.2) **U:MM (0.8) so, THAT'S (f) what I'm THINKING (1), uh (0.2) and LET me give you a piece of paper, (0.5) which starts to say, (0.5) uh (1) uh, (0.5) can you take one (p), and pass them round, (p) which is kind of the - - (0.4) this is the: the: (0.4) honest, and open, (11:00) (0.2) and everything, (0.2) to everybody, (0.3) in one place (laughs) (self-reflective) =**
- 32 <n Peter> **A1**→ = Apart from the people who aren't here, WELL (f), I would have done it (f) for THEM, but, you know, they umm (0.4) but they - -, **F**→ (0.3) **what this CHART is, is a chart of structure, so, (0.4) there's obviously there's me, and there's two (0.2) delivery managers, (0.2) then there are (0.5) managers managers, (11:20) (0.2) and then, and then, (0.2) I mean, there's FOUR (0.5) four kind of (0.2) levels (0.2) in there, (0.2) u:h (0.6) and (1) well, I - - (0.2) uh in in /neutracy/, (0.3) openness and honesty, (0.2) umm (0.2) what I'm therefore suggesting, is that (0.7) ...**
- 36 <n Peter> ... **A1**→ (= c- c- c- I mean I think, (0.2) can I take, I mean, and CLEARLY, this is a shock for people, and I accept, you know, people may be like WHOOO! What is this, (0.4) uh (1.2) and I think, (0.4) you know, **F**→ **I I I would say a number of things about this, and then, I might I might just shut up, uh (0.8) [<R>,<K> (smile)] (14:40) which is the - - (0.4) I think it gives, (1) I think it gives people (0.8) both (0.6) a bit of more clarity, (0.6) but also some (0.6) more opportunity, as well, in a way, **A2**→ because, for EXAMPLE, I think, (0.4) if you look at yourself, Kevin, (0.5) at the MOMENT, (0.4) it's the (name of business forum), and and that, you know, THAT'S - - it's very CLEAR, (15:00) and very DEFINED, what it is that you're (0.2) about, what your - - what you do, (1) uh and the same with the the ZONES, it's quite, you know, it's the zones, and that's that's what you do, (0.3) I think, being in within a team that is around influencing and bidding, I think, it gives you some opportunities to say, well ACTUALLY, (0.6) you know, (0.2) LONGER-TERM, (0.6) for EXAMPLE, (0.3) you look at the the the way (15:20) we're funding the forums, we're funding that from SBS core, and reserves, and so on and so forth. Now, (0.3) you know, I am not saying, that's not the the that's not gonna continue forever more, (0.4) but CLEARLY (f), (0.2) you know, (0.2) if you're in a situation, where, ACTUALLY, you're giving some added value (0.2) to the organisation, saying well actually, (0.2) you know, we've brought in this money, we've brought in these bids, and so on, (15:40) I think, that's a real opportunity for YOU, to kind of say, well, actually, I'm - - that - - Sitting within THAT TEAM, (0.3) that will operate as a TEAM (f), (0.6) you know, (0.2) we will operate as a team, [<R> (laughs) (pp)] (0.4) bidding, (0.4) I am sure it WILL, (0.2) and THAT so, I think, in that sense, it'll actually be us saying, well, actually, actually, you've got seven opportunities, seven big things you gotta do here, (0.2) ACTUALLY, (0.3) you know, Kevin, I particularly want you to lead on (16:00) on THIS one, because that one FITS with the (name of aforementioned business forum), and the Asian issues and, actually, you know, that's the one to lead on, **F**→ **so, you know, (0.3) there will be some STRUCTURING like that, the the the the team would agree, (0.4) so I think, (0.2) whilst it gives, you****

know, it gives that, but I think it also gives some some clarity, I think, in terms of, (0.4) you know, why, why we're HERE (16:20) (0.2), you know, (laughs) (self-reflective) uh I think, I HOPE it gives a bit of that, (0.2)

DS03_ITUG01

9 <n Sharin>

F→ So I think that would be, A1→ I did I did suggest that to Marcus at the time, and he was happy with that. [<L> Yeah] **F→ So, if the group is happy with this, [<L> Yeah] (0.2) we'll (0.2) put an area for the IT user group, where we can put our documents in there, so, (0.2) anybody in the company can see it. (03:00) ...**
... **A5→** (0.2) Uh, in the first instance, we did not want to jump in and implement the system, when people don't have any (0.2) uh FAITH uh in the system, because culturally will - - that would be counterproductive, and people will not (0.2) be HAPPY to adopt (0.2) a document management system. **F→ SO, we're working on THIS, but as I've said, the progress is very slow, (0.2) (05:40) we'll be ENLISTING external help, in terms of uh (0.4) (0.2) uh consultancy work, to see whether (0.3) they can help assist us, in in going in the right direction. (0.6) ...**

20

<n Sharin> **expressing a position →** Ye:s, I I think, in terms of the system training, there was (0.2) NO WAY we could have had a manual in place (07:40) BEFORE (0.2) now, **A →** because sc- screen settings, and and sc- screen designs, and whatever, weren't in PLACE! We were working with the supplier, and were aiming for it to be implemented by the first of April, but it didn't HAPPEN, it was six, eight weeks LATE. (0.2) **F→ So, now we we know what the SCREENS are like, we know what the PROCESS is like. (0.4) tentative commitment →** Uh uh (0.2) all be it, with some some work rounds, uh uh we (08:00) WILL start putting that, with with with [Finance]

87

<n Sharin> ... **A2 →** (0.2) N- - I (emphasised) take calls of the support desk, if if the support guys are busy, (0.2) I take calls MYSELF! [<A> Mhm] And everybody, everybody in the team is instructed, to (28:00) PICK up the call (0.2) for the support desk. **F→ So, if EVER, (0.2) you call the support desk, (0.2) and you don't get a call, (0.2) you RAISE that problem, (0.2)**

Appendix 8.2: Managing Change: Accounts and their Influence on Decision-making

The data below form extracts from Data Set Two across a number of meetings for both REG and ITUG teams. The data identify the meeting, the turn, and the speaker. They then provide textual evidence of Accounts that took place in the meetings (highlighted by **A1→**, **A2→**, etc.)

In addition, text highlighted in **bold** print shows **Formulations** that followed from the accounting sequences and led to either decision proposals or to decisions. This enables the links between Accounts and the decision process to be identified, and also demonstrates the sequentiality of the Account-Formulation patterns repeated throughout the data samples.

DS01_REG28_T50C

31 <n Peter> ... **A1→** (0.5) But the the point about THIS, and why that (sic) threw it up to us (13:40) because this is Chamber services, and well, (0.2) uh (0.2) the sepa- - the point about separation is, if things are (name of Chamber department), then they ABSOLUTELY they CANNOT be CHAMBER services, [**R>Mhm**] you know, they are NOT Chamber services, umm (0.4) and I think, (0.4) there is an immediate reaction to that, (0.2) yeah, a:h separation this goes here, that goes there, (0.2) but I think we need to think that through, (14:00) and and I don't think it's CRYSTAL CLEAR, I don't - - and I don't think it's black and white, (0.3) [**R>mhm** (p)] at ALL, (0.3) **so, I think, (0.8) no I think we should do that as a (0.3) TEAM, [**R>Mhm**] frankly, rather than you know, just TO enterprise, [**S>mhm**]**
A2→ 'cause, actually, I think there is a whole raft of things, and I think it would be useful to do that, as a as as a group, (0.2) I don't think we can do it in a ten-o'clock meeting, I think we need a bit more TIME as well, [**M>**I think - -] because we need to (14:20) (0.2) get (0.2) the guidance and the stuff, (0.2) and just take on board what everyone - -, you - -what it says in the - - 'cause there was a GRID, there was a TABLE, and I'm - - people probably saw the table, it was going round once, and it's STILL around, (0.4) that that said, you know, this is the test, and this is what we're doing, and bla bla bla, **(0.2) well, we need to just, I think we need to get back to it**

DS02_REG29_T1C

1 <n Peter> ... **(0.2) so the version on the L drive isn't right.**
A1→ (1.3) u:h and that's because I had to put all the salary stuff detail back in, (0.2) (41:40) **so, ...**
A2→ (1) u:h and (0.4) there there was there some REASON behind that, because (0.2) what I did with the FIRST version of the budget, the version that was on the L drive, was it used things like (0.2) put in a load of money from SBS, (0.2) (42:20) pull in u:h (0.2) the: (0.2) (name of a local funding strategy) money, and use as much of that, if not pretty much ALL of that, for (0.2) op- - uhm for direct costs. (0.2) And it it was just it was an UNTENABLE budget, (0.3) **So, what I've had to do, (0.2) is I've had to reduce (1) the: (42:40) direct costs (0.8) other than where they are contracted, (1.2) ...**
A3→ I mean, you know, that's that's still guesswork, it may or may not be there now, /but was left in there/ uhm (0.5) has NOW (0.5) be taken out of direct costs, (0.4) and all going into overheads, on the basis that (1) s- - (0.6) the where I DON'T wanna be, is in a situation, where we can't cut the staff (43:20) costs. **Well, (0.2) we CAN'T cut the staff costs (laughs) (self-reflective), ...**

A4→ I mean this is all done in the knowledge of my debtors, and from the discussions I've HAD with them, we said, umm, well, it's INCONCEIVABLE [**<R>** (laughs) (pp)] that we won't get some, (0.2) you know, that we won't get NRF, or we won't get SOMETHING (44:20) at SOME point, I mean, you know, whatever, it may be (name of local project), or whether it's someth- - that's gonna contribute to that bottom line, and if we DON'T, well, we got to deal with that when it arises, **but RIGHT NOW, uh what I want us is to put a budget in, is a budget that (initials od Executive Director), (initials of senior manager) can DEFEND (0.4) to the board, (0.2) on the basis, or on the whole range of bases, (44:40) uhm (1) that's defensible (sic) in some way, but that's SHOWING (0.4) a (0.8) NEGATIVE MOVEMENT from this year, which it is, (0.2) but not (0.2) uh (2.2) but it's still defensible, (0.2) [so that - - and I NEEDED that]**

DS03_REG30_T61C

61

<n Peter> = [But I think,] [<R>**Mhm] this is - - for ME, this is about (0.2) thinking BEYOND that, [**** Mhm]**

A1→ I mean, I I ACCEPT, you know, in the short term, that there's no doubt about it, that people are gonna be unsettled, and UNSURE, and then, you know, they're quite right to be, (0.5) uh but because there're so many things going on, (0.2) (27:40) BUT (0.2) if if we can understand, (0.5) and and have a kind of JOINT, SHARED, as much as anything, not such as having a vision, but something which is a SHARED VISION (0.2) about where we're trying to get to, (0.4) uh and some of the building blocks to do that, (0.5) uh and the PRESSURES, I mean, that's what the reality check's about the pressures, isn't it, if we've GOT a SHARED kind of (28:00) knowledge around that, then it DOES give us a chance to (1) uh kind of WITHSTAND some of that stuff, 'cause actually no, al that's - - that's short term, you know, we we know where we're going, (0.2) that's short term, and we know, and - - I mean, you know, part of it, of course, something like that (pp) (2.2) AFTER the twenty-third is to be - - I mean, if we talk about it now, (28:20) is about talking to other teams, (0.2) and talking to (name of Senior Manager), (0.2) and, you know, (0.2) and and [**** Mhm (p)] just to say, this is this is OUR VIEW, **you know, this is what we - - (0.7) and [**** Mhm (p)] (1.2) All righty (p)**

DS04_REG31_T9C

8 <n Peter>

(1) Uhm, Could we just can we just go on, and talk about the: (0.3) uh Away Day, (15:20) (0.2) u:h [**<M>** Mhm (pp)] just [**<M>** Yeah(pp)] whilst on that ON THAT note (4.8)

9 <n Ben>

A1→ Oh, sorry, (laughs) (self-reflective) I thought you were gonna ask questions, [sorry - -]

10 <n Maria>

A2→ [I thought you were starting,] I was gonna do something, [[but I thought, you wanted to go first]]

11 <n Peter>

[[Whichever way round you wanna do it]]

12 <n Ben>

E1→ U:h, (0.2) I think, we have we've worked it out, u:h (0.2) in terms of how the whole day will work now, [**<P>** Cool] we have worked out the questions, (0.2) u:h (15:40) the objectives, you've SEEN them! [**<P>** I have] just a couple, made a - - (0.2) u:h and in fact you saw it last Wednesday we circulated it, u:h (0.6) so, I think, in our head we've got (0.2) the whole thing done, Maria's (0.5) sorted the venue, which a - - (0.5) when I send all the other stuff, it'll be today or tomorrow at the very latest, [**<M>** /??/ that (p)] make sure all your instructions are there as well, (16:00) (1) u:h

DS05_REG32_T26C

26 <n Peter>

= exactly so, (0.2) the issue is not finding places, it's finding places that we'll be happy with, that they've got parking, (0.2) u:h and (0.2) you know, are the right price, and all the rest of it, so, you know, those those those are the things that we've gotta (0.2) do, you know, SO, u:h (16:40)

A1→ (0.9) I don't know, I don't know whether whether //I'll end up - - and and and, when it all kind of turns up, / (0.2) **but (0.2) u:h (0.8) we can start looking at - - start looking at things in the next sort of month or so.**

DS06_REG33_T319C

319

<n Peter> Yeah, we might do, and and let, you know, **let's not let's not pre-judge any of that, because, actually, there's some things we need to do, I think the KEY (0.2) bit for me,**

A1→ which is why I think we need this SHEET, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] although, you know, it's only a bit of paper, after all, (0.4) uhm (0.2) **but the key for me, I think, (0.2) is just to be clear on what our process is from here,**

A2→ I'm not hundred per cent clear on what our process is from here, (0.8) I think, it's (0.4) (51:40) it's two minutes to ten! So, I don't think we're going to get that clear, and I am a man, so I think, I want a bit of time, [<R> (laughs) (pp)] so, I can't (0.2) COPE with that, [<S> Mhm (smiles)] BUT, (0.2) if we get that bit of paper done, and then we (0.6) u:h (1) and then we (0.2) have another discussion about it, then, (0.4) I would like that that we have a clarified vision perhaps, (0.2) that will start to help us, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] (52:00) in terms of working through all that, because we can say, (0.2) THIS is where we're trying to get to, (0.2) this is the kind of the stuff what we're doing NOW, (0.2) this is what is coming up on the horizon, [<Ma> Mhm (p)] we can start to kind of get our message, well, it's - - we're trying to encapsulate that, (0.4) you know, **what what we - - what KIND of organisation we wanna be representing ourselves as =**

DS07_REG34_T104A

104 <n Roxanne>

A1→ [I think, we WOULD WE WOULD (f)] want to DO all our enterprises, it's just the fact, (07:20) that we won't, you know, we - - (0.2) potentially in the future, (0.2) [<A> Yeah] 'cause that bit sits somewhere else, we won't be able to do it, [I think we would - -]

DS08_REG35_T243C

243 <n Ben>

A1→ [I mean, if you] (0.2) if you ask the question slightly differently, (0.2) 'cause if you are (37:20) actually saying, (0.3) do we want business support development to be (0.2) a PASSIVE thing, ai i: we'll buy you a camera, it's a bit PASSIVE (0.2) [<R> Yeah] at the end of the day, (0.5) 'cause it stops somebody, (0.2) or are we really about (0.2) working with you to grow your business, (0.2) which actually means a lot more (0.4) face to face contact, (0.4) helping you with your business plan, thinking about your market, thinking about your product, (0.2) I mean that's all very (0.4) INTENSIVE, (37:40) (0.7) and that would be a better (0.6) way of using the money? (0.4) and and in the LONG term, (0.2) probably yeah, (0.8) but uh (0.8) there is room for BOTH, (0.6) I mean CCTV is just about engagement, (0.5) it just says, we're engaging with you, you WANT this now, we'll give you it, (0.2) [<S> Mhm] what we should THEN be saying is, ok, (0.3) HOW do we make your business grow, (0.4) **so, you should also be writing bids, and say, (0.2) we need to put (38:00) (0.2) a lot more resource on the ground, (0.2) that will last through these things.**

DS09_ITUG02_T3C

3

<n Marcus> ... (1.1) **Now, (0.7) before we go into any solutions, we've decided that, actually what we REALLY need to do, is (24:40) have a thorough (0.3) FEASIBILITY study, (0.3) around what we're trying to do as an organisation.**

A1→ We're trying to get some consultancy to help us DO that, uh (0.7) because we don't know what we DON'T KNOW. (0.8) And actually, uh (0.2) if we don't take a STRATEGIC view of all this, the DANGER is, we could take ANY route that might help us in the short term, scanning documents might (0.5) shift everything onto (25:00) some digital framework or microfiche, (0.4) and actually might get rid of PAPER, but might not actually HELP us in the long, in terms of coordinating records, getting SINGLE-client records together, for example, uh (0.6) working more COLLABORATIVELY to say, we're working with a client, or programme, or even in FINANCES, that a single piece of information can be accessed (25:20) through EVERYBODY, in the SAME WAY, so that we actually all know what we

are doing. (0.5) **So, (1.3) rather than come up with some actions, we think the first thing we need to do, is to get some feasibility. (0.3) The SECOND thing we've got to do, is REALLY embed this in what we want to do as a business. (2.3) And therefore what we're proposing to do, we're getting the consultants back in on the: seventh of (0.4) (25:40) SEPTEMBER, (0.7) to do a presentation to (0.8) the: u:h (0.5) executives, through the STEERING group, (0.4) to kind of get them raise the game and to see what WE DO,**

A2→ when Sharin, (name of aforementioned senior manager) and I went away, which is kind of look at the big picture, (0.4) like where my document management fit (sic) within, (0.8) you know, CORPORATE objectives within (0.2) TECHNOLOGY (26:00) objectives and all the rest of it, and is actually having the sense of (0.2) uh (0.4) what it's all about, and the REALITY is, I'm hoping, that the steering group will say, what we said was crikey, we actually DON'T know where we ARE, and we DON'T know where we wanna BE, (0.3) and therefore the point of a feasibility study is to start (0.3) doing some some work on, well, (0.2) what sort of scale is the problem, how many records (26:20) DO we create, (0.2) retrieve, move about, access, (0.2) you know, what is the scale of it, what is the: OPPORTUNITY for us in terms of u:h (0.2) efficiency, saving money, saving effort, (0.2) and also, what is the cost of doing it, (0.3) 'cause (0.2) the FINAL thing we - - they did, was uh a sort of (0.2) SHOWCASE of all the potential (26:40) suppliers out there, and believe you me, there are a MILLION and one suppliers out there who've all got their little angle on, how to manage your documents better, (0.3) and we did get a presentation from firm who had a SOFTWARE application, which was about, (0.2) fundamentally about a DESKTOP (f) organisation, wasn't it, like [So we've kind of taken half-a-step backwards, I think, (0.2) with the intention of getting the ex on board, and getting them to commit, (0.2) number one to an understanding that this is a bigger issue than just fixing (1.2) scanning (0.4) or whatever, and secondly, that we need to spend a little bit of money on that (27:20) feasibility study to get it right, (0.8) and that we need to go outside the business to get that. ...

... So, one of the things I want you to take back to your teams please, is (0.4) how MIGHT you approach this idea about the big picture, in terms of - - (0.2) uh (0.4) you know, where where you THINK your reference points are (28:40) for managing documents,

A3→ 'cause it's easy for us all to say, there are no company protocol, (0.2) uh but actually, we all DO things, (0.6) we all DO create, (0.2) store, retrieve, (0.2) uh handle (0.2) documents, files, whatever, (0.4) all the time_ (0.5) **So it would be useful if you can go back to your teams, to kind of get the scope of that, and secondly (0.2) (29:00) u:h a reinforcement to the fact, that this IS gonna be on the horizon, and it WILL grow, we WILL to have (sic) involve more people, we WILL have to do some data RESEARCH, as well!**

A4→ (0.2) [<A> mhm] so, you know, actually, (0.5) if if these consultants came to us, and said, well, how many documents have you GOT, (1.5) that you might create in a YEAR, (0.5) I, PERSONALLY, would have the TROUBLE getting and coming up with a number. (29:20) (0.4) I mean the only way we can do that, is a bit of data gathering, so we will be involving the group to go back and say, (0.4) uh (0.2) you know, what's the scale of all this.

Does that make sense? (0.2) [<A> Mhm] **So it depends a little bit on how exec go with it, ...**

A5→ (0.2) 'cause it's it's also about change management process (30:20) isn't it (1.7) we as an organisation are not very good A: at making decisions saying everybody will do this THIS (ff) (pounces the table loudly), and sticking to it, uh we're even worse at deciding what the THIS IS (pounces the table).

So, (0.2) does that make SENSE_ and I'm getting some smiles, so you do understand what I mean, [(all laugh)] **so (0.2) we got to bring about a culture**

change where everybody is actually lined up to do (taps the table) this, before we spend (30:40) ANY amount of money,

A6→ and FRANKLY, some of the stories we've heard, is that people can spend (0.2) uh, you know, ZILLIONS on technology and software, to achieve these kind of things, and for some firms it works brilliantly_ (0.2) but we ain't in that market, (0.2) we've got to have a solution that's gonna work for us, **(0.2) so, (0.2) that's a kind of a long speech, but that brings us up to date on where we are. So we expect some feedback (31:00) after the seventh of September.**

DS10_ ITUG04_T206C

206

<n Sharin> **E1**→ Yeah, the Windows updates, (0.2) they they they work in the background, ...

A1→ But we HAVE to do this, in fact, it's it's - - we thought it was a good fact step forward, I'm not sure whether our - - (0.2) we should have communicated with users, (0.4) with with the operating system, I'm sure you are all aware, with they get u:h u:h (55:00) HACKERS attacking them, [<M> Mhm mhm] and so on, ...

A2→ The trouble IS, (0.2) Microsoft releases (0.4) a dozen or so a week, so you get this message saying_ [<A> Yeah] [<M> Yeah] you know, u:h (0.2) and it's to do with the operating system, with their browser, with a NUMBER of things in there, uh (0.2) with Outlook, so (0.2) uh (0.2) we don't want to every time and update comes (55:40) along and says, do you want to install this update, you - - because you will be hit with (0.3) on average, a message or two a DAY, (0.2) =

DS11_ ITUG05_T1A

1

<n Amanda> **A1**→ (06:40) The only thing, uh (0.5) my Acer screen, the flat screen, (0.2) had to be taken away, (1) because (0.7) it would just switch itself off, or or (0.2) no power going through it and thing like that. But it SEEMS, that it's not only- - I think, it's like a FAULTY batch, because (name of colleague) had the same problem with her machine, (07:00) (0.3) you know, it's only the screen, (0.2) and apparently, it's been happening all the time, because (name of colleague from IT department) said, yeah, we know about it, and took it away, and I've got a monitor for now, (0.2) 'til it get (sic) repaired. Is that (0.2) something in GENERAL (0.2) that's happening

DS12_ ITUG06_T77C

77

<n Sharin> ... **But that's not for me and you to worry about, I think it for the management to worry about, and actually they said, look, don't worry about (37:40) (0.3) ownership of hardware, software, whatever,**

A1→ because as as Marcus pointed out, (0.2) we've NEVER (0.2) in anything we purchased in the last three four years, and and RIGHTLY SO, because we were one organisation. We've never said, oh, this is (name of aforementioned Chamber department), (0.2) oh, this is Chamber, this is (name of city) Chamber of Commerce, whatever we bought! [<A> Mhm] So, we've never really apportioned (0.4) costs to any any IT (38:00) systems. (0.5) But, (0.3) uhm (0.5) there was a (0.5) (sighs) (p) fairly (0.5), uh uh a few funny comments in in in the steering group. **But the the the agreement was, ok we'll cross this bridge, when we come to it next April, we can then debate it from (0.5) a (38:20) FINANCIAL side, [<A> Mhm] or the financial point of view to say, (0.2) do we need to refund some of it, do we need to give (0.4) some of the hardware away, do we do that kind of thing.**

Appendix 9.1: Formulations in Long Turns: REG36 and ITUG01 Textual Evidence

In the meetings data, Formulations in the long turns were employed to construct sense (SC), or to make and announce proposals (FP) and decisions (FPD). Textual evidence presented below has been selected from REG36 and ITUG01 and it illustrates the goal-oriented and structured use of Formulations in meetings.

DS01_REG36_T22C_Peter: Example of how Formulations establish goal-orientation and structure in meetings talk (i.e., sense construction) and the transition from talk to action through the formulating of proposals and decisions.

MICRO_REG36_T22C: Part 1/3, setting the scene		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
A		
F1	gist, summarises what has been agreed prior to the meeting or externally (SC)	Uh (0.5) (01:40) Because, when we had u:h (1) the AWAY DAY, obviously we went through, and we did quite a lot of work around, (0.7) eh our vision, and what we're trying to achieve, and some of the kind of the (0.4) BARRIERS, I suppose, as much as anything in- in terms of uh (0.2) uh (0.3) achieving that. (0.2)
F2	upshot, sets out current implications for team future (SC)	And clearly, (0.2) I think , (0.2) one of the things that came very very clear from that, (02:00) was that (0.2) umm, (0.2) where we are NOW, we are in a- - (0.4) uh we're in - - we're in an ok position, in terms of (0.3) the things (0.2) that we've got (0.4) uh the the delivery, you know, oh six oh seven,

MICRO_REG36_T22C: Part 2/3, building towards a decision		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
A		
F3	restating the problem (SC)	(0.2) But FUNDAMENTALLY , the real issue becomes in oh seven oh eight,
E		
F4	F drawing an implication, creates a logical link between the problem and the proposed decision (SC)	But in in oh seven oh eight, all these things start to disappear, so, (0.2) our ABILITY to BID, and our ABILITY to WORK on, those (0.2) who are (0.5) putting, y'know potential funding opportunities out there, uh (03:00) and try, and INFLUENCE , and and and MANAGE , what THEY come up with, STRUCTURE those opportunities, umm ALL that stuff is REALLY REALLY VITAL .
F5	F of Peter's thinking, Peter's professional interpretation of the situation (SC)	(1) So, I GOT to thinking, (0.2) well, (0.2) umm to what extent are we - as we are NOW , the way we are structured, and the way we we sit as a team, GEARED towards (03:20) (0.7) DEALING with that situation, and actually GETTING those bits together, you know, WHO'S responsible, how we're gonna make these things happen.
F6	F4 + F5, synthesis of the information presented to date with a start summary 'we're NOT ready', F combining the two previous positions and funnelling the discussion further to the decision (SC)	And (0.2) umm, (0.5) I can't help it, I suppose in the end, I came to the conclusion that, (2) we are NOT! really (laughs) (self-reflective) I suppose, it's a simple answer, you know, it's a bit hit and miss,
A		
F7	Decision proposal, starts to paint a new reality (FP)	and I think, you know, whi- - what (0.2) struck me most forcibly, (04:00) was that (1.5) what (0.7) what I think we need to do, (0.7) is to MOVE to a structure, that enables us (0.2) to to have some real FOCUS around bidding, (0.2) and and I I think the other kind of BIG area, which is- - sits ALONGSIDE the bidding, uh (0.3) but is- - you know, is is a separate process (04:20) in itself, but but sits very close to the bidding, (0.4) is (0.2) the kind of INFLUENCING (0.2) side, which is around that kind of going being involved on the strategic groups, (0.2) talking to the councillors, (0.2) talking to- -, (0.2) you know, people in city councils, on- - so that it enables us to get access to things. (0.2)
A		
F8	Cornerstone DECISION (FPD)	(0.5) Uh, (0.2) SO , (0.2) WHAT I've (0.2) decided to do (1), is to <u>restructure the team</u> , (0.7) which is a little bit scary, (laughs) [(all laugh)] for all of us.

PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
Z		
F9	outlining a new structure, new ways of working, presented as an opinion, proposal (FP)	(0.4) Uh, (1) FUNDAMENTALLY, (0.2) I think, (0.2) we should have, uh (06:20) (0.5) TWO TEAMS within the (0.2) the (0.5) department, whatever you wanna call it, (0.5) uh (0.2) ONE focusing on delivery, (0.2) and getting the delivery th- done, (0.2) so, you've got managers there responsible for (0.2) ALL of the delivery contracts, that we have, (0.5) and then, (0.4) a bidding and influencing (06:40) TEAM, (1) with the bidding and influencing managers, so a manager on both of those, and a and a list of uh (0.4) uh (0.4) you know, the kind of, s- - so- - some ind- - individuals in there, as much as anything, that are FOCUSED on (0.5) the people who work with partnerships, (0.2) and people who work with the: you know, (07:00) all the relationship development side.
F10	Peter re-emphasises how he anticipates the team will work in future (SC)	(0.8) NOW, (0.3) I mean, I THINK, (0.3) THAT'S NOT to say (f), that (0.2) there wouldn't be (0.2) lots of this going on, I mean, CLEARLY, there WOULD, (0.2) and and I mean, I think, for example, the bidding, for instance, is an example, (0.2) umm (0.4) what we CAN'T do, (0.4) is (0.2) say, RIGHT, (0.2) (07:20) well, THAT person does all the bidding, and they're gonna write all the bids, 'cause that's clearly NOT gonna work, [<R> Mhm] you know, I mean, it it clearly COULDN'T work, because, (0.2) one individual couldn't have all of the knowledge [<R> Mhm] around (0.7) ALL of the different aspects of what we DO, (0.2)
F11	Slab stone DECISION presented as a proposal	BUT (f), (0.2) I'm - - I ABSOLUTELY THINK, that we need somebody who is responsible for (0.2) =

DS02_ITUG01_T265C_Sharin: Example of how Formulations conclude ideas and closing turns and agenda points.

MICRO_ITUG01_T265C		
PR.	WHAT DOES IT DO	ORIGINAL TEXT
E		
A		
F1	Drawing conclusions (SC)	And that's the challenge, we need to get a system in place, that (0.2) we're ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about, WHAT (65:00) requirements is it going to address, (0.4) and the requirements definition, that is where we are struggling as a group, and and the document management group.
A		
F2	Drawing conclusions (SC)	And that's the (65:40) challenge now. It's getting something that we could BUILD upon, and two three four five years' time, we'd we'd be ABSOLUTELY (0.6) dependent on that system, (0.5) you're with me? (0.2) And that's where we're now.
F3	Closing a query (SC)	So, (0.2) THAT feedback, I guess, is what what is to be expected, [<R> Mhm] at this stage, unless we feed more to the team to say, ok, HERES what we plan to do, (66:00) what do you THINK. Uh (0.4) but we're not at that stage yet. So we'll uh- - =

DS03

DS03_REG36

31 <n Peter>

E→ Yeah, I mean that that was the - - this is the: uh (0.4) this is this is the chart, ... F1(FP)→ (0.4) So, (0.2) uh I mean I THINK there's (0.4) uh (0.4) so there's, (0.4) so there' (0.2) some PRIORITIES around there, (0.4) and I mean, if you look at (0.4) those, you can start to say, well, ACTUALLY, you know, there's there's some priorities there in terms of what we need to, uh (0.2) what we need to focus on, uh (0.7) (09:20) and I THINK on the (0.5) on the INFLUENCING side, I mean, clearly, I do (0.2) quite a LOT of that, (0.2) but in a WAY, I'm (0.2) I'm - - (0.2) this this would make it much clearer for me, to say, well, actually, what what the team REALLY needs from me, (0.4) is to be doing that influencing work. (0.4) F2(SC)→ And so, I am NOT writing the bids, which is probably, which is DEFINITELY not the right thing for me to do, (laughs) (self-reflecting) I'll contribute to them, (09:40) but writing them is probably not the right thing, because (0.4) if you want them written this year, (0.2) then (0.2) it ain't gonna happen, (0.4) so, (0.2) you know, (0.2) that's life, so, (0.3) I think, the (1.4) THAT THAT makes sense to me, in terms of saying, well, (0.2) there's a real focus (0.4) from m- - MY time, in terms of (0.4) the influencing, and focusing on, (10:00) (0.2) A1→ you know, for example, I mean ... (10:40) F3(SC)→ (0.2) U:MM (0.8) so, THAT'S (f) what I'm THINKING (1), uh (0.2) and LET me give you a piece of paper, (0.5) which starts to say, (0.5) uh (1) uh, (0.5) can you take one (p), and pass them round, (p) which is kind of the - - (0.4) this is the: the: (0.4) honest, and open, (11:00) (0.2) and everything, (0.2) to everybody, (0.3) in one place (laughs) (self-reflective) =

32 <n Peter>

A1→ = Apart from the people who aren't here, WELL (f), I would have done it (f) for THEM, but, you know, they umm (0.4) but they - -, (0.3) F1(FPD)→ what this CHART is, is a chart of structure, so, (0.4) there's obviously there's me, and there's two (0.2) delivery managers, (0.2) then there are (0.5) managers managers, (11:20) (0.2) and then, and then, (0.2) I mean, there's FOUR (0.5) four kind of (0.2) levels (0.2) in there, (0.2) u:h (0.6) and (1) well, I - - (0.2) uh in in /neutracy/, (0.3) openness and honesty, (0.2) umm (0.2) what I'm therefore suggesting, is that (0.7) (11:40) Samuel (0.4) and Ben, become the delivery manager, and the influencing and bidding manager, (0.2) uh (0.5) and I've talked to them, (0.2) so, they know (0.4) uh what's happening, (0.3) and then (0.2) you can SEE the other bits really, (0.2) so, there's a (0.2) the SPECIAL projects bit, that's the business empowerment that's (name of member of staff), (0.2) so, that's just that that is - - you know, who knows what may happen to THAT_ (0.2) umm (0.4) then (12:00) (0.8) umm (0.4) I've got within this, TWO (0.5) project managers, (0.2) in terms of the: (0.4) delivery side, (1) u:h one around enterprise, and one around regeneration, (0.5) uh (0.5) I'd like Roxanne to be the regeneration (0.3) one, (0.4) which covers the business competitiveness, (12:20) and the FINANCE, from the SRB6, but all those other ones as well, (0.4) so, we will talk about what's in those, and so on, (0.4) umm (0.2) then an enter- - one enterprise manager, and then I mean,. I think, you know, it it kind of makes sense, as a team, to have one (0.4), you know, one (0.4) enterprise manager [<R> Mhm] rather than two, and all of that, so, we have to work out, how we do these things, (12:40) (0.4) umm (0.4) and the other thing /that of/ NOTE there, I think that's worth saying, I mean, clearly, there's a change of role, and particularly, Roxanne, there's change of role for you (0.2) [<R> Mhm] in that, (0.2) well, (0.2) that's something we can talk about, (0.2) umm (0.4) the other (0.2) BIG change in there, (0.3) is that, uh (1) I am looking at (name of colleague) being (0.4) oth- - on that level, (13:00) A2→ now what that means, I haven't (0.4) frankly sat down ... (0.2) F2(SC)→ and then there's the influencing the BIDDING, (0.4) uh (0.7) obviously the ZONES is in there, because that's about - - that's a big part of (0.8) uh (0.4) the the: influencing, and and the bidding side around the zones, although you know, who knows, obviously with the zones, but (0.2) particularly WEST, (0.2) u:h (0.3) and obviously Kevin, and and (14:00) Mike, (0.4) a LOT of what you're doing is AROUND (0.2) the relationships and partnerships, and so on, I know, (0.2) you know, (0.2) I I KNOW, you're on the phone all the time, influencing, Kevin, you see, I know these things

happen, uh (0.4) and (0.2) then then (0.2) the other change in there, is in terms of bidding support, (0.8) I put (name of colleague) in there

- 37 <n Peter> **A1**→= c- c- c- I mean I think, (0.2) can I take, I mean, and CLEARLY, this is a shock for people, and I accept, you know, people may be like WHOOO! What is this, (0.4) uh (1.2) **F1(SC)**→ and I think, (0.4) you know, I I I would say a number of things about this, and then, I might I might just shut up, uh (0.8) [**<R>**,**<K>** (smile)] (14:40) which is the - - (0.4) I think it gives, (1) I think it gives people (0.8) both (0.6) a bit of more clarity, (0.6) but also some (0.6) more opportunity, as well, in a way, **A2**→because, for EXAMPLE, I think, (0.4) if you look at yourself, Kevin, ... , **F2(SC)**→ so, you know, (0.3) there will be some STRUCTURING like that, the the the team would agree, (0.4) so I think, (0.2) whilst it gives, you know, it gives that, but I think it also gives some some clarity, I think, in terms of, (0.4) you know, why, why we're HERE (16:20) (0.2), you know, (laughs) (self-reflective) uh I think, I HOPE it gives a bit of that, (0.2)... **F3(SC)**→ the OTHER thing I wanna say is, I think that, (0.2) LONGER-TERM, (0.4) I think one of the other things, I think it helps with, **A3**→I mean I - -, you know, (0.3) I didn't wanna ... , **F4(SC)**→ (0.4) and so I think, longer-term, one of the other things is that, it DOES give people a LITTLE bit of an opportunity in terms of PROGRESSION, and any other future, ... **A4**→ because, I mean at the moment, ..., **F5(SC)**→ so I I think, (17:20) you know, it DOES give some, (0.8) it gives a LITTLE BIT more (0.4) sort of LEEWAY, I think, (0.2) in terms of (0.2) in terms of doing that (1)
- 48 <n Peter> **Z**→ AA:H (f) that's, you know, that's we'll keep working on that, **F1(FP)**→ I mean, just just two things, one because one last thing I need to say, but I'll say it in a sec, but uh (0.2) one of the things we DID say, we WOULD DO, after the away day, and I mean I think, once THIS is IN (18:40) PLACE, **A1**→ I mean, you know, u u u (0.3) ... **F2(FPD)**→ So, you know, obviously, I am happy to talk to people, but that that's what I think we should do. Umm (0.4) but (0.3) one of the - - ONCE we have MOVED to, to whatever we have moved to, (0.2) uh (0.2) let's let's put it that way, (19:00) (0.2) then, I think, that that the one of the things we need to do pretty quickly, (0.2) I mean the FIRST thing we need to do, frankly, is to talk to the teams, (1.2) **A2**→ I mean I was - - you know, (0.2) ...
- 50 <n Peter> **opinion**→ Yeah, that's a - - I don't think we can hold onto bef- - until then, but (0.4) **F(FPD)**→ so, (19:20) (0.5) BUT I WOULD LIKE to hold onto it until I've at LEAST spoke (sic) to the other managers, [**<A>** Mhm (pp)] (0.6) **A** → if that's ok, (0.4) because (0.6), ...
- 84 <n Peter> **F1(SC)**→ Umm (0.8) The only the only other thing I wanna say, **A1**→ and this is again, you know, ... , **F2(FPD)**→ it's still gonna be ME going to the zone meetings, and and and so there is still a DIRECT relationship, you know, in terms of making sure that the agenda is right, and so on, and I mean, you know, that's that's just, you know, I am not I am not looking to CHANGE THAT, in terms for example, you know, of getting, (0.2) getting Ben involved in in in those things, (0.4) **A2**→ because, (0.5) (26:20) you know, that - - ... (0.5) **F3(FPD)**→ so, once we've - - once we've have the TEAM meeting, (0.5) once people (27:00) all know, and we will get to the point where we put this thing in place, whatever it IS (0.2) then we can [have an information - -]
- 161 <n Peter> **F1(FPD)**→ = I will just talk to the other managers, so, if you can keep it - - ... but if you can just keep it until MONDAY, (0.4) uh (0.3) then that would be good, (0.2) **A1**→ is that POSSIBLE? [**<L>** Yeah] Is Monday TOO long? (0.3) Is Monday ok? **F2(FPD)**→ (0.5) And obviously, I think, as well, the other thing I am happy to do, well, I WILL do, is gonna, you know, is to have one-to-one conversations, as well, [**<R>** Yeah] with people, **A2**→ because I think, you know, it it's (32:00) uh (0.7) I think we just need to do that, don't we_ (0.2) we just need to do that, (0.2) so that people can talk about, tell me what they think, (0.2) and and and we can (0.2) get to a point, where we (0.3) can get it (0.8) uh (0.6) get it into place, really, (1.2) is that all right? **F3(SC)**→ So, (0.3) uh there you go, (laughs) (1) now you know! (32:20) (2)

370 <n Peter> Z→ Yeah, that's his background, isn't it, ... (50:00) A→ (2.5) ALL RIGHT, well, I I I I ... F1(FP)→ (0.3) so, (0.2) if you could, (0.2) at LEAST until MONDAY, [<R> Monday] (0.3) and then then by which time I will have spoken to the other managers, (0.4) (50:20) and then, (0.3) you know,

DS03_ITUG01

9 <n Sharin> A1→ So I think that would be, ... F1(FPD)→ So, if the group is happy with this, [<L> Yeah] (0.2) we'll (0.2) put an area for the IT user group, where we can put our documents in there, A2→ ... (03:00) F2(FPD)→ And uh we'll put the terms of reference there as well. So, we'll get on with it, (0.3) and and do that. (8) E1→ Uh, (0.2) I am not sure, if you've got a copy of the minutes ... A3→ Uh these are for, (0.2) clearly for, (0.2) receiving emails remotely. (04:00) (2) E2→ The BUSINESS CONTINUITY ... F3(SC)→ (0.4) So, THAT'S that's IN PLACE, umm (0.4) which is (0.5) an ACHIEVEMENT, A4→ because I think it will - ... (1.5) E3→ DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT system. ... (0.2) A5→ Uh, in the first instance, we did not want to ... F4(SC)→ SO, we're working on THIS, but as I've said, the progress is very slow, (0.2) (05:40) we'll be ENLISTING external help, in terms of uh (0.4) (0.2) uh consultancy work, to see whether (0.3) they can help assist us, in in going in the right direction. (0.6) E4→ We talked about the: PO system, ...

31 <n Sharin> E1→ Yes, and the the: ACTUAL TOPICS (0.2) ... F1(FPD)→ so, at the end of the day, when we decide on a DATE, we can sit down as a group, and say, these are the things we want to DISCUSS, and and open for discussion (09:40) (0.2) for for uh users. So, we'll do that, nearer the time. A1→ It's just, uh, (0.2) ... (3) Uh (4.5) E1→ There was a couple of other issues, ... A2→ BUT, the the danger is, ... F2(FP)→ uh so, so, (0.2) if ANYBODY HERE, (0.5) is happy to say, (10:20) (0.2) I'll chair meetings, when Marcus is not here, or run I'll run this group, or whatever, uh in the future, then that'll be fantastic. If we can have more than ONE, that's even BETTER, A3→ because then we can have- - (0.2) ...

58 <n Sharin> E1→ Great, uh (2) and there was, (0.3) an issue ... F1(SC)→ uh I think wh- what we're getting is, (0.2) hopefully, through discussion today (0.2) is some feedback from you, (0.2) if you had (12:00) any discussions within your team, A1→ (0.4) uh (0.2) simply because we as ... Z1→ Was there ... (2.5) A2→ OK, umm (3) (12:40) I didn't ... [<D>,<C>,<St> (laugh)] E2→ Uh, but no we we did the: (0.2) minutes, ... E3→ Umm, if I may start with the IT side of things, ... E4→ Uh, well, (0.2) the good news is, ... F2(SC)→ uh so they (14:00) will be, HOPEFULLY, (0.2) assisting the the team in in (0.4) uh DELIVERING uh (0.2) services a bit more promptly, than it has been in recent times. E5→ Uh (0.2) we have also been AUTHORISED ... (14:20) Z2→ Uh, hopefully, next meeting we can say, ... (0.8) F3(FPD)→ I WILL (14:40) (0.3) perhaps send an email (0.2) next week, to tell the whole organisation, who the two members are, and what they will be working on. A3→ I think, that would be good, (0.2) because ... F4(FPD)→ So, I'll do that (0.2) next week (15:00)

68 <n Sharin> A1→We can we ... (0.4) E1→Uh I I GUESS, I wanted to SAY that, ... F1(SC)→ and (0.2) in in a way, we'll be addressing the the question, that Mike has just raised, on how we (17:40) prioritise, and and how we (0.2) tackle development (0.2) uh tasks. (2) E2→Uhh (2.5) In terms of (1) a a new (0.2) initiative, ... F2(FPD)→the Blackberry devices will be (0.4) A2→uh I HOPE you guys have, ... (0.3), F2(FPD)→they'll be rolled out, (0.2) uh (0.2) A2→because as I've said, (18:20) (9.5) E3→One (0.2) last (0.2) update is the Intranet, (0.2) ... F3(FP)→So, (0.6) (19:20) the PLAN is, we should have that uh (0.3) sometime in August, (0.2) uh implemented, (0.2) uh so by the end of August, if you haven't seen it, you can hit me back with something.

74 <n Sharin> F1(FPD)→Yes. Yes, it is necessary. A1→I I'll tell you why, (0.2) uh (0.2) Mike, ... F2(SC)→ (0.2) Uh, so we we LOG IT not simply, (0.2) for for for for, you know, (0.2) the sake of logging it. (0.2) We LOG it, because we want to, historically, look at the cases and analyse, (0.2) and then, we can we can FOCUS our (0.2) SUPPORT efforts, (0.2) to ADDRESS those (22:00) issues. ... A2→Uh in fact, ... E2→ Uh, so, when we ask users to - - (0.2) uh if it's an URGENT (0.2) uh CASE,...

- 97 <n Sharin> E1→Actually, (29:00) the the the support- - ... **F1(FPD)→So, what we'll do, (0.2) will send an EMAIL, to REMIND people to LOOK at THAT document, basically. (0.2)**
A1→Because it contains ... (0.4) **F2(FPD)→Uh so I'll I'll (0.4) I'll send an email out, (0.2) to remind people** (10) (29:40) (5) **Z→**Amanda, does that answer your question?
- 152 <n Sharin> **F1(FPD)→No, uh (0.7) seriously, (0.3) if it is if it is a business requirement, then we will have to accommodate it somehow, we will look into it, [<A> Mhm] with you, (0.2)** **A1→**but if it is on a: (0.6) just (sighs) ...
- 211 <n Sharin> **F1(FPD)→You talk to IT in the first instance, [<C> Mhm] stick it on the on the Support Desk. [<C> Mhm, yeah] A1→** I'll tell you why. [**<C> Yeah**] Because, ... **F2(FP)→So, to make your life easier for YOU, as a user, stick it on the support desk, [<C> Support desk] and then we can liaise with the group in Marketing, [<C> Mhm] (0.4) and do it (53:00) that way.**
- 228 <n Sharin> **F1(FP)→ [one page (0.2) one page about,] (0.3) the the the BASIC principles, of what we're trying to achieve. (57:40) [<A> Mhm] And if that is- - If I see that, and and I'll run it past to you, and if you think, yeah, that's useful, then (0.2) I'll publish it. Uh (0.2) I'll TRY and DO that. [<A> Ok] A1→**Uh but, (0.3) ... **F2(FPD)→**So, (0.3) I'll give you something (0.5) to just give you an idea, about [**<A> Mhm (p)**] what we are [trying to] (58:00)
- 238 <n Sharin> **A→=** It's the implementation. You know, ... **F(FP)→ But I'll I'll put something in place, and and hopefully that will help. (0.5) Hopefully, that will help.**

Appendix 9.2: Managing Change: Formulations and their Influence on Decision-making

The extracts below sample data from across a number of meetings in Data Set Two for both REG and ITUG teams. The data identify the meeting, the turn, and the speaker. They then provide textual evidence of Formulations that took place in the meetings (highlighted by **F1→**, **F2→**, etc.)

Formulations have been highlighted in **bold** print and decisions made or reported in the meeting are indicated by means of underlining. The textual boundaries of the adjacent Explanations and Accounts have been marked, with the systematic sequencing of the three practices demonstrating the complementarity and joint working of Explanations, Accounts, and Formulations in meetings.

DS01_REG28_T50C

32

<n Peter> **E1→**But my QUESTION MARK was, (0.3) ... (0.2) from the first of April THIS year, [**R>Yeah**] not NEXT year, from the April of this year [**R>** we're supposed to be separated] the THE THEORY is, we are supposed to be separated, (13:00), (0.3) NOW, you know, (0.2... **F1→**I think we need to sit down [**R>Look at that individually**] I think we need to put some TIME into this, [**S>Mhm**] (0.2) you know. (laughs) (self-reflective) [**B>Mh::m**] ... **A1→** (0.5) But the the point about THIS, and why that (sic) ... **F2→** (0.3) so, I think, (0.8) no I think we should do that as a (0.3) TEAM, [**R>Mhm**] frankly, rather than you know, just TO enterprise, [**S>mhm**] **A2→** 'cause, actually, I think there is a whole raft of things, ... **F3→** (0.2) well, we need to just, I think we need to get back to it

DS02_REG29_T1C

1

<n Peter> **E1→**(41:00) (3) Thank you. Umm (0.4) The only the only other thing I've got on (0.2) on on my list, ... **F1→** (0.2) so the version on the L drive isn't right. **A1→** (1.3) u:h and that's because I had to put all the salary stuff detail back in, (0.2) (41:40) **F2→**so, I didn't put it back on the L drive, and I can put it back on the L drive, so it's there, you can see it (p). Uhm, but the TWO things I need to say about it u:h are, (0.2) the thing number ONE is, (1) ultimately when we were looking at the (0.2) gross margin, the the the how much of the income is going into direct (42:00) costs, (0.5) that's gone up quite dramatically between (0.2) THIS year, (0.2) and NEXT year, (1) **E2→** u:h and (0.4) there there was there some REASON behind that, **A2→**because (0.2) what I did with the FIRST version of the budget ... **F3→**So, what I've had to do, (0.2) is I've had to reduce (1) the: (42:40) direct costs (0.8) other than where they are contracted, (1.2) **E3→** so, in other words, (0.2) there is no SBS money in there,... **A3→** I mean, you know, that's that's still guesswork, ... **F4→**Well, (0.2) we CAN'T cut the staff costs (laughs) (self-reflective), **E4→**, because even the SECOND thing to say is, even with all of THAT, (0.8) we're still not covering (1) the salary overhead costs, (0.3) in fact, ... **F5→** (1) Uh (0.8) the: (1.2) so, that's, (1.2) you know, the other, second thing to say, is that **E5→**IN the current version of the budget, (0.3) ... **A4→** I mean this is all done in the knowledge of my debtors, ... **F6→** but RIGHT NOW, uh what I want us is to put a budget in, is a budget that (initials od Executive Director), (initials of senior manager) can DEFEND (0.4) to the board, (0.2) on the basis, or on the whole range of bases, (44:40) uhm (1) that's defensible (sic) in some way, but that's SHOWING (0.4) a (0.8) NEGATIVE MOVEMENT from this year, which it is,

(0.2) but not (0.2) uh (2.2) but it's still defensible, (0.2) [so that - - and I NEEDED that]

DS03_REG30_T3C

3 <n Ben>

Z→Yeah. ... (circulates round the Away Day preliminary plan) (17:20) ... E1→ (1) Uh, (0.8) you probably had something in your diary, uh (0.5) where WE ARE with the Away Day, (0.2) ... F1→ (0.4) and then, (18:20) really, say what does that mean to us, and where do we sit in the position, (0.4) E2→u:h (0.2) the agenda itself, F2→so it won't be like building big towers and things, (0.2) and marshmallows, and stuff, (0.2) but, (18:40) it's still got to be relaxed and formal, (0.2) uh we need lots of space, and ABILITY to write lots of things up, so, I think that's the sort of tone it'll all have, E3→there will be icebreakers, ... F3 (unfinished)→ (0.2) (19:00) so uh - - =

DS04_REG30_T61C

62

<n Peter> F1→= [But I think,] [<R>Mhm] this is - - for ME, this is about (0.2) thinking BEYOND that, [Mhm] A1→ I mean, I I ACCEPT, you know, in the short term, that there's no doubt about it, that people are gonna be unsettled, and UNSURE, and then, you know, they're quite right to be, (0.5) uh but because there're so many things going on, (0.2) (27:40) BUT (0.2) if if we can understand, (0.5) and and have a kind of JOINT, SHARED, as much as anything, not such as having a vision, but something which is a SHARED VISION (0.2) about where we're trying to get to, (0.4) uh and some of the building blocks to do that, (0.5) uh and the PRESSURES, I mean, that's what the reality check's about the pressures, isn't it, if we've GOT a SHARED kind of (28:00) knowledge around that, then it DOES give us a chance to (1) uh kind of WITHSTAND some of that stuff, 'cause actually no, al that's - - that's short term, you know, we we know where we're going, (0.2) that's short term, and we know, and - - I mean, you know, part of it, of course, something like that (pp) (2.2) AFTER the twenty-third is to be - - I mean, if we talk about it now, (28:20) is about talking to other teams, (0.2) and talking to (name of Senior Manager), (0.2) and, you know, (0.2) and and [Mhm (p)] just to say, this is this is OUR VIEW, F2(unfinished)→you know, this is what we - - (0.7) and [Mhm (p)] (1.2) All righty (p)

DS05_REG31_T3C

3 <n Peter>

F1→= Well, well, I'll come back to it, well, I'll I'll circulate that, E1→I mean, ...

DS06_REG32_T1C

1 <n Peter>

E1→ (12:47) Uhm (0.5) I'll carry on, then (0.5) the: (1) other thing ... (0.4) u:hm (1) and (1) the expectation is that (0.6) the EARLIEST that we will move is August, (1) u:h (2.4) but that (13:40) could go back to December, (0.6) I think that's (0.2) I think that's what (0.4) (name of CEO) said at the - - (0.2) ... F1→So, (0.2) you know, I - - (1.2) well, (0.2) anyway, the - - (1.2) I say move fast on the basis that, (0.4) if they DO wanna put the money in, (0.6) uh (0.5) and they (0.2) sign the (0.4) (14:40) the agreements and so on, (0.3) they'll wanna be on site getting and going ei es ei pi., you know, 'cause they'll want their money back, (laughs) (self-reflective) [Mhm] [<R> Yeah (p)] which is why August, actually, (0.2) is not such a kind of - - that's not SO UNLIKELY =

DS07_REG32_T26C

27 <n Peter>

F1→= exactly so, (0.2) the issue is not finding places, it's finding places that we'll be happy with, that they've got parking, (0.2) u:h and (0.2) you know, are the right price, and all the rest of it, so, you know, those those are the things that we've gotta (0.2) do, you know, SO, u:h (16:40) A1→ (0.9) I don't know, I don't know whether whether I'll end up - - and and and, when it all kind of turns up, (0.2) F2→but (0.2) u:h (0.8) we can start looking at - - start looking at things in the next sort of month or so.

DS08_REG33_T319C

320

<n Peter> Z→Yeah, we might do, and and let, you know, F1→let's not let's not pre-judge any of that, ..., I think the KEY (0.2) bit for me, A1→ which is why ... F2→ (0.4) uhm (0.2) but the key for me, I think, (0.2) is just to be clear on what our process is from here, A2→ I'm not hundred per cent clear on what our process is from here, (0.8) ... F3→well, it's - - we're trying to encapsulate that, (0.4) you know, what what we - - what KIND of organisation we wanna be representing ourselves as =

DS09_REG35_T17C

17 <n Samuel>

E1→U:H (0.5) in terms of PROFIT IS, (0.8) ... F1→ (0.2) so, (1) I I think, (0.2) you could, (0.2) I I would (0.3) [Mhm (p)] ask you, to have a look at this, (0.2) and challenge this (22:20) to say, (0.2) do you think this is RIGHT, do you think this is not right. [Mhm] (0.8) E2→And THEN, (0.4) another big assumption is, ... F2→ (0.4) So, according to THIS, we should chase - -, the top priority (22:40) should be, the (name of local development partnership) money, and (name of regional development agency) local money, (1) next one is RZE_ (0.2) ...

DS10_REG35_T243

244 <n Ben>

A1→ [I mean, if you] (0.2) if you ask the question slightly differently, (0.2) 'cause if you are (37:20) actually saying, ... F1→ (0.4) so, you should also be writing bids, and say, (0.2) we need to put (38:00) (0.2) a lot more resource on the ground, (0.2) that will last through these things.

DS11_ITUG03_T82C

82 <n Sharin>

E1→Oh well, we said to them, ... F1→and (0.6) uh their recommendation was to go out to tender, so we'll send (1.2) aspects of THAT proposal requirements to (0.4) three or four (38:00) suppliers out there, uh (0.3) in fact they recommended we even send it to them again, to those guys, [<Mi> (laughs)] uh (0.9) just to rub (0.2) it (0.2) IN, [(all laugh) (ff)] uh (1.1) see what they come back with. Uh (1.8) so, that's where we are. E2→In fact, (0.2) uh Marcus and I ... F2→ Uh (0.6) so, that's where we are. Uh I don't think it's a MAJOR major setback. But it's certainly going to delay us (0.4) uh a month or two, because we were hoping (1.1) uh by (38:40) now (0.3) to have kick started the: (0.3) the process. E3→I mean, the other element ... F3→Uh (0.5) That's where we are! (39:20) That's where we are. (39:22)

DS12_ITUG04_T19C

19 <n Sharin>

E1→= no what what we've DONE ... F1→So what we've done is, we've added within (0.2) within the Intra- the new Intranet, you can feed BACK, [<A> Mhm] [<M> Mhm] when you get (20:20) the last one which says closed, you can't do - - you can actually feedback and say, (0.2) what the hell did you do! (0.2) [<L> Mhm] you know, o:r this wasn't satisfactory, o:r I am not happy with it. (0.2) F2→So (0.2) I think it it's got to be (0.2) both both parties to play a role in enhancing those kind of (0.2) [uh (0.2) comments.]

DS13_ITUG05_T21

21 <n Sharin>

E1→Well, I've got an update on THAT, [<A> Mhm] ... F1→What I SUGGEST to the team is, to roll it out uh (0.2) group by group, rather than the whole company in one go, just in case we (09:40) hit a problem. E2→We we ... F2→So what we'll do is, roll it out to group by group, and I suggest your group will be the first to [to (0.2) roll it out]

DS14_ITUG06_T77C

78

<n Sharin> E1→Ownership of hardware, systems, (0.4) intellectual property rights, (0.4) post-Chamber, (name of Chamber department) separation, ...

F1→ But that's not for me and you to worry about, I think it for the management to worry about, and actually they said, look, don't worry about (37:40) (0.3) ownership of hardware, software, whatever, A1→ because as as Marcus pointed out, ... F2→But the the the agreement was, ok we'll cross this bridge, when we come to it next April, we can then debate it from (0.5) a (38:20) FINANCIAL side, [<A> Mhm] or the financial point of view to say, (0.2) do we need to refund some of it, do we need to give (0.4) some of the hardware away, do we do that kind of thing.

Data Annex: Full Transcription of Data