

Linguistic Definitions and Transcription Techniques*Part 1*

- **face-threatening act** *noun* if **face** is the term used for people's public self-image (Maybin, 2007), then a face-threatening act is a speech act which does something to threaten the integrity of that self-image. Janet Maybin gives the following as an example: 'saying *there seems to have been a bit of an accident here* rather than *how the hell could you have been so stupid!*' (p. 10). Another example could occur in a situation where one person, John, poses a question to Rebecca and Alan, Rebecca can be seen to be trying her hardest to answer the question, but Alan undermines her and answers with the face-threatening, 'We don't know'. Face-threatening acts can be avoided by using hedging expressions such as *I think perhaps, sort of or possibly*.
- **collocation** *noun* nominalisation of the verb to **collocate**, meaning to put together. In linguistic terms refers to two or more words which are commonly found in conjunction with each other. In Reading A of Chapter 2 of the course book Norman Fairclough presents collocations he found in a study of '53 speeches of Tony Blair's between 1997 and 1999' (p. 73). He found that 'the most frequent collocations are 'New Labour' ... and 'New Deal''. Other examples could be 'laboratory experiment' or, in computing, 'Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS)'. One possible effect of collocations is to spread the meanings of each word in the collocation to the others, so that one word may be used and the meanings of the other(s) will be associated with it.
- **nominalisation** *noun* the act of turning one syntactic form, e.g. a verb, into another, e.g. a noun. In the course book Mike Baynham and Janet Maybin highlight the replacement of the verb *invest* in Extract 1 by a related noun *investment* in Extract 2 from earlier in the chapter (p. 125). Nominalisation could also occur from a verb to an adjective, as in *like* and *likeable*, or from an adjective to a noun, as in *lonely* and *loneliness*. Nominalisation from verb to noun often occurs in formal written texts (indeed, it is said to be 'particularly characteristic' of the genre (p. 125)), and has the effect of making the text more lexically dense, i.e. there are a higher proportion of lexical items (meaning-bearing words) to grammatical items (connective words).
- **marketisation** *noun* a type of border crossing in which techniques of 'sales language' are used in informative texts to make them more persuasive. Such techniques include making the text more informal – use of contractions (*won't* or *you'll*), the active voice (*we surveyed one hundred people*) or by addressing the reader directly – using more than one semiotic mode in one text (words and images, or words and music), or using triadic structures (i.e. presenting a proposition in three parts) (Maybin, 2007, p. 215). An example of these techniques is given in a page from a Department of Health leaflet (p. 219), in which luscious images and enticing language work together to convince the reader that its message is beneficial. Other such persuasive techniques can be found in television news and weather programmes, in which attractive visuals and 'authoritative' music are used to present a professional, and therefore trustworthy, appearance. However, some viewers or readers may simply want the bare facts, and these slick visuals serve only as distractions, and thus despoil the trustworthiness of the information.

Part 2

Nicholas Parsons	Josie Lawrence	Paul Merton	Comments
1 I'm still with you			
2 completely (.) the			
3 morning after (.)			
4 <u>starting</u> (0.3) now			with urgency (0.4)
5			
6		[rings bell]	
7 [<u>Ah</u>]			very short
8			[much general
9			laughter from
10			audience and
11			panel]
12 Darling		<u>Are you getting my</u>	comic venom
13	<u>I didn't</u>	<u>drift (.) Nicholas</u>	with drama
14	<u>hesitate</u>		
15 Darling (.) you <i>did</i>			
16 hesitate			
17 <u>you</u>	<i>I didn't</i>		cut short (0.3)
18			
19 <u>you</u>	<i>I breathed in in order to</i>		cut short
20	<i>speak</i>		
21			(0.4)
22 I know (.) but			
23 <u>you</u>	<i>If I hadn't've breathed in</i>		cut short
24	<i>(.) I would've gone blue</i>		
25	<i>(0.2)</i>		
26 I <u>kno-</u>	<i>for god's sake</i>		cut short [laughter]
27			
28 But you didn't actually			
29 sta- (.) what I always <i>do</i>			
30 in this game (.) is I say			
31 (0.2) and th- and I look			
32 at you (.) and I say the			
33 time starts (0.4) and you			
34 breathe in on <i>that</i>			
35			(0.3)
36	<u>Oh</u>		unimpressed
37 And the time starts			
38	[inhales		
39 Deep breath (0.3) <u>n-</u>	deeply]		elongated /n/
40 <u>now</u> (0.4) and off you			
41 <i>go</i>			
42			(0.5)

43		<u>God in heaven</u>		with mock awe
44	<u>It is a difficult game (.)</u>			with amusement
45	<u>isn't it</u>			
46		Yes		
47				(0.5)
48	And I let you have the			
49	benefit of the doubt			
50	(0.3) the last time			
51	that Paul chall-			
52	<u>enge-</u>	Well (.) I		cut short
53		didn't feel I hesitated		
54				(0.3)
55	No (0.3)			
56	I		No	
57	know you	Chris Neill		
58	di-didn't feel <u>tha-</u>	Oh (.) shut up (.)		cut short
59		she <u>did</u>	A- (0.4) a-	very high-pitched
60				[audience
61		Josie Lawrence		laughter]
62		<u>I didn't</u>		spluttering
63				[laughter cont.]
64	N- on that occasion ()		Why not (.) why not	
65			listen to it (.) when it	
66			goes	
67		Do you know (.) I've got	out [uhn-hum]	
68		some brilliant stories		
69		about the morning after		
70		and they're all true (.)		
71		and you'll none of them		
72		hear them now		
73			I'-	
74				[audience
75			No (.) I'm quite happy	laughter]
76			for Josie to have the	
77			subject back	
78				(.)
79		[strong laughter]		[audience
80	N-no (.) no (.) no (0.8)			laughter]
81	You had a correct			
82	challenge (.) Paul (.) the			
83	other time you <i>weren't</i>			
84	correct			
85	and but		[mm]	
86	you were (0.2) <u>being</u>			losing steam
87	<u>very (.) [erm] (0.5) very</u>			
88	disingenuous I think			

89	<u>anyway</u> (.) so (0.2) [er]			renewed vigour
90	(.) you have a correct			
91	challenge there (0.2)			
92	you can give it back to			
93	Josie if you <i>want</i>			
94			<u>Yes</u>	definitely
95	<u>E-alright</u>			with uncertainty
96		<u>Oh</u>		with shock
97	If you want to			drama
98		no!		[audience
99	But (.) you get a point			laughter]
100	for a correct challenge			
101	(0.4)		Fine	
102	right			
103			[uh-	
104	Ah, and	<u>Ah, right</u>	hum]	With happy
105	Paul			determination
106	wants you	[clears throat]		
107	to have it back (0.3) so			
108	you (might) (0.3)	[three sharp exhales]		
109	take the breath on (0.4)			
110	and the time starts (0.6)			[aud. laughter]
111		Time		
112	Right	starts		
113	Right (0.3) forty-nine			
114	seconds (0.2) and your			
115	time			
116	starts	[extremely deep inhale]		
117	(0.6)			
118	now			
119		<u>I</u>		dramatic urgency
120		<u>remember</u>	[rings bell]	
121		[uproarious laughter]		
122				[much laughter
123				and applause]
124	<u>Paul (.) you challenged</u>			with laughter
125			Deviation (0.3) she	
126			didn't hesitate	
127				[audience
128				hilarity]

Key

Nicholas	boldness indicates speaker
(.)	brief pause
<u>starting</u>	underlining indicates elements commented on in the Comments column
(0.4)	timed pause in seconds
[rings bell]	transcription of a sound other than speech
I didn't	colour indicates that comments continue to apply to subsequent utterances
<i>italics</i>	italics indicate speech emphasis
()	unclear speech
(want)	transcription uncertain

Part 3

I think the first decision which had to be made, once I'd chosen my portion of speech, was whether to employ a standard or a column transcript layout. I decided on the latter, judging it to be more suitable for recording a group of people, with many interruptions, turns and overlaps. A fine example of these elements occurs from lines 55-62, and I feel this particular passage would not be as successfully recordable had I chosen to use a standard transcript layout. However, this very passage illustrates one primary flaw of the column transcript layout: whereas in a standard transcript the speakers need not be defined in advance, but can simply appear as they speak, column transcripts depend upon each speaker being defined with their own column, otherwise the system may become unstable and conflicts may occur. Chris Neill is a case in point, here. He speaks only once during the entire conversation, so to save space I decided not to give him his own column. However, if his one utterance had coincided directly with utterances from each of the other speakers, I would have been in trouble, because there would have been nowhere to record it. It was only good fortune on my part that Josie Lawrence wasn't speaking at the time, which saved the system from falling apart.

After deciding which layout I wanted to use, I had to establish which features of speech I wanted to record. Speed and Pitch were two elements I considered, but rejected them both on grounds of practicality. Instead I tried to concentrate on moods (*with urgency*) and timings; and the use of the comments column, bracketed times and line divisions I found very useful to accomplish this. Moods could be conveyed in the comments column for single utterances, but there are also two occasions when the mood has extended beyond one utterance, across the boundaries of an interruption, and which I have signified by using red text. I found this a more expedient method than either underlining all the utterances to which the comment applies, or by using 'open and close tags' in the column (e.g. *with drama, start* and *with drama, end*). My method kept the comments column as clean as possible, and enabled me to comment on Nicholas's utterance (line 26), without having to worry about Josie's ongoing drama. With regards line divisions, my policy was that when the state of the utterance changed (from solo to interruption, or back again) the line was divided, bearing in mind that the audience's reactions constituted utterances.

The extract is from Monday 7th January's episode of the Radio 4 comedy panel game *Just a Minute*, a game in which avoiding common features of speech – hesitation, repetition and deviation – earns

points, and so which I thought would make a curious and interesting subject for a transcription. However, only two words of the extract are uttered within the confines of the game's rules (Josie's 'I remember' on lines 119-120), almost the entirety being regular spontaneous speech, and a great many features of typical speech can be found. Personal forms of address are used, such as Nicholas's *darlings* in lines 12 and 15. At this point he is authoritatively upholding the 'law' (no hesitation), but this form of address works to soften the impact, and save Josie's face. This softening is also a type of hedging. Furthermore, it creates a sense of solidarity, so he is seen to be *with* the panellists, as opposed to authoritatively *against* them. An alternative (and possibly more realistic, in this instance) explanation is that Nicholas is simply an affectionate person, and naturally addresses people as 'darling'.

There are also a series of interruptions around this passage (lines 12-26), in which Nicholas is interrupted, and immediately quiets to allow his interrupter to continue. This act of Nicholas's works to fulfil his negative face needs – his desire not to impose himself on others. A series of false starts then occur in Nicholas's solo from lines 28-34. He begins by reiterating the complaints made against Josie, but then he stops himself and goes on to explain what *he* usually does in the game. In this way he is saving Josie's face again, and is instead offering her positive advice on how to continue the game.

There are so many features in just the beginning of this extract, as there are in the whole of it, and as there were in the entire episode, but I feel I must finish with another example, my favourite, from near the beginning of the transcript. There are a couple of echoes in lines 12 and 13: Nicholas says /dɑ/ at the same time as Paul says /ɑ/, and then just as Paul says /maɪ/ Josie says /aɪ/. These rhyming echoes may have occurred entirely by chance, throwaway sounds at the spur of the moment, but I feel it would be nice to think of them as the hidden keys to these people's relationships, as very strong indications of the deep solidarity that these people have between them.

(2054 words)

References

J. Maybin, N. Mercer and A. Hewings (eds) *Using English*, London, Routledge/ The Open University