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MA TEFL/TESL

Module 4

Classroom and Spoken Discourse,
Written Discourse
October 2009 – January 2010

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**Spoken grammar and a register approach:
approximating to natural speech in the
communicative language classroom**

Assignment SD/09/05

'There can be little hope for a natural spoken output on the part of the language learner if the input is stubbornly rooted in models that owe their origin and shape to the written language.'

(McCarthy and Carter, 2002, in Hinkel and Fotos [eds.])

Basing your answer on analytical models which you have encountered in this module, how do you feel that the issue of 'natural spoken output' should be addressed?

Word count: 4,415

excluding long quotes, figures, tables,
references and appendix

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1 Introduction

For nearly half a century the goal of English language teaching has been to enable learners to communicate successfully in writing and in speech. However, after decades of 'communicative language teaching' (CLT), teachers and learners alike deplore learners' general lack of communicative competence (Skehan, 1996, Mitchell and Myles, 2001, Bennett and Bricker, 2006, Rühlemann, 2008). While the particular aim of natural spoken output may be debatable, this paper takes the stance that approximating to natural speech is one of the goals of CLT. Nevertheless, most current EFL methodologies, strive as they may to be 'communicative', fail to support learners in achieving this goal. So what are we missing in our efforts on the way to natural spoken output?

Discourse analysis reveals that spoken and written varieties of English are considerably at variance and that conventional analytical models, based on corpora of written language and describing a variety called 'Standard English' (SE), explain the structures of spoken language insufficiently (Biber et al., 2002, McCarthy and Carter, 2002, Rühlemann, 2008). As most current textbooks, "the backbones of most EFL courses", are based on SE (Rühlemann, 2008, p.686), learners' spoken output is measured by the standards of written language, thus becoming an artificial construct rather than natural speech.

In the first part of this paper I will, therefore, compare features of written and spoken language and present different analytical models and their appropriacy for different speech situations in order to underline the significance of spoken discourse analysis for CLT. The second part of the essay will deal with classroom implications, viewed from my teaching experience in Germany; based on the analytical models described, with an emphasis on spoken grammar, I will present an approach to teaching conversational speech, questioning the notion of 'correctness', discuss teachers' and learners' attitudes in this context and address other issues in the implementation of a spoken grammar.

2 The role of spoken discourse analysis in communicative language teaching

Language is fundamentally communicative, and CLT has become a major approach to EFL teaching worldwide (Brown, 2001), seeing the language learner as language user and language learning as a facilitator towards this aim (Brumfit, 1984). The goals of CLT, therefore, are "the negotiation of meanings and assured interaction with others" (McCarthy and Carter, 1995, p.214), and to achieve this, authenticity and real-world simulations are essential in the language classroom (Brown, 2001).

Nunan (1988, cited in Tatsuki, 2006, p.1) defines authenticity of materials as "hav[ing] been produced for purposes other than to teach language", while Tatsuki (2006) sees authenticity as a 'social construct' and debates the 'authenticity' of materials like Hollywood films; I interpret 'authenticity' as the use of all kinds of written and spoken language in formal and informal real-life contexts. To obtain authentic models for a natural spoken output, it is thus crucial to analyse not only formal, written language but different language varieties used in different real-world situations. The following section, therefore, compares the normative variety of Standard English and varieties occurring in spoken discourse.

2.1 Standard English and real-life discourse

Occurring predominantly in written language and spoken only by a minority of British or American native speakers, Standard English (SE) is notwithstanding widely understood and a global standard (Rühlemann, 2008). A prestigious target variety in native-speaker education, SE has also become a model in written and spoken EFL (Rühlemann, 2008). SE is the underlying norm for textbooks, grammars and examination materials; therefore, innumerable non-conforming structures from everyday language are stigmatised as 'ungrammatical' and 'deviant' (McCarthy and Carter, 2002).

However, recent analyses of spoken corpora show the hugely predominant native-speaker use of these 'deviant' structures, overwhelming evidence that conversational language rules differ widely from those of SE, supporting the view

that spoken utterances cannot be 'ungrammatical' (McCarthy and Carter, 2002). Consequently, the status of SE grammar in conversation needs to be revised: are conversational utterances mutilated forms of 'real' grammar, or is written language a refinement of spoken structures (McCarthy and Carter, 2002)?

Teaching materials usually neglect many structures carrying important discourse functions that differ from or exceed those of SE (for examples, see section 2.1.1): "a clear mismatch between the corpus evidence and what is covered in textbooks" (Rühlemann, 2008, p.687). To demonstrate how crucially these omissions might affect the comprehension and production of natural speech, I will present a few examples of 'deviant' language use.

2.1.1 Examples of functional differences

Countless phenomena frequently found in natural speech depend on situational context and interpersonal relationship; they include ellipsis, non-standard syntax, non-standard use of tenses, vague language, etc. (Carter and McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy and Carter, 1995, 2002). Speakers often make choices under the constraints of planning and processing time; the quotative 'I says', 'incorrect' by SE standards but a regular counterpart of 'he says' or 'she says', is a striking example of 'economy of speech', saving the speaker a decision about grammatical and phonological distinction (Rühlemann, 2008).

Conversational contractions and particular aphetic forms (as defined by Rühlemann, 2008), more frequent in spoken discourse than the non-contracted variants, rarely appear in teaching materials, despite their different roles: while the taught form 'yes', for instance, is usually confirmative, the informal 'yeah' is commonly used as a backchannel or topic transition marker (Rühlemann, 2008). The contracted variant 'cos' functions not only as subordinating conjunction, like the non-contracted textbook variant 'because', but beyond that as coordinating one (Rühlemann, 2008). Although many EFL materials equate 'too'/'either' and 'so'/'neither', discourse analysis places the latter mainly in contexts of negative evaluation (Celce-Murcia, 2002).

I have presented these examples to illustrate the diversity of spoken language in comparison to the standard forms based on written language, and to support McCarthy and Carter's (2002, p.51) view

that language pedagogy that claims to support the teaching and learning of speaking skills does itself a disservice if it ignores what we know about the spoken language. [...] [T]here can be little hope for a natural spoken output on the part of the language learner if the input is stubbornly rooted in models that owe their origin and shape to the written language.

2.2 Different models for the analysis of spoken discourse

The first approaches to a system of discourse analysis were based on Halliday's rank scale system implying that permissible combinations of grammatical units form the structure of larger units, i.e. unstructured morphemes as the smallest unit form words, words form clauses, and clauses, sentences. Since this description is unsatisfactory in discourse structure where a single function may be realised by different grammatical items (e.g., a directive by an imperative, an interrogative or a declarative clause), Sinclair et al. adapted it to describe discourse functions (Coulthard, 1985). Other approaches take into account sociolinguistic aspects or the specific characteristics of informal conversation. As it is quintessential, in my opinion, to analyse the speech models underlying language production, the sections below summarise the characteristics of some approaches to spoken discourse analysis.

2.2.1 Structural theories: the Sinclair-Coulthard model and the system of Francis and Hunston

The Sinclair-Coulthard model for classroom discourse analysis, developed at the University of Birmingham, replaces the four grammatical units of the Halliday system (cf. section 2.2) by four discourse units: act, move, exchange and transaction, with the act as smallest, unstructured unit and the transaction as the highest, all realised by grammatical structures (Coulthard, 1985). Transactions, marked by frames ('OK', 'well', 'now', etc.), consist of exchanges; a typical classroom exchange consists of three turn-taking moves: initiation (I), response (R) and feedback (F). The roles of moves are eliciting, informing, directing, boundary or evaluative, while acts may have a number of discourse functions, such as meta-interactive (i.e., marker, metastatement or loop), interactive (various options of I, R and F) or turn-taking (i.e., cue, bid or

nomination) (Coulthard, 1985). Figure 1 illustrates how the units are related, while the following analysis of a sample of classroom transaction with typical teacher-pupil-teacher (T-P-T) exchanges shows how the Sinclair-Coulthard model is applied (cf. table 1).

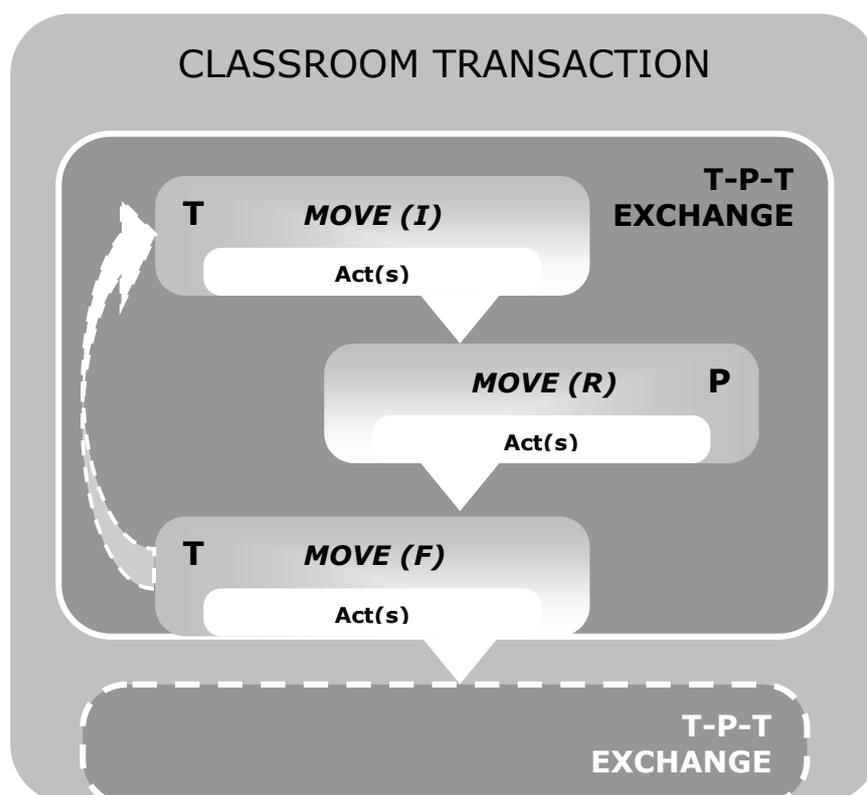


Fig. 1: A graphic example of a three-move, IRF exchange according to the Sinclair-Coulthard model. (Graphic by the author)

		act	move	exchange
T:	Now then...	marker	frame	boundary, eliciting
	I've got some things here, too.	informative	focus	
	Hands up.	cue		
	What's that, what is it?	elicitation	I	
P:	Saw.	reply	R	
T:	It's a saw, yes, this is a saw.	evaluate	F	
	What do we do with a saw?	elicitation	I	eliciting
P:	Cut wood.	reply	R	
T:	Yes.	evaluate	F	
	You're shouting out though.	metastatement		
	What do we do with a saw?	elicitation (loop)	I	eliciting
	Marvelette.	nomination		
P:	Cut wood.	reply	R	
T:	We cut wood.	evaluate	F	
	And, erm,	marker	I	eliciting
	what do we do with... etc.	elicitation		

Table 1: Analysis of a classroom dialogue according to the Sinclair-Coulthard model (discourse sample taken from McCarthy, 1991, p.15). (The sample is presented in tabular form for comparability with table 2 below).

The rigid, three-move IRF structure with the recurrent eliciting, replying and evaluating acts reflect the traditional teacher-pupil roles (McCarthy, 1991). Outside the classroom I see further applicability of the Sinclair-Coulthard model to discourse varieties with structurally and interculturally similar patterns and relevance to certain fields of EFL (e.g., telephoning, professional interviews, doctor-patient talk, etc.).

The need for a more flexible system applicable to a broader range of discourse situations led Francis and Hunston (1992) to revising the Sinclair-Coulthard model, without losing sight of its original principles (cf. fig. 2). The two most salient changes concern the exchange, now featuring a variable number of moves and an additional element R/I, while F becomes optional. Moves may be incomplete and/or overlap and, like acts, possess dual functions – frequent conversational phenomena unexplained by the Sinclair-Coulthard model with its clearly defined boundaries.

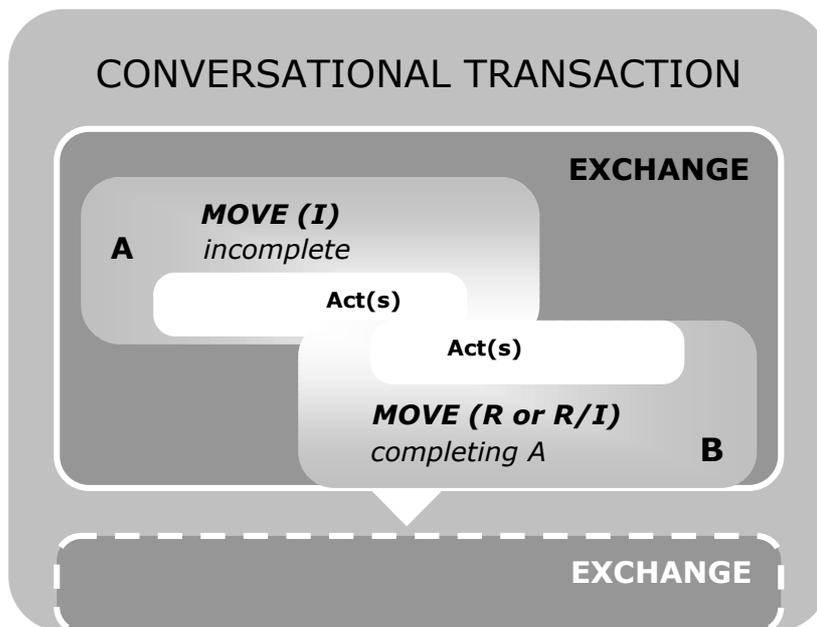


Fig. 2: A graphic example of an exchange according to Francis and Hunston (1992), with two overlapping moves, the second of which may be an R/I, and no feedback. (Graphic by the author)

Moreover, while the original system classifies all utterances solely according to their effect on those immediately following, its successor takes into account a larger-scale context (Francis and Hunston, 1992).

To illustrate how speaker relationships other than those of classroom discourse may be analysed, Francis and Hunston (1992, p.144) present a sample of everyday conversation with an additional R/I move and no F move:

		act	element of structure	move	element of structure	exchange
A:	I mean you know it's not (laugh) important it's just er a peculiar physical fact that helium yesterday was lighter than air and today it's heavier	informative	head	informing	I	Inform
B:	Really?	marked proposal	head	eliciting	R/I	
A:	Yeah (high key) isn't that weird	confirm comment	head post-head	informing	R	

Table 2: Analysis of an informal conversation according to Francis and Hunston (1992, p.144).

In this example, with speakers being on equal terms of authority, no evaluative feedback is given and speaker A initiates as well as responds, while speaker B responds by initiating in turn.

Based on a considerably larger quantity of data and thus reflecting various discourse types from casual conversation to technical talk, the system of Francis and Hunston with its greater adaptability is more extensively applicable than the Sinclair-Coulthard model; its usefulness in cases of SE-accustomed learners in a CLT environment will be discussed in section 3.2.1.

2.2.2 Conversational analysis: a sociological approach

McCarthy (1991) observes that classroom discourse analysis does not fit situations where speakers' roles are more balanced and IRF sequences thus less predictable, as in more communicative classrooms and informal conversations (cf. section 2.2.1), while more formal situations with planned talk feature longer, less spontaneous contributions resembling written language (Carter and McCarthy, 1997). Analysis of conversational discourse, therefore, should not be reduced to structural views but also regard sociological aspects.

In an ethnographic approach analysing cultural and sociological aspects, the turn-taking system – an agreement of at least one and not more than one person speaking at a time – is a central feature, as "all communities have an underlying set of non-linguistic rules which govern when, how and how often speech occurs" (Coulthard, 1985, p.55). In certain cultures, for example, replying or not replying to thanks or greetings, or the interpretation of unpredictable discourse features like speech pauses, may play a role in exchange patterns (McCarthy, 1991). In some cultures the turn-taking order is prescribed by rank, whereas in others overlapping or disrupting other speakers' utterances is acceptable, and different components within a speech event determine the choice of speech variety (Coulthard, 1985).

The conversational approach shows that discourse analysis must go beyond linguistic structures to provide an image of natural speech in its entirety, and that language must be regarded within a complex web of linguistic, cultural, psychological and sociological aspects.

2.2.3 Spoken grammar

As discussed in section 2.1, corpora built on formal, written language are highly insufficient when formulating general rules about grammar. Rings (1992, cited in McCarthy and Carter, 1995, p.207) points out that

there are dangers, in both English as a mother tongue and EFL / ESL domains, of producing speakers of English who can only speak like a book, because their English is modelled on an almost exclusively written version of the language.

That 'bookish' language can be a hindrance to communication may be illustrated by my own learner experience: talking to native speakers in Scotland after nine years of school English and encountering amusement or incomprehension, I was mortified when being kindly told that my English sounded "funny" and "book-like". (Although this approach to language awareness was highly effective, I cannot recommend it.)

Researchers, therefore, have begun to collect data from spoken language, suggesting a socially embedded grammar in which forms are acceptable if they are communicable and adequate in context (McCarthy and Carter, 2002). The information gained has been processed to develop spoken grammars (see Biber et al., 1999, and Carter and McCarthy, 2006), designed not to replace SE grammars but to address the grammatical phenomena of natural conversation through "uniquely special qualities that distinguish them from written ones" (McCarthy and Carter, 2002, p.51).

McCarthy and Carter (2002) have developed ten criteria for a spoken grammar, introducing the 'ungrammatical' aspects of choice and interpersonal relationship. The perception of the functional possibilities of particular forms, unrestricted by SE rules, enables speakers to make choices and influence the relationship to interlocutors. Although in public conception spoken language 'corrupts' grammar, learners should be aware that 'anomalies' "are licensed and perfectly normal in the target language" (McCarthy and Carter, 2002, p.63).

In the light of fast-developing technology enabling spontaneous global communication, where written language assimilates to vernacular in media like emails, chats or text messages, communicative speaking skills are an inestimable asset (McCarthy and Carter, 2002). Learning to make contextual

choices about language use, in my opinion, is a priority in CLT, and a grammar based on spoken corpora its cornerstone. In the following sections I will, therefore, present EFL situations which from my viewpoint would benefit from introducing a spoken grammar, and an approach to its implementation.

3 Implications for the communicative EFL classroom

3.1 Spoken output in German classrooms

Public schools in Germany profess to meet the goals of language learning described in the Common European Framework (CEF): the development of abilities and skills for successful communicative interaction (Tranter, 2003). However, having taught at secondary schools and adult education centres, I perceive a discrepancy between these communicative aims of public schools and their implementation, as there is an unbroken tendency for adult learners to enrol on lower-level or beginners' courses after several years of public school English because of their lack of speaking skills in real-life situations. To provide a basis for the subsequent discussion about how this deficit may be addressed by linguistic theory, I will briefly describe the two school types.

3.1.1 Secondary schools

With a view to implementing the CEF descriptions, language teaching has received some fresh attention by officials and politicians alike, and a new range of EFL textbooks (cf. appendix) has been designed, allegedly meeting the CEF standards of communicative competence. However, many of these glossy materials actually do not differ much from earlier generations: informed by written corpora and designed for classroom use, they enhance the competences required in the final examinations: reading, writing, listening and translation. SE grammar, usually introduced in linear order, features throughout as a main element, and there are few (if any) authentic texts, while a minority of tasks actually promote speaking skills. Römer (2004, 2005, cited in Rühlemann, 2008) states that German textbooks either do not feature frequent spoken forms at all or do so at a later stage than less frequent ones; of the textbooks that I have used (cf. appendix), only two present ellipsis, markers and a few aphetic forms

beyond contractions of 'be', 'do' and 'will'. Since most EFL teachers are non-native speakers often unfamiliar with everyday language, and extra-classroom EFL activities usually depend on teachers' commitment, authentic speech models are rare.

The effect described in section 3.1 thus is not surprising. Unaware of the much greater range of options in spoken language, pupils often admit to being nervous of "not getting it right", i.e., of not conforming to SE norm. Made aware of spoken language features, few pupils ever use them; confronted with authentic speech or asked to communicate freely and spontaneously, they are usually confused and embarrassed, as the SE-based input does not provide them with suitable speech models. I will discuss procedures to address these problems in section 3.2.

3.1.2 Adult education centres

Adult education centres in Germany began to focus on CLT long before public schools did, aiming at learners needing English as a lingua franca for specific purposes and strengthening the sociocultural role of many courses; they are supported by a network of high-quality teacher training seminars. Methods or materials are seldom prescribed, with examinations (e.g. the Cambridge Certificates) always focussing on both written and spoken skills. Using authentic materials and alternative media is usually encouraged and supported; sadly, with public funds dwindling, access to authentic language through television or the Internet cannot be guaranteed.

A vast range of continually revised coursebooks (cf. appendix) aim at various target groups; although still SE-based and designed for the classroom, most books introduce selected features of conversational speech, such as markers ('well', 'right'), aphetic forms ('yeah', ' 'cause'), hesitation ('er', 'erm', 'um'), ellipsis, overlapping moves, etc. Moreover, with a number of teachers being native speakers, there are, at least for some students, additional opportunities to become aware of natural spoken language.

Although these learning conditions ought to enhance communicative competence, and although in my experience many adult learners do shed previous inhibitions to speak (cf. section 3.1.1), they often remain unaware of

informal language, and the appropriacy or naturalness of their output does not improve significantly. The following sections will show how this phenomenon may be addressed.

3.2 Some suggestions towards a natural spoken output

If learners' ability to produce natural speech is proportional to their exposure to it, this may not be equally fruitful at all learning stages; more advanced students, having been drilled in SE grammar, may have difficulties to develop an awareness of natural speech (cf. section 3.1.2). This would point to teaching informal conversation at an earlier stage, i.e. at secondary (or primary) schools, and of introducing advanced learners to spoken grammar. I will, therefore, present some criteria for materials and methodologies introducing a spoken grammar in the classroom.

3.2.1 Introducing a spoken grammar in the classroom

With regard to classroom materials, it is paramount, in my opinion, to stimulate learners' motivation. Learners' interest and plausibility in terms of naturalness are two main criteria for "pedagogically sound materials" (Timmis, 2005, p.119), while lexis and content should be not too alien to learners and spoken texts be made available for listening (Timmis, 2005). The corpus-based 'Touchstone' series by McCarthy et al. (2006) is an example of a user-friendly coursebook which effectively aims at learners' confidence about spoken communication (Bennett and Bricker, 2006), and thus unique among English textbooks (Rühlemann, 2008).

These classroom materials require procedures developing learners' critical perception of spoken language and stimulating natural spoken output. Since traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) methodology does not aim at raising consciousness, McCarthy and Carter (1995) favour a 'three Is' methodology: 'illustration', by examining and presenting choices of forms in real-life language contexts; 'interaction', by discourse-sensitive activities making learners aware of interpersonal language uses and meanings; and 'induction', by

learners' conclusions about context-related functions and their ability to notice these variants later.

Timmis (2005) describes four types of tasks to achieve these aims: global understanding tasks like preliminary 'gist listening'; noticing tasks in which learners compare their image of English and real-life language; language discussion tasks in which learners reflect on language use in terms of reason, effect and appropriateness in producing these forms themselves; and cultural access tasks to familiarise ESL learners with native-speaking contexts by cultural comparison.

In the case of more advanced, grammar-instructed learners (cf. section 3.1.2), Hill (2007) proposes a task-based methodology that builds on a concept-based teaching (CBT) approach and, anticipating learners' overgeneralisation of a form, features built-in constraint techniques. Hill (2007) also suggests addressing learners' cognitive abilities by a reactive focus on forms demonstrating the context of usage for certain forms in an IRF teaching exchange, as described by Francis and Hunston (1992) (cf. section 2.2.1). Since explicit and implicit knowledge are connected, learners may develop awareness by noticing features introduced by formal instruction (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002). However, in view of these difficulties of SE-instructed learners, I would welcome a rethinking of the notion of 'correctness'; the following section will introduce an approach proposing a change in thought.

3.2.2 A register approach: rethinking the notion of 'correctness'

As language is traditionally regarded as a 'monolithic block' described by SE, Rühlemann (2008) points out the huge discrepancy between SE and the corpus-provided evidence for an entirely different conversational grammar, demanding a shift in view: reducing the role of SE, which is related to written registers, to a core variety for teaching writing, and introducing a conversational grammar for teaching speech. For implementation in the classroom, Rühlemann (2008, p.673) proposes a register approach "which acknowledges the fundamental functional diversity of language use", defining 'registers' as being related to certain situation types and distinguishable by certain linguistic features.

The classification of spoken language characteristics as 'deviant' (cf. section 2.1), manifesting itself in terms like 'dislocation' (of words or clause elements) or 'dysfluency' (referring to pauses, fillers, restarts, etc.), devalues frequent spoken variants that do not meet written standards (Rühlemann, 2008). The notion of 'correctness' thus generated is inappropriate, as 'aberrant' features "fulfil crucial functions in discourse and interaction benefiting both the speaker and the recipient in multiple ways" (Rühlemann, 2008, p.682). In connection with spoken language, the notion of 'correctness' should therefore be replaced by a notion of 'appropriateness', the latter depending on the register and contextual conditions of the alternative language use.

Since the register approach "is more likely to get EFL teaching anywhere close to reflecting the linguistic richness and functional diversity of real language use" (Rühlemann, 2008, p.683), I consider it an excellent tool for implementing spoken grammar in the classroom, which would certainly address learners' "frustration at their inability to use 'real' English outside the classroom" (Bennett and Bricker, 2006, p.2). However, as the register approach rocks the foundations of conventional beliefs, it should take into account teachers' and learners' attitudes, as described in the section below.

3.2.3 Teachers' and learners' attitudes

While the deeply-rooted notion of 'correctness' may cause teachers' reluctance towards spoken grammar and a register approach, the greater problem might be that the notion of 'appropriateness' involves variation and a focus on context beyond grammatical norms, thus incurring decision-making and possibly a more complicated workload (Rühlemann, 2008). However, since grammar consists of useful and useless forms, teachers should be aware that grammatical forms are not a starting-point but a tool for communication (Tranter, 2009).

Young learners may be curious about authentic language and unbiased towards spoken grammar, but its greater complexity would require careful mediation – a simplification of language and rules –, to avoid confusion (Rühlemann, 2008). Adult learners accustomed to the notion of 'correctness' might accept change if made aware of learning in general and cautiously

introduced to both consciousness-raising methodology and that tending to their cognitive abilities (cf. section 3.2.1).

In the light of teachers' and learners' frustration about the general failure of their committed efforts to develop naturalistic speaking skills (cf. section 1), I anticipate that, given time and appropriate teacher training, many teachers will welcome these opportunities to support learners in approximating to natural speech. Nevertheless, there are some other potential issues in introducing a spoken grammar, which I will address in the following section.

3.2.4 Other issues in implementing a spoken grammar

Although Gilmore (2004) reports considerable changes in the design of textbook dialogues (without specifying their origin, cf. section 3.1.1), the latter still do not resemble authentic interaction, lacking important discourse features teachable even at early learning stages, like pauses or repetitions. Despite the textbook slogan, "Real talk: Wir sprechen echtes Alltagsenglisch (*Speaking real, everyday English*)", the role-play dialogue below (Horner et al., 2008, vol. 3, p.3 and p.33) illustrates the discrepancy between textbook dialogue and real discourse:

- A: Excuse me. Could you help me, please?
 B: Yes, of course.
 A: How can I get to Covent Garden?
 B: Take the Bakerloo Line southbound two stops to Piccadilly Circus.
 Then change to the Piccadilly Line eastbound.
 Covent Garden is the second stop.
 A: That's the Bakerloo Line and then the Piccadilly Line from Piccadilly Circus?
 B: Yes, that's right.
 A: Thanks very much.
 B: You're welcome!

'Real' talk in similar situation types would probably feature repetitions (e.g., of the destination) or pauses, fillers and ellipsis (e.g., speaker B trying to recollect and explain), as well as aphetic forms or disruption and overlapping (cf. section 2.1.1). From a sociolinguistic view, perfect politeness and orderly turn-taking may also be unexpected in 'real-life' teenage talk. However, the fact that recent

textbooks do incorporate features of authentic language, as e.g. lower lexical density, hesitation devices or backchannels (Gilmore, 2004), to my mind gives room for hope.

Finding texts answering all criteria for suitable materials (cf. section 3.2.1) is a challenge (Timmis, 2005); however, with the Internet as a freely available and steadily growing source, coursebook designers and teachers are, in my opinion, in a better position than ever to provide suitable and variegated materials. Gilmore (2004) also notes that most authentic dialogues are longer than contrived ones, possibly distracting learners by their greater complexity. However, if the goal of CLT is to prepare learners for real-world communication, I share Gilmore's (2004) view that learners should be confronted with the untidiness and unpredictability of natural discourse.

It has been argued that using native-speaker data for spoken grammars might affect the purpose of teaching global English; nevertheless, structures commonly used by native speakers to establish relationships may concern all learners (Timmis, 2005). Moreover, many teachers and learners worldwide favour native-speaker grammar, including spoken grammar (at least in theory), and agree that exposure to spoken grammar is important (Timmis, 2005). Additionally, learners' attention should, in my opinion, be drawn to the existence of different linguistic, cultural and sociological aspects (cf. section 2.2.2) arising from the use of English as a lingua franca.

Despite the large body of evidence from spoken corpora, there are still few empirical data to support the effectiveness of the registered approach (Rühlemann, 2008). However, this can only be remedied by trial; and stubbornly adhering to the existing ineffective alternative, SE, has no more merit, in my opinion, than implementing a new theory based on solid evidence but needing empirical support.

4 Conclusion

The central issue of this paper being natural spoken output and how it might be addressed by linguistic theory, I have pointed out the significance of spoken discourse analysis for CLT by briefly outlining the discrepancies between Standard English and spoken discourse, and presenting different models of discourse analysis. Against this background, I have focussed on spoken grammar, sharing McCarthy and Carter's (2002), Rühlemann's (2008) and Tranter's (2009) view of the role of grammar as conducive, not restrictive, to natural communication. In this sense, the predominant role of Standard English in EFL needs to be reassessed: based almost exclusively on written or formal language, SE grammar is not useful for informal language production and should be supplemented by a socially embedded spoken grammar based on corpora built from samples of real-life discourse.

In view of the situation at German public schools, I have argued that educators and learners should be encouraged to exchange the notion of grammatical 'correctness' for a notion of 'appropriateness', and that it is possible, despite the challenges of language complexity and materials selection, to implement the model of spoken grammar at different stages, with a special view to SE-instructed learners. A register approach, using materials informed by spoken corpora, may enable learners to become aware of the diversity of interpersonal functions and contextual meaning in conversation and thus make informed grammatical choices. Although the effectiveness of the theory remains to be proved, I am convinced that a spoken grammar will facilitate teachers' and learners' efforts in approximating to a natural spoken output.

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* German titles translated by the author of this essay

Appendix

Selected titles of textbooks used at German schools

Textbook series for 'Hauptschule' (lower educational level, ages 10-16)

Barker, R. et al. (2006) **Portobello Road**. (Braunschweig: Diesterweg)

Donoghue, F. and Benne, R.R. (2007) **New Highlight**. (Berlin: Cornelsen)

Taylor, C. et al. (2006) **Let's go**. (Stuttgart: Klett)

Textbook series for 'Realschule' (medium educational level, ages 10-16):

Baier, B. et al. (2000) **Bayswater**. (Frankfurt/Main: Diesterweg)

Beer, N. et al. (2006) **Camden Town**. (Braunschweig: Diesterweg)

Disselbeck, B.D. et al. (2007) **English G 21**. (Berlin: Cornelsen)

Gerngross, G. et al. (2007) **Go for it!** (Berlin: Cornelsen)

Horner, M. et al. (2008) **Red Line**. (Stuttgart: Klett)

Selected titles of textbooks and textbook series used in adult education (English for General Purposes):

Charlton, M. and Wittmann, C.K. (2004) **English Network Basic
Conversation**. (München: Langenscheidt)

Devlin, Dr. P. and Hübner, L. (2004) **English Network Connection**. (München:
Langenscheidt)

Fischer-Callus, M. et al. (1999) **English Elements**. (Ismaning: Hueber)

Pitt, A. and Pierre, N. (2000) **On the Move**. (Stuttgart: Klett)

Sinclair, B. and Prowse, P. (1996) **Activate Your English**. (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press)

Soars, L. and Soars, J. (2003) **New Headway: the new edition**. (Oxford:
Oxford University Press)

Stevens, J. et al. (2005) **First Choice**. (Berlin: Cornelsen)