CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 : Introduction

In this chapter, I will present a general summing up of the main findings discussed in the previous chapter and provide plausible answers to the research questions detailed in Chapter 3. Following that, an effort will be made to confirm some of the major findings with those of a published study. The implications of the study and recommendations given in 5.5 and 5.6 are to provide practical solutions in identified areas that P1, P2 and P3 need most help in. The two implications relate to feasible, on-the-job training approaches to help the librarians bridge their linguistic needs.

Through the implementation of the proposals outlined in 5.6, P1, P2 and P3 can most likely gain a clearer idea of the kinds of discourse they have to engage in at each phase of the programme. This awareness will equip them with better strategies to structure their discourse according to the needs and expectations of their audience participants as well as their pre-defined objectives. Finally, I will suggest four areas for further investigation and research for the benefit of students who may be thinking of conducting discourse studies in similar or related fields.

5.2 : Summary of Main Findings

The main findings of this investigation into the discourse patterns of 3 SL college librarians are as follows :-
5.2.1: The Librarian's Role

From the discourse patterns investigated here, it is generally noticed that the 3 SL librarians find it difficult to abandon their role as the transmitter of information with a remarkable degree of discourse control. Their "instructor" and intermediary role is a multi-functional one i.e. that of a librarian, teacher, demonstrator, promoter and counsellor, all rolled into one.

Librarians control a considerable degree of discourse rights and privileges. They initiate most of the opening moves and turns at talk, they choose who they want to address and they can monopolise two or sometimes three consecutive turns to address students individually or as a group to achieve different communicative intents. For example, they can function as guide and instructor to help a particular student solve his point of use problem with information retrieval from the database, and as friend and adviser to the others who are observing and learning from the experiences of their peers.

5.2.2: Student Contributions Towards the Discourse

In this context, it is equally important to know what part students play as they are the ones who are at the receiving end of all this input. As Allwright believes, and rightfully so, that whatever happens in an instructional situation is a co-production between the information provider and the informed (1988:171). As such, it is important to focus on student discourse contributions as well.
One of the problems students face in this context is their failure to recall and demonstrate their understanding of the instructional procedures during the controlled practice or Hands-on phase. From the data, it is evident that this is due to their high anxiety levels, their lack of prerequisite knowledge and the absence of visual aids or self-reference guides for them to refer to at their own time.

In her study of verbal teaching patterns, Moore (1982:271-306) asserts that in an area where students have no prerequisite knowledge, if the teacher does not provide a stream of constantly rich input, students are apt to forget what they have been told. In fact, her study demonstrates that the slow learner will forget by 2 teaching moves, while the fast learner will likewise forget three moves later.

Student contributions towards the discourse can be classified under two categories i.e. proactive and reactive. The findings generally indicate that students begin to contribute proactive turns when they feel more at ease and self-assured and when they have been given some prior input to think about. For the sessions conducted by P1 and P2, the findings indicate that student proactive contributions account for about 30% of their total turns performed. However, for the more vocal students of P3, 61% of their total turns performed are proactive ones. (See Table 7 and Fig.2 p.91)

Back-channel behaviour which come under reactive turns are
usually realised as student choral feedback, given in response to the intermittent comprehension check questions posed by the 3 SL librarians. Sometimes these responses can determine turn boundaries to mark the end of a macro phase e.g. during P1's session. Back-channel signals account for 43% or 110 out of a total of 256 turns performed by students for the 3 sessions. (Please refer to Table 6a p.86) So they do play an important role in this kind of SL discourse.

5.2.3 : Discourse Patterns During the Presentation and Demonstration Phase

The primary finding revolves around the two types of discourse which the SL librarians have to produce for conducting these oral manual instructional sessions effectively. At the Presentation and Demonstration phase the discourse is largely librarian-led, involving a 2-party or dyadic exchange. Since students choose to participate chorally in unison, they are considered as one party. The nature of talk is controlled, formal and predictable with shorter 2-turn exchanges or 3-turn returns which involve slow changes in turn transfer.

Here, the librarians monopolise longer and more talking turns as their function is more of information provider and demonstrator. During their one-way transmission of information, there are opportunities for listeners to grab turns and interrupt but they usually do not. Instead students mainly communicate back-channel signals to indicate their agreement with the 3 librarians' views or suggestions and their understanding of the input transmitted.
The order in which the information is provided does not follow the rule from the simple to the complex. Rather, it is provided in sections beginning from the first basic operation and building up part by part following the order of a written manual.

During this phase of spoken "language in action", there is a high incidence of deictic or context specific expressions like "this one here", "this is the ...", as well as the use of instructional verbs e.g. "See..", "Press the .. ", to direct students to trigger the right computer key or direct their attention to a particular onscreen menu option and so forth.

During an extended talking turn, the SL librarians usually employ a ritualistic pattern of framing moves and pre-sequences to prepare students for what to expect and the nature of the turn that follows. In addition, they engage self-initiated simplification strategies like repetition, exemplification, reformulation...etc, to ensure students can understand the content presented.

5.2.4 Discourse Patterns During the Hands-on Phase

During the Hands-on phase, a different set of discourse patterns emerges. It is worth noting here that we are dealing with a service-oriented environment where students do not have to please their instructors but where the librarians are promoting the use of an available and underused library service to reticent student user groups.
Here, the discourse produced is more free-form, informal, less controlled and therefore unpredictable. In contrast to the Presentation and Demonstration phase, conversational engagements here are longer with more rapid changes of turn transfer. Librarians still occupy longer talking turns but students begin to assert their listenership rights by grabbing turns to interrupt and to initiate opening moves by introducing topic change.

Students contribute proactively towards the discourse by asking epistemic system-centred questions which have the "What if" or "How to" formats. They are obviously keen to obtain more information previously left unmentioned by the librarians in Phase II. However, it is important to note here that because of their minimal background knowledge of CD-ROMs, students do not use their proactive turns to contribute towards topic development. Rather, the in-flow of additional reply moves in the longer conversational engagements are for self-repair strategies to resolve ambiguities in the questions they ask.

Although librarians dominate discourse during this phase, it is noticed that they do try to preserve a democratic atmosphere. They are patient and tactful in providing guidance, suggestions, help and advice almost in lock-step fashion to ensure that the service is well-received. For the avoidance of conflict and to suggest, advise, caution and reassure, the language of advice is often used. This is particularly no-
ticed during P2's session.

Finally, a shortcoming noted in this context concerns the few closing acts used during this phase. This trend seems to indicate that the three librarians generally have problems with summation. It is necessary to review the main points or sum up discussions at regular intervals for reinforcement. It is also important to bring each phase to an end with a closing move before initiating the next phase of the programme. In fact, the endings of all 3 sessions do lack a closing act to sum up the main points.

5.3 : Answers to Research Questions

The research questions proposed for this study are :-

1. From the analyses of the spoken data of the 3 CD-ROM familiarisation sessions conducted by the 3 informants, what are the typical or recurrent patterns of discourse which can be identified?

2a. How do the informants organise their discourse?

2b. Is their organisation of talk effective for this instructional context of target language (TL) use?

5.3.1 : Answer to Research Question 1

Although the 3 SL librarians are introducing 3 different databases to 3 groups of students, at the overall interactional level, the analysis of their interactive roles seem to reveal almost identical findings. The number of their speakership turns (S + T) account for about 55% of the total turns
for their respective sessions. (Please refer to Table 3 p.73)

Table 12 below, shows the total (S) speaker, (A) addressee, (T) talker and (L) listener turns performed by the 3 informants. (Please refer to Fig. 1a p.74a for the pie graph illustration of this.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(S)</th>
<th>(A)</th>
<th>(T)</th>
<th>(L)</th>
<th>Total Turns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with their interactive roles, the informants control discourse rights and privileges at every phase of the session. During Phase I, they initiate the introductions, invite student contributions and prepare them for what to expect with a statement of intention.

They occupy extended talking turns during Phase II to transmit information, instructions, precautions and advice to the student participants who generally provide back-channel signals to indicate their receptiveness. In this context of spoken "language in action", the informants not only produce extended stretches of talk but also take as many turns as they need to complete transmitting what they have to say. Routkoop and Mazeland (1985) refer to these extended talking turns as discourse units (DU).

During the Hands-on phase, the librarians have to manage two types of discourse. One which requires them to provide individualised attention and lock-step guidance to the student.
who is interfacing with the system and the other which requires them to explain what is happening to the student observers. To keep students interested it may be necessary to create social chat. In fact, conversational engagements here have greater spontaneity and freedom with greater equality of speakership turns among participants.

As for conversational engagements, the 2-turn exchange (O+R) and the 3-turn returns (ORC and ORR) are the most frequently used. These 3 patterns account for 75.5% or 139 out of the total 184 conversational engagements for the three sessions. (See Table 4 p.78) The findings seem to indicate the trend that the SL librarians prefer conversational engagements which involve fewer turn transfers with a dyadic or 2-party setup.

Conversational engagements during the Hands-on phase involve more reply moves. These additional student turns do not contribute towards topic development. Rather they are for self-initiated repairs for the resolution of ambiguity so that the librarian instructors can understand what they want the system to do and what they actually want to ask.

5.3.2 : Answer to Research Question 2a.

The data seem to suggest that for each session, the pattern of talk naturally flows into 4 macro phases i.e.

i) an Introduction,

ii) a Presentation and Demonstration phase,

iii) a Hands-on phase and

iv) a Question-Answer and End phase.

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The length of the second phase may vary according to the size and complexity of the database presented. Similarly, the length of the Hands-on phase is controlled by the number of students who want to have a go at the terminal.

The identification of the turn boundaries to separate one macro phase from another is sometimes not well marked. This is because although the librarians generally initiate the start of each phase with an opening move, they rarely end each phase with a closing act. As a result the final turn boundary to mark the end of a phase is sometimes signalled by student back-channel signals, laughter or a long silence.

5.3.3 : Answer to Research Question 2b.

To arrive at a fair assessment of how effectively the SL librarians structure their discourse, we need to consider how their students have rated the programmes they conducted.

**TABLE 13 : Student Ratings of CD-ROM Sessions conducted by P1, P2 and P3.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success in</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducting effective Introduction</td>
<td>(out of total of 4)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explaining use of Function keys</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Explaining use of Index</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Explaining use of Boolean operators</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Helping to find relevant information</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Providing guidance during Hands-on phase</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Avg. score (out of 24)</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the whole, students have rated their instructors quite favourably. But these ratings show a dip in the areas which require oral explanations of which they are the passive recipients of the input transmitted i.e. items Nos. 2, 3 and 4. However, in areas where they benefit individualised attention guidance and practical experience e.g. items 5 and 6, librarians are rated fairly well.

The results seem to indicate that the discourse the 3 librarians produce during the Hands-on phase is more favoured by students. This may be attributed to the ritualistic sequence of repetition, expansion, reformulation and modelling that librarians employ to negotiate talk with students during this phase. Moreover, librarians display a lot of tact and patience as they guide students in lock-step order to ensure they understand how to retrieve information from the databases.

5.4: Confirmation of Findings with Those of a Previous Study

To a large degree, the findings which Houtkoop and Mazeland came up with in their study, are very typical of the structure of the 3 informants' patterns and extended turns at talk during the Presentation and Demonstration phase. Some of these similarities are listed below to further substantiate why there is a preponderance of librarian talk during this phase and why student contributions are essentially confined to back-channel feedback particularly during this phase.
a) When a speaker performs a longer turn, he is not seen as monopolising the floor space because he is sharing what he knows with his (L) listener student participants. (L) listeners normally consider themselves to be less informed and thus need to know what the speaker has to transmit. As such, they will freely allow the information to flow one-way uninterrupted. They are happy to know that as (L) listeners, they have the right to grab turns, interrupt and communicate their attentiveness nonverbally. But what is more important for them is to have a stress free environment to learn at their own pace.

During the 3 sessions, listeners are kept very busy processing the spoken data presented by the librarians as well as registering the output that appears on the computer screen whenever a command is keyed in or an operation is performed.

b) The speaker is given the discourse right to transmit what he has projected to say. Should students try to grab turns, he will not be prevented from completing his turn.

c) During an extended speaking turn, the addressees i.e. the students, are free to react to the information or explanation given. However, compared to normal turns of talk, their back-channel contributions function to assure the speaker that they can follow what is transmitted. These signals are important in this context, to communicate conversational co-operation as they provide useful feedback to the SL librarian to
enable him to complete his turn. (Gumperz 1982:163)

d) During long speaking turns, student participants are not only allowed, but expected to contribute short remarks, ask for clarification, interrupt, grab turns and echo key statements for reinforcement.

e) Should they fail to do so, the SL librarian will use questioning or communication control strategies to do the following:-

   i) elicit student reactions,

   ii) confirm student comprehension,

   iii) confirm student receptive mode is still maintained,

   iv) draw student attention to important details by using instructional verbs and markers like "See", "Note" etc,

   v) repeat key lexical terms to ensure they understand and reformulate to define terms more clearly or simply.

f) Student participants can hold the floor temporarily but they have no right to nominate one of their peers for the next turn.

g) When a question is asked by the librarian, students usually signal choral agreement as they feel more secure to act as a group and assume the (T) talker role. The nature of their replies will relay the continuation of their listenership or their role as (A) addressees. Students can also use a turn to signal they do not want the right of floor and consequently elicit continuation of speakership by the librarian or the previous speaker.
So the addressees' rejection of the floor makes the previous speaker the dominant contributor to the discourse. In this context, students have limited discourse rights because they do not actively claim them. Even when a librarian pauses midway within a phrase, students do not make the effort to grab or compete for turns.

Furthermore, in this situation when students are introduced to something that is so new to them, it will not help to nominate them to take turns at talk. This will add to their anxiety as they have very minimal or zero content knowledge to contribute towards topic development. To help them negotiate talk, there is the need to provide enough prior input for them to ingest. There has to be more information sharing at the start of or prior to these sessions.

However, given the present circumstances, the librarians can safely assume that they will be the primary speakers especially during the initial two phases of the programme. They have to be prepared to perform their intermediary role and strike a compromise between the sequence of information flow dictated by the database and student needs and expectations that arise at each phase of the programme.

As for the organisation of talk in this instructional setting, it can be noticed that the flow of discourse naturally shapes itself into 4 macro phases as mentioned in 5.3.2 pp.121-122 (Answer to Research Question 2a).
The 3-phase structure which Psathas and Kozloff (1976) came up with in their study of the structure of directions, i.e. I: Situation, II: Information/Instruction and III: Ending; is in my opinion, a helpful guide but not adequate to account for the Hands-on or guided practice phase which is very important in this context of search skills instruction.

5.5: Implications of Study

a) From the findings of this investigation it is clear that the SL librarians do require a bit of help to fine-tune their spoken discourse for the one-way transmission of information as well as for interactive engagements with a variety of conversational partners. What they need are short cuts to competence through an on-going exercise of practical work, individual consultation and self-paced learning and evaluation to overcome their linguistic lacks in the area of verbal interaction with specific user groups.

In this connection, the pragmatic approaches contributed by Bowers (1987) and Scharer (1983) for teacher training can be adapted to fine-tune the instructional effectiveness of SL librarians. Bowers' counselling-training module, acronymed HORACE, aims to establish greater trainer-trainee rapport. It takes away the product-oriented edge of training and replaces it with a more affective and trainee-oriented strategy.

Moreover, the flexible schedule for counsellor-trainee interaction allows trainees to request for consultations as and
when the need arises, without imposing demands on their working schedules. This ensures that whatever they learn is of practical application to their workplace and they will learn as and when they really need to.

b) To remain sensitive to the language needs and anxieties of the SL librarians in this context, Scharer’s proposal for a teacher-training programme (1983:115) can also be adapted for use. This resembles Bowers’ HORACE in its pattern of sequenced steps. Both models involve training through discovery and experience.

Scharer’s model is structured to involve greater learner involvement in the identification of their developing language needs with follow-up strategies like individual counselling and debriefing sessions for self and peer appraisals, which can be likened to stimulated recall group discussion sessions where librarians can learn from the experiences of their peers as well.

5.6 Recommendations

In line with Bowers’ recommendation, I feel there is the need to equip SL librarians with strategies for producing a variety of talk and to ask the right questions, especially during the introduction and ending phases. For example, during the ending stage, librarians can initiate instructional talk to sum up or review the main points presented so that students can obtain a clearer idea of what the system can or cannot do.
In addition, Organise talk can be used to i) restate the objectives of the programme conducted and ii) invite students to share their views of the databases and whether they have enjoyed themselves or gained anything from the session.

Since students generally like to know what is the next option available for them, it is good to establish the line of continuity by informing them of a follow-up session and what it is going to be about. Alternatively, an assignment can be given as a follow-up exercise to encourage students to venture on their own and propel them towards the path of learning from doing and discovery.

To spice up the session, there needs to be a bit of social chat, not just formulaic introductions. Social talk includes jokes, the exchange of casual harmless gossip and so on. These humourous moments can trigger the right chords of harmony and make students and librarians feel good at the end of the sessions. At the same time, librarians can fine-tune their presentation skills to respond more effectively to the needs of their audience and the demands of the situation.

Richards and Schmidt (1986:131-133) have a very valid and pertinent point to offer in this context. In their view, SL students need a large stock of adjacency pairs and practice in using them with various conversational partners in a wide range of situations. This operating stock of paired expressions for functional and social exchange will help them to negotiate talk with more confidence and conviction, especial-
ly in this context when their job requires them to promote the use of an available but underused library service.

In addition, it is a good strategy to provide SL librarians with a list of functions and the associated lists of useful formulaic expressions to enable them to produce discourse without having to worry about the processes of verbal construction at each macro phase. The example below is a suggested outline for the Introduction phase of the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Useful formulaic expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting self-introduction</td>
<td>Good morning/afternoon..welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm .... working experience...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State objective(s)</td>
<td>For this session, I hope to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>demonstrate and explain...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>show you how to obtain...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify</td>
<td>fast and easy way ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>useful research tool ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wide coverage...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do research in armchair comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm level of Ss.</td>
<td>Has anyone tried...before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background knowledge</td>
<td>Do you know anything about...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does anyone have any idea...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate Ss.</td>
<td>It's as easy as...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That's good! Fine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You'll be amazed ..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage Ss involvement</td>
<td>Have a go...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let's do it together..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any suggestions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try keying in...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

Since this study is designed to be a practicum with an acceptable word limit of about 20,000 words, I am not claiming to be saying anything new. Rather, this investigation has served to create another ripple on the lake of sensible intuition and to confirm the general trend of discourse patterns which can generally be identified in an instructional situation of NNS-NNS (non-native speaker) target language use. It is dangerous to read too much into the findings of such a small scale study which involves only 3 informants. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to conduct more in depth experimental studies with a larger sample of informants and audience participants before the validity of the conclusions can be ascertained.

In the course of conducting this study, I have come across certain features which may prove to be promising topics for further investigation. For the benefit of students and researchers who may want to explore aspects of discourse in similar instructional contexts, I have outlined below 4 areas which I hope, will be of some help.

a) Firstly, it would be interesting to follow up this study and develop an instructional package for conducting CD-ROM familiarisation programmes to SL student user groups. This can be a two-tier model catering for SL student users at the elementary level, i.e. for those with zero background knowledge of CD-ROMs, and the intermediate level i.e. for those
who have some knowledge and are computer literate.

This model can be designed as a self-access teaching package to lessen the pressure on SL librarians having to produce such a considerable amount of discourse. However, librarians will need to stand by to provide the necessary guidance during the Hands-on phase should students face any problems.

I would also like to suggest having more information sharing from the start, in the form of simplified handouts and self-reference guides to enable students to learn by discovery and practical experience. This approach will set students on the path to becoming more autonomous users of the technology.

b) My second suggestion concerns the study of questioning or nominating strategies as proposed by Bowers' model (1987). The questioning genuineness of SL instructors in classroom and non-classroom or formal and informal situations can be investigated. From the transcripts of the spoken data collected, the nature of questions asked by instructors and students in both situations can be identified.

These can then be classified according to Bowers' categories of genuine and unreal questions to investigate whether his model is adequate to account for the kinds of questions asked and the nominating strategies employed by participants in these two different situations.

Knowing the common kinds of questions students are apt to ask will help prepare instructors to frame ready answers for
them. On the other hand, by knowing the kinds of questions and questioning strategies they normally employ, SL instructors are likely to gain better control of how to structure their own questions more purposefully to tap what students can realistically contribute in such situations. These insightful questions may help to trigger off more student talk in situations of target language use.

c) Thirdly, another feasible area of investigation revolves around the guided practice or Hands-on session during IT familiarisation sessions. This is an interesting area worth investigating because here, instructors have to play two roles while the student who is at the terminal, has three addresseees to contend with, viz. the system, the instructor and his peers or onlookers.

First of all, the instructors have to guide and monitor the student who is interfacing with the system. Besides that, he has to see to the needs of the non-participating audience or onlookers. So he has to comment on what is happening, and explain to them why the system responds the way it does. In other words, he has to generate various types of talk, viz instructional, counselling, and social.

For the student who is interfacing with the computer, his talk is of necessity varied too; one of silent processing and talking to himself when he is interacting with the system and the other, eliciting and social talk which he exchanges with his instructor and his peers. The investigation could focus
on the different kinds of talk identified in this complex
dual-level, triadic situation.

d) Finally, it would be useful to compare the outcome of this
study with another which involves the analysis of oral dis-
course in a comparable situation of spoken "language in
action" use such as a session to familiarise users with
information retrieval from a CD-ROM language teaching data-
base or from the Internet.

It would also be helpful to investigate the recurrent dis-
course patterns during sessions which involve the conduct of
similar familiarisation programmes to other user groups e.g.
lecturers and members of the administrative staff of the
college, or a session conducted by a native speaker to a SL
user audience. These will provide useful insights regarding
how interactional patterns, participant roles, discourse
rights and generalisations pertaining to the organisation of
talk may resemble or differ from the findings concluded from
this study.