Iranian Students' Preparation for IELTS: Development of Verbal Argumentative Texts

Sharif Moghaddam and Peter Mickan

The University of Adelaide, Discipline of Linguistics, Adelaide, South Australia

Abstract: Students whose first language is not English, for example 'Iranian students', seek to continue their education in English-speaking universities. They are required to sit for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as evidence of their language proficiency. Despite meeting the required IELTS band scores, a number of them face difficulties with academic requirements. This paper reports on a qualitative study of a formal IELTS (Academic Version) preparation course in Tehran for five months. The purpose of this study was to investigate class tasks that generate opportunities for producing verbal argumentative texts. The focus was on aspects of verbal argument literacy practices. Accordingly, sixteen adult candidates of both genders, who were holding 'BA' and 'MA' Degrees in different educational fields, were selected to participate in the study. The paper discusses the course which provided learners with opportunities: (a) to develop argumentative texts, (b) to utilize a range of linguistic resources in composing their texts, (c) to observe argumentative conventions in organizing and structuring their texts, and (d) to interpret, evaluate and elaborate arguments. However, based on the findings, the discourse knowledge that Other Than English as First Language (OTEFL) students bring with themselves into English-speaking universities may not be at an appropriate level for commencing university study as far as IELTS is concerned.

1. Introduction

Increasing numbers of students whose first language is not English (here after, in this study, referred to as Other Than English as First Language students or in short OTEFL students) apply to study in English-speaking universities. OTEFL students are expected to read and prepare academic texts, attend lectures and take notes, participate in tutorials, and listen to seminars conducted in English (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Coley, 1999; Wicks, 1996). They are required to show evidence of an appropriate level of proficiency in the English language for entry into English-speaking universities. The universities have set minimum language proficiency levels, with IELTS as a preferred test for entrance into Australian universities (see Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Feast, 2002; IELTS Handbook, 2007, for more information on the test and its assessment criteria).

Those IELTS test-takers who meet band score requirements are assumed to be able to cope with the multiplicity of tasks in tertiary studies (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006). IELTS (Academic Version) is designed to assess candidates' ability to understand and produce written and spoken language expected of students in English-speaking universities (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Jakeman & McDowell, 1996). However, a number of OTEFL students with the required IELTS band scores experience communication problems in meeting academic requirements in their initial higher education studies (Coffin, 2004; Feast, 2002; Moore & Morton, 2005). Thus, the appropriateness of IELTS as an entry requirement has been questioned (Read & Nation, 2005). This has raised questions about class tasks in terms of academic texts that candidates experience in IELTS academic preparation classes (Brown, 1998; Coffin, 2004; Moore & Morton, 2005). Therefore, this study was conducted in order to document IELTS academic candidates' experiences in a formal preparation class in Tehran, also to contribute to the literature.

Email: moghaddam3@hotmail.com, Peter.mickan@adelaide.edu.au

2. Literature Review

There has been little research into class tasks for developing spoken argumentative texts in IELTS academic preparation classes. Studies to date have included application of lexical statistics to the IELTS speaking test by (Read & Nation, 2005), while the impact of gender in IELTS verbal proficiency tests was conducted by O'Loughlin (2002). However, providing insights into class tasks for IELTS preparation has not been the focus of these studies.

Coley (1999) looked at the English entry requirements set by Australian universities for Non-English Speaking (NES) students, and addressed the apparent discrepancy between the actual English proficiency of international students, as reported by the academic staff, and their IELTS band scores as an indication of their language proficiency (Coley, 1999, p. 8), yet providing data on the features of verbal argumentative texts which candidates produce in IELTS preparation classes has been beyond the scope of this study.

Some other studies investigated confusion with gained IELTS band scores (Bellingham, 1993), or looked at the real performance of students after their admission to university (Deakin, 1997; Feast, 2002), and showed that NES students' performance (Wicks, 1996) was below their potential in Australian universities despite presenting the required IELTS band scores. However, the reasons for students' under-achievement were not discussed.

Hayes and Watt (1998) undertook an investigation into the effects of different approaches to IELTS preparation. Their study showed that different preparation programs contributed little to the test-takers' overall language development and performance in IELTS. However, unlike the present study, which focused on aspects of spoken argumentative literacy practices, the focus of their study was on finding a way to help students obtain a higher IELTS band score in the examination. In another study which aimed to find outcomes of IELTS preparation courses, Brown (1998) compared two groups of students. One group studied in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) preparation course, the other group in an IELTS preparation course. Brown (1998) predicted likely success in IELTS as the result of attending an intense IELTS preparation course. However, he did not see any indication of such students' better preparedness to meet academic requirements satisfactorily.

Coley (1999) and Wicks (1996) have reported that a cause of OTEFL students' underachievement in English-speaking universities is their general lack of English proficiency. Wicks (1996), for example, found that students with the required IELTS band scores performed significantly poorer in units requiring language use compared to students who had qualified by having studied a tertiary course in English. As with Australian students, the same teaching materials and assessments are used by international students, so "unless English proficiency is a problem" (Wicks, 1996, p. 199), reaching a similar level of expertise is expected. He suggested a more detailed investigation into OTEFL students' language problems (Wicks, 1996, pp. 199 & 203). The study conducted by Wicks (1996) was quantitative and limited to statistics and cultural subject matters.

Some studies (e.g. Mickan, Slater & Gibson, 2000) suggest the significance of prior experiences on test-taking. Mickan et al. (2000) noted the importance of social factors in assessment "as they impact on interpretation of prompts" (p. 9). Regarding "Composition of candidate responses" Mickan and Slater (2003, pp. 61-62) pointed out the importance of negotiation of meaning and appropriate interpretation of the prompts and social purposes of the topic. However, relatively little is known about students' preparation tasks for the IELTS academic examination in classrooms. Therefore, from the review of the previous significant studies, it becomes clear that identifying aspects of class tasks in IELTS academic preparation programs in order to develop verbal argumentative texts is under-researched. This study is an effort to focus on the IELTS (Academic Version) preparation practices over a longer period of investigation to fill this knowledge gap.

This study investigated class tasks in terms of verbal argumentative texts as preparation for IELTS. In this inquiry, the students' class tasks were analysed and interpreted.

3. Guiding Frameworks

This inquiry draws on two approaches to the study of verbal argumentative literacy acquisition. The literacy socialization perspective involves firstly, determining the range of linguistic resources in a speech community, including reading and writing as its ground rules, and the way they are developed and distributed (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Considering a social practice perspective, Barton (1994) suggests that "literacy events are the first basic unit of analysis for social practices approach to literacy, and that they are a constituent of literacy practices" (p. 8). Language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) has been used as a frame of reference to ethnographic study. Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) argue that language socialization entails an ethnographic perspective on language learning. The process of social learning combined with the emergence and evolution of shared socio-cultural practices in which people with common goals interact, is embedded in the concept of what is known as a community of practice (CoP), (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Communities of practice based on Wenger et al. (2002) are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). This means identifying a group of participants in a discussion, for example in a preparation class for IELTS, and studying how it develops shared patterns of behaviour over time (i.e. ethnography). This paradigm has contributed to literacy (Gee, 1994), and second language learning studies (Mickan, 2007; Morita, 2000; Young & Miller, 2004). Based on this premise, discourse analysis of literacy practices from the literacy socialization perspective in group discussions (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1985; Schiffrin, 1997; Tannen, 1985) has been used.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994) was employed to analyse the students' use of linguistic resources that construct the experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings. A description of the meta-functions (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) regards "Ideational", which encompasses the "experiential" (ways of representing events and entities in the experiential world) and the "logico-semantic" (ways of representing logical relationships between events in the material world) is used to construe and encode reality in order to represent experiences (also termed "reflective"), and "Inter-personal" as social interactions in order to engage in social relationships, which is also termed "active", and finally "Textual" as a tool to organize representational and interpersonal meaning in order to present a message as text in context. Specifically, this refers to IELTS's expected argumentative verbal tasks.

The usefulness of student-student classroom discussion for language development has been reported (Gass, 1997; Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). Students' engagement in group discussions led to reading texts and talking around the issues in the texts. This involved a sequence of moves of questions and answers in an Initiation-Respond-Follow-up (IRF) cycle (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992).

Classroom discussions as preparation for IELTS can also be framed by the IRF pattern. The IRF can be modelled in two forms. One form involves teachers in the role of the teacher who monitors discussions and feedback. The other form involves the teacher as one of the participants who only collaborates as a knowledgeable member of the group, with equal membership rights in expressing perspectives. Despite limitations of the IRF from a collaborating activity perspective in teacher-student interactions (Clark, 1996), and comparing the IRF pattern with conversational exchanges which lack the evaluative move of feedback (Mickan, 1997), the IRF pattern has been suggested (McCarthy, 1991) as a useful and credible tool for realizing elements of discourse and their possible combinations.

Group discussions most commonly comprise eliciting moves which are usually followed by a set of response-eliciting moves and/or follow-up/eliciting moves. Exchanges also include some bound-elicit exchanges. Francis and Hunston (1992) explain that bound exchanges "are so named because they are bound to preceding exchanges and they all have eliciting moves at Ib" (p. 136), (see Appendices for description of abbreviations and the meaning of such terms as 'move', 'turn' and 'exchange', etc.). Endorsement and negotiation of meaning are considered as appropriate forms of academic engagement. They reinforce the flow of responses which contribute to literacy development.

Employment of the IRF cycle in argumentative group interactions in a formal IELTS preparation class has received little attention. Hall and Walsh (2002) have called for research to look closely at linguistic resources which can be used to improve quality of students' texts. One of the linguistic resources which

plays a significant role in monitoring cohesiveness in the production of argumentative texts at discourse level is the Theme/Rheme pattern (Fries, 1994; Martin, 1993b).

'Theme' is also known as given information (though not always the exact copy of Theme), and in the words of Halliday (1994, p. 37), occupies an initial position preceding the process to "serve as the point of departure of the message". Also, it functions to orientate the reader towards the meaning of the clause. The clause concerned could be unmarked or marked. Marked Theme (Halliday, 1994) refers to positioning a circumstance prior to the subject (traditional grammar) as part of the 'Theme'. The rest of the clause, which provides the reader/hearer with some information about the Theme, is known as 'Rheme'. Rheme which usually forms the ending part of the clause or sentence is also known as new information. New information signals the focus of the information. A text in relation to its social purpose, according to Martin (1993b) is oriented by theme, hence it is considered genre-oriented in the context. Theme/Rheme is used to examine students' extent of control over appropriate use of thematic structure, thematic selection and progression in order to observe cohesion across clauses and the text.

4. Objectives of the study

The study was conducted in order to look at literacy practices which generate opportunities for developing verbal argumentative texts. It also aimed to provide insights into literacies which the students experience as preparation for IELTS.
The specific objectives were:
- To investigate class verbal argumentative tasks as opportunities provided for experiencing literacy in an IELTS academic preparation course;
- To identify and describe and analyse aspects of verbal argumentative literacies that students experience;
- To discuss implications for IELTS.

5. Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were developed.

1. What verbal argumentative tasks in class do students engage in as preparation for the IELTS academic examination?
2. What are the attributes of verbal argumentative texts that students develop in a formal preparation course for IELTS?
3. What are the implications for IELTS?

6. Methodology

A qualitative approach was selected (McKay, 2006; Saville-Troike, 2003), because the study of classroom literacy practices involves examining the experiences of human learners (Iddings, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

6.1 Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Rahrovan Language Teaching Centre (RALTEC) in Tehran. It was accredited by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and Trinity College in the UK. Classes were held in classroom No. 3. It was large enough to house 16 participants with their armchairs organized in a U shape. The classroom was furnished with two large windows and sufficient lighting. Ventilation and air conditioning were appropriate.

6.2 Duration of the Study

The study was conducted for 15 weeks in three different parts in 2007. Each part was 20 preparation sessions of two-hour classes.

6.3 Participants

From among a larger group sixteen candidates who were able to obtain band scores 4, 4.5 or 5 were selected, because this range was considered as pre-intermediate to intermediate, which was deemed an appropriate range for participation in this study. The participants were all adults, five being female and eleven male, and their ages ranged from 24 to 42. Seven of them had attained Bachelor's degrees and the other nine had completed Master's degrees. Their fields of study were computing, electricity, electronics, architecture, aerospace, civil engineering, road and urban development, psychology, husbandry and English. Their English language experience was mainly based on the Iranian standard and official curricula of school and tertiary education system. The candidates' motivation was their need for IELTS certificates as a prerequisite for entry into English-speaking universities.

6.4 Procedure

Because only four participants had an official IELTS band score result paper with band scores 4-5, the rest were invited to sit for an IELTS mock examination (an examination which resembles the real examination) at RALTEC Testing Centre. The tests were rated at the testing centre by two experienced accredited raters.

The purpose and the process of the study were explained to the candidates. Their consent to collect data on their class activities and texts was sought (see Appendices and section 'Class tasks' for more information about the procedure).

Instructions and the role of the instructor

Instruction on argumentative texts (e.g. techniques, strategies, rules, and conventions) was explicit and instructor-directed. Constructing debates based on various contemporary topics required the students to take up a position in order to compose their texts in agreement or disagreement with the topics (see Table 15). In Part 1, the students were provided with information about appropriate applications of grammatical arguments which are more typical of argumentative texts. A portion of the class time was devoted to promoting the students' vocabulary knowledge by reading different texts and constructing their own clauses with newly learned vocabularies. This was based on the instructor's belief that the participants needed to be provided with an opportunity to gain an appropriate expert knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy in accordance with published English grammar materials that meet IELTS expectations.

In the latter parts (i.e. Part 2 and particularly Part 3), the instructor acted as a more knowledgeable participant among them to answer their queries and/or make suggestions. He gave feedback to the students. The students read and analysed argumentative texts, as well. Using their own experiences and knowledge of the field, they were encouraged to take up a position in order to talk in agreement or disagreement on a topic. In this way, the students argued, interpreted, evaluated and supported their points of view. This literacy practice aimed to provide the students with an opportunity to experience an appropriate model of the interpersonal stance or voice which is typically adopted in English in conducting such debates. The students talked about texts analytically and discussed issue(s) independently in their small groups. They experienced conventions of negotiation and transaction of opinions in order to reach conclusions. Text based interactions also produced opportunities to experience variety of discourses and a conventionally appropriate manner of

argumentation. These made it possible for them to reflect these literacies in producing their own argumentative texts.

In order to monitor participation, they were also invited to respond to different questions based on IELTS test types. These patterns formed the continuous focus of the inquiry in the course. These patterns established the students' participation in their "literacy socialization" (see Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Also, they provided the students with opportunities to involve in such activities as reporting to the class and discussing conclusions in group discussions.

In the next stage, i.e. Part 3, preparation sessions were mostly student-based. Most of the class time was devoted to group work. This provided the students with the opportunity to share their perspectives, experiences and knowledge of literacies. They analysed genre of texts in addition to relevant selection of vocabulary and structure. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the literacy events over the course of preparation were tailored to meet the requirements of the IELTS academic examination.

Class tasks

Different class tasks (see App. D, for an example) were observed and documented when the students were engaged in practices as preparation for IELTS. Some class tasks were based on daily conversations. For example, the students took part in paired role plays, such as buying things from shops, visiting a doctor, booking a room in a hotel, registering for a sightseeing tour, enrolling at university, and discussing with administrative staff the selection of subjects for university study. They also searched for appropriate topics for verbal presentations and discussions using such resources as books, magazines, newspapers and the Internet.

Another aspect of literacy practice was the students' group and individual work in developing argumentative texts. In the process of developing texts, they discussed the issues and negotiated their different perspectives in order to reach conclusions. They silently read different models of argumentative texts of approximately 500-600 words, for example, *Spending money on space exploration*, in order to base their verbal discussion upon them. They did this for 5-10 minutes. The length of reading time was based on the length and complexity of the texts. The texts required the students to take up a position in order to compose their texts in agreement or disagreement with the topics. In the process of developing texts, they discussed the issues and negotiated different perspectives in order to reach conclusions. These practices made it possible for the students to experience relevant literacies required for IELTS. They resembled the argumentative texts expected in an IELTS test (for exemplars see IELTS Handbook, 2007). These practices made it possible for them to experience relevant literacies required for IELTS.

6.5 Data Collection

Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the current study (Gillham, 2000; Morse & Richards, 2002). Data collection using multiple sources such as observation of natural settings, and audio recordings, was carried out in order to provide a realistic picture of the members of the community of practice's actions and interactions (Dysthe, 1996; Iddings, 2005). The classroom proceedings were audio and video-recorded every 3 preparation sessions out of 60 two-hour sessions. Participants' verbal argumentative tasks were collected. Documentation of the classroom events and activities covered about one third of the preparation sessions in the 3 parts. In the process of transcription, time, day and date, place of observations, specific facts, and details of classroom events were noted in the field notes. The data for analysis include the students' verbal texts based on some contemporary issues (cf. Section 'Class tasks' and appendices for specific examples) which resembled some of the topics for discussion in IELTS speaking test.

7. Data Analysis

Small-group discussion was selected for analysis, because a) it provided the participants with an opportunity to practice discussing on different contentious topics, and b) Small-group discussion made it possible for the participants to practice putting forward queries or questions about contentious issues or subject matters. This literacy event included 3 different parts. (cf. Section 'Data collection').

7.1 Analysis of Classroom Literacy Events

Four members argued for or against a contentious issue selected by the instructor from a book entitled *For and Against* (Alexander, 1973). The students took positions and pursued arguments. They developed opinions on a range of matters. This was followed by verbal reports, which required the participants to undertake a relatively higher load of speaking responsibility, thus offering them certain opportunities for further developing their speaking skills.

The purpose of the analysis was to
- examine the participants' contributions;
- determine if the students were adapting arguments supporting or contradicting a position.

Students initially read an argumentative text. Reading was intended to develop knowledge of the topic. It was also expected that reading such texts might enhance students' understanding of how to develop argument.

The transcriptions of the discussions were analysed at the level of act, move and exchange (see appendices for an explanation of transcript preparation). The analysis made use of the definitions and taxonomies of Francis and Hunston (1992), Rex and McEachen (1999), Sinclair and Coulthard (1992), and Willis (1992). Analysis resulted in the identification of some different acts (See App. E, for the description of the identified acts).

7.2 Move Formation Based on Act Combination

Acts according to Coulthard (1992) are "the units at the lowest rank of the *discourse level* of language patterning, and are realized at the level of grammar and lexis" (p. 128) which combine to form moves. The emergent structure of the moves in the discussions was: signal ^ pre-head ^ head ^ post-head. In this structure signal (an indication to commence a move) could be substituted by a 'marker act', pre-head by a 'receive act' or a 'starter act', and post-head by a 'comment act'. Table 1 describes the typical structure of the moves (see App. E, for definition of the terms).

Table 1: The Structure of Moves

Structure / Move	signal	Pre-head	Head	Post-head
Eliciting	Marker	Receive/starter	inquire, neutral proposal, marked proposal, return, loop, prompt	comment, prompt
Informing	Marker	Receive/starter	informative, observation, concur, confirm, qualify, reject, acquiesce	concur, comment, qualify
Acknowledging	Marker	Receive/starter	terminate, receive, react, reformulate, endorse, protest	comment, terminate

7.3 Exchange Formation Based on Move Combination

Moves are characterized by elements of the exchange structure. The emergent structure of the exchanges from analysis of the data were I or I ^ R or I ^ R/In ^ Rn or I ^ R/I ^ R ^ Fn or I ^ R/I ^ R ^ F/In ^ Fn in which 'n' represents more than one contribution. Because the discussions were free and independent there was no obligation for 'R' or 'F'. But, the participants were expected to observe 'I', because of the nature of the argumentative conversation. Occurrence of Rn and Fn was because of the number of the interlocutors' engagements in the discussions. Table 2 illustrates the patterns of typical exchanges.

Table 2: Typical Emerging Exchange Patterns

Exchange / Structure	Initiation	Response		Follow-up	
	I	R	R/I	F	F/I
Exchange 1	eliciting		eliciting		
Exchange 3	eliciting				
Exchange 4	eliciting	informing	eliciting		
Exchange 8	eliciting		eliciting	acknowledging	eliciting
Exchange 11	eliciting	informing	eliciting	acknowledging	informing
Exchange 12	eliciting		informing	acknowledging	
Exchange 15	eliciting	acknowledging	eliciting	acknowledging	eliciting

From Table 2 it can be concluded that it was common for an 'eliciting move' to occupy the 'initiation slot'. This move reflects the preceding utterances and usually leads to new sub-topics which, although related, do not repeat the same argument. By way of illustration, Table 3 contains excerpts from discussions in part 2.

Table 3: Excerpts from Part 2 showing Reflection of Preceding Argument in an Exchange

turn	es	P	argument	move	act
1627	I	P4	Yes, this topic is only that new fashion is only not for women not the fashion of the men.	eliciting	receive elicitation
1628	I	P10	I think that fashion make people more beautiful and more confident. When they have, when, when they are standing in front of another people.	eliciting	elicitation comment

An initiation can be followed by two types of response, namely informing or acknowledging (Francis & Hunston, 1992), provided the argument maintains its restricted link to the preceding initiated sub-topic. Table 4 shows extracts from parts 1 and 2 as instances.

Table 4: Extracts from Parts 1 and 2 Indicating Strict Confine to the Preceding Argument

Part / Item	turn	es	P	argument	move	act
Part 1	327	I	P3	There are many actor, actors from TV, actors smoke in on the TV. So, oh many,	eliciting	elicitation comment
	328	R	P10	many [child…Oh ye.]	acknowledging	react
Part 2	1629	I	P4	Do you think it is for exploiting?	eliciting	ne-proposal
	1630	R	P10	Yes.	informing	informative

However, an initiation can also be followed by an eliciting response/initiation move (Table 2, Exchange 1). In such cases the response usually suggests some changes in the initiated sub-topic (Table 5).

Table 5: Excerpts from Part 2 Demonstrating Suggested Changes in the Initiated Sub-Topic

turn	es	P	argument	move	act
1625	I	P12	Someone ah nowadays, someone can use, they make up, yeh.	eliciting	elicitation
1626	R/I	P3	It is some one's just make ah people they are more beautiful, or handsome. So, it doesn't make anything compulsory.	eliciting	elicitation comment

It is evident that members of the discussion group needed to decide between 'R' or 'R/I' as a response to the initiation. In general terms, 'R' and 'R/I' can both serve the initiation as acknowledging moves, so one of them may follow the initiation. Conventionally, any acknowledging move following the latter move is considered as a follow-up move (Francis & Hunston, 1992; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992), because it is based on previous contributions between 'I' and 'R' (Table 6).

Table 6: Extracts from Part 1 Indicating Sequence of the Structure

turn	es	P	argument	move	act
356	I	P4	But], is it nice to [hurt…?	eliciting	return
357	R/I	P3	It's] quit smoking and diseases are quite different.	eliciting	informative
358	R	P4	But, it, it might [sometime…	acknowledging	protest
359	F	P10	Yeh…]	acknowledging	react

In turn 356, P4 raises a question which is based on shared knowledge between group members about the issue of the dangers of smoking. P4's opinion about the sub-topic of the direct link between smoking and lung cancer is challenged by P3 in turn 357, and this is to inform P4 and the other participants that there is no direct link. While acknowledging P3's utterance (Turn 358), P4 protests that a direct link is possible. These contributions, in addition to the previous contributions, establish a shared knowledge between the members of the group. So, socially speaking it is legitimate that other speakers contribute by acknowledging the outcome of the debate on the sub-topic, (i.e., P10 in Turn 359).

The data show that conditions observed in response situations are also probable in follow-up situations. That is, a follow-up slot can be filled either by an 'F' acknowledging move or by an 'F/I' eliciting move (Francis & Hunston, 1992; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992). The condition applies provided the forwarded perspective or the utterance in the follow-up is not to receive, or to react or to endorse, in which circumstance it is probable that the follow-up will be considered as a re-initiation requiring a corresponding response. The premise is depicted in the following diagram (Figure 1) showing the exchange pattern in the group discussion.

Element of structure (es)

I
R/I
R
F/I
F

Class of move
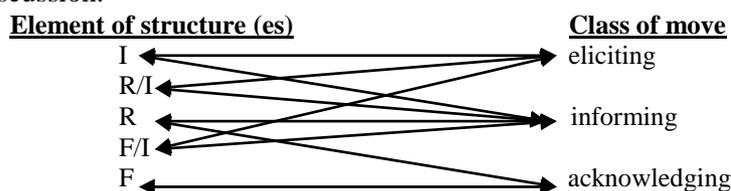
eliciting

informing

acknowledging

Figure 1. Exchange Pattern

Figure 1 shows that eliciting move or informing move occupies the response/initiation slot. Then an informing move or acknowledging move fills the response, an eliciting move or informing move occupies the follow-up/initiation slot, and finally an acknowledging move fills the follow-up slot.

8. Findings

Analysis encompasses the development of the exchanges and bound exchanges in addition to underlying coherence. The focus is on the differences in the following features of the group exchanges:

- initiation and discourse of the exchanges;
- distribution of the turns;
- structure and function of the turns.

8.1 Comparison of the Parts

The following Tables indicate rapid changes from part 1 to part 3 of non-focused comments and sounds (e.g. um, yeh). These gradually decreased as more confident, focused, and relevant comments were made. For example, in part 3 moves were topic-loaded, and sub-topics were about the ozone layer and global warming, subjects of a more academic nature (Tables 7 & 8).

Table 7: Excerpts Demonstrating Exchanges from Part 1

turn	es	p	discussion	class of move	class of act
341	I	P4	I totally disagree with smoking, because ah (1 sec), it, if ah (1 sec) people ah (1 sec) do smoking keep constant so, they make ah (1 sec) some diseases like a big disease like a [cancer… ---	informing	informative
342	Ib	P3	Cancer?]	eliciting	elicitation
343	R	P4	Ye, cancer (1 sec)	informing	acquiesce
344	F	P3	Nooo (1 sec) I, I (1 sec) ---	acknowledging	protest
345	Ib	P3	Lung cancer you mean?	eliciting	return
346	R	P4	Ye.	Informing	informative
347	F	P3	Uh, but it depends on the [person…	acknowledging	protest
348	F	P10	Ye, ye (1 sec)] _____	acknowledging	react
349	I	P3	My father smokes and he doesn't have cancer, [ye…	informing	informative
350	R/I	P4	How much does he smoke? ---	eliciting	inquiry
351	Ib	P3	No, no as I totally disagree, because (1 sec) um, very old people for long time smoking, but, uhm never die, just depends on, ye depends [on …	eliciting	prompt

These two exchanges, which included embedded (clarification) bound exchanges each indicate strong challenging moves such as, "I totally disagree with smoking…" (P4, turn 341). Similarly, P3 challenged P4's perspective (turn 351) by uttering "No, no as I totally disagree, because…". This manner of discussion is usually considered as inappropriate in academic settings.

In comparison, during part 3 the exchanges are shorter, more cautious and considerate, and usually do not include bound exchanges (Table 8).

Table 8: Excerpts Demonstrating Exchanges from Part 3

turn	es	p	discussion	class of move	class of act
2129	I	P10	We can send satellite and we can understand if something is wrong with the ozone layer and [then…	eliciting	elicitation
2130	R	P9	The only] thing that you are right in that [case… _____	acknowledging	endorse
2131	I	P10	And], we can't find solution [to…	eliciting	elicitation
2132	R	P9	Yeh], in that case you're right. _____	acknowledging	endorse
2133	I	P9	But, I don't think that's good…, That's good. I don't think that's good to invest money on Mars to uhh…solution, solution for problem. That's good idea, that's good to invest on it. But, I don't think to invest money on Mars and the other planets will help us.	eliciting	starter m. proposal
2134	R/I	P10	We keep [that…	eliciting	informative
2135	R	P9	Yeh] (2 sec)	acknowledging	qualify
2136	F	P10	Um, (engage)	acknowledging	endorse
2137	F	P9	So, um	acknowledging	terminating

In turn 2129, P10 initiates an exchange by putting forward her opinion as a solution to an issue of data collection on the ozone layer. P10's opinion is acknowledged, endorsed, and commented upon (turns 2130, 2132 and 2133) by P9. Doing so, P9 provides more data and shows a contradicting opinion "… I don't think that's good to invest … for problem". In so doing, the members provide new data and ideas.

8.2 Initiating Discussions and Reaching Conclusions: A Comparison

The data indicate differences between the beginning of initiation moves and the following exchanges in the three parts. For example, in part 1 initiation was with hesitation "Erm (2 sec) (illegible), oh,…" (turn 319 initiation of part 1, Table 9).

Table 9: Beginning of Initiation Moves in Part 1

turn	es	P	argument	class of move	class of act
319	I	P3	Erm (2 sec) (illegible), oh, ... ---	informing	information
320	R	P12	Ah (2 sec) (illegible) if someone uh (1 sec), for example make up film uh (2 sec) they can't decide uh (2 sec) to about smoke, smoke, uh (3 sec) they show on movie (1 sec) ye.	eliciting	information

But, this phenomenon was not observed in parts 2 or 3 (turn 1625 initiation of part 2, Table 5, and turn 2089, initiation of part 3, Table 15). Also, the findings show varieties of new sub-topics, though these are more limited in parts 2 and 3. This indicates development of literacy so that participants know how to be more focused with a more narrow line of inquiry, and how to reach a conclusion or a degree of consensus. Inability to reach a conclusion or consensus was announced in part 1 (Table 10).

Table 10: Lack of Reaching a Conclusion/Consensus in Part 1

turn	es	P	argument	class of move	class of act
406	I	R/L	Now, it's time for spokespersons to report to the class what you discussed and what you concluded. ---	directing	directive
407	I	P4	Conclude? (repeat)	eliciting	loop
408	R	R/L	Yes, what you discussed and what you concluded.	eliciting	elicitation
409	F	P3	We couldn't make conclusion, just discussion in this group.	acknowledging	comment

In parts 2 and 3 the groups managed to reach a conclusion, and this is expected as part of a conventional discussion (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin, 1986). Table 11 shows examples of consensus in parts 2 and 3.

Table 11: Demonstration of Conclusion/Consensus in Parts 2 and 3

Item / Part	turn	es	P	argument	class of move	class of act
Part 2	1702	I	R/L	In general, what did you conclude? Do you agree on this topic or disagree?	eliciting	elicitation
	1703	R	P8	Strongly agree.	informing	informative
Part 3	2152	I	R/L	So, what is the conclusion?	eliciting	elicitation
	2153	R	PS	Hah, huh, heh, hnh (engage)	acknowledging	
	2154	R	P9	How do we stop it.	informing	informative

8.3 Length of Turn

The length of turns of native English-speaking students in an academic discussion are expected to be short, precise and to the point (Li & Nesi, 2004; Micheau & Billmyer, 1987). But findings from this study did not show a significant difference in this regard (Table 12).

Table 12: Relationship of Lengthy Turns and Number of Turns

Item / Part	Lengthy turns (more than a line)	Total turns	%	Total discussion time
Part 1	14	86	16.3%	6′. 47″
Part 2	13	75	17.3%	7′.20″
Part 3	9	62	14.5%	4′.06″

However, circumstances in terms of the total length of discussion were quite different.

8.4 Factors Affecting the Turns: Role of Structure

Analysis showed some differences in the structure of the turns. Two major differences were the length and the appropriateness of the structures, these aspects being affected by the participants' fluency in English and the use of terminology. Two turns by P10 in each of the parts demonstrate these aspects (Table 13). P10 was one of the participants who were tracked in the three parts.

Table 13: Effect of Structure on Turns in Parts 1, 2 and 3

Part \ Item	turn	es	P	argument	class of move	class of act
Part 1	379	I	P10	Because, cigarette fee is the for the tax used for some public ah, place, some public nature ...	eliciting	elicitation
	401	I	P10	So, it could influenced to someone, uh (1 sec) people's health. But, depends, the government cannot push the people ah (1sec) ... so I think, they can control by themselves.	eliciting	elicitation
Part 2	1669	I	P10	I can see that pink was not also purple. But, nowadays, ... I can see many kind of clothes are just purple and pink colours, ah, I think it is being [normal.	eliciting	elicitation
	1695	R/I	P10	… May, many people ... agree that women like men nowadays has changed the way of life.	eliciting	informative
Part 3	2116	I	P10	I disagree with this topic that space race is for knowledge ... it is for discovery of other planets for the problem of population on the Earth.	informing	observe
	2129	I	P10	We can send satellite and we can understand if something is wrong with the ozone layer ...	eliciting	elicitation

8.5 Function of the Turns

Based on the structure of the conversations, 'F' and 'F/I' can only follow 'R'. On the other hand, 'R/I' always reflects the exchange back to the initiation move. Consequently, because of an inverse ratio between the numbers of 'R/I' and 'F/I' or 'F', an increase in the numbers of 'R/I' predicts a decrease in the number of 'F/I' and /or 'F' - and vice-versa (Table 14).

Table 14: Extent of the Occurrence of the Turns in Different Parts

es \ Item	Part 1		Part 2		Part 3	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
I	28	36.8%	24	34.8%	20	35.7%
R/I	10	13.2%	12	17.4%	13	23.2%
F/I	8	10.6%	7	10.1%	5	8.9%
R	15	19.7%	14	20.3%	12	21.4%
F	15	19.7%	12	17.4%	6	10.8%
Total	**76**	**100%**	**69**	**100%**	**56**	**100%**

Table 14 shows a continuous and significant increase in the rate of 'R/I' from part 1 to part 3. Conversely, a continuous decrease in the percentage of 'F/I' and 'F' from part 1 to part 3 was observed. This finding supports the above-mentioned rule, and it also indicates a willingness to contribute more critically in the discussions in order to evaluate issues from different perspectives. Table 15 provides an example.

Table 15: Indication of Critical Discussion

turn	es	P	argument	class of move	class of act
2089	I	P9	Um, spending money on the waste, on the space ...? We are to look upon hunger in the instead of spending money on the [space…	eliciting	marker elicitation
2090	R/I	P4	Like] the other concerns, space was the study for the governmental [operation…	eliciting	informing
2091	I	P9	The] point is to spending on the places were linking the planet can live in is or shortage of oxygen something, I don't think [it takes…	eliciting	elicitation
2092	R/I	P5	Don't you think] it is about our life and [the space…?	eliciting	m. proposal
2093	F/I	P9	Because, I don't think it takes short time. I, I think it takes long time to make that place suitable for living [beings…	eliciting	reformulation

In turn 2089, P9 initiates the discussion by applying an eliciting move on the topic of wasting money on space exploration. This initiation receives a response from P4 in turn 2090, and this response/eliciting move reflects back to P9, so leading him to put forward a new sub-topic. This new sub-topic meets a response from P5 (in turn 2092) who introduces yet another sub-topic.

The findings show that, in general, the arguments in these groups were significantly symmetrical, and members co-operatively engaged in the debates. The repetition of some statements by other members of the group indicates a level of agreement on particular points, and it suggests confidence on the part of members to intervene, to overlap, and to complete the statements of others. They generally respected each other's speaking rights, though on occasions one or two members would try to dominate or be more authoritative.

9. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate literacy practices which provide students with opportunities for developing verbal argumentative texts, also to provide insights into literacies which the students experience as preparation for IELTS. The findings provide clear and significant insights in this respect.

Students engaged in multiple literacies for developing argumentative texts. They experienced conventional argumentative structuring, staging, and organizing of their texts. A further aspect was engagement with prompts, and contentious topics in order to understand, decode, and analyse the test rubrics. Students identified key constituents of the task in order to focus on the main issue, sub-issue(s) and the writer's point of view.

Analysis demonstrated the students' literacy development in terms of producing argumentative texts. They developed the expert knowledge of analysing genre of texts, for example exposition and discussion genres (Table 3), in addition to relevant selection of vocabulary and structure. This was because they needed to communicate with the texts appropriately in order to share their perspectives and knowledge and experiences of specific issues. They used such linguistic resources as lexical cohesion, reference, and conjunctions (Table 13) in order to produce conventionally structured and organized argumentative texts with cohesive ties to create unity (Tables 15).

The tasks deployed in the classroom generated opportunities for the students to experience different literacy practices when engaged in group discussions and presentations about issues in print texts. Such class tasks provided the students with opportunities: (a) to experience the genre of some argumentative texts, (b) to learn how to develop views for and against debatable issues, (c) to learn how to open, continue (elaborate or interpret and evaluate and support a perspective) and thus generate an argument, and (d) to select and

acquire appropriate words and phrases. However, it should be borne in mind that the academic requirements of English-speaking universities are significantly at higher level of discourse and complexity, notwithstanding the fact that academic genres may vary in different academic disciplines. For example, IELTS-focused practices are not associated with such university-based spoken activities as PowerPoint-aided presentation.

So, these interpretations, however, do not indicate if the test-taker might be equipped with, for example, such academic literacies as delivering a presentation required by a department in a seminar using PowerPoint - one of the academic literacies expected of the university students. Presentations were simple and short (about 3-5 minutes), because the entire area of verbal presentation context is ignored in the IELTS examination (Hogan, 1992). This approach is unlikely to prepare students for control of academic literacies despite their engagement in developing argumentative texts. Some students who enter English-speaking universities seem unable to demonstrate such literacies, leading to difficulties and possible failure in meeting academic requirements. One cause for this is that they have not been expected to demonstrate such literacies to obtain their IELTS band scores, and explains why after obtaining the required band scores for university entry, students still have difficulties with university study. Therefore, the discourse knowledge that OTEFL students bring with themselves into English-speaking universities may not be at an appropriate level for commencing university study as far as IELTS is concerned.

Based on the class observations, the discourse in the IELTS academic preparation course comprised different patterns. During debating of various contemporary contentious topics, students experienced conventions of negotiation and transaction of opinions in order to reach conclusions. Text based interactions also produced opportunities to experience variety of discourses and argumentation. After accomplishing a task, members of each group designated one member to share the conclusions of their interaction with the whole class in order to receive their comments and criticisms. At this stage the students' discourse was for the purpose of mutual discussion and knowledge sharing. The students talked about texts analytically and discussed issue(s) independently in their small groups.

Verbal proficiency plays a crucial role for students who intend to further tertiary education at English-speaking universities. Group discussions provided the students with opportunities to experience relevant literacies. Reading "For & Against" texts aimed to develop the students' knowledge of and ability to talk about a particular topic area and the experiential domain in which it is set (i.e. developing field knowledge). However, the practices in the study aimed at preparing the students to obtain as high an IELTS band score as possible. Accordingly, their knowledge development was limited to meeting the extent of the descriptors as defined by IELTS (IELTS Handbook, 2007). In an investigation of the attitude of IELTS stakeholders, Coleman et al. (2003) found that "both staff and students indicated that the purpose of IELTS test is primarily functional (i.e. university entry), with a secondary learning/skill improvement role" (p. 160).

10. Implications

Although argumentation does not typically form a significant part of the speaking test in IELTS, it usually appears as a writing task (i.e. Task 2). Literacy from the IELTS academic examination perspective, however, can be understood as the ability to participate in the type of social practices involved in the examination. These literacy events had implications for preparing the students to meet some of the expectations of the IELTS academic examination.

Findings of the present study showed, for example, that argumentative texts did not include critical literature review and critical referencing. Hence, improving the design of the IELTS test in accordance with this typical academic culture could result in the formation of preparation classes that focus on such circumstances. That is, the design of IELTS needs change in a way that in addition to increasing English

proficiency, candidates might practise adaptation and adoption of the academic culture before they commence their university study. For example, group work members could give feedback and comment critically on each other's productions and viewpoints. This situation would resemble English-speaking academic culture, for example in terms of critical thinking, at least at commencement level.

Improving test types based on disciplinary studies rather than on a general academic model would be useful both for students and recruiting universities. The benefit for students is their focused and informative preparation towards subject matter which faces them as part of their tertiary education. The usefulness for the receiving universities would lie in their awareness of the possible extent of the students' understanding, adaptation and adoption of the English-speaking academic culture.

Descriptors of IELTS at present do not signal such properties. An examination of the list of descriptors for assessing test-takers' texts (cf. IELTS Handbook, 2007) reveals the absence of attention to such descriptors as discourse, understanding of the social purpose of the topic, decoding and meaning making with the prompts and the topic for debating which are significantly valued in university study. The descriptors provide insufficient information about students' language repertoire prior to commencing their tertiary education at English-speaking universities, which results in university admissions staff and departments' uncertainty about the students' language proficiency to meet academic requirements of their course of study (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006).

There are descriptors such as 'Task Achievement' and 'Task Response' which may indicate decoding and communicating with the prompts, but they do not indicate whether or not discourse and understanding of the social purpose of the topic are also considered. These are achieved by looking at the extent of topic-related information in texts. There are also aspects of 'Coherence and Cohesion', 'Lexical Resource' and 'Grammatical Range and Accuracy' among the descriptors for assessing IELTS writing tasks. However, these also do not specifically clarify the criteria in detail.

OTEFL students usually come from diverse academic backgrounds, which may differ from that of western academic conventions. After entering into English-speaking universities OTEFL students are challenged by at least two obstacles to access academic knowledge. Firstly, these students have to face different orders of discourse, which belong to a particular discipline genre embedded in the academic genres. Secondly, they have to deal with the medium of instruction - English. These can hinder students' successful adaptation to English-speaking academic life which can lead to students' poor academic results and achievements. Students are typically required to be able to produce a range of text types in their programs of study in English-speaking universities. The processes required to develop such texts also vary in accordance with the different nature of the discipline (see Candlin & Plum, 1999). Therefore, because the expectations of university study are at higher level of complexity, OTEFL students may need to be provided with further information to prepare for university study, in terms of adaptation to and adoption of English-speaking academic culture, prior to commencing their desired tertiary programs in such academic institutions as Australian universities.

11. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study was limited to one IELTS (Academic Version) preparation class in Tehran. Further experiential studies are required to investigate into what causes OTEFL students' obscurity and possible failure in doing academic courses in English-speaking universities. This study suggests additional research into literacy practices in preparation courses for IELTS which can efficiently lead students to adaptation and adoption of English-speaking academic culture. Research in this area could result in identifying specific patterns of literacy which closely relate to expectations and requirements of English-speaking academic culture. Such a study would address the question: 'What is the extent of the association between class tasks provided in IELTS (Academic Version) preparation courses in terms of the verbal skills and current

academic literacy practices in different disciplines in English-speaking universities?' This entails researchers to identify and describe the extent of students' preparedness in using English practically and meaningfully in academic contexts.

12. Conclusion

The study focused on Iranian students' experiences in the development of spoken argumentative texts when preparing for IELTS. OTEFL students usually come from diverse academic backgrounds, which may differ from that of western academic conventions. After entering into English-medium universities OTEFL students are challenged by at least two obstacles to access academic knowledge. Firstly, these students have to face different orders of discourse, which belong to a particular discipline genre embedded in the academic genres. The processes required to develop such texts also vary in accordance with the different nature of the discipline (Candlin & Plum, 1999). Secondly, they have to deal with the medium of instruction - English. These can hinder students' successful adoption of and adaptation to English-medium academic life which can lead to students' poor academic results and achievements.

The data discussed here contribute to the body of knowledge about an extent of opportunities provided for experiencing literacy in terms of producing verbal argumentative texts as preparation for the IELTS academic examination. The students did engage in literacy practices for developing argumentative texts and acquired a range of linguistic resources. Also, they obtained significant information about the nature and features of IELTS. These contributed significantly in the students' acquisition of literacies required for composing conventionally appropriate argumentative texts. Reporting on the deliberations and conclusions of a group discussion provides one example. Such literacies are also useful for university study, because the study points to approaches which will enable OTEFL students to develop argumentative texts through the study of genres. Despite the significant contribution of formal IELTS preparation classes which leads to the students' successful achievement of their desired band scores for entry into English-speaking universities, a number of them face difficulties with academic requirements. Consequently, because the expectations of university study are at higher level of complexity, OTEFL students may need to be provided with further information to prepare for university study, in terms of adaptation to and adoption of English-medium academic culture, prior to commencing their desired tertiary programs in such academic institutions as Australian universities, for example. Therefore, the study has implications for IELTS stakeholders as discussed. Nevertheless, further inquiry in this area may have significant implications for IELTS and for the teaching and testing of verbal skills in English.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Abbreviations

Acknowledging: ack	Incomplete: incom	Post-head: post-h
Acquiesce: acq	Informing: inf	Pre -head: pre-h
Behave: be	Informative: i	Protest: prot
Bound exchange: Ib	Inquire: inq	Qualify: qu
Comment: com	Loop: l	React: rea
Element of structure: es	Marked proposal: m. Pr	Receive: rec
Eliciting: eli	Marker: m	Reformulate: ref
Elicitation: e	Neutral proposal: n. Pr	Researcher/Lecturer: R/L
Endorsement: end	Observation: obs	Starter: s
Engage: eng	Page: p	Terminate: ter
Head: h	Participant: P	

Appendix B

The Exchanges Patterns in the Small Group Discussions
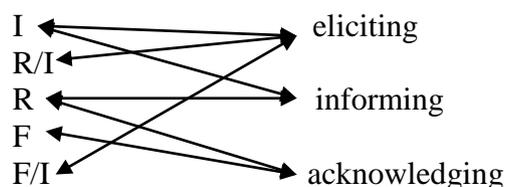
Subcategories of elicitation
$$\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{Inform} \\ \text{Commit} \\ \text{Confirm} \\ \text{Agree} \\ \text{Repeat} \\ \text{Clarify} \end{array}\right.$$

Appendix C

An Explanation of Transcript Preparation

In order to prepare the collected data for transcription, firstly, some actions were required. Having audio recorded and/or video recorded each session, the first author transferred the recorded materials from a digital audio recorder and video recorder into a 'Pentium 3 Computer' on the same day. Then, using a computer, he converted the transferred materials into compatible versions to be recordable on raw audio and video CDs. Next, he transferred the data from the computer to the raw CDs. This process was necessary to prepare the collected data for the purpose of transcription and to keep an electronic copy for future references and for the validity and credibility of the research project. After, he began transcribing the collected data of each session off -site. This process firstly involved developing a manuscript of events that had occurred in the classroom - for instance the candidates' engagement in classroom literacy practices through the use of texts. Needless to say, he did not transcribe every detail, because as Ochs (1999) has stated, a perfect transcription is unlikely to emerge. However, for some unreadable parts, he sometimes had to replay that part several times for the sake of not missing any significant pattern or information.

For the study focus, he tried to be selective in the transcription and attempted to transcribe significant data by reviewing and re-reviewing the data while having an eye to the research questions. This deliberation was important because "a transcript that is too detailed is difficult to follow and assess. A more useful transcript is a more selective one" (Ochs, 1999, p. 168). However, in the second round, he typed and retyped the manuscripts so that the first draft of the transcription of the raw data was ready in time for the next part of the process. This provided the authors with an opportunity to obtain further insights into the data.

In the third round, they categorized classroom literacy practices, field-notes and interviews. They followed the steps in the process of data analysis one by one seeking to identify the significant patterns. Analyses were based on the collected data and the research questions with the focus on the argumentative verbal texts and related literacy practices in the classroom.

Appendix D

An Example of Class Tasks

Part 1 is described below as an example.
Lesson: For & Against
Genre: Argumentation
Day and Time: Wednesday, 20:00-20:30
Duration: 30 minutes out of 120 minutes of the 'Speaking' preparation session
Number of participants in the classroom: 12 (male & female)
Number of the participants in each group: 4 (male & female)
Topic: World governments should conduct serious campaigns against smoking

Discussions which were based on IRF cycle, usually, continued for 10 to 15 minutes and were followed by verbal reports to the class. Verbal reports formed the final step in a series of class verbal literacy practices. The aim of the verbal reports was to provide students with a form of communication that was different from that of the group discussions.

The reporters were selected as the spokespersons by the group members, their task being to summarise the group's discussions and conclusions. This task was important because it set the comments within the context of the conversations, and this influenced the negotiations of meanings (Hall, 1993).

The verbal reports required the students to develop their speaking skills, for example in terms of fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy and pronunciation. The purpose of verbal reports was to provide the students with an opportunity to practise English for their IELTS test. Sections 2 and 3 of the IELTS speaking test require students to read about a particular contentious topic, talk about it for one or two minutes, and then engage an examiner in an extended discussion of abstract nature on that subject (see IELTS Handbook, 2007 for the nature of interactions and performance descriptions).

Appendix E

Description of the Identified Acts

The following descriptions of the identified acts in this study, also the meaning of 'Move' and 'Turn' are based on Sinclair and Coulthard (1992).

Acquiesce: The counterpart of *metastatement*, which is often realized by *well/yes* and other items indicating assent. It realizes the head of an *answering* move in the exchange, for example, Table 7, turn 343.

Comment: Realized by statement, which is often as the post-head of any move. Its function is to exemplify, expand, explain, and evaluate one's own utterance, or provide additional information, for example, Table 10, turn 409.

Elicitation: Acts as the head of an *eliciting* move. It functions to elicit comment on new information or opinions, and it is always followed by further response, for example, Table 10, turn 408.

Endorsement: Often realized by a statement as the head of an *acknowledging* move. Its function is to elaborate on a positive response to the preceding content, for example, Table 8, turn 2136.

Engage: Produced by the listener to give minimal feedback without interrupting the interlocutor. It does not realize any element of the move structure, for example, Table 11, Part 3, turn, 2153.

Informative: Realised by statement or by 'yes' and 'no' items and their variants, both verbal [e.g. 'I (don't) think so'] and non-verbal (e.g. nods and shakes of the head), for example, Table 7, turn, 341.

Inquire: Realized by questions which seek information as opposed to a 'yes' or 'no' answer, i.e. wh-questions and ellipted forms of these. It realizes the head of an eliciting move (except at I^b in Clarify and Repeat exchanges). Its function is to elicit information, for example, Table 7, turn 350.

Loop: Realized by a closed class of items: 'pardon', 'what', 'eh', 'again', and their variants, said with rising intonation. Realizes the head of an eliciting move at I^b in a repeat exchange. Its function is to elicit the repetition of a preceding utterance which was not clearly heard, for example, Table 10, turn 407.

Marker: Often realized by *um*, followed by a short pause at the beginning of any move. Its function is to mark the onset of a move, for example, Table 15, turn 2089.

Marked proposal: Often realized by a question whose polarity is indicated by the interlocutor's intonation or the following tag question. It functions to elicit agreement from the other participants, for example, Table 15, turn 2092.

Neutral proposal: Often realized by a question, which seeks for an answer between *yes* and *no*. It acts as the head of an *eliciting* move, for example, Table 4, Part 2, turn 1629.

Observation: Realized by statement. It realizes the head of an informing move at I (Inform exchange). Its function is to offer 'information' which is already part of the shared knowledge of the participants in

the conversation. In other words, it has a predominantly phatic function, for example, Table 13, turn 2116.

Protest: Realized by a statement or by *yes* and *no* items and their simple variants. It acts as the head of an *acknowledging* move. Its function is to raise an objection to a preceding utterance, in terms of its content, relevance, validity, etc. for example, Table 7, turn 344.

Qualify: Realized by 'qualified' statement or by tentative' yes' and 'no' items (where tentativeness is intonationally signalled) and their variants, both verbal ('to some extent yes', 'no not really', 'well I suppose so (not)', etc.) and non-verbal (e.g. shrugging the shoulders), for example, Table 8, turn 2135.

React: Realized by high key 'yes' and 'no' items and their variants, both verbal and non-verbal; or by high key repetition. It realizes the head of an acknowledging move at R and/or F. Its function is to indicate positive endorsement of a preceding utterance, for example, Table 7, turn 348.

Receive: Often realized by *yes* and *no* items and their variants, or by reformulation or repetition of the previous utterance. It can be a pre-head of any move and its function is to acknowledge a preceding utterance and to indicate that the appropriate statement is forthcoming, for example, Table 3, turn 1627.

Reformulate: Often realized by a statement which paraphrases a preceding utterance. It often functions as an acknowledgement of the preceding utterance. By using *reformulate*, the listener contributes his/her understanding of the previous utterance to the discussion within the current subtopic, for example, Table 15, turn 2093.

Starter: Often realized by a statement as pre-head of any move. Its function is to introduce background information, to establish a common understanding, or to direct the others' attention to the subtopic to be discussed, for example, Table 8, turn 2133.

Terminate: Often realized by low-key repetition or reformulation, as an *acknowledging* move at R or F. Its function is to acknowledge a preceding utterance and to intend to terminate the current exchange, for example, Table 8, turn 2137.

Move: Talk of an interlocutor in a group discussion.

Turn: Shift of talk from one interlocutor to another.