

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSATIONAL COMPETENCE OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

Josep M. Cots
Estudi General de Lleida

1. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This paper attempts to provide some insight into the nature of an aspect of language learning which is all too often absent from pedagogic programmes: conversational competence. The basic question the analysis tries to answer is one which most foreign language learners and teachers have to face from day to day: what is it that makes a native speaker sound like a native speaker when participating in a social interaction? The question can be answered fairly easily by saying that it is the native speaker's communicative competence. Yet, this answer is not enough for the language learner if he/she is not told exactly what this general concept involves. This is precisely what I am going to do by describing some of the features present in the interactional speech of native speakers which are absent in the interactional speech of non-native speakers.

The interactions on which this study is based (see Appendix) are organized into three different sets according to the task intended in each of them. The first group (1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d) have the act of **thanking** as their central object, the second group (2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d) develop around the act of **requesting**, and the third group (3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d) take the act of **disagreement** as the reason for the verbal encounter.

Encounters labelled with a, b, and c are elicited through a series of role-play sessions which took place among native speakers of American English and speakers of peninsular and Puerto-Rican Spanish. The conversations of the d group were taken from textbooks of current use among teachers and learners of English. The reason for such a selection was, in the first place, to show some relevant features of interactional speech, and secondly to be able to emphasize the contrasts between the way native speakers take part in an interaction and the way non-native speakers participate depending on their degree of communicative competence in American English. Finally, the inclusion of conversations from textbooks is intended to show the gaps between what really happens in an interaction and what books say happens. Only in #3d can we see some efforts made towards a more 'faithful' representation of actual speech.

A total of four subjects took part in the role-play sessions. They were all females, aged between twenty and twenty-five. Two of them (Janice and Jana) were native speakers of American English. The other two had Spanish as their native language. Paloma was a native from Spain who had been living in the U.S. for about five years when the experiment took place. Maritza was from Puerto Rico. At the time of the experiment she had been in the U.S. for about two months, attending a special programme of English for Foreign Students. Back in her country English is the second official language. She studied it through primary and secondary education. During her higher education about 70% of the courses were taught and used textbooks in English. Janice and Paloma were enrolled in a graduate course in Linguistics together with the researcher.

Special care was taken that the task the subjects were asked to develop was one with which they were familiar, and, consequently, could not place them out of their ordinary role. Both participants were given a role-play card with some contextual information, but there was only one clear 'initiator' (Janice, Paloma and Maritza). The cards contained the following information:

(a) Situation 1 (expected reaction: thanking)

There was a change in the regular schedule for this class. Of all the people in the class nobody thought of calling you but the person in front of you.

(b) Situation 2 (expected reaction: request)

You could not come to class last week, and you would like to have the note from that class.

(c) Situation 3 (expected reaction: disagreement)

Last week the person in the front of you proposed that the class should have only one final exam, without a mid-term. You think it would be better to have both a mid-term and a final

2. BACKGROUND

Almost anybody who has attempted to learn a foreign language has become acquainted (and discouraged sometimes!) with the notion that in order to speak a language with some degree of native-like proficiency one needs to spend some time in the community where the language is spoken. It is usually argued that contact with the native speakers provides the learner with an opportunity to be exposed to and practice the language code. But there is still another reason, and one which language educators are beginning

to be aware of, to see how language is actually used, in other words, what people say, to whom, when, and how.

Fortunately, foreign language programs have started to tackle this problem in incorporating the concept of communicative competence (e.g. Munby 1983, Brumfit and Johnson 1978, Van Ek 1980, Finnochiaro and Brumfit 1983). A great deal of effort has also been invested for different purposes (education, diplomatic, economic, etc.) in the subject of cultural differences and how people can become aware of them (e.g. Seelye 1974, Lafayette 1978, Luce and Smith 1987).

In spite of all the contributions mentioned above, there is still one whole area of language use that has been very little emphasized from the pedagogic point of view: the interactional aspect. The idea that different societies structure conversation in different ways but following very definite patterns has been a focus of research in Anthropology and Sociolinguistics since the sixties

It is a generally accepted premise of modern conversational analysis that to engage in and sustain a significant range of verbal encounters, participants must have both background information about the situation at hand and socio-cultural knowledge, i.e. familiarity with the shared conventions governing the verbal categorization of the environment and the conduct of activities alluded to in the interaction. (Gumperz 1984, p.127)

Although dialogues are the most common way of presenting and explaining the linguistic code and its communicative potential, there is almost no emphasis at all on the fact of what engaging in a conversation supposes:

(1) Engaging in a social encounter, which means that participants need to take into account the norms of social behavior and values of the community.

(2) Constructing a text, including here the devices to make one's contribution coherent and at the same time communicatively effective.

The foreign language learner needs to be explicitly shown what kind of knowledge and skills the native speaker has in order to take account of the two premises mentioned above. In most of the cases this is included under the general category of *conversational strategies*.

The teaching of conversation is hence a much more basic and comprehensive activity than is sometimes assumed, and implies far more than the parroting of dialogues. It must focus on strategies of conversational interaction. (Richards and Schmidt 1983: 150).

Taking part in a conversation is one of our daily tasks which we seldom stop and consider in detail. We rarely think of it as a result of learned knowledge

and skills. Nevertheless, this unawareness can be discovered when we are faced with the need to participate in a conversation taking place in a culture other than our own, abiding by a different set of beliefs, conventions and expectations, developing in different circumstances, and using a different linguistic code.

Conversations have their own 'mechanics', susceptible to being adapted to the specific socio-cultural context. The decision to analyze how a 'successful' conversation is attained is a basic requirement if we want to train people not just to be able to convey messages but also to behave in a specific society causing the least rupture in it.

What happens during a verbal encounter can be expressed by means of three tasks each of the participants is responsible for: (i) **cooperating**, (ii) **playing the game**, and (iii) **getting the message through**

In the first place entering a conversation means starting or continuing a relationship with another person. It also means behaving according to certain social, ethical principles such as solidarity and politeness, and, finally, assuming that the other person(s) expect to live a life as happy as possible. **Cooperation** is the key concept which summarizes all the participants' efforts made around those principles and assumptions. Secondly, conversations take place between two or more people, under certain circumstances and limitations of the people themselves and of the surroundings. Because of this, the participants must follow certain basic rules to achieve an orderly and efficiently organized task. This is what we have defined as **playing the game**, alluding to Wittgenstein's theory of games in language (1). Finally, every conversation has a purpose even though sometimes this purpose may just be "passing the time". In order to achieve that purpose messages must be exchanged and negotiated and this requires the participant to concentrate some of his/her efforts on expressing the message(s) in a clear and coherent way. This is the task we have defined as **getting the message through**.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

COOPERATING

Participants in an interaction are required to ensure that the physical act of conveying and receiving information takes place in favourable circumstances of receptiveness and willingness to contribute. They must acknowledge, more or less explicitly, both the social reality surrounding the interaction and, in the end, the social nature of the human beings with their need to be part of a community.

Cooperation imposes certain restrictions on how a subject should be treated, mainly because of the possible danger of giving an image of self

contradictory with the principle. In the encounters #3a and #3b we can see that even though Janice and Paloma knew for sure that Jana had suggested having just one final exam, they still introduce the topic with a tentative question, thus avoiding an excessively aggressive tone:

(#3a)J1- Jana were you the person last last week who said that they just wanna have a final exam?

(#3b)P- were you the one that said the other day that we shouldn't have a mid-term or something?

We see, on the other hand, how Maritza, the less competent speaker, does not realize the need to provide a preface either in set 3 (#3c) or in set 2 (#2c).

There is a constant effort on both parts to avoid direct confrontation. This is done by prefacing the turn with expressions which seem to support the previous speaker's argument. Examples of this phenomenon appear especially in set #3, where what is at stake is the expression of opposite opinions.

(#3a)J1- yeah well it's maybe not the greatest subject in the world but

(#3a)J2- well that's true but uh - and I I guess it would help us to know how she you know tests and all that but

(#3b)J- yeah well that's you know

(#3c)J- (...) I understand what you're saying it'd be

This is not the case, however, with the non-native speakers. In #3b Maritza's response to Jana's confirmation that it was her who proposed having just one final exam could be interpreted as highly confrontational, in the sense that it questions Jana's capacity of decision.

(#3b)J2- yeah I I brought that up when we were talking about it in class last week because uh.....

P- ... *why do you why do you think so*

The confrontational nature of #3c is established very explicitly from the very beginning of the encounter,

(#3c)M- Jana *I am not I am not according* with the idea that our classmates eh propo proposed (...)

The fact that Maritza is attributing the proposal to the classmates instead of to her addressee (and the role-card is very clear in that Jana was the one who made the proposal!) shows that she is aware of the potential danger of direct confrontation but she can just find other expressions which, without breaking the maxim of sincerity, would be useful for the goal intended.

The favoured image of self is one that accepts and respects other people's opinions and allows for a rectification whenever necessary. Reducing the degree of assertiveness is one very efficient way of showing this attitude. This can be done by showing some insecurity in the assertion or by prefacing it with a parenthetical expression indicating that what is said is not a general statement but rather a personal point of view.

- (#3a)J2- yeah I did uh *I don't know* I'm just
- (#3a)J1- (...) I *kind of* like to have just one final
- (#3b)J- (...) uh *I think* with our projects and then a final that that's enough
- (#3c)J- (...) I don't know uhm I'm just-*kind of thought* that it would be nice

Hesitations and insecurities are a characteristic part of natural speech. Examples such as those presented above should not be considered as unconscious reactions but, on the contrary, as part of the set of the devices the competent speaker has available to give a not-excessively assertive presentation of self. Curiously enough, of the three dialogues selected from textbooks only #3d takes this kind of phenomena.

One other aspect involved in **cooperation** is that of reducing the demands placed on the other(s), that is to say taking into consideration his/her negative face (2). Requests can certainly be made, but special care must be taken so that they are not seen as an arbitrary imposition. This is done by (i) expressing them in an indirect way and (ii) by providing a justification.

- (#2a)J1- yeah uh I didn't make it last week (LAUGHTER) do you think I could-take a look at your notes from then?
- (#2b)P- Jana you know something? I wasn't here last time so uh could I borrow your notes?

When we compare the two previous ways of requesting with the way Maritza realizes the speech act (#2c), the difference in directness is clear. In spite of the fact that she later becomes aware of it, we cannot help

interpreting her request as arbitrary (not providing a justification) and imposing (a statement about her needs instead of a question),

(#2c)M- Jana I need the notes of the -class last week if you can

One last aspect of **cooperation** consists of knowing how and when to close a possibly conflicting line of argumentation:

(#3a)J1- yeah I guess we'll probably take a vote I don't know

(#3b)P- yeah anyway

(#3c)M- ok the teacher will tell us if

PLAYING THE GAME

Apart from the fact that conversation is the most common way of exchanging information, it is also necessary to consider it as a special kind of activity, successfully developing thanks to the participants' knowledge and skill in following a series of rules which ensure the game-like nature of the activity.

One of these rules is **participating**. What is meant by this is that the conversationalist must constantly make explicit his/her attention and willingness to contribute. In the following example 1 has already accomplished her goal of expressing a request, nevertheless she must still 'fill out' her corresponding turns, in spite of the fact that she is not being asked to contribute:

(#2a) J2- oh sure, I don't know that I took a whole lot uh
J1- *it's alright, you is more legible than mine*
J2- (LAUGHTER) we just went over a few of the chapters uhm I don't know if you've been keeping up with some of those, it's hard to
J1- *not too bad*

Very often this same task is reduced to providing just some feedback signals to keep the channel open:

(#3b) P- (...) for me you know so I thought we >
J- *yeah*
>P- were gonna have two terms

(#3c) M- midterm and one final test I think that is better to have two eh two tests eh: because the material will
J- *mhmm*
>M- be accumulate accum accumulated

This is another feature which is absent from most of the dialogues presented in textbooks (see #1d and #2d). We see the participants investing their turns exclusively with an informative function destined to contribute directly to the achievement of their own goals. The functions of these back-channel signals is not goal-directed but means directed, that is, they are not loaded with pragmatic meaning but rather they serve to maintain the dialogic nature of the interaction.

In general conversationalists must avoid inactivity, a term which in conversation must be translated as silence. In cultures such as the one whose language we are analyzing, fluency of speech is one index of presentation of self ("you are what you say"). This is the reason why the use of 'fillers', with very little pragmatic force, can be appreciated not only at the level of the encounter but also at the level of the turn. These particles help to avoid periods of apparent verbal (and mental) inability, maintaining at the same time the rhythmic nature of the discourse,

(#2a)J1- *yeah uh* I didn't make it last week

(#2b)J- *yeah well that's you know I mean*

Expressions such as those emphasized should be very useful to non-native speakers when they are faced with problems of lack of knowledge of the system. The immediate provision of the correct version of the form or the appearance of a pause can undermine the impression of fluency which native speakers may sometimes expect even of non-native speakers.

(#3c)M- Jana I am not I am not according with the idea that our classmates eh propo proposed eh the last the last week because I want -have one midterm and one final test I think (...)

Lack of the required information at a certain stage in the encounter may also be a cause of rupture in the smooth development of the activity. We realize that the expert language user has some devices available to avoid the occurrence of these situations. Sometimes a 'generalizing expression' is used (allowing for some ambiguity). In some other cases the lack of information is explicit but the development of the conversation is not interfered with. Of the examples below the first two refer to the former solution and the third one refers to the latter solution.

(#3a)J1- (...) it would help us to know how she you know tests *and all that* but

(#3c)J- (...) I felt that with the project that we're doing and the participation *and stuff* that I

(#3a)J2- (...) I mean the mid-term doing it on that *what was it the Gung-Ho?* uh-

Any activity has an opening stage and a closing stage, and the participants must know how to behave during those stages. The opening stage is usually characterised by some introductory work in which one of the participants demands the attention of the other(s) and presents the topic. In encounters #1a and #1b the opening phase consists of the usual exchange of greetings. In #2a, #2b, #2d, #3a, and #3b we can appreciate clearly how this 'introductory work' is done by looking at the first turn in each of them. Closing the encounter requires some explicit marking. It is generally the person who took the initiative in opening the conversation who must take it again in closing it. In the case of the request (set #2) the four encounters are closed with the expression of gratitude from the person requesting. In the disagreement (set #3) it is always the initiator who stops the argument-counterargument progression by appealing to some external source of decision (voting, the teacher).

GETTING THE MESSAGE THROUGH

The first and perhaps most important element in an encounter is the fact that there is a message to communicate. Conveying a message does not only require a knowledge of the linguistic code at the grammar level but also at the level of discourse. What is mainly at stake is constructing a 'text' as coherent as possible. This can be achieved basically by progressively developing a topic or a point of view and marking any movements away from and back to that topic. This is how Schifffrin (1987) explains the use of "well" at the beginning of non-preferred turns, that is turns which do not support what the previous speaker said but rather oppose it. We can see this very clearly in set #3 where the main task is disagreement. The contrast between a supportive and non-supportive act can be seen very well in the following example, where J begins the turn with a non-supportive act and then switches into a supportive one, the first act is preceded by "well" together with a conjunction with an adversative meaning, the second one by "and":

(#3c)J *well* that's true *but* uh - *and* I I guess it would help us to know how she

The expert language-user has some other tools available to manage topic. Sometimes a message needs to be rephrased either because the addressee is giving signs of lack of understanding or because the relevance of what has been said deserves insistence upon it. "I mean" is the marker signalling that what is coming next is a variation on the same message:

- (#3a)J1 (...) I'm just really not - that - excited about doing a mid-term
and a final you know *I mean* the mid-term doing it on
- (#3b)J- yeah well that's you know *I mean* it'ssomething new for
me

The participants also risk entering into digression and then having to go back to the main topic of the encounter:

- (#2a) J2- keep up with them as as much as we should *but yeah* you
J1- I-
- J2- can take a look at them and copy it

Part of the ability to convey a message consists of knowing how to emphasize certain aspects of it and attitudes of the speaker. This can be done by altering the syntactic structure of the sentence. In #3a and #3b we have two initial questions phrased in an indirect way which could be perfectly expressed by means of a direct question (did you say you didn't want a mid-term exam?). The question as it appears in the encounter implies a certain degree of casualty, and lack of a planned intentionality which helps avoid confrontation.

Another way of emphasizing specific aspects is the addition of words such as "just" and "really":

- (#2a)J2- (...) you can *just* give them back to me next week
- (#3a)J2- (...) I'm *just* really not that excited about

Some of the expressions we use, because of their common appearance in speech have become somehow devoid of their original semantic force. This is the reason why "emphasizers" such as those mentioned above are needed. One more example is the use of "sure" instead of "yes" (or "yeah") (#2a). J in this case wants to show her positive disposition towards fulfilling I's request, that is why she uses "sure", a more expressive word than "yeah".

The absence from the speech of Maritza (specially) and Paloma of particles and expressions such as those emphasized in this section also contributes to making their speech sound 'non-native'.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to show some conversational phenomena which are rarely dealt with in the language classroom. The complete transcription of the conversations should allow the reader to evaluate the relevance of the features mentioned and see them in relation to the whole discourse context. The fact that most of these characteristics cannot be found in either the dialogues belonging to two of the textbooks (#1d), #2d) or in the speech of the speaker with least exposure to real interactions makes one think of the possibility that the former circumstance justifies the latter. Maritza, after so many years of studying English as a second language, is still missing many of the features that constitute communicative competence. One reason for this could be the fact that at no stage of her learning process was she made aware of them.

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#1a. Janice (J1) – Jana (J2) (thanking)

J2- how are you doing Janice

J1- where is everybody

J2- oh they're not here yet

J1- time yet di(h)d th(h)ey

J2- L [LAUGHTER]

J1- oh thanks for calling me letting me
know really I would've been sitting at home >

J2- L.....

> J1 and you would've been going on without
me

J2- yeah well I thought you had to know
about that because I know what is like
to come into class and then kind of be
out of touch with everybody

J1- oh God [LAUGHTER]

#1b. Paloma-Janice (thanking)

P- oh hi Jana

J- hi Paloma how are you

P- fine thanks to you that I could
get in time to class today

J- oh yeah I thought you should
know it since you weren't here
last week

P- oh yeah that is true – why did you
call me ?

J- why just uh since you weren't here
I wanted you to know that we were
gonna be to come into
class half-hour late

P- L.....

P- who who told you about my phone
number ?

J- [LAUGHTER] I got it from the teacher

P- ah

#1c. Maritza-Jana (thanking)

- M- hi Jana how are you
 J- good how are you doing
 M- fine and you
 J- good real good
 M- thank you for for telling me
 that the class begin will begin
 eh - eh early
 J- early yeah yeah I wanted
 you to know because I didn't want
 you walk in a half-hour late since
 you know it was decided last week
 and you weren't here -
 M- ok what themes that the professor
 do did

#1d. Textbook (thanking)

- R- Here are your coats.
 K- Thanks... it's been a marvellous
 evening. It was very kind of you
 to invite us.
 R- Don't mention it ... it was nice
 to see you again.
 K- Well, we enjoyed ourselves very
 much
 R- I'm glad ... you must come again
 K- Goodnight ... and thanks again.
 R- Goodnihgt ... and drive carefully.
 it's a very wet night.

(From: Hartley, B. and P. Viney.
 1983. *Connections*. Oxford: Oxford
 University Press)

#2a. Janice (J1) – Jana (J2) (request)

- J1- Jana were you here last week ?
J2- yeah
J1- yeah uh I didn't make it last week
[LAUGHTER] do you think I could -
take a look at your notes from
then ?
J2- oh sure, I don't know that I took
a whole lot uh
J1- it's alright, your is
more legible than mine
J2- [LAUGHTER] we just went over a few
of the chapters uhm I dont know if
you've been keeping up with some of
those, it's hard to
J1- not too bad (SPECIAL INTONATION)
J2- keep up with them as much as we
should but yeah you can take >
J1- ↓.....
> J2a look at them and copy it down
you know the information if you >
J1- ↓ok
> J2want.....
J1- yeah would you rather I do that
or would it be easier if I took them
and xerox them or something
J2- uhm that'd be ok too and you can just
give them back to me next week >

#2b. Paloma-Jana (request)

- P- Jana you know something ? I wasn't
here last time so uh could I borrow
your notes?
J- oh sure no problem you can just you >
P- ↓because
> J know I'll give them to you and you
can just give them back to me next
week
P- you don't mind don't you
J- oh no not at all, that's fine
P- ↓ok because I know
some people do, you know
J- [CHUCKLES] no problem
P- thanks

J1- Lok.....>
 > J2.....then
 > J1no problem
 J1- ok
 J2- ok ?
 J1- great, thanks

#2c. Maritza-Jana (request)

M- Jana I need the notes of the
 – the class last week if you can
 J- class last week? L ok
 yeah I've got them here uh do you
 want just to take them on tonight
 and copy them and give them back
 to me next week ?
 M- do you need the notebuk notebook ?
 J- uh I just you know I don't have it
 in a binder. I can just give you
 the notes from last week and you
 can just give them
 M- L I can I can copy if you want
 if you need the notebuk, the notes
 J- ok no uh just give them back to me
 next week
 M- ok thank you
 J- ok ?

#2d. Textbook (request)

X- Debby, I want to ask you a big
 favor. I was wondering if I could
 borrow your car Saturday night, I
 have to go to my cousin's wedding
 and it's twenty miles from here.
 D- What time do you need it ?
 X- Around 7:00.
 D- That's fine. I won't be using it
 Saturday night.
 X- Thanks a lot I really appreciate.

(From: Reinhart, S.M. and I. Fisher.
 1985. *Speaking and Social Interaction*
 Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall)

3a. Janice (J1) – Jana (J2) (disagreement)

J1- Jana were you the person last last week who said that they just wanna have a final exam ?

J2- yeah I did uh I don't know I'm just really not - that - excited about doing a mid-term and a final you know I mean the mid-term doing it on that what was it the Gung-Ho ? uh - I'm not really sure that the I know enough to really analyse it =

J1- yeah well it's maybe not the greatest subject in the world but it shouldn't be that hard and it would kind of spread out the grade a lot more

J2- well that's true but uh - and I I guess it would help us to know how she you know tests and all that but - I don't know just was a little apprehensive about it I I kind of like to have just one final

J1- I don't know I hate leaving everything build up at the very end because there are so many tests then.....that

J2- well that's true but you know we've got our projects too that will be taking some of the grade and and being a large >

J1- I yeah

#3b. Paloma-Jana (disagreement)

P- were you the one that said the other day that we shouldn't have a mid-term or something ?

J- yeah I I brought that up when we were talking about it in class last week because uh

P- I why do why do you think so ?

J- well I prefer just have one final uh I think with our projects and then a final that that's enough to be graded on I really don't have the time to study right now for mid-terms because I got so many others in my other classes

P- you know Italk about that sort of tests like mid-term and final so that is not something new for me you know so I thought we

J- yeah

P- were gonna have two terms instead of one

J- yeah well that's you know I mean it's something new for me

P- I yeah

J- but I just I just prefer not to have it that's one last thing I have to say for it [CHUCKLES]

P- yeah anyway

> J2part of

- J1- L yeah I guess we'll
 probably take a vote I don't know
 J2- yeah

#3c. Maritza-Jana (disagreement)

M- Jana I am not I am not according
 with the idea that our class-mates
 eh propo proposed eh the last the
 last week because I want - have one
 mid-term and one final test I think
 that is better to have two eh two
 tests eh: because the material will

J- L mhm

>Maccumulate accum accumulated

J- L accumulated yeah yeah

M- what do you think

J- well uh yeah you weren't here last
 week when we discussed that were
 you ? I I asked to have just one
 final b e c a u s e uhm I felt that
 with the project that we are doing
 and the participation and stuff
 that I prefer just one and I'm I'm just
 so overloaded now with studies and
 stuff that I don't have time to study
 for you know and prepare for a
 mid-term - and then a final too
 [CHUCKLES]

M- but do you think that the fin the
 final test will be -

J- too much ?

M-too much or

J- uhm

M-

J- well that is a - concern you know I
 understand what you're saying
 it'd be better to find out - how
 she tests and what kind of things
 she's looking for - from us but -
 I don't know uhm I'm just - kind
 of thought that it would be
 nice just to go through it
 once[CHUCKLES]

M- L ok the teacher will tells us if

J- L yes

#3d. Textbook (disagreement)

S- (...) most of the people in
 the country have got a far
 better standard of living
 and we're just coming to terms
 with it ... um , it's ...

M- Well, yes I , I agree ... I
 mean you've got a point that,
 that people have got a better
 standard of living, but you're
 living in a fool's paradise,
 if you think that that can
 continue

S- Oh, really ?

R- Come off it, Mike. I, I disagree
 I think that if people (...)

(From: Jones, L. (1977) 1978.
Functions of English.
 Cambridge: Cambridge
 University Press.)