PhD Thesis by research

A critique of 'cultural fit' in relation to the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists for the Y2K project in Australia

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Abstract

In this study of intercultural communication, I investigate the multi-faceted meaning of the expression ‘cultural fit’ in the sense that it is used by recruiters when shortlisting Indian information technologists to fill skills shortages for the Y2K project in Australia. The data is in the form of ten videotaped interviews in Bangalore and the recruiter commentary on those tapes in Melbourne. A crucial decision to be made by recruiters in any shortlisting process is “How will the candidate fit into the workplace?” This question becomes more problematical when applied to overseas-trained professionals. I take a critical approach, drawing principally on the research traditions of linguistics where studies of intercultural communication and workplace interaction intersect, employing chiefly the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics and the more abstract notions of Bourdieu. A bridge between these different discourse approaches is provided by Sarangi & Roberts (1999) who show the connection between the larger institutional order and interactional routines, through an elaboration of frontstage talk and backstage talk following Goffman (1959).

An analysis of the interviews (frontstage talk) reveals ‘cultural fit’ to involve a knowledge of institutional talk, in particular, directness. The recruiter commentary (backstage talk) draws attention to issues of intelligibility, body language, technical expertise and workplace values. The study shows that Indian Information Technologists have ‘partial fit’ in that they possess technical fit but do not demonstrate, or lack the opportunity to demonstrate in the interview, Australian workplace values such as small talk, humour and informality. The recruiter judgments were fleeting and apart from checking for intelligibility, were made on the basis of candidates’ body language thus highlighting its importance and its relative absence from the discourse approaches mentioned above. This study shows clearly that there is room for more communicative flexibility on the part of all the stakeholders.
# Contents

**Acknowledgments**  
**Abstract**  
**Tables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Context for critiquing ‘cultural fit’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis and the workplace</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interactional Sociolinguistics and the job interview</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Key concepts from Bourdieu</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Workplace linguistic issues</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The importance of nonverbal communication</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Frontstage Talk – Candidates’ interviews</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Backstage Talk – Recruiter judgments</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conclusion: The politics of presentation</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts 1-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus Group Transcripts 1-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Video Assessment Sheets 3-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>What causes irritation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Ten rules of the interview game</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Job interview Transcript – Candidate 9</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Permanent and Long Term Arrival of Computer Prof. by birthplace</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>The interview and the shortlisting process serve two different purposes</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>The complete recruitment process</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Recruiter biodata</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>The interrelationship between frontstage and backstage talk</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Move 1: Questions to elicit candidates’ previous experience</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Move 2: Questions about candidates’ experience of Y2K solutions</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Move 3: Questions about candidates’ role in teams</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Who was doing what?</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Cultural frame mismatch</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Critical moments in the interaction – Interviewer</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Critical moments in the interaction - Candidates</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Number of times fit and cultural fit are mentioned by recruiters</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>Extract: Recruiters’ response to assimilationist scenario</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18</td>
<td>Analytic category 1 – Intelligibility</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19  Analytic category 2 – Body Language  
Table 20  Analytic category 3 – Technical Expertise  
Table 21  Analytic category 4 – Workplace Values  
Table 22  What really counts in the decision-making process  
Table 23  Snapshots of candidates who are shortlisted
1 Introduction: Context for critiquing ‘cultural fit’

The research problem

The extent to which an individual who wishes to ‘cross over’ or ‘pass’ into another group to gain occupational or social advantage adopts the behavioural patterns and cultural features of that group poses many interesting strategic and ethical problems. The problem is strategic in the context of globalization, when meeting skill shortages for information technologists overseas may bring about their increased social mobility. The problem is ethical when workplace rhetoric is about valuing differences but the practice may be about muting those differences. In this thesis, I explore such questions with a case study of Indian Information Technologists. The demand for technical professionals for the Y2K project led recruitment agencies in Australia to source and sponsor suitable candidates for temporary placement from South Asia.

A crucial decision made by recruitment consultants in the shortlisting process is ‘How will this candidate fit into the workplace?’ There are many kinds of ‘fit’: ‘personal fit’, ‘technical fit’, ‘social fit’ or ‘cultural fit’. When the term ‘cultural fit’ is used in relation to Indian Information Technologists, the term is problematic as dominant group members (recruiters who are the gatekeepers) are engaged in discourse about ‘them’, a minority group seeking short-term contracts overseas.

Culture affects practically all aspects of the way people or a group interact with each other and its full potency can be seen when two autonomous cultures are brought into close contact with each other. To compound matters, culture is in constant flux and racial identity is likely to be fragmented by class issues, religion and politics. The first research problem while acknowledging these constraints, seeks to critique the generic term ‘cultural fit’, as used by an international IT recruitment company when Indian Information technologists are recruited for corporate clients in Australia. In the process, I will be developing an interdisciplinary linguistic framework to investigate both the spoken and unspoken meaning of ‘cultural
fit’, one which allows the inclusion of an array of tools to deal with the inherent complexity. The second research problem is concerned with furthering an understanding of the interplay between frontstage talk (the interview) and backstage talk (the recruiter judgements in the shortlisting process) in a workplace context.

There are two sets of data for this enquiry. The first is in the form of ten videotaped interviews from Bangalore, India. The second is the recruiter commentary on those tapes which has been collected from a multinational employment agency with an office in Melbourne. Even though Indian Information technologists are being shortlisted for jobs in Australia, in fact, few are selected. This agency receives 400 resumes in a week and 240 of those are from overseas in response to the internet and the ‘hit rate is low’ (Senior Manager IT Recruitment Agency 30/6/98). To date, Australian employers prefer to choose Australian technologists where they have a choice and that market has not been exhausted. There is a preference for Indian candidates who have worked overseas already in US, UK or Canada where they are more exposed to Western corporate values. There are a number of factors involved for understanding their lack of success in the final selection process, apart from market forces, including but not limited to discrimination.

The understanding of what constitutes ‘cultural fit’ for Indian Information Technologists is intended to have wider application to overseas-trained professionals already in Australia in the process of seeking employment who experience similar difficulties. For Australian job seekers, this process is referred to as opening doors:

Applying for jobs in Australia is a matter of prising open a series of doors. The first door you need to prise open is the one to the interview room, the office of the person in charge of recruitment or the employer.
You want them to open the door to consider you seriously as a potential employee. Once the door to the interview room or office is ajar, you must carefully plan your approach and prepare to maximise the probability that the next door - that to the workplace - is also open to you.

(Sutcliffe 1998: 1)

The ‘door’ metaphor is apposite for referring to a candidate of insider status. But when the candidate is an outsider, an overseas-trained professional, as in this particular case study, a commonly used metaphor in the job interview literature within studies of intercultural communication, is a ‘gate’. A gate implies some kind of barrier, namely that of culture. The issue under investigation then becomes the problematical nature of ‘cultural fit’ ie how is this notion both enabling/disempowering together with the related goal of how to open the ‘gate’ wider.

While there are a number of studies which investigate the critical gatekeeping role of the interview in an intercultural context (Gumperz, Jupp & Roberts 1979, Gumperz 1992; Hawthorne 1992; O’Grady & Millen 1994; Sarangi 1994; Roberts & Sarangi 1995; Bilbow & Yeung 1998; Birkner & Kern 2000) there are few if any, studies of the shortlisting process, which follow the interview. In this study of the shortlisting process, I critique the notion of ‘cultural fit’ drawing principally on the research traditions of linguistics where studies of intercultural communication and workplace interaction intersect, employing chiefly the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) . A critical approach as opposed to a descriptive one, focuses on a reading of the multiple ‘hidden’ messages contained within the interview/recruiter narratives and implies something has to change. Macro (society and politics) and micro (linguistics) issues are not separated but integrated in order to show the multifaceted nature of ‘cultural fit’.
Need for such a study

As Byrne and Fitzgerald point out intercultural communication has gone “from being a slightly esoteric subject on the agenda of the socially minded to a key business skill for companies driven by efficiency and the need to innovate”(1996:13). It is not simply a question of Asian cultures accessing the dominant Anglo-American culture but also of Australian management in order to gain a competitive edge, knowing more about the cultures that their employees come from. According to the Karpin Report (1995: Section 3) by 2010 most of Australia’s managers and business leaders will be operating in a richly diverse, highly skilled and Asia-focused economic environment and will be required to capitalise on the talents of diversity.

Most research in workplace linguistics has been about monolingual speakers - the literature has rarely focused on relatively advantaged groups apart from Hawthorne’s (1992,1994) research on migrant engineers which highlighted ethnicity as being a critical factor in overall employment outcomes. In her report, she showed that the sole predictor for employability proved to be racial origin (1994:118) which shows that possession of advanced English language levels was advantageous only if engineers were European (Hawthorne 1994: xviii). Migrants must negotiate a series of critical transitions to progress in a limited amount of time; youth, possession of advanced English language levels and recognition of overseas qualifications are no guarantee of employability.

In a recent report on immigrants and the professions in Australia (Birrell & Hawthorne 1997: 3), overseas-born persons were found to make up a notable 31.5 per cent of all Australians holding degree-level qualifications and 26.1 per cent of those held diploma qualifications. Results of their study show that with few exceptions, skilled NESB (Non English speaking background) migrants reaching Australia between 1986 and 1991 achieved limited access to employment in their professional fields by 1991. Those from the
Philippines, China, Vietnam and from Poland, Yugoslavia and Egypt were particularly disadvantaged (Birrell & Hawthorne 1997:71). The immediate cause for the problems experienced by recently arrived NESB professionals was the oversupply of professionals by the time of the 1991 census; and employers’ preference for youthful (under 25) Australian-trained graduates when they had a choice. Also two factors, often noted to explain employer preferences, are difficulties with qualification recognition and problems with English skills. There is no mention of culture being a factor yet as Hawthorne (1992:100) pointed out, in an earlier study of migrant engineers, cross-cultural miscommunication “is perhaps the most serious underlying cause” of job interview failure.

A recruitment consultant from a Melbourne agency was explicit about why migrants don’t get jobs:

the problem was not because of technical ability but because of accent for instance in the case of Vietnamese, they don’t finish their sentences or end the words with a consonant. When they don’t understand, they just guess instead of checking the meaning like “Do you mean...?” It actually means they don’t get the job. The minimal responses and the delay in response are frustrating for the interviewer and it’s difficult to represent them to the client. More and more technicians are accountable to business and must deal with business. They need to understand what the consumer wants. They start answering straight away and get the questions wrong. The hardest people to place are people with an accent (Vietnamese); they have a passive way of communicating. They don’t give a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. They take a long time to make a decision (Fieldnote - Recruitment Consultant 10/12/97)

Hawthorne (1994) in her research on labour market barriers for immigrant engineers in Australia also reports “Indians (despite the fact that many have been fully educated in English, and are often of native speaker competence) are perceived to have major problems in terms of clarity of speech, due to ‘excessive
speed and alien intonation patterns” (1994: 69). These comments so far relate to problems in verbal communication.

An advantage of the data in this study being in the form of videotaped interviews is that it highlights the importance of the nonverbal message. I sat with a recruitment consultant as he gave me a quick impression of one candidate in the corpus who was videotaped:

He’s leaning forward, aggressive tone, no chat or smile. Very serious. Shows insecurity. How will he fit into the workplace? Needs to loosen up and get on with a bunch of people at work. Struggling a bit. Lose control easily. For example, at E, the Swedes are always having a bit of a laugh, joke around. The Indians after a few years get burnt out-just do the work, don’t smile or joke. Not easy going. A lot of people put a lot of unnecessary pressure on themselves. A little disappointment, failure, are really knocked (Fieldnote – Recruitment Consultant 19/12/97)

The issues that arise in this investigation cover the familiar territory of English language competence, in particular, intelligibility and the less familiar area of nonverbal language and the vastly underestimated area of cultural competence and how it impacts on the job interview. It is the latter issue, which is the primary focus of this thesis.

**Research already done in this area**

A major study of South Asians done by Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts (1979) highlighted among other things that misunderstandings are based firstly on different cultural assumptions. For example, the candidate fails to note the inferences behind the interviewers’ questions and make their answers relevant and direct and secondly, different ways of structuring information and arguments. There are linguistic and cultural
conventions which influence whether a person sounds relevant, logical and concise to a listener. Given that both parties speak English and hence there is no obvious language barrier, important barriers to communication were in fact found to be on the other side. Gumperz et al (1979: 7) found that “many English people could not really grasp the existence of different systems of culture and language...our early work was not successful because our emphasis was largely upon overcoming communication weaknesses in understanding complicated grammar and vocabulary”. In other words, cultural differences were underestimated by the native speaker as the focus was on language, not culture. Gumperz et al (1979: 31) asked the still pertinent question “Is the point of an interview to consider only a person who will “fit in” because he (sic) is exactly the same as the interviewers...?” The problem here is twofold. The native speaker may have difficulty grasping the extent of the cultural differences of the newcomer but similarly, the non-native speaker may lack the requisite cultural knowledge to operate effectively in the host culture. The issue of cultural competence is relevant both to the insider and the outsider of a monocultural background.

Hawthorne (1992) in her study of migrant engineers from Eastern Europe, and their poor performance in job interviews drew attention to the minimal consideration of the degree to which specific cultural knowledge learnt in the country of origin may interfere with absorption and the use of Australian strategies in a situation of considerable stress. A major difficulty for example was with ‘self-promotion’ questions, which invite positive presentation of professional skills. As an example, questions that two candidates - Boris and Marko had been taught to answer ‘well’ in class, under pressure in a simulated interview, produced very inappropriate answers (Hawthorne 1992:100).

Millen, O'Grady & Porter (1992:47) from NCELTR (National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research), Macquarie University make a similar point that people bring an ethnolinguistic communication
style which may carry different meanings in the new cultural context. Such encounters lead to judgements and evaluations by both parties about abilities, attitudes and personal qualities. These evaluations and judgements can, and often do result in the building and reinforcing of negative stereotypes which can in turn exclude immigrant employees from positions of power in the workplace. As an example, the speech act strategy “can you tell me about...?” would be interpreted by native Australian speakers as a request. Speakers of Indian English are more likely to interpret it as questioning their ability and take this as an insult (Millen et al 1992: 52).

Sarangi’s (1994:163) position in contrast to that of Gumperz et al (1979) is that a difference in participants’ culturally determined discourse strategies culminates in a ‘mismatch’ in cultural expectations as opposed to a communication ‘breakdown’. He points out that not enough attention is paid by Gumperz to the rule-governed nature of the interview or ‘activity type’ to use Levinson’s terminology. Both frameworks - Gumperz’s ‘discourse strategy’ and Levinson’s ‘activity type’ - are criticized by Sarangi for regarding culture as a ‘fixed’ entity which falls short of explaining the dynamic aspect of ‘cultural mix’ in the real world.

Taking things a step further, in a later article by Roberts & Sarangi (1995: 384) the authors explore the many and subtle ways in which exclusion and inclusion is achieved. They quote Margaret Thatcher’s famous question ‘Are they one of us?’ which became a metaphor for describing what was seen as an exclusive regime, in which only very few were ‘in’. Once ‘in’ one remained part of the team as long as they played by the rules of the game. Influenced by Bourdieu and cultural theory, Roberts & Sarangi argue that there is not a single, controlling discourse but a layering of discourses within a particular communicative activity - in this case study, the recruitment interview. They see a complex intertwining of
discourses of objective procedure and subjective assessment where the latter, saturated with talk about feelings, quite often steers the final outcome.

In a recent study, carried out at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Bilbow & Yeung (1998: 405) focused on the impressions students project of themselves in the course of interviews for positions in the hotel industry. Central to the study is the social psychological construct of ‘impression management’ elaborated by Goffman (1959) in *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Impression management can be broadly ‘resonant’ or ‘discordant’ (congruent or incongruent). In impression management that is resonant, the speaker’s interlocutor perceives the speaker in ways that match the speaker’s preferred image. Hence in cross-cultural encounters, the potential for discordant impression management would be greater than in monocultural encounters. For example, in the corpus collected by Bilbow & Yeung (1998: 415), indirect discourse was sometimes negatively interpreted by Western interviewers as symptomatic of woolliness, lack of comprehension or lack of ideas. Self-disclosure was sometimes viewed by Chinese interviewers as evidence of self-aggrandisement or psychological instability. For the authors, greater intercultural sensitivity goes hand in hand with a better understanding of the pragmatics of interpersonal discourse processes.

Lastly, Birkner & Kern (2000) in their study of impression management in East and West German job interviews recorded 41 authentic job interviews (22 with the East and 19 with the West Germans) and interviewed eleven staff members from personnel departments to collect ethnographic data on common stereotypes of East and West Germans and their respective linguistic behaviour. The results show that West and East German candidates’ conversational styles differ in respect to openness about private topics such as one’s qualities and weaknesses and differ in their response to critical questions inviting disagreement. Interviewers found East German candidates to be submissive while West Germans were considered more
self-confident and better prepared to handle conflict in teams hence the authors argue that because of the East German conversational preference for downgrading disagreement, East Germans have to make a greater effort to achieve successful self-presentations than West Germans do.

**The significance of the research project**

This study will make more explicit the thinking behind judgments about the ‘cultural fit’ of candidates from a specific ethnic group of professionals - Southern Indians. The last major study of South Asians in a gatekeeping context was done by Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts (1979) over twenty years ago. Although the issues largely remain the same, the political landscape has changed considerably. A major change has been the restructuring of capital on a global basis and the consequent social changes which include the practice of short-term employment contracts. Candidates (and recruiters) must improvise to find their way around the Western corporate world where the rules are in flux.

Dominant group members, however, are still engaged in discourse about ‘them’ and these discourses are complex and contradictory and not widely understood. There are very few studies of spoken discourse with authentic data in workplace settings or studies which take a critical approach to intercultural communication. A critical approach problematises the expression ‘cultural fit’, something which otherwise might be considered mundane or commonsense. It can bring informal patterns to awareness to reveal new worlds of meaning, by making more visible what goes on in the public space and what goes on behind the scenes.

Studies of institutional talk generally refer to interaction but work practices involve ‘talk to’ and ‘talk about’. An analysis of the candidates’ interviews (fronstage talk) reveals that ‘cultural fit’ involves a knowledge of discourse hybridity. While candidates have control of the technical discourse, there is a
cultural frame mismatch in terms of directness. The recruiter commentary (backstage talk) draws attention to issues of intelligibility, body language, technical expertise and workplace values in judging ‘fit’. A significant feature of this fieldwork conducted in an institutional site is that recruiters rely a great deal on the body language of the candidates in the videotaped interviews to form their judgments.

While traditional workplaces in Australia are dominated by Anglo-Celtic managers, this will not continue into the 21st century. Both majority and minority groups are heterogeneous with individuals belonging to several social communities with overlapping memberships (Kukathas1993:11). For instance, an Indian Information Technologist brings to the Australian workplace a cultural identity that is already influenced by colonial histories and multiple identities (Dravidian, Aryan, Mughul, British, Hindu, Muslim), by local cultural diversity and by the homogenising experiences of internationalization.

This study can only aim to reveal a little of this complexity with a critical approach to intercultural communication in the context of globalization. Information Technology is currently one of the most multicultural industries and involves a number of literacies including a knowledge of English language, workplace culture, discourse hybridity and communicative flexibility. The key challenges of globalization for Indian Information Technologists become gaining more control of the multiple literacies involved in working overseas for short-term contracts. My argument is that both parties, management representatives and skilled migrants at this interface, need to widen their cultural repertoires to manage the reality of cultural diversity.

The structure of this study

The purpose of the next five chapters is to develop a theoretical and analytic framework for critiquing ‘cultural fit’. This will form the basis for the data analyses in chapters eight and nine. The central thrust is
one within the broad discipline of linguistics which covers the field of intercultural communication and workplace studies. Within this very broad field, there are a range of varied styles of research which have developed under the scope of ‘discourse analysis’. A discourse constructs reality in a particular way so that different discourses commence from quite different assumptions. As McHoul & Luke (1989) point out:

While Anglo-American approaches tend to locate discourse analysis in the realm of empirical linguistics, with occasional importations from other empirical social sciences, continental approaches much more clearly embrace a social-historical-political view of discourse.


For this particular research problem where a majority group is judging a minority group, I have been influenced by developments in two discourse approaches within linguistics which reflect both the empirical and social-political tendencies described above. These discourse approaches are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which derives from the Frankfurt School (Calhoun 1996: 62) and takes a more social-historical-political view of discourse; and Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) which derives from Anglo-American studies in anthropology and sociology. The theoretical framework is interdisciplinary as there are a number of discourse approaches within a discipline, each covering some part of the observational scope and being unable to cover the rest.

Power is implicit in the interaction between dominant/minority groups which necessitates a critical approach to this investigation. A critical approach is essentially bound up with making language use more visible. In Chapter two, I begin with some of major concerns in the literature on CDA and in the second half, I review some recent studies which take into account the institutional order and do fieldwork in an institutional site. While the social aspect of CDA may be sufficiently developed, a perceived deficiency is
that the linguistic analyses need to be more empirically based, redressed somewhat by workplace studies by Van Dijk (1993) and Wodak (1996). Hence, in Chapter three, I draw on Interactional Sociolinguistics where there is a well-developed body of literature for analysing the gatekeeping role of the interview. This tradition as observed by Sarangi (1994: 410) is empirically based and “deserved credit for having produced fine-grained analyses of naturally occurring intercultural encounters”.

Chapter four is a consideration of three key concepts from Bourdieu, a French sociologist, foreshadowed in IS, which seem to apply particularly well to the situation of Indian Information Technologists. These are ‘habitus’, the notion that culture is encoded on the whole body; ‘cultural capital’, various capitals (linguistic, social, economic) constitute the value of an individual on the market; and ‘agency’, personal power, the ability to transform a situation to one’s advantage. Bourdieu’s approach is on the whole too abstract for empirical use here but is used to justify the need for widening one’s cultural repertoire, taking into account the nonverbal. Bourdieu’s theory of language together with CDA and IS combine wider contextual knowledge with a closer examination of the institutional order and workplace interaction.

In the first section of Chapter five, I provide an overview of the issues that arise specifically out of the literature on workplace linguistics and the literature on intercultural communication at work. The workplace issues do not fall neatly into either of the two approaches to discourse outlined above, hence they are dealt with separately. The issues dealt with, point the way to which tools are appropriate for a consideration of the asymmetric relations in the interview. In Chapter six, I discuss the importance of body language, mainly from a linguistic-kinesic perspective. The inclusion of this comparatively shorter chapter is intended to balance somewhat the discussion in the previous chapters, which concentrates on the verbal aspect of communication.
Chapters two to five anchor the study theoretically. So far as the present study is concerned, the particular perspective on discourse is a socio-cultural one integrating Anglo-American approaches, represented by Interactional Sociolinguistics with continental approaches, represented by Critical Discourse Analysis and to a lesser extent, Bourdieu’s notions of ‘habitus’, ‘cultural capital’ and ‘agency’. The scope has been reduced to include only those areas relevant to intercultural communication in the workplace and more specifically, the recruitment interview/shortlisting process, a site for examining the intersection of culture, the institutional order and workplace interaction.

In the last four chapters, I take up the more concrete analytic issues of analysing the meaning of ‘cultural fit’, beginning with an outline of the research design in chapter six. I describe the process of obtaining data on Indian Information Technologists, explain the methodological choices involved and provide background to the recruitment process. Chapters eight and nine consist of a detailed analysis of frontstage talk in the form of the interview, and backstage talk in the form of the recruiter commentary. The purpose of the data analysis is to illuminate the spoken and unspoken criteria for making judgments about ‘cultural fit’ in relation to Indian Information Technologists. In the conclusion, I will be remarking upon the theoretical and practical implications, the limitations of the research project and pointing towards future research.
2 Critical Discourse Analysis and the workplace

Introduction
In the first section, I begin with some of major concerns in the literature on CDA, discuss the varied ways of doing a ‘critical’ discourse analysis, discuss the macro-micro cleft and some limitations of the CDA approach overall. In the second section, I review recent critical studies which take into account communicative practices in the workplace at a macro level and a micro level. My goal is to explore the range of theoretical approaches, methodologies and tools employed in a critical discourse analysis in order to determine which set of tools are suitable for the data analysis in chapters eight and nine.

Central to a critical linguistic approach is the notion of ‘discourse’. Language use is never neutral and is bound up with particular ways of seeing the world. Widdowson (1995: 10) observes that there are two distinct traditions in the study of discourse. One is sociological and defines discourse as an ideological mode of thought and the other is linguistic and defines discourse as a use of language:

The problem about the first definition is that it pays little attention to the features of actual texts. The problem with the second is that it tends to be so busy with the linguistic features of texts that it fails to explore their social significance (Widdowson 1995:10).
An attempt to combine both approaches - the sociological (ideological) and the linguistic is present in critical studies of language - Critical linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Wodak (1995: 204) points out that although CL and CDA are seen by many linguists as quite different in methodology, they can both be said to occupy the same 'paradigmatic space' and the terms are used interchangably.

Over the past twenty years the studies have established themselves as cross-disciplinary but are chiefly grounded in the critical theory of social science (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:1). 'Critique' means make explicit what otherwise may be taken for granted, to question unspoken assumptions. Critical discourse analysts show the importance of not accepting a presented reality at its face value but rather, reading it critically. For example, Fairclough in Torode (1989: 157) argues that within an institutional setting the dominant discourse will typically be 'naturalised' or rendered invisible to protect it from contest. Critical discourse analysis aims to 'denaturalise' the dominant discourse, by making it visible and by revealing its links with 'macro' social structures.

Thus the sense of 'critical' is one of a constant question – a problematization of the 'given'. This political edge is founded on ethical concerns for justice. A moral aim is to uncover hidden structures of inequality in order to change society for the better. In the context of intercultural communication, with interaction between dominant and minority cultures, equity can be seen as a matter of cultural trade between majority and minority groups.
Spread of critical discourse into new domains

In this review, I locate Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) within critical research on social change in contemporary society, in this case, the restructuring of capital on a global basis which entails the practice of short-term contracts. These social changes create new possibilities and opportunities for many people but can also cause disruption and suffering.

My focus is on a more recent version of CDA which deals with research on communicative practices in the workplace. These include studies of corporate and professional discourses, which in turn cover such issues as the marketisation of discourse (Fairclough 1995), the spread of the technocratic (Lemke 1995), the bureaucratic (Sarangi & Slemrouck 1996) and new capitalist discourses (Gee 1996).

Previous studies in Critical Linguistics have tended to focus on media and document analysis. A limitation of the former kind of work is that it has been overly textual. By way of contrast, there are few such studies which involve fieldwork in an institutional site in CDA so I augment the above survey of studies of the institutional order with three recent studies of the workplace involving fieldwork by Van Dijk (1993) on the reproduction of racist attitudes in corporate elites; Wodak (1996) on doctor/patient interaction in Vienna; and Holmes et al (1999) who explore a number of ways in which professional identities are constituted in everyday workplace interactions in New Zealand.

The studies mentioned above will give more shape to the theoretical framework for the analysis of my own fieldwork in an institutional site in Melbourne. Recruiters function as
gatekeepers of a social order and the gatekeeping is largely accomplished through discourse processes. The recruiters' discursive practices may have major ideological effects: here they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between cultural majorities and minorities. Power rests in their judgments about language and presentation. Drawing upon some of the tools of critical discourse analysis that follows in the studies of institutional order and workplace studies, I will be able to identify in turn, key elements of the discourse of recruiters and candidates, in order to critique what recruiters mean by 'cultural fit'.

**Genealogy**

Before I do this, though, I identify some of the major themes and concerns of critical linguists over the last twenty years in a short overview, chart some of the changes and reveal some of the shortcomings of CDA. The sense of 'critique' established in the social sciences was under the earlier influence of the Frankfurt School, which was founded in the 1930s as a response to the triumph of fascism. Characteristics of the research were firstly, its interdisciplinary nature, above all, economics, psychology, history and philosophy; secondly, an innate distrust of all empirical or scientifically verifiable data; and thirdly, a desire to be both worldly and practical. It sought to actively intervene in the process of social reproduction for the sake of a more rational and just organization of social life (Wolin 1992:51). These threads remain at the core of Critical Discourse Analysis today with linguistics being a later addition. What is distinctive about CDA within this tradition however is that it brings critical social science and linguistics together within a single theoretical and analytical framework.
The development of critical linguistics in the seventies and eighties has been most closely associated with Fowler and his associates at the University of East Anglia (Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew 1979; Kress & Hodge 1979; and Fairclough 1989) at the University of Lancaster. This development was combined with systemic functional linguistic theory (SFL) (Halliday 1978, 1985). Since 1979, this general approach has been refined, broadened, changed and reapplied by linguists coming from different traditions. The tools of analysis of public discourse were an eclectic selection of descriptive categories drawing on Halliday’s notions of the ideational and interpersonal as well as speech acts or transformations (Fowler 1987:482). Many of the studies used SFL as a main resource for textual analysis which were do with media, race discrimination and advertising where there was an emphasis on analysing lexico-grammatical features in the text such as transitivity, modality, passivizations, nominalizations and metaphors. These pioneering efforts have undergone continuous development and modification over the last decade including efforts to renew the connections with Halliday’s (1978) conception of language as a particular form of social semiotic.

While the original model had the advantage of being based on the linguistic theory of Halliday, Candlin in his preface to Fairclough (1995: x) points out that “...the impeccably grounded polysystemic approach of Firth and Halliday poses considerable descriptive demands”. Another problem was that Fowler (1987) in the UK and Birch (1994) in Australia were critical of Halliday for not engaging enough with critical theory:
I have argued that part of critical linguistics needs developing in its own terms and supplementing with the insights of other models...occasions for ideological critique are pressed upon our lives daily.

(Fowler 1987: 481)

Accordingly, Fairclough (1995;1999) and others turn increasingly to Bakhtin (heteroglossia/intertextuality), Gramsci (hegemony) and French Poststructuralists including Foucault (antinormativism) who recognise that language determines rather than reflects, social realities.

Fairclough's definition of discourse (1993:134) embraces spoken and written use and extends it to include semiotic practice such as non-verbal communication. He (1992: 8) proposes a form of analysis which is multidimensional - it must be able to relate the detailed microanalysis of texts to social processes. To accomplish this task he continues to draw on Halliday's multifunctional theory of grammar and text. He argues that a critical discourse analysis must have a historical dimension to be able to link specific textual instances to wider processes of social and cultural change. The notion of intertextuality, a French influence, is evident here.

In Fairclough's final chapter of Discourse and Social Change (1992), there is a 'how to' checklist of lexico-grammatical and discourse-level features which are relevant to the linguistic analysis of texts. The newer section on interactional control is relevant to the study of the workplace and includes such categories as turn-taking, politeness, social identity, added to earlier categories which are less relevant, of grammar, transitivity, modality, metaphor. These categories allow the analyst to show which patterns are salient
or relevant for a particular interpretation of a text. However as Thibault (1993: 300) points out, the isolation of particular linguistic features does not constitute an automatic procedure for making ideologically revealing analytical statements about texts.

Fairclough (1993:136) does not separate the 'micro' and 'macro' levels. Instead the two dimensions are unified under description, interpretation and explanation. His analytical framework is made up of 1) a spoken or written text, which is 2) an instance of discourse practice involving the production or interpretation of the text, and 3) a piece of social practice. This comes down to an analysis of the forms of texts, including their generic forms (the overall structure), their dialogic organization (in terms of turn-taking), cohesive relations between sentences and relations between clauses in complex sentences, the grammar of the clause (including questions of transitivity, mood and modality), and vocabulary. The analysis is critical in that it endeavours to break free of how society normatively views itself and the view of a harmonious social order. Change is based on a struggle between contending social groups. Questions of power and ideology may arise at each of the three levels above, which are in an ongoing process of struggle for hegemony (Fairclough 1993:137).

Concomitant with his framework for critical discourse analysis is a strong orientation to changing discursive practices. Certain key institutional genres such as the interview reproduce power relations and social identities (Fairclough 1993:139) while relationships and identities are negotiated through dialogue, implying an openness which entails greater possibilities than the fixed relationships and identities of traditional understanding.
For his colleague Wodak (1995) working in Vienna, ideally a linguistic theory and methodology would also integrate language and the social but would transcend the limitations of current existing eclectic procedures in ways that allow basic questions to be addressed for example:

How do we choose our units for analysis? How does one ‘know’ which interpretation fits the data? How can the macro and the micro be precisely connected? How do we include the multimodality of signs apart from language (ie the relationship between verbal and nonverbal elements? )

(Wodak 1995: 207)

Wodak & Matouschek (1993) summarize the most important characteristics and goals of CDA:

- Research interest: uncovering inequality, power relationships, injustices etc
- Object under investigation: language behaviour in natural speech situations of social relevance is to be investigated (institutions, media etc)
- Interdisciplinary research: social phenomena are too complex to be dealt with in any one field
- Inclusion of the historical perspective: social processes are dynamic, not static. This has to be reflected in the theory and the methodology
- Researchers are forced to take sides: the ‘subjects under investigation’ cannot be treated as objects. Research includes the ‘researched’ and eventually ought to help them, if possible
• Social and political practice is aimed at: results of the research should not only imply success in the academic field, but they should also include proposals for practical implementation (training seminars etc)
• Thus the ‘leitmotif’ of critical research could be stated as follows: ‘diagnosis’ first, interpretation and therapy to follow!

Wodak & Matouschek (1993: 227)

The macro-micro cleft

Fairclough and Wodak & Matouschek were reacting against a study of text/talk or interaction which is typically associated with apolitical, micro-level studies. Fundamental notions of the social sciences such as those of class, gender, race, power and dominance, ideologies, and institutional decision-making were hard to find in most studies of discourse. Much conversation analysis in the social sciences bracketed the broader societal or political frameworks in which such conversations were embedded. Whereas CA derives its theory from the interaction order, CDA draws on social and philosophical theory to read into the text/talk.

Discourse and communication have macro and micro dimensions. The micro-level of the analysis is the text and the macro-level is the larger social structure. The exclusive focus on the micro-level details of social interaction contributed to a macro-micro cleft. According to Van Dijk (1994:163), linguists and discourse analysts are often satisfied with an account of the grammatical rules, semantics of textual coherence, appropriateness, conditions of speech acts, strategies of turn-taking etc, without taking into account pressing social issues. However the understanding of grammar and lexicon does not constitute an understanding of the text just as the isolation of particular linguistic
features does not constitute an automatic procedure for making ideologically revealing analytical statements about texts, as pointed out earlier, by Thibault (1993).

At the same time, social and political scientists needed to take into account the theoretical and methodological advances of discourse analysis. From both sides of the divide, theoretical and methodological, bridges needed to be built. Whereas much of the earlier work on language use and discourse has a linguistic bias, CDA provides a more socio-political emphasis, bridging a gap between micro and macro analyses of social phenomena without ignoring the two decades of linguistic grammars and systematic discourse analysis. The use of multiple methods is encouraged. Some properties of discourse can be categorized as typical micro-level phenomena whereas systems of language use also operate at a more global level or macro-level which is associated with ideology and the enactment and legitimation of power.

**Shortcomings of CDA**

Other approaches to discourse are critical of CDA, the most influential of which, is conversation analysis. In a review of Fairclough's *Discourse and Social Change* (1992) Widdowson (1995: 510) points out that Fairclough devotes a chapter to Foucault but there is no chapter on a comparable figure in the linguistic tradition which suggests that “the theoretical hybrid that Fairclough has in mind is essentially sociological or socio-political rather than linguistic.”

Further, the terms Fairclough uses are not concepts which cohere in a theory but labels for descriptive devices. For example, says Widdowson “We are told that ‘text analysis can be organized under four main headings: ‘vocabulary’, ‘grammar’, ‘cohesion’ and ‘text
structure"…but the list does not end here, for there is an addition of three ‘further main headings’ namely ‘force’, ‘coherence’ and ‘intertextuality’). So there are seven main headings, but how the second group relate to the first is not explained” (Widdowson 1995: 511). Fairclough’s readings, Widdowson says, are interpretive rather than analytic, descriptive rather than theoretical, in other words, partial and piecemeal. The purported goal of Critical Linguistics is to move the discipline of linguistics to social and political relevance but Widdowson’s criticism is that Fairclough is more interested in socio-political theory and that linguistic ideas merely play a supporting role. However, the value of Fairclough’s book is that, by its very shortcomings, it sharpens perception of a whole range of issues in discourse analysis which it fails to address – in particular the imbalance of macro (socio-political) to the micro (linguistic).

Another critic, Schegloff (1997:170) offers a corrective to the grandiosity of critical discourse analysts whom he criticizes for their lack of attention to the micro-level, commenting:

...before undertaking to relate cultural artifacts to their so-called social, economic and political contexts, one might well undertake to grasp their constitution as objects in their own right.

Schegloff is concerned with ‘getting the formal aspect right’, and grounding the analysis in the tradition of the ‘technical’ discipline of conversation analysis. However, Choulia raki & Fairclough counter that:
Schegloff's fine-grained analysis fails to mention certain details which might lead to a different understanding of the talk within a different historical framing. What we are contesting is the idea that a formal analysis which excludes theoretical preoccupations of the analyst is possible. Any discourse is open to no end of formal analysis, and all forms of formal analysis are theoretically informed (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:7).

Both Widdowson and Schegloff share a view of discourse analysis that is decontextualised and shows a tendency to stress the micro over the ideological. Schegloff asserts that a conversation analytic approach to an interaction must always be a transcript of a recorded interaction and is preliminary to any other valid approach. Hak (1999:444) points out that Schegloff's 1997 article is another good illustration of how the methodological imperative that only taped data are good data, prestructures the range of research questions that legitimately can be asked:

When Schegloff states that a 'technical analysis' must precede a 'critical and sociopolitical analysis' he is discussing different (technical and critical) approaches to a given transcript, not how we come to study a transcript in the first place.

(Hak 1999: 444)

In Schegloff's example of a conversation between a divorced couple, he would argue that a technical analysis should come first, before it can be analysed as an instance of gender inequality, an example of how the methodological imperative shapes the question.
Chouliaraki & Fairclough’s (1999: 29) view also is that theory itself is a practice which is caught up in networks of relations with economic, political and cultural practices. And Wetherell, a social psychologist, in her reply to Schegloff argues for a more synthetic approach, as Conversation Analysis alone does not offer an adequate answer to its own classic question about some piece of discourse – why is this utterance here?:

Rather, a complete or scholarly analysis (as opposed to a technical analysis) must range further than the limits Schegloff proposes. (Wetherell 1998: 388).

Whereas Schegloff focuses on talk-in-interaction, a critical approach takes discourse as the topic, which includes linguistic and non-linguistic elements. As Wetherell (1998: 102) points out the problem with conversational analysts is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation and it is usually a tiny fragment. She (1998: 394) argues that a more inclusive notion of discourse provides a better grounding for analysis. It is true that multiple and potentially inconsistent subject positions are at play in a stretch of discourse “but some order can be placed on these various positions by noting that they fit within several recognizable interpretative repertoires…” (Wetherell 1998: 400). She further points out the need to convince social scientists that detailed analysis of the text will always enhance discourse analysis but reminds linguists that they need to be concerned that the social concerns of CDA do not deflect from detailed and careful linguistic analysis of the texts.

Along these lines, Stubbs (1997: 237) says much work in CDA has been theoretical and CDA has been criticised for not carrying out the sort of systematic analysis of large
representative bodies of text including the quantitative and computational methods which could give a firmer linguistic grounding to its social claims about discourse. Ideas gain stability, he says, when they fit into a schema.

Critical Linguists themselves are aware of the above limitations – an elaboration of the macro - at the expense of the micro and admit that there is a need for published analyses to be more explicit, less allusive about the tools they are employing:

What I am saying is that we need to be more formal about method both in order to improve the analytic technique and to increase the population of competent practitioners.

(Fowler quoted in Caldas-Coulthard 1996: 9).

Yet another more philosophical shortcoming is pointed out by Pennycook (1994) who in reference to CDA, states that there is little space for an understanding of agency or change: socioeconomic relations determine power, power determines ideology, ideology determines orders of discourse and orders of discourse determine discourse. In other words, critical discourse analysis tends to operate with a problematically static view of both language and society. As he points out:

While I have been suggesting that an essential aspect of a critical approach to discourse analysis lies in the understanding that our ability to act in the world is constrained, it is nevertheless crucial here to allow for human agency rather than constructing a model in which all is determined by socio-economic relations (Pennycook 1994: 126).
If mainstream linguistics is guilty of its assumption of a free-willed subject, in critical discourse analysis, the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction, he says. This is perhaps the result of its materialist or deterministic origins where ideology is reducible to class relationships and the means of production. Pennycook argues in favour of Foucault’s approach, which looks to a multiplicity of social, cultural, political, economic, technical, or theoretical conditions for the emergence of discourses. He says that:

The constraints on human freedom of thought are no longer reducible to the nature of ‘man’, to the sexual drives of the subconscious, or to the relationship of the means of production, but rather are a product of a multiplicity of relationships (Pennycook 1994:128).

To think in a Foucauldian sense means to understand how meaning is produced through a range of power/knowledge systems that organize texts and is embedded in social institutions. These discourses ‘map out’ what can be said and thought about what they define as their respective domains. While a Foucauldian approach shares a number of similarities with critical discourse analysis in its concern with questions of power and social structures, it is not concerned with how discourses reflect social realities but how they produce them (Pennycook 1994: 131). This is less a question of unmasking reality or showing how truth is represented or misrepresented but showing how meaning is produced by discursive regimes. This raises the rather interesting issue about whether the two approaches to discourse – Foucault and CDA – are incompatible or ‘incommensurable’ as Pennycook puts it. He poses the challenge of whether the chasm that has opened up between the two can be traversed (Pennycook 1994: 134).
Fairclough’s answer to this dilemma is that CDA should be open in its analysis to different theoretical discourses, which construct the problem in focus, in different ways. In a sense, CDA is already a theoretical hybrid and reasonably comfortable about that hybridity. Consequently, in my own study, this discussion draws attention to the present challenge for CDA, which is to seek more of a balance between macro and micro concerns and to map out a critical (interdisciplinary) theoretical framework combined with a methodology which uses multiple methods.

What follows is a closer look at some practical applications of CDA to the workplace firstly in the form of the larger institutional order which takes account of macro issues (Lemke 1995; Sarangi & Slembrouck 1996; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996) and secondly workplace studies involving fieldwork in an institutional site which balance macro with micro issues to varying degrees (Van Dijk 1993; Wodak 1996; Holmes et al 1999).
A critical approach to the workplace

1. Institutional Order

To begin with, Lemke's (1995) *Textual Politics: discourse and social dynamics* has a chapter on technical discourse and technocratic ideology. He points out that the tendency to see skills and competencies as neutral, as being independent of wholesale questions about the social distribution of resources, makes more pressing and urgent issues of power and access for marginal groups. Power itself is shifting from the property holders, the owner class, to the new technocrats, the manager class. He makes the point strongly that:

They are resources that we can sometimes use for our own purposes, but access to them requires that we collude to some degree with the dominant cultural systems that have spawned them. Failure to master these genres provides the gatekeepers with an excuse to keep us out of places we may wish to go: these genres are conduits for the power of the dominant group to control our lives whether we master them or not. We should point out the options and the flexibility in genre forms and how their elements form a vocabulary that can become a potent resource for innovation. Without a mastery of these genres...important forms of social activity are closed to us.


These ideas echo those of Bourdieu (1991) in that knowledge of (institutional) genres is part of one's cultural capital and can be converted into economic capital. Some of the characteristic features of technical discourse are their thematic condensation and monologic orientation. Lemke chooses three texts or documents circulated during the Reagan Administration, related to the purported culpability of parents for their children's
failure in school that illustrate this genre. Some grammatical features (following Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics) such as ‘research findings’ are presented as objective facts by using agentless passive clause structures: ‘Enough of these programs have been evaluated to provide an overall assessment of their effectiveness’ (Lemke 1995: 60). There is no agent who has done the evaluation and the process ‘assess’ is nominalized as a participant. Third person forms dominate technical discourse. No ‘I’ speaks to a ‘you’, no space for dialogue, disagreement or differing points of view are opened:

The world of technical discourse is a closed world, which admits no criteria of validity outside its own. In Bakhtin’s terms, it is a pre-eminently ‘monological’ discourse.

(Lemke 1995: 60)

Lemke states that technical discourse minimizes its use of the interpersonal exchange and dialogical resources of language because it claims to be a value-free, objective reportage of the facts:— “This historically and culturally specific ideology...I loosely call positivistic” (1995: 61). Both condensation and monologism in technical discourse serve to establish and maintain social elites, with their claims of privilege and their access to power. These strategies, once limited to technical and scientific discourse have come to be adopted into managerial and bureaucratic discourse, from which a technocratic discourse emerges.

Focusing on bureaucratic discourse, Sarangi & Slembrouck (1996) in Language, bureaucracy and social control provide an analysis of the discursive practices of
processes in which the relationship between clients and bureaucratic institutions is mediated by intermediary institutions. These processes are ambivalent in that on the one hand, they appear to empower clients but on the other, they anchor them more firmly into institutional procedures. When examining the discourse practices of the intermediary institutions, in particular information exchanges, the following questions are pertinent:

Whose side do these institutions take and whose interests do they serve? What type of client are they likely to attract and what kind of client is likely to benefit from their practices? How are such bodies perceived by clients, bureaucracies and by the government? What are the effects of having to operate in the space between client and bureaucrat?

(Sarangi & Slembrouck 1996: 147).

Information seeking/giving are different things for the client and the bureaucrat. Terms such as ‘client’ or ‘bureaucrat’ refer to role categories occupied by the individual participants in the interaction. The bureaucrat is in the asking role and the client is in an answering role. What seems at stake is some kind of ‘institutional literacy’ so that clients get to know what the options are about putting forward their case. Armed with this knowledge, clients may stand a better chance if they can ‘tune into’ the institutional way of doing things, when dealing with bureaucrats. This view resonates with Bourdieu’s (1991) notions of ‘cultural capital’ and ‘habitus’. Is there a particular type of client who is favoured in the current socio-economic climate, remembering that the capacity of a person to be active and creative depends on the resources they have and people vary in their habitus according to their social circumstances?
Power is often exercised by being able to use the right discourse ‘form’. Lemke (1995:13) influenced by Gee, observes that people from some social groups more readily master these forms and are prepared by their whole lives to feel comfortable with them, and to operate with them more intuitively than others do. However, discourses do not just function to obtain ‘goods’. Lemke (1995:13) argues they also function to legitimate, naturalize or disguise the inequities they sustain. They function to get us thinking along particular lines, the lines of common sense, which are not as likely to lead to subversive conclusions as using some other discourses might. Dominant groups control the conventions for each type of discourse for example, the structure of the interview, the process of recruitment.

However, the authors, Gee, Hull & Lankshear (1996: vii) in *The new work order: behind the language of the new capitalism*, point out that recent times are characterised by differentiation and fragmentation rather than homogeneity and standardization. For instance ‘contracting out’ is popular because it protects organizations against unexpected changes in the market which might require labour redundancy. As a result, there are conflicting discourses about the traditional ‘job’ and the ‘portfolio career’ of the new capitalism. Questions can be raised about what this means for the identities of workers:

What patterns of talking, acting and valuing are apparent, what social practices?

...How are these demands embedded with the company’s experiment with teams, and how do workers meet these demands, circumvent them or shape them?

(Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996: 112).
While seeming to deliver more opportunity in the workplace, there is a corresponding increase in managerial control. Gee & Lankshear (1995:17) distinguish two very different modes of empowerment. In one, individuals and groups are empowered in the sense of being enabled to perform with mastery or excellence in relation to established ends and values - whether by following given procedures, or by discovering and implementing new and better ways of meeting prescribed ends. The second mode enables individuals and groups to contest and (re)define the very goals, purposes, and underlying beliefs and values of discourses in which they are engaged or which otherwise impinge on them. This calls for a critical 'meta level' understanding of systems per se.

Having explored some major themes in the studies of the institutional order to do with the rapidly changing nature of technocratic, bureaucratic and managerial discourse, I turn now to a survey of some recent research in the workplace involving fieldwork in an institutional site (Van Dijk 1993; Wodak 1996; Holmes et al 1999). These three studies attempt to combine critical theory with a methodology which varies according to the research problem.

2. Workplace Studies involving fieldwork

So far the discussion about communicative practices in the workplace has not paid much attention to micro issues. In this section, in specifying CDA’s contribution to workplace studies, I turn to three critical studies which involve fieldwork in an institutional site (Van Dijk 1993; Wodak 1996; and Holmes 1999). I begin with Van Dijk (1993) whose critical work *Elite Discourse and Racism* focuses on the reproduction of ethnic prejudices and racism in discourse and communication. He investigates a hypothesis which
suggested itself in his previous studies - that elites play a crucial role in the reproduction of racism.

As he points out “Elites have a power base based on symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984, 1988). They have a symbolic role in setting the agenda, in formulating the problems, in controlling the changing systems of norms and values by which ethnic events are evaluated” (Van Dijk 1993: 47). Therefore the main concern is not the freedom of minorities from discrimination by employers but rather the so-called freedom of corporate enterprise (Van Dijk 1993: 76). In chapter 4 on ‘Corporate Discourse’ he comments that the ‘virtual world hegemony of market ideologies, emphasized by the crumbling of communism around 1990, and the increasing size and transnationalization of companies further contribute to this unparalleled growth of corporate control” (1993:115).

According to Van Dijk (1993:123) the position of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, and in particular in Dutch corporations, is in many respects worse than in other Western countries. He says it may be concluded that besides socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, it is recruitment and employment procedures that effectively exclude minorities from both state institutions and private business corporations. Managers are acutely aware that these are very sensitive topics, and accusations of discrimination are seen as bad publicity. The corporate voice in regard to minorities is primarily one of Public Relations which focuses on optimal services or products rather than corporate personnel policies.
Much research in the United States, Europe, Great Britain and The Netherlands, as well as the daily experiences of minority workers has shown that ethnic and racial discrimination in both the workforce and the corporate domain is still widespread. For instance, a study of racism in US corporate life by Fernandez (1981), reported by Van Dijk (1993:119), based on interviews with white and black managers found that three times as many black men (39%) have a college degree than white males at the same managerial level. Most blacks agreed that they had to perform better than whites to reach the same level of achievement and remuneration (less than 1% of white males agree with this opinion). Conclusions point to the inherent ambiguity and contradiction between norms and values on the one hand, and the realities of discrimination, on the other.

Van Dijk conducted semistructured interviews with personnel managers of Dutch multinational companies. In Van Dijk’s discourse analytical approach, business managers are involved in many forms of decision making such as the need for a multicultural workforce, the criteria for the hiring and promotion of minorities: these are routine topics for managerial discourse. The topics of diversity of employees, special policies for women and minorities, and Affirmative Action were brought up casually, sometimes by the personnel managers themselves. He is not so interested in the discourse of blatantly racist employers but more the seemingly modern liberal talk of highly educated professionals. Because the talk was about sensitive topics, there was a lot of self-monitoring. They speak as personnel managers and as representatives of their organizations:

Hence in such interviews, they see as their main tasks to (a) give information about the personnel policies and practices of the organization, and (b)
persuasively present these as following good business norms, and to defend them in more general moral terms. As with their other products, managers see their personnel policies as something that should be sold as effectively as possible...however, when policies are not yet fully developed... Managers will often improvise and present what they clearly mark as their own personal opinions on such issues.

(Van Dijk 1993:130)

Van Dijk focuses on overall topics, argumentation and local moves. With overall topics, the transition was from relatively safe topics to more sensitive topics. They use the argument that they have an “international staff” because they are international companies but “despite the widely known minority policy of the government, and despite the frequent coverage in the press about minority unemployment, the speaker argues that he didn’t know which groups may be called minority groups”. Van Dijk (1993:132-3) refers to this as denial, ignorance and evasion tactics.

Although companies may have few minority employees, they may be aware of minority unemployment and the sociopolitical necessity to employ more minorities:

M (Oil company): Suddenly, this is now being emphasized. Like you have to hire aliens...and now we are being asked to do that, [Organizing training] the same trend exists, the same trend now forces us to emphasize aliens. In that regard we are considering the training we may provide (Van Dijk 1993:135).
Van Dijk notes that this ‘trend’ is not interpreted as a moral or business obligation, but as a top-down, political decision where minorities are ‘forced’ on companies which is not an attitude favourable for the recruitment of minority workers. In any discourse about minorities, white participants are aware of the norms of nondiscrimination and are conscious of the fact that they should present themselves as tolerant citizens. Therefore, negative remarks and practices that might be seen as unfavourable to minorities need to be explained, mitigated, excused or justified. The interviews with the few employers who explicitly support multicultural policies are interesting as compared with discourse fragments by managers who have a more ambivalent or negative attitude about minorities. Managers show a lack of hedging, justification, excuses, and especially negative other-presentation. Also such managers need not say that they do not discriminate, do not hire all colours and so on. In multicultural discourse this is simply presupposed and need not be asserted (Van Dijk 1993:148).

Although most talk about minority recruitment is expository and hence argumentative, arguments may sometimes be backed up by stories, for example, about personal experiences of managers, or about events in the company that otherwise illustrate the main point. Instead of making general statements about the recruitment practices of the company, the personnel manager may be more persuasive by telling about a real event. Evaluations about recruitment and promotion practices need not be given directly but can be inferred by the listener/interviewer.

In conclusion, Van Dijk’s (1993:156) study found that as soon as topics such as equal opportunities came up, they could expect a number of standard sub-topics, standard arguments, and even standard moves of defence, face-keeping and positive self-
presentation. Stories were persuasively used to prove the positive attitudes of the employer – and the less negative attitudes of minority personnel. They found that specific words such as discrimination tend to be avoided and racism was virtually absent. The term foreigner was used less in corporate talk and was replaced by ethnic minorities or translated from Dutch, aliens (allochtonen) In talk with managers, explicitly derogatory terms about minorities are virtually absent. Van Dijk (1993:18) points out in the beginning that this does not mean that white people are inherently racist but that historically Europeans have acquired or appropriated the power that has been reproduced in racial terms. If racism is defined as a system of racial or ethnic dominance, it is likely that the denial of racism has a prominent role in the reproduction of racism (Van Dijk 1992: 96).

In this study of institutional racism, the criticism that the sociological approach to discourse is explored at the expense of linguistics (Widdowson 1995: 10) is somewhat borne out by Van Dijk’s (1993) study of corporate elites. The analysis remains at a macro level with a focus on the role of social beliefs including knowledge, opinions, attitudes, norms and values of the group. A limitation of this approach is that majority groups are asked what they think of minority groups and they would be expected to use hedges and mitigations.

A later study by Ruth Wodak in ‘What pills are you on now?’ Doctors ask, and patients answer’ from Disorders of Discourse (1996) also does fieldwork in an institutional site - a hospital. Ruth Wodak and her group in Vienna base their model in the Bernsteinian tradition and on the ideas of the Frankfurt school, especially those of Jurgen Habermas. She does a critical sociolinguistic analysis of institutional discourse and her aim is to
diagnose disorders – misunderstandings and conflicts that occur when doctors and patients communicate with each other.

In clinical conversations between doctors and patients the technical terminology doctors employ in making diagnoses and prescribing remedies is often impenetrable and intimidating to patients, reinforcing previously existing power relations. The result is a so-called ‘frame conflict’ – worlds of knowledge and interests collide with each other and those who possess linguistic as well as institutional power invariably prevail. There exists not one discourse in the institution but a whole set of interwoven, conflicting discourses, which construct and establish multiple relationships:

Disorders in discourse result from gaps between distinct and insufficiently coincident cognitive worlds: the gulfs that separate insiders from outsiders, members of institutions from clients of those institutions, and elites from the normal uninitiated in the arcana of bureaucratic language and life.

(Wodak 1996: 2)

The detailed analyses of the daily routines of the outpatient clinic in Vienna—seven morning shifts were recorded and transcribed which yielded a number of generalizations about frame conflicts. While analysing doctor-patient communication, it became apparent that over and above their expert knowledge, doctors use many strategies to dominate their clients. They ask the questions, they interrupt and introduce new topics, they control the conversation:

From this perspective, ideal patients would be those who have experience, know the jargon, can explain their symptoms in technical language, reply with precise
and short answers and do not expect the doctors to listen to their stories from everyday life.

Some patients, those with experience, are able to communicate better; others remain powerless. If patients had not understood the jargon, they dared not ask the meaning of certain terms for fear that doctors would be angry. A knowledge of the jargon is a huge symbolic capital – it demarcates one group from another, it indicates an elite to which you belong only if you have the training and have learnt the language.

This clash between the institutional world and the lay world is described by Wodak (1996: 37) as a ‘frame conflict’. An example is where doctors typically want to arrive as quickly as possible at a diagnosis, while patients often want to introduce aspects of their biography and also like to know the implications of their symptoms or illness. Wodak takes two case studies – the experienced patient and the inexperienced patient – and analyses them in the institutional context of a typical morning session when a male and female doctor are exhausted from working the night shift, have to deal with six disruptions. These disruptions have a bearing on Doctor/patient interaction.

Wodak (1996: 21) pays attention to context and believes that context should be integrated in a more holistic manner than previously, where ‘context’ was traditionally defined through the inclusion of static sociological variables such as class, gender, ethnicity and age. Situational contexts were not included. Thus she visualizes methodology in the form of concentric circles. The smallest circle is the discourse unit itself and the micro-analysis of the text. The next circle consists of the speakers and audiences, of the
interactants with their various personality features, biographies and social roles. The next circle involves the 'objective setting', the location in time and space, the description of the situation. Then the final circle signifies the institution in which the event takes place.

Accordingly, the texts show clearly how the external situation influences the verbal behaviour of the doctors in respect to their patients. During quiet, relaxed periods such as the start of the morning session, doctors are relaxed and friendly with their patients. As soon as an element of disruption occurs, the patient discussions become shorter. Patient initiatives are not encouraged and are interrupted. It appears that the disharmony is not accepted as 'routine chaos' and the doctors react like victims of circumstance. Wodak (1996:55), however, points out that accepting disruption as a routine and part of everyday life would reduce pressure and facilitate a more flexible approach to the whole situation.

Often the patient is kept in the dark about what is going on. The lack of information for the patient makes it difficult for them to interpret the procedures and hierarchies. Wodak (1996: 61) suggests that the provision of essential information, during the examination for instance, would help patients become more cooperative and understand the examination. Wodak concludes that discourse analysis provides a means for medical practice to make changes in behavioural patterns, which can have considerable impact on the quality of professional work and on the well-being of patients. Some myths may have to be dismantled: doctors, for example, should be able to confess that they do not know everything without losing their authority as experts.

For Wodak, the aim of CDA therefore is to the query the underlying assumptions of structures in our society and equip doctors and patients with the linguistic tools for
demystifying power relationships by demythologising some of the institutional myths such as the myth of the ‘undisturbed, predictable process’, ‘the myth of efficiency’, the ‘myth of time’ (Wodak 1997:191). In other words, people need to accept the conflicts and contradictions, the ‘routine chaos’ as the norm. The results of the study were presented at a seminar on improving communication following her dictum of ‘diagnosis’ first, interpretation and therapy to follow (Wodak 1993:227). An important consequence of the ‘therapy’ was a qualitative change in attitude, in viewing the patient as a partner and person, and not merely as an object.

In the final critical study of the workplace, Janet Holmes, Maria Stubble and Bernadette Vine (1999) in *Constructing professional identity: “doing power” in policy units* explore a number of ways in which professional identities are constituted in the everyday workplace interactions of workers in government policy units in New Zealand. The data consists of a corpus of over 300 interactions in four workplaces. Volunteers were provided with tape recorders and were asked to record a range of their everyday interactions at work over a period of one to two weeks. The observations are grounded in the detailed analysis of a set of naturally occurring interactional sequences supported by ethnographic data of various kinds including workplace observations, informal contacts with participants, contextual notes provided by management.

Since people enact their gender identity, their ethnicity, and their professional status and so on as they talk to others throughout the day, workplace interactions are seldom neutral in terms of power. The analysis rests on two assumptions as with Wodak: firstly that the wider context is crucial for understanding the discourse and for defining social identity and secondly, that interaction and identity construction are dynamic interactional
processes (Holmes et al 1999:351). The analysis focuses particularly on how those in managerial positions and their subordinates negotiate power relations by means of the discourse strategies they use. Thus a female Pakeha (British descent) manager may ‘do power’ as one way of enacting her professional identity in an interaction with a male Pakeha policy analyst, but she will also be ‘doing’ being a woman in the workplace, and a Pakeha in New Zealand society at the same time.

Different aspects of these various identities may be signalled by contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1982) or “shifts in talk” (Sarangi & Slembrourck 1996: 61). Such shifts are reflected in the linguistic choices ranging from the phonetic through to the syntactic, lexical, pragmatic and paralinguistic and these in turn depend on the ongoing assessment of the relative weight of factors such as the formality of the setting, the nature of the topic and the role relationships involved:

In this way, each utterance contributes to the social and personal identity construction of the speaker, as well as modifying the perceptions of the addressee in an interaction in a dynamic way.

(Holmes et al 1999: 353)

Ultimately it is the people in positions of power who decide what is correct or appropriate in an interaction.

Politeness theory, interactional sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis, the authors say, provide productive explanatory frameworks. Using a multi-level framework for sketching the relationship between three different levels of analysis: speech acts, choice
of discourse strategy and linguistic forms, these different levels are not always clearly distinguishable as the authors admit (Holmes et al 1999: 356). Such a framework is useful for identifying recurrent patterns in the data, and secondly, as a way of separating form and function. In the case of the latter, there is no one-to-one correspondence between linguistic form and function for example a speech act such as an apology might be realised by the linguistic form *sorry* or it might be expressed by a strategy of providing an excuse through the form *missed the bus again*.

At the level of speech acts, professional identity is enacted by certain preferred patterns such as setting the agenda, summarising progress, issuing directives, expressing approval, issuing a challenge. In terms of discourse strategies, managers used relatively direct discourse strategies more frequently than their subordinates did in relation to the control of turn-taking and topic management, making requests or providing feedback. For instance, superiors were succinct and direct, they frequently used explicit statements of agreement (eg *yes, that’s right*) and expressions of approval (eg, *good, fine*). Conversely, subordinates tended to use more neutral minimal responses (eg *mm, yes*). When a person’s status is unknown or it is risky to differ in a view from a number of others, then those views are likely to be heavily hedged and attenuated which leaves them room to escape (Holmes et al 1999: 375).

The authors conclude that politeness theory may have greater explanatory power in interactions where both participants share the same transactional goals but where the workplace is a site for oppressive or repressive discourse - where the participants’ goals in an interaction conflict rather than co-incide - then critical linguistics may provide a better account. The constant realignments of the participants in the interaction from
'doing power' to 'doing collegiality' or 'doing friendship' means that a satisfactory account of their motivations may need to draw on more than one theoretical framework.

**Conclusion**

CDA as a method is constantly evolving as its application to new areas of social life (e.g., the workplace) is extended and its theorisation of discourse correspondingly develops (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 59). A central feature of CDA is its interdisciplinarity: since most social problems are multi-faceted, they usually do not allow an account in terms of a single discipline. From this overview it is clear that there are many ways to do 'critical' discourse analysis. As Sarangi & Roberts (1999: 33) observe, a critical discourse analytic perspective not only draws our attention to modern business organizations and institutions as a site for power struggle, it also topicalises the issue of leakages, hybridity and intertextuality at the institutional and interactional level.

So which way of 'doing' critical analysis is appropriate for my purposes? Fairclough’s three dimensional model is limited as it does not separate macro and micro and his division between description, interpretation and explanation is perhaps too artificial and unworkable as there is a sense in which description presupposes interpretation. The earlier approach which employed a range of categories – adjectival transformations, nominalizations, passivization, modality is more suited to texts and less suited to an analysis of professional discourse. While earlier questions within CDA focused on representations of what was powerful in the text, to these we have to ask questions with a postmodernist edge which add hybridity to power (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 93). These concerns cut across the earlier ones but power and struggle are constants as is a concern for justice and equality.
For my purposes where I am seeking to choose appropriate tools to engage in a critique of 'cultural fit' at both a macro level and a micro level, all of these studies have something to offer. At a macro level, it is useful to bear in mind the characteristics of technocratic, bureaucratic and capitalist discourses that operate within institutions (Lemke 1995; Sarangi & Slemrouck 1996; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996) and the role that elites play in the reproduction of racism (Van Dijk 1993).

At a micro level, it is useful to focus on the overall topics and moves as Van Dijk does, when he conducted interviews with personnel managers in a Dutch multinational company. The notion of 'frame conflict' as employed by Wodak (1996) in her description of 'frame conflict' between the institutional world and the lay world in a Vienna hospital can be applied to interactions between the Interviewer and Indian Information Technologists. Instead of the experienced patient and the inexperienced patient, it is useful to analyse the differences between the successful candidate and the unsuccessful candidate to better understand 'fit'. Wodak draws attention to the importance of context to show how the external situation can influence the verbal behaviour of the interactants. How does the fact that candidates are interviewed in India for jobs in Australia affect the outcome in the shortlisting process? The multi-level framework of Holmes et al (1999) is useful insofar as it draws attention to the 'shifts in talk' but the inclusion of politeness theory is not so relevant in situations where both participants have conflicting transactional goals, as the authors themselves mention.

I am researching a relatively new area encompassing a critical linguistic application to workplace interaction in an intercultural context, where minority groups are being judged
by majority groups. From the discussion in this chapter, a desirable goal would appear to be a balanced integration of theoretical exploration, descriptive investigation and practical application which pays adequate attention to the nature of social power and dominance in the context of recruitment practice and points the way to an exploration of personal power to increase one's chance of eligibility in a gatekeeping encounter. Apart from Van Dijk's (1993) study of the reproduction of racism amongst corporate elites in Holland, there is a notable absence of studies of interaction in an intercultural context in CDA. For this reason I turn to Interactional Sociolinguistics, in the next chapter, where there is a well-developed gatekeeping literature for exploring the asymmetric relationship between the outsider and the insider.
3 Interactional Sociolinguistics and the job interview

Introduction

In contrast to a critical linguistic approach, which is grounded in text and talk and attends to external variables such as ideology, an Interactional Sociolinguistic (IS) analysis favours naturally occurring data of intercultural encounters and pays attention to gatekeeping issues in the interaction. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the IS perspective and then take a closer look at the job interview literature which illustrates the IS approach. It can throw more light on the nature of ‘cultural fit’ in regard to the asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and candidates.

Interactional Sociolinguistics is based in anthropology, sociology and linguistics and shares the concerns of all three fields with culture, society and language (Schiffrin 1994: 97). According to Verschueren (1995: 336) “it may be the sociolinguistic application par excellence of basic ethnomethodological tenets (such as the local and situated nature of the creation of meaning, the extra ‘work’ done by interactants in face-to-face settings on top of what is already given in ‘rules’, the reflexive relationship between context and verbal behaviour).” The label was introduced by John Gumperz in 1982 to describe a type of work he and a number of other linguists and anthropologists had been doing for about a decade at the intersection between sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics in reference to intercultural communication (ibid).

Sarangi (1994b: 411) makes the point that the Interactional-Sociolinguistic perspective in works by, among others Gumperz (1978, 1982); Gumperz & Tannen (1979); Scollon & Scollon (1980, 1983) can be seen as a reaction to the cultural-anthropological tradition which paid very little attention to linguistic and interactional data. For instance, Gumperz (1992: 39) comments:
while dialectologists had focused on language as a structural system and had looked upon individuals as members of preexisting social groups, my own ethnographic orientation led me to adopt more inductive procedures and concentrate on speakers' use of linguistic signs to categorise others' social identity in everyday discourse. (Gumperz 1992: 39)

In other words, instead of concentrating on structural categories, the question is how does socio-cultural knowledge shape speaking practices and how does it enter into interpretation? Social action is packaged in terms of encounters or events and these in turn are always located in time and space. From this it follows that the units basic to this type of sociolinguistic analysis are events analyzed in terms of discursive practices rather than utterances or sentences.

Two of the key assumptions which underlie the IS research tradition, Sarangi (1994b: 411) says, are:

a) ethnicity and different cultural backgrounds determine speakers' discourse strategies
   (different ways of speaking, different ways of structuring information etc)

b) different discourse strategies and communicative styles can lie at the heart of interethnic misunderstandings.

There are strong resonances between this tradition and the cultural-anthropological tradition as they continue to share a belief that communicative problems can be accounted for in terms of cultural differences. But unlike the cultural-anthropological tradition which hypothesises about potential problems on the basis of cross-cultural differences, the
Interactional-Sociolinguistic tradition locates communicative problems in observed linguistic data.

Favourite topics in line with these theoretical objectives are intercultural encounters in institutional settings ranging from court proceedings, job interviews, doctor-patient interviews, service encounters to Sino-American communication in the boardroom (Verschueren 1995: 336). Methodologically, the approach is empirically centred around observable phenomena such as patterns of intonation, rhythm, stress, choices of code and register, certain lexical and syntactic options, formulaic expressions, as well as openings, closings and sequencing strategies. The assumption is that such choices produce habitual, though still quite flexible, frames of interpretation.

According to Tannen (1984:189), just about everything is culturally relative, for example: when to talk, what to say, pacing and pausing, intonation, formulae, indirectness, cohesion and coherence and to complicate matters, any cultural group is unlikely to be homogeneous but culturally heterogeneous in terms of regional, ethnic and gender differences. As an example, borrowed from Gumperz (1982), tiny differences in intonation and prosody can throw an interaction completely off without the speakers knowing what caused the problem. For instance, in a staff cafeteria at London’s Heathrow Airport, newly hired Indian and Pakistani women were perceived as surly and uncooperative by their supervisor as well as by the cargo handlers whom they served:

Observation revealed that while relatively few words were exchanged, the intonation and manner in which these words were pronounced were interpreted negatively. For example, when a cargo handler who had chosen meat was asked whether he wanted gravy, a British assistant would say “Gravy?” using rising intonation. The Indian assistants, on the other hand, would say the word using falling intonation: “Gravy.” (Gumperz 1982: 173)
An offer was interpreted as a statement which in the context made the Indian workers sound rude and their offer redundant. At the same time, supervisors learned that the Indian women’s falling intonation was their normal way of asking questions in that situation and that no rudeness was intended. Another example of how a small difference in intonation can result in miscommunication is when speakers of British English use loudness when they are angry, whereas speakers of Indian English use it to get the floor. So when an Indian speaker is trying to get the floor, the British speaker thinks s/he is getting angry – and gets angry in response. The result, both agree, is a heated interchange, but each thinks the other introduced the emotional tone into the conversation (Tannen 1984: 193).

Gumperz: “Contextualisation cues”

For Gumperz, cognition and language are affected by social and cultural forces and in order to understand these forces what is needed is a “general theory of verbal communication which integrates what we know about grammar, culture and interactive conventions into a single overall framework of concepts and analytical procedures” (Gumperz 1982: 4). One of the key notions in Gumperz’s approach is ‘contextualization’ which can be shown to play an important role both in interpretation and in the maintenance of conversational coherence:

Roughly speaking, a contextualization cue is any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions.

(Gumperz 1982: 131)

Contextual presuppositions are a type of assumed background knowledge that allows inferencing during the course of the interaction. Methods for the discovery of contextualisation cues rely partly on comparative analysis of a wide variety of ethnically homogeneous in-group and ethnically mixed encounters (Gumperz 1982: 174).
Gumperz’s studies show that contextualization cues can affect the basic meaning of a message. And it is the analysis of misunderstandings between people from different groups – people who do not share contextualisation cues – that can provide the most telling evidence that such cues are at work. Such misunderstandings can have negative social consequences for members of minority groups who are denied access to valued resources.

Interational sociolinguists always draw upon naturally occurring interactions for data and then pay a great deal of attention to transcription features of talk which are likely to serve as contextualization cues. Gumperz works on small extracts from face-to-face interaction and the most important ‘cues’ that are the basis of contextualization are intonation, tempo, rhythm, gaze, body movement, code-switching (Auer 1992: vii).

Another way of describing Gumperz’s contextualization cues is as a framing device: they indicate the frame (eg serious, joking, business chat). Goffman’s (1974) work on frame analysis – the frames through which people structure experience – shows how the organization of framing activity is itself socially situated. Frames are the organizational and interactional principles by which situations are defined and sustained and footing concerns “the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (Goffman 1981 quoted in Schiffrin 1994: 104). What Goffman’s work adds to Gumperz’s sociolinguistics is a more elaborated view of what presuppositions and frames can be signalled through contextualization cues.

In his interpretation of Gumperz’s approach to contextualisation, Auer (1992:4) points out that “contextualisation... comprises all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel...any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence”. This notion
characterises 'context' as flexible and reflexive. It covers too the larger activity participants might be engaged in, the genre; the small-scale activity, the speech act; the mood, the topic, the social relationship, modality etc. To quote Schiffrin's (1994) summary of the similarity between Gumperz and Goffman:

Despite the different sets of interests reviewed above – one stemming from concerns about language and culture, the other from concerns about the self and society – there are two central issues underlying the work of Gumperz and Goffman that provide a unity to interactional sociolinguistics: the interaction between self and other, and context. (Schiffrin 1994: 105)

There is a tendency to assume that those who deal with fine-grained details of interaction are relatively unconcerned with larger social theories and the contingent power relations and values implied by such concern. But Gumperz has consistently tried to show that in complex multi-ethnic urban societies, there is a linguistic dimension to racial discrimination. Gumperz's work also relates to Bourdieu's (1991) concept of the 'linguistic market place' and Foucault's 'orders of discourse' which puts constraints on what is allowable (Bremer et al 1996: 227). However, Bourdieu (1991) also criticises the 'interactionist' approach where it treats interaction as a closed world:

The 'interactionist' approach which fails to go beyond the actions and reactions apprehended in their directly visible immediacy, is unable to discover that the different agents' linguistic strategies are strictly dependent on their positions in the structure of the distribution of linguistic capital, which can in turn be shown to depend, via the structure of chances of access to the educational system, on the structure of class relations. Hence, interactionism can know nothing of the deep
mechanisms which, through surface changes, tend to reproduce the structure of distinctive deviations and to maintain the profits accruing to those who possess a rare and therefore distinctive competence.

(Bourdieu 1991: 65)

Nevertheless, twenty years ago, there was little recognition of how cross-communication difficulties could result from culturally specific uses of language and how these difficulties can, wrongly, identify minority groups as less competent, educated or co-operative in the eyes of the majority group.

In the next section, I go on to review chronologically the job interview literature within the Interactional Sociolinguistic tradition over the last twenty years (Gumperz et al 1979; Roberts 1985; Gumperz 1992; Sarangi 1994a; Sarangi 1994b; Roberts & Sarangi 1995) My aim is to show some of the developments within IS and reveal its manner of analysing intercultural discursive practices in the context of the job interview which can show the myriad ways minority group candidates may be perceived as lacking 'cultural fit'.

**Intercultural communication and the job interview**

1. **Accounting for difference (1979)**

Gumperz et al (1979) groundbreaking work *Crosstalk* came about through a joint collaboration between The Industrial Language Training Service in London and Gumperz's research team at the Language Behaviour Research Laboratory at the University of California (Berkley). They developed a joint pilot course entitled: *Developing awareness skills for inter-ethnic communication* which was a course for a mixed group of Asian bilinguals and English people working together in a large London company and led to the making of a film with BBC. They argue that difficulties in inter-ethnic communication arise from a lack of shared assumptions about goals, from different styles of communicating and
from different accents. The film *Crosstalk* examines some of the ways in which people jump to the wrong conclusions and explore how cumulative misunderstandings can create and reinforce negative group stereotypes. These differences in ways of speaking can lead to a form of indirect racial discrimination (Gumperz et al 1979:1).

Gumperz is careful to point out that there is a danger in focusing on differences in styles of communicating, as this can imply negative attitudes about minority groups or can suggest that all members of minority ethnic groups will communicate differently from native English speakers but clearly this is not the case. What *Crosstalk* aims to do is to develop an awareness of the difficulties involved in inter-ethnic communication, in particular for professional people who often have to select members of ethnic minority groups who are seeking access to wider opportunities - the so-called 'gatekeepers' - because they control access to opportunities and entitlements in the society. The 'gate' is usually in the form of an interview. The ability of both sides to communicate effectively in such situations is vital to a satisfactory outcome.

In the interviews, Gumperz et al found many examples of misunderstandings based on:

a) *different cultural assumptions*: for instance in the job interview, the interviewers fail to grasp what the candidate says he is offering personally and professionally to the job; or the difficulties he has had in pursuing such a career; and the candidate fails to note the inferences behind the interviewers’ questions on these points which would make his answers seem relevant and direct.

b) *different ways of structuring information and arguments* eg there are both linguistic and cultural conventions which influence whether a person sounds relevant, logical and concise to a listener. While the research into these has been less than systematic, the following are three examples:
1) In English, a key topic word is often repeated in order to establish the immediate relevance of the answer or comment. This rhythmic repetition of a key word or phrase seldom happens with Asian-English (sic) speakers.

2) In Asian-English (sic), it is customary to repeat some part of what the speaker has just said, although it may not be relevant to the point being made in reply. This can give a sense of being repetitive or inconsistent.

3) In some Asian English (sic) styles of speaking, too direct a response is avoided. The speaker responds first of all in a general sort of way, only moving later to his important specific points. English style of logic is the opposite, so the English listener may switch off before the important point occurs. (Gumperz 1979:13)

c) different ways of speaking: When Gumperz et al (1979) started the project, they assumed that the major cause of communication problems was the lack of English in terms of lack of correct English pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. But such a view presupposed that the acquisition of fairly basic level of English would enable Asians to become effective communicators with other ethnic groups. However, they soon realised that this was too simple a view and that there were important barriers to effective communication on the other side as well. They found:

Many English people could not really grasp the existence of different systems of culture and language... our early work ... was not very successful because our emphasis was largely upon overcoming communication difficulties caused by Asians' weaknesses in understanding complicated grammar and vocabulary. (Gumperz et al 1979: 7)
In other words, when there was no obvious language barrier, both sides were usually reluctant to recognise communication failures as such. An important reason for this is that habits of language are not subject to conscious control as opposed to being deliberate. Also the “ability to adapt and to learn, however, is greatly inhibited by the fact that the very situation in which minority and majority groups often interact on important matters are such that the power relationship prevents misunderstandings from being recognised and therefore precludes the learning of new strategies” (Gumperz et al 1979:14). There was one exception to this lack of recognition of linguistic factors and that was the English tendency to exaggerate the importance of accent amongst fluent Asian-English speakers with the result that people can be debarred from promotion and from important work areas such as the use of the telephone, on the grounds of accent (Gumperz et al 1979: 8).

As a result, the approach they developed emphasised developing an awareness of the impact of what you are saying on the other person and developing communication skills in demanding and stressful situations. Gumperz et al (1979: 9) take the view that language problems in communication are not only to do with correct pronunciation, grammar and with the production of intelligible sentences. Such breakdowns may be linguistic “because there are linguistic skills involved in maintaining conversational continuity and in building up what sounds like a reasonable and polite argument and these skills are automatic, that is, learned as part of a speaker’s linguistic background and subject to cross-cultural variation”.

Their methodology consists of recording authentic conversations, and then finding out how each side interprets what has happened in the conversation. They use a comparative approach, using these two interpretations as the basis of analysis (See Table 1). They do not work on the basis of a single ‘objective’ meaning. Gumperz’s analysis of real conversations showed that there were certain systematic features of English spoken by
people of Asian origin (Asian-English sic) which are different from the English spoken by people of English origin (English-English). When speakers are using different strategies and signals to convey attitude and meaning, wrong inferences are likely to be drawn and then breakdowns in communication occur.

Table 1

**What causes irritation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can confuse English people and lead to irritation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Certain uses of high or low pitched voice and loudness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg Raising voice in ‘No’ to contradict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Lack of stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg not marking clearly the difference between “last week and this week”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Use of Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg saying ‘yes’ but not meaning that you agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Lack of cohesive features in discourse so that the Asian speaker appears boring or confused eg misleading intonation patterns, unclear pronoun references</td>
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<td>e) Wrong use of turn-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg persistently interrupting in the middle of the English speaker’s utterance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can confuse Asian people and lead to irritation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d) Tone of voice: high pitch or stress on particular words. This can sound emotional or impolite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg when English speaker wants to explain or emphasise a certain point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Apparent not listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg in longer chunks of discourse the English speaker may switch off, or change subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Many forms of inexplicit or indirect statements and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Apologetic or polite and repetitive uses of English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gumperz (1979: 13) *Crosstalk*

The two interviews in *Crosstalk* illustrate the mutual process of failing to make correct inferences from what the other speaker is saying. Smooth communication between people
is characterised by the listener’s responses (such as nods, facial signs, body movements), and interjections (‘yes’ ‘hm, hm’ etc) being rhythmically synchronised with the stress and rhythm patterns of the speaker.

The following is a summary of the important areas of difference Gumperz et al found between Asian-English (sic) and English-English which can lead to these breakdowns and these point to the areas to focus on in the data analysis in chapter seven:

a) Tone of voice and stress (prosody)

Prosody is important in the process of inferring meaning and attitude in English-English and serves to signal these in three particular areas: normal information flow, contrastiveness and expressiveness. Normal Information flow includes distinctions between the principal parts of the message and the subsidiary parts, essential for longer stretches of speech. Contrastiveness refers to the use of stress to place special emphasis on one item either to correct or contradict something. Expressiveness refers to the signalling of unusual emotion eg when we call attention to something new we raise our voice.

In Indian languages, information flow is signalled through grammar. Tone of voice and stress have only limited and different functions for signalling meaning and attitude. A South Asian person using English makes much less use of tone of voice and stress than an English person. South Asian-English uses pitch level and rhythm to signal emphasis in ways which are associated in English-English, with expressiveness and contrastiveness (Gumperz et al 1979:11). Thus there is great scope for misinterpretation between the two systems ie “Asian-English sounds to an English-English speaker either unusually flat and unemotional, or overly excited as a result of these differences” (ibid). Gumperz emphasises that tone of voice is the single most important area of difference between the two systems and cumulatively can lead to substantial difficulty of communication.
b) *The right time to speak in a conversation (Turn-taking)*

The two-way nature of conversation is maintained rhythmically by the speaker knowing when to finish and by the listener knowing when to speak. The lack of rhythmic response which often occurs between South Asian-English and English speakers in longer conversation will upset the smooth process of turn-taking. In stressful situations such as a job interview, the loss of a sense of reciprocity and relevance, the essence of conversation, can interfere with the communication process.

c) *Reference and coherence*

English has particular systems for showing links between statements like ‘but’ and ‘although’, for referring back to people, events and times and for showing when you are quoting someone else. Asian-English uses different systems for linking and references eg:

“We finish our dinner and go back”

“We went afterwards there” (‘back’ and ‘there’ do not refer to previously mentioned places)

d) *Agreement and disagreement*

“Yes” and “No” are used differently. Two examples:

(1) An Asian-English speaker may say “yes” as an interjection simply to indicate “I’ve heard you”, not to indicate agreement.
(2) What sounds like too direct a form of disagreement to an English speaker may be used: “No, no”.

a) Politeness formulae

There are fundamental differences in the conventions for signalling politeness in Indian languages eg ‘thank you’ or its equivalents are used in Indian languages only in return for special favours. Their use implies some social inequality and a high degree of formality. The same goes for ‘please’. Respect, humility and apology in Indian languages are conveyed through special words, pronouns or through professional or other titles.

The linguistic and cultural points discussed above are made concrete in the filmed extract of an interview for a librarian’s post in a college. Mr Sandhu had a successful university record and then an administrative job in India and in England, a temporary job as a Librarian. The question “What exactly do you do in your present job?” really means “Tell me your present duties and how these relate to this job you are applying for?”. In his answer, Mr Sandhu does not give what sounds to the interviewer like a clear specification of duties. Instead, he starts by talking about some of the activities of the Centre which is background to his reply, rather than about his job. To an English ear, his reply does not sound relevant or sufficiently explicit. But a characteristic of structuring information by South Asian speakers is to begin the response in a general way. An English speaker’s answer to the same question was:

I’m responsible for cataloguing the accessions….., for keeping track on….., for supplying….etc

The lack of perceived relevance of the content in the case of Mr Sandhu leads the
interviewers to "switch off" in further questions.

Over 20% of the interview was spent asking and reasking the question "Why are you applying for this particular kind of job in a college?". For the interviewers this was a key question. It is another indirect question because what is implied is: "What is there about this job which you are interested in professionally and which you think you could do well?". While an English speaker might reply "Well, I'd like to work in a college. I'd like to use my skills in dealing with students", Mr Sandhu was puzzled by being asked such an obvious question as "Why do you want a job?". He felt that question had an insulting implication.

The cumulative effects of such misunderstandings increases the stress and all the differences between the two ethnic styles of English reinforce the mutual process of misinterpretation. Altogether Gumperz et al (1979) analysed eighteen significant breakdowns occurring during the interview. The candidate did not know about the planned overall structure of the interview, he frequently made wrong inferences about the indirect questions and he structured his information so that the most relevant points were often at the end of the reply.

Of the Crosstalk material, it is noticeable that many of the episodes show people who are in the grip of cultural assumptions and habits which cause them to misunderstand each other. The functioning of the person with at least some degree of awareness into the process is not depicted. The failure of the cross-cultural awareness by the characters in Crosstalk is effective for didactic purposes but it is misleading to portray people as being so utterly passive in the face of what is happening to them. It is also somewhat inaccurate, to perpetuate the image of society as an all-engulfing mechanism, and to fail to allow for and draw attention to their agency.
Such early analyses concentrated on locating the source of communication failure, that
different cultural assumptions lead to communication failure in the job interview represented
by Table 1 What causes irritation (page 60). However, as Roberts & Sarangi (1995) point
out, this kind of approach is somewhat dated because South Asian candidates (in Britain)
are living in a multicultural society and do not have one single homogeneous identity but
have multiple identities which makes it difficult to explain communication problems in terms
of culture alone. Another complication is that of conflating South Asian communication
with an Asian style of communication, or for that matter conflating the variety of languages
spoken in India with the shorthand expression “South Asian”.

2. A strategy for dealing with difference (1985)

Having previously said there is no neat way individuals can be told exactly what to do in
situations such as job interviews, Gumperz’s colleague, Celia Roberts (1985) in her book
The Interview Game: and how it’s played sets out to do just that. She acknowledges the
help of the Industrial Language Training Service who contributed many ideas and insights
as well as a debt to John Gumperz at the University of California. The book is designed to
help candidates, interviewers and trainers but it specifically aims to help candidates
understand what goes on beneath the surface of job interviews. Although appearance and
arrangements are not unimportant, the book concentrates on the talking that goes on in the
interview and the judgments that are made on the basis of this talk. A job interview, she
says, is like a game because like any game, it has rules but unlike real games the ‘rules’ of
the Interview game are never made clear. For minority groups, knowing the ‘rules’ may
help them to gain at least some control in what will always be an unequal encounter (See
Table 2).
Table 2

**Ten rules of the interview game**

1. The candidate’s suitability for a job is assessed on the basis of how well they can talk in an interview.

2. Qualifications are less important than experience. Often questions about qualifications are routine, and are meant to relax the candidate or are trying to assess the candidates’ attitudes or motivation.

3. Interviewers keep power and control but candidates can, at times, take the initiative and talk freely.

4. The interview is an opportunity for candidates to ‘sell’ themselves but not oversell themselves. Answers should be modestly expressed and backed up with examples.

5. Candidates are expected to be honest about facts, but they can tailor the truth so as not to give a bad impression.

6. Candidates are expected to say that they enjoy their job. New jobs are supposed to be treated as a challenge and not as easy as the current job.

7. Interviewers often do not give any genuine feedback. It is an interview, not a conversation.

8. Candidates should relate their answers to the job on offer, but rarely invited to do so. Questions from interviewers are usually indirect. The real purpose of the question is hidden.

9. Interviewers may take the smallest negative piece of information from candidates and use it to create a negative impression of the candidate.

10. Interviews go better when the interviewers and candidates establish they have something in common.

(Roberts 1985:13)

The job interview, she says, is a ‘strange encounter’ full of contradictions. Interviewers have absolute power and control in what is usually a very formal event. Yet there is a pretence of informality and equality. Interviewers have to be fair to everyone, yet in order to pick one candidate they have to discriminate between candidates. Interviewers are meant to be objective and the outcome of interviews is said to be based on objective standards. But in reality judgements about people are inevitably subjective.
She points out the fundamental difference between interview talk and ordinary conversation:

In an interview, the interviewers have complete control over how long the talking should go on, what the topics should be and when topics should be switched. Candidates have no rights over the direction and length of the talk. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that most candidates do not see the interview as an opportunity to talk freely and get on in a relaxed way with the people on the other side of the table. But that is precisely what the interviewers expect the candidates to do.

(Roberts 1985: 14)

The underlying theme of the book is that interviews, despite the stress and the power of the interviewers, should be a co-operative endeavour. Accordingly, the interviewer needs to relax the candidates, give them an opportunity to say what they want to say. Interviewers’ opening lines are usually meant to relax the candidate eg asking about the journey.

The way candidates talk about their work experience will decide who gets the job (Roberts 1985: 25) but this is not as straightforward as it seems. Interviewers expect to find out something of the candidates’ attitudes and opinions as they talk about their experience:

Although this is not made explicit in the question, the candidate knows instinctively that she needs to weave opinions and feelings into her factual description.

(Roberts 1985: 29)

In fact, when an interview goes well there is a balance maintained between fact and feeling. The straightforward factual question is best answered by building in some attitude or opinion. Where someone’s experience is obviously appropriate, interviewers tend to ask
fewer hypothetical questions. When there is doubt about candidates' suitability, because their experience does not seem to fit, more hypothetical questions are asked (Roberts 1985: 31).

Interviewers normally have a clear picture of what they're looking for, for example, a typical checklist of qualities in the interviewers' heads would include:

- **Personality**
- **Reliability**
- **Attitude to authority**
- **Ability to work independently**
- **Judgment**
- **Sense of responsibility**
- **Ability to work with or manage others**
- **Ability to communicate**

Hence the interviewers' line of questioning has a hidden purpose that the candidate may not pick up on. Candidates who fail to pick up on the hidden message are often judged as not being good communicators. Good interviewing technique allows the candidate to talk at least 60% of the time. If interviewers are impressed with a candidate, they tend to talk more - trying to 'sell' the job to the candidates. By the same token interviewers can also talk more when they are unhappy about the candidate and spend a lot of time warning the candidate off the job.

Since most interviewers are at middle or senior levels of management, the chances are high that they will have brought with them or will have acquired a 'middle class style' of communicating. 'Middle class' talk assumes that the hidden meanings behind indirect
ways of talking are understood. It assumes that people know what a high premium is put on balanced answers and it assumes that people know how to tailor the truth to fit the expectation that candidates should ‘sell’ themselves (Roberts 1985: 64).

Another issue of relevance is that of differing perceptions about qualifications:

The typical attitude of white British people towards qualifications is that they are less important than experience and simply show you have got the minimum that is required of the job. Minority ethnic candidates may have a very different perception. For example, in the Indian sub-continent, qualifications are considered to demonstrate a good deal about one’s personal development and attitudes and therefore are often discussed at length in interviews. Because qualifications say so much about the candidate, an Asian candidate might well answer the question like ‘Tell us why we should offer you the job’ with a response such as ‘Well, I’ve got the qualifications for the job’. Because of this convention about qualifications in the Indian sub-continent, many Asian candidates many feel able to ‘sell’ themselves by talking about their qualifications. But they would feel extremely uncomfortable about selling themselves by talking about their experience, their motivation or their opinions.

(Roberts 1985: 88)

As pointed out by Gumperz et al (1979) in Crosstalk, the job interview is one of the most culture-specific events in public life. Just how culture-specific the job interview is only becomes apparent when those who do not know the rules are required to play the game. Interviewers often assume the candidate was inadequate but a close analysis of such interviews and post interview discussions reveals that it is the interview itself which is poorly conducted. Roberts (1985: 75) makes the point that being a good interviewer in a mono-
cultural setting does not necessarily mean you will be a good interviewer in a cross-cultural setting. The conventions of the traditional British interview can put minority ethnic groups at a particular disadvantage or anyone for that matter who does not fit the stereotype of the conventional candidate. Interviewers on training courses, she says, can be made aware of how candidates’ responses are typically interpreted and how other interpretations are valid. The aim of training is not to teach interviewers how to talk to a particular ethnic group but the aim is to develop ‘communicative flexibility’:

This flexibility emerges when interviewers adjust their own communicative styles to take account of communication differences, and when interviewers question their criteria for judging the adequacy of the candidates’ performance ... as they become more accepting of the notion and more confident in their flexibility, they can ‘open the gate’ to those who have so often found it shut.

(Roberts 1985: 85)

Overall, Roberts (1985:105) sees the interview as a dynamic process - decisions about candidates can change from moment to moment. But since interviewers are in control, they can use their power to ask questions which either change or maintain the context of that particular part of an interview. Also while candidates from a particular ethnic group may have a culturally specific style of communicating which is not shared with the interviewers, they may also have ‘communicative flexibility’, in other words, they may be able to adapt their style, or certain aspects of it, to accord with the interviewer’s style.

A final point Roberts makes relevant to a culturally specific style of communicating, concerns the sense of well-being which participants have in a conversation when they feel they ‘see eye to eye’, which is directly related to how co-operative the talk is. For instance, Grice (1975) has outlined four maxims of conversational co-operation: you must say
enough but not too much, you must be truthful, you must be relevant and you must be clear:

What individuals consider ‘co-operative’ depends upon their traditions of communicating for example, in the interview, knowing how much to say in answer to an interview question will depend upon candidates’ view of what is the right amount. The maxim of truth is hard to follow in an interview because the convention of the interview is that the candidate should not be so honest as to give a bad impression. The maxim of relevance depends on understanding the hidden message of questions...to answer (a question like ‘What does your job involve?’) candidates must know the preferred answer should be a few utterances long, should indicate your range of responsibilities and take account of what interviewers are likely to know about their work.

(Roberts 1985: 111).

For many black candidates, past experience with white officials means that they interpret fact-finding questions as questions to ‘catch them out’ and consequently their answers might appear defensive to the interviewers who were expecting a purely factual answer.

3. Accounting for difference (1992)

An article over a decade later by Gumperz (1992) *Interviewing in intercultural situations*, reports on a comparative study of two-job training program interviews recorded in the early 1980s in the British Midlands. A principal concern in the analysis “is with the subtle and often unnoticed ways in which linguistic and sociocultural knowledge interact in verbal encounters” and “where the differences in interpretive criteria have a perjorative effect on the outcome of the interaction” for the minority group. In contrast to informal conversations and casual talk, interviews are goal-orientated. Gumperz’s basic assumption shared by most discourse and conversation analysts is that interpretation of what a speaker
intends to convey at any one point “rests on socially constructed knowledge of what the encounter is about and what is to be achieved” (Gumperz 1992: 303). But he points out that there are additional, taken-for-granted evaluative and interpretive criteria which only emerge in the course of an interaction and which play a key role in the interpretive process. And it is these largely unnoticed assessment processes which are of particular importance for the understanding of the process of stereotyping members of stigmatised minorities.

In this study, the non-native English speaking participants (Northern Indians) have a good functional command of English, and interpretive difficulties for the most part arise at the level of illocutionary force, where a speaker’s communicative intent is assessed. Gumperz argues that when bilinguals face such unaccustomed communicative complexities, they tend to fall back on rhetorical strategies acquired in their own native-language environment, mapping those onto their English speech. Native English-speaking participants in turn, who find their communicative expectations violated, can make decisions that negatively affect the interviewee’s goals.

He quotes Goffman who argues that the set of assumptions associated with particular events or situations acts as a filter or lens by means of which we sift our general stock of knowledge in order to retrieve what we need to know for the purposes of the encounter at hand (Gumperz 1992: 307). In the interview candidates face a panel of two or more staff members of a skill centre. Candidates are judged on the basis of how they present themselves through verbal interaction, how they react to the interviewers’ queries and how they describe what they can do:

The bricklayer comes across as responsive, interested in the program, and relatively capable and enterprising and is consistently given the benefit of the doubt. Although many of his answers are lacking in detail, interviewers frequently supply
him with the words he needs and in other ways assist him in making his case. The electrician, by contrast, is seen as relatively passive, unnecessarily stiff, unresponsive to interviewers’ overtures, and frequently not knowing what he is talking about. His answers are challenged at every turn and there are clear indications that much of what he says is just not believed.

Gumperz poses the question: are the differences between the applicants matters of individual personality or individual style, or do they reflect culturally patterned distinctions? The data suggests that the latter is the case and that the interviewers’ assessments are based in large part on systematic differences in contextualisation strategies. The native speaker (the bricklayer) responds to the interviewers’ informal style, returning informality with informality, the exchanges are fast-paced and routinized. The South Asian (the electrician) responses are patterned differently for example, his low and soft “hello” contrasts with the native applicants’ higher pitched and more cheerful sounding delivery. When the electrician counters the interviewer’s “take a seat” with a formal “good morning”, the latter reacts by pausing before going on with the introductions. Like the other South Asians, the electrician barely responds to the interviewers’ attempts to set a more informal tone.

The bricklayer frequently repeats or paraphrases by way of confirming what has been said for example; with the phrase ‘look around’ is strategically deployed again and again. In this way, applicants present themselves as being sufficiently enterprising to have familiarised themselves with the training program in advance of the interview. Non-native speakers strategies by contrast are quite different:

1 T: well, first of all, have you been to the . . . skills center at A yet?
2 M: yeah. I- I’ve been once.
3 T: you’ve been once.
M: yeah.
T: and how long were you there?
M: ..well,...there?
T: mhm
M: just a .. few hour
T: just for the visit?
M: yeah, just for a visit.
T: yeah? .. ehm: did you have a good look around the center? or did you just go
into one section (xxxx)?
M: no I.. been there, around all-- all center.

(extract Gumperz 1992: 321)

Whereas the native speakers are seen as showing initiative and willingness to cooperate, the
non-native speakers appear to be inordinately reticent and seeking to downgrade or
minimize what they have done, when judged by the English conventions. The interviewers
and the bricklayer consistently use high pitch to indicate new information and, by inference
in certain contexts, willingness to respond. They use low pitch to refer to known
information or, by inference, to confirm what has been said. Furthermore, interviewers and
interviewee readily respond to each other's pitch level and match changes in level to signal
agreement. The South Asian response (the electrician) is less easy to process as the pitch
registers are not synchronised. Other analyses of South Asian English discourse show,
according to Gumperz (1992: 323), that there are far-reaching differences in ways of
signalling emphasis. Pausing, pacing and intonation also contribute to the inferential
process. It seems evident that the interviewers' reactions are in large part explained by
inferences based on their own culture-bound interpretations of contextualisation cues.
The interaction generally starts on a friendly note and then the atmosphere deteriorates noticeably as the interaction progresses. Gumperz’s argument is that “we are not simply dealing with lack of linguistic knowledge or prejudice on the part of one or another of the participants. Both candidates and interviewers rely on different, taken-for-granted rhetorical strategies and as a result seem unable to negotiate shared understandings about matters that are crucial to the interview’s success” (Gumperz 1992: 326). The result is that speakers whose communicative practices are stigmatised tend to encounter much more difficulty in their institutional contacts with majority speakers.

4. Accounting for difference 1994-95

In Accounting for mismatches in intercultural selection interviews, Sarangi (1994a: 163), examines the strengths and weaknesses of two explanatory frameworks: Levinson’s (1979) ‘activity type’ and Gumperz’s (1978, 1982) ‘discourse strategy’, for analysing mismatches in intercultural selection interviews. He argues in favour of a broader analytical position – following Gumperz’s notion of ‘rhetorical strategies’ – by pointing out that while one framework (‘activity type’) does not take into account the cultural component and the individual choices, the other framework (‘discourse strategy’) by overstressing the cultural differences, pays little attention to the rule-governed nature of the immediate communicative situation. The major shift here is from the ‘cultural’ attribute of the interactants to the ‘situational’ context of the intercultural encounter.

His data is based on intercultural selection interviews for training courses where the interviewer is British and the interviewee of Asian origin. The unspecified number of interviews were videorecorded for analysis. A selection interview can be analysed as an ‘activity type’ with specific norms and participant role-relationships:

By participating in an interview, both parties are implicitly agreeing to abide by
certain communicative norms. The interview moves the roles that each normally occupies in life into the background and structures the encounter with respect to the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

(Sarangi 1994a:170).

According to Sarangi (1994a: 171), it follows that such a communicative event, which is very specific in its nature and purpose, will pose problems for interviewees who are not familiar with this type of ‘interview game’, whether or not they come from different ‘cultural’ backgrounds. What is at stake is some kind of ‘situational literacy’ which comes with experience of participating in these activity types. As far as Asian interviewees are concerned, he says, first, they have to be well aware of what is allowable at this stage, and, more importantly, how to realize that message in a modest way. For example, the interviewee may only legitimately ask a question in the concluding stages of the interview in order to clarify something or as a response to an invitation from the interviewer to ask very specific questions. Just as interviewees may lack a knowledge of the agenda of the interview, they may also lack ‘an awareness of speaker rights’.

For Sarangi, culturally determined interference (eg discourse strategy) happens to be only one of the causes of ‘activity-type’ specific mismatch and consequently the explanatory value of ‘activity-type’ framework overrides that of the ‘discourse strategy’ framework. However there is no denying that the activity-type framework will always favour the culturally dominant group (1994a:188). And if the minority groups were to adopt wholesale the dominant cultural model, this would contribute to the sustenance of the dominant ideology. A possible solution is the negotiation of the situational norms which take place in an ‘intercultural encounter’ and a minimum condition be that both parties (the dominant and the dominated) become aware of the ‘cultural’ differences at a general and interpersonal level (1994a: 189).
Concerning this problem, Gumperz puts forward the notion of ‘rhetorical strategies’ which allows us to draw attention to different communicative styles which cut across ethnic differences (Sarangi 1994a:189). The interviewer and interviewee are capable of mutually redefining the boundaries and scope of the ‘activity-type’. In both frameworks described above, ‘culture’ remains a ‘fixed’ entity, which falls short of explaining the dynamic aspect of ‘cultural mix’ in the real world where ‘intercultural’ encounters are rooted.

Developing this theme, Sarangi (1994b: 413) *Intercultural or not? Beyond celebration of cultural differences in miscommunication analysis* raises questions about the ‘cultural’ emphasis in intercultural miscommunication analysis. He argues that analyses need to tackle the shifting nature of ‘culture’ in contemporary societies and what people actually do with cultural differences in real-life encounters. A possible alternative focuses on Levinson’s (1979) notion of ‘activity type’ in order to show how the existence of layers of normative rules in gatekeeping situations makes communicative breakdowns possible, whether or not participants share the same ‘cultural’ norms. This implies a shift from ‘culturally determined’ discourse strategies (in the heads of people) to ‘socio-culturally’ governed ‘activity types’.

Sarangi is concerned to take a dynamic approach to intercultural miscommunication analysis. To this end, he examines four interviews with younger Asian migrants who are typically different from the ‘first’ or ‘second’ generation migrants in terms of socio-educational background, professional ambitions. The interviewer is British. In his analysis, although the interview situations can from one analytic angle straightforwardly be labelled and interpreted as intercultural, many of the communicative difficulties that occur in these situations do not easily lend themselves to an explanation exclusively based on the principle of cultural differences:
A situational reading of the data seems to capture more closely the complexities — institutional and otherwise — involved in these contact situations.

(Sarangi 1994b: 423)

The construct ‘Interculture’ is not powerful enough to capture the migrants’ fluid identities. In order not to fall into the trap of homogenising a group’s ‘cultural’ practices, it is necessary to take into account further markings within ‘intercultures’ such as ‘urban youth culture’, ‘younger migrant culture’, etc. The interviewees in the data sample share a ‘migrant outlook’ but this identity cannot be captured by reference to either their ‘culture of origin’ or the ‘culture of non-migrants’. In other words, the notion of ‘culture’ is very much a contested one as both dominant and dominated groups often resort to the culture card in managing their power-maintaining and power-acquiring purposes.

So Sarangi (1994b:416) concludes that in analysing encounters between the dominant and dominated groups in a multicultural society, we need to subscribe to a dynamic view of ‘culture’. In practice this means rather than treat mismatches as exclusively resulting from ‘cultural differences’ or ‘linguistic inadequacies’ they may reflect Bourdieu’s idea of habitus where interviewees in Sarangi’s corpus choose to narrate stories rooted in their life experiences in preference to conforming to the norms of the job interview format.

Roberts & Sarangi (1995) continue this theme of shifting, contested nature of identities in ‘But are they one of us?’: Managing and evaluating identities in work-related contexts. The title refers to Margaret Thatcher’s famous question – ‘Are they one of us?’ “which became a metaphor for describing what was seen as an exclusive regime, in which only very few were ‘in’. Once ‘in’, one remained part of the team as long as s/he played by the rules of the game” (Roberts & Sarangi 1995: 363). In examining the many and subtle ways in which exclusion and inclusion work is done in relation to job interviews, Roberts & Sarangi
(1995: 364) draw on Gumperz's work in interactional sociolinguistics and Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic power. Thus, a job interview requires the candidates to make use of their 'cultural' resources in order to gain the symbolic and market power of the job on offer.

The point following Bourdieu, according to Roberts & Sarangi (1995: 366), is that the linguistic capital required to perform well in the institutions of our societies coincides with the habitus of the dominant class. This group does well but this is put down to intrinsic merit rather than the inevitable outcome of such a co-incidence. At a practical level, Roberts & Sarangi (ibid) pose the question of how job interviewers or gatekeepers can prevent the processes of exclusion in multicultural societies. As a social theorist, Bourdieu does not offer specific solutions, but rather an understanding of how ways of speaking sustain our hierarchical society. Issues of race and ethnicity are largely absent from his work and so Roberts & Sarangi (1995: 366) turn to interactional sociolinguistics and to the relationship between Bourdieu's "grim logic of symbolic economy and less determined and more agent-centred theories of social and discursive practices"(ibid).

Gumperz's work connects with Bourdieu in seeing linguistic resources as a form of cultural capital, observe Roberts & Sarangi (1995: 367). Critics of Gumperz and Bourdieu have argued that their positions allow little room for individual agency and creativity in redefining social relationships. However, the authors point out that the notions of 'contextualisation' and 'rhetorical strategies' imply the possibility of negotiating an alternative social space (ibid).

The implication for gatekeepers is that they need to develop and diversify their rhetorical strategies if they are to make judgements and offer opportunities which contribute to a more just society. Both parties in the game need to acknowledge that there is not a single,
controlling discourse but a layering of discourses within a particular communicative act. There is a complex intertwining of discourses of objective procedure and subjective assessment where the latter, saturated with talk about feelings often steers the successful outcome. There is also ambiguity and space for negotiation in the job interview and where gatekeepers bring multiple identities to the interactions, the authors conclude there is the possibility to alter or appropriate the rules of the game with participants from the dominated groups (Roberts & Sarangi 1995: 384).

**Conclusion**

What is clear from a sociolinguistic application to the job interview here is the high risk of communicative failure in an interview. It would be an illusion to claim that success in intercultural communication could be attained by simply accommodating to each other’s style. The onus is not only on the dominated group to tune in and align themselves with the game (develop communicative flexibility) but more importantly on the dominant group to recognise that the single, fixed marginalized identity of the subordinate group is incompatible with their own job interview practice which is fluid and multi-layered. This review of the literature highlights the highly problematic nature of the intercultural encounter in the form of an interview with the implication that any analysis also runs the risk of being reductive. It raises the crucial question of whether the dynamics in an interview are culture-specific or individual in nature with a consequent shift in focus from a cultural literacy to a situational literacy, a forerunner of ‘institutional literacy’, a theme taken up in chapter 5 — Workplace linguistic issues. In terms of ‘cultural fit’, the recent literature points away from ‘culture’ as such towards the centrality of institutional setting as a starting point for analysis.
4 Key concepts from Bourdieu

Introduction

In the previous chapter on gatekeeping encounters, Roberts & Sarangi (1995) draw on Bourdieu’s theory of language (1977, 1991), to explain ideas about the ‘linguistic marketplace’. Power is often exercised by being able to use the right discourse ‘form’ and Bourdieu offers a sophisticated discourse about why and how this happens. Bourdieu’s style of sociological work pays more attention to cross-field rather than cross-national comparisons. Nevertheless his ideas can illuminate the nature of ‘cultural fit’. For instance, the notion of ‘habitus’ is useful for understanding how culture is contained in the body as well as the mind. The notions of ‘cultural capital’ and ‘agency’ have implications for personal power in altering or appropriating the rules of the game in a workplace interaction. In this chapter, I start by taking a larger social-historical-political view of Bourdieu’s approach to language, define the terms above, and then see how they might apply to ‘cultural fit’ in regard to recruitment of Indian Information Technologists.

Thompson (1991) in his introduction to Bourdieu’s theory of Language and Symbolic Power states:

As competent speakers we are aware of the many ways in which linguistic exchanges can express relations of power. We are sensitive to the variations in accent, intonation and vocabulary, which reflect different positions in the social hierarchy. We are aware that individuals speak with differing degrees of authority, that words are loaded with unequal weights, depending on who utters them and how they are said, such that some words uttered in certain
circumstances have a force and a conviction that they would not have elsewhere. We are experts in the innumerable and subtle strategies by which words can be used as instruments of coercion and constraint, as tools of intimidation and abuse, as signs of politeness, condescension and contempt.

(Thompson 1991: 1)

Most people exhibit at best, competence rather than excellence in their dealings with others. Thompson (ibid) notes that in some branches of linguistics, there is a tendency to think of the social character of language in a rather abstract way as if it were a ‘collective treasure’ (following Saussure) shared by all members of a community. What is missing from such a perspective and linguistic disciplinary frameworks, is their failure to grasp the specific social and political conditions of language formation and use. According to Bourdieu (1991):

what circulates on the linguistic market is not ‘language’ as such, but rather discourses that are stylistically marked both in their production, in so far as each speaker fashions an idiolect from the common language, and in their reception, in so far as each recipient helps to produce the message which he perceives and appreciates by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience.

(Bourdieu 1991: 39)

In practice, language is immersed in situations and is socially constructed. All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, that is, the practices of those who are dominant (Bourdieu 1991: 53). Measured against the standard, people from other
regions (and cultures) are found to be wanting. To speak is to appropriate one or other of the expressive styles already constituted in and through usage.

Like others working within a critical perspective, Bourdieu takes a broadly deterministic view of power relations based on the political economy of the market place (Bremer et al 1996: 219). Within this market economy, symbolic, cultural and communicative power rests with the dominant group. Since this group establishes the norms and conventions of the institutions which it controls, its members tend to gain material, symbolic and cultural capital from the institutions which both represent such capital and offer it. By contrast, a mutually reinforcing negative cycle of low status and low communicative power keeps dominated groups on the social and economic periphery (ibid). Hence power is exercised in modern society not so much by force but by discourse.

Unlike Marx whose common emphasis is on capital and labour, Bourdieu’s key original insight is that there are immaterial forms of capital – cultural, symbolic and social – as well as material or economic forms, and that with varying levels of difficulty it is possible to convert one of these forms into another. Economic capital can be more easily and efficiently converted into symbolic (ie social and cultural) capital than vice versa, although symbolic capital can ultimately be transformed into economic capital (Calhoun 1993: 5). Much of Bourdieu’s work focuses on this interplay between social, cultural and economic capital.

It is this notion of multiform, convertible capital that underpins his account of class relations in France (Calhoun 1993: 69). Economic capital is the most efficient form of capital; a characterizing trait of capitalism is that it can be passed on from one generation
to the next. In this way, Bourdieu places class at the centre of his analysis of modern society that allows for a material determination of culture and history (Calhoun 1993: 5). Bourdieu was schooled as an anthropologist within the structuralist tradition then dominant, and conducted fieldwork in Algeria. A good part of his research was done during the Algerian war against French colonial rule – an experience that impressed upon him the mutual relationship of science, social reflection and politics.

In France, Bourdieu repeatedly analysed how schooling reproduces class position despite ideologies of equal opportunity and meritocracy. In his study of Arts Faculty students in Lille and Paris, he shows that the choice of discipline and attitude to education is influenced by family background. Those factors which make students ‘at home’ in an educational institution, are the product of family education, and create or reproduce class inequalities in achievement. The transmission of power and privilege is achieved as well as masked or concealed by family and schooling practices. Privilege became translated into ‘merit’. For some, higher education is an effort and a constant struggle; for others, members of dominant classes, it is their legitimate heritage (Jenkins 1992: 111). This situation is no less relevant to Indian Information Technologists who, based on their schooling, bring with them varying degrees of cultural capital: knowledge of information technology, English language (and discourses).

Later, Bourdieu was associated with Erving Goffman as a visiting scholar at the Institute of Advanced Study and the University of Pennsylvania (Calhoun 1993: 2). According to Jenkins (1992:19), Goffman’s personal brand of interactionism seems to underpin much of Bourdieu’s thinking on strategising and games-playing. Bourdieu’s epistemological critique is bound up with his theoretical move from ‘rules’ to ‘strategies’. Social life is
fluid and Bourdieu asks us to recognize that we are not rule-governed automata, precisely and unconsciously orchestrated by our culture. Cultures may divide the peoples of the earth but in relation to culture - how they learn to handle it, modify it, draw upon it as a resource – they have more in common than not (Jenkins 1992: 50). All cultures are equally arbitrary and in the final analysis, behind all culture lies the arbitrary sanction of 'pure de facto power' (ibid 105).

However, while Bourdieu has sometimes been called the French Goffman (Harker 1990:8), he is sharply critical of subjectivist-interactionist approaches which concentrate on the individual level of analysis. Bourdieu’s account is distinct from Goffman’s in that social and economic conditions are embedded in the heart of his argument, rather than merely being implied at the periphery of theory. A weakness of Bourdieu’s model of class is that it is just ‘there’ (Connell in Jenkins 1992:116). There is an absence of dynamics or process in the model and, as well as being ahistorical, it neglects the emotions. For example, while traditional societies are radically limited in their range of options, information technology, organizations and impersonal markets are factors militating for basic changes in habitus and field, two concepts most centrally associated with his theory.

**Habitus**

Habitus is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways, it orients their actions and inclinations without strictly determining them – it gives them ‘a feel for the game’, a sense of what is appropriate and what is not, depending on the circumstances. The body too has become a repository of ingrained dispositions when certain actions, certain ways of behaving and responding become natural – a durable way
of standing, speaking, walking and thereby feeling and thinking (Bourdieu 1991: 14). The bodily posture is part of *field* (Hanks 1996: 254). The boundaries between fields shift around and have to be made by human agents.

*Habitus* literally is a Latin word, which refers to a habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body (Jenkins 1992: 74). Bourdieu retains some of the concept’s original meaning(s) in the relationship between the body and the *habitus*. *Habitus* exists ‘inside the heads’ of actors through the practices and interactions with others and ways of moving. According to Jenkins (1992: 75), the embodiment of the *habitus* finds another expression in Bourdieu’s use of the word ‘hexis’. Originally Greek, with a meaning not dissimilar to the Latin ‘habitus’ in Bourdieu’s work, it is used to signify deportment, the manner and style in which actors ‘carry themselves’ e.g. stance, gait, gesture etc:

Bourdieu noticed...that members of different cultures not only talk differently...but they even walk differently. They carry themselves differently, with a body hexis distinctive to their culture (and gender and age group, etc.). This suggested to Bourdieu that cultural and subcultural dispositions of all kinds are literally embodied in people.

(Lemke 1995: 32)

*Habitus* and *field* roughly correspond to portions of what earlier approaches call ‘context’. In the case of *habitus* there is a move towards context being defined by routine modes of perception, action, and evaluation, whereas the *field* concept moves beyond the individual agent to broader social conditions of practice (Hanks 1996: 237). Unlike a grammar, but much like an ideology, *habitus* is highly differentiated according to the
actor’s place in society. Genres are a key part of *habitus* as a set of enduring dispositions to perceive the world and act upon it in certain ways. Access or control of certain genres for example, job interviews, involves power and legitimacy and serves as a form of sociocultural capital.

Bourdieu’s conception of *field* is not to be considered as a field with a fence around it in the sense of domain but rather as a ‘field of forces’ because it is required to see this field as dynamic, a field in which various potentialities exist. This conception has been compared with Goffman’s frame (Harker et al 1990: 8) (a frame both defines the boundary of an event and establishes the contextual information needed to draw inferences about it). Capital rewards gained in one field may be transferred to another. Each *field* is immersed in an institutional field of power and more broadly in the field of class relations. *Habitus* leads to strategies for the ‘accumulation of capital’. For instance in his fieldwork in 1977, on the behaviour and relationships of Algerian peasants who had earned substantial amounts of cash outside the traditional village field of production, Bourdieu showed that their attempts to convert their economic capital into cultural and social capital were thwarted and made difficult by the traditional normative structure and habitus. Paying for services in money rather than accumulated social debt undermined a pattern of more or less stable reproduction (Calhoun 1993: 68).

To reiterate, a *field* is a structured system of social positions – occupied either by individuals or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. It is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a *field* is structured internally in terms of power relations – by virtue of the access to goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the *field* (Jenkins 1992: 85). The more technologically
complex and socially differentiated the society, the more fields there will be. The boundaries of fields are imprecise and shifting. A *field* is, by definition ‘a field of struggles’ in which agents’ strategies are concerned with the preservation or improvement of their positions with respect to the defining capital in the field. Bourdieu uses the metaphor ‘market’ as an alternative to the notion of field. In a field, there are stakes which are struggled over and regulated by a relationship between supply and demand (Jenkins 1992:87).

Bourdieu’s point that culture is encoded in or on the body is an issue which has resonance in the comments made by recruiters viewing the videotaped interviews. Candidates’ headnodding was a trigger of racial and cultural stereotyping which resulted in negative appraisals of the group as a whole. The search became almost, in effect, one for a candidate who did not fit the cultural stereotype. For outsiders to succeed, ie the placement of Indian Information Technologists to fill casual skills shortages, a shift is required. The appropriate cultural capital has to be acquired with inevitable consequences for the habitus. In relation to class, this might be called embourgeoisment. In the case of ethnicity, it is close to assimilation. However, a problem with this way of making sense of the process is that, it is far too static. A more dynamic way of describing the process is to imagine the outsider as having a repertoire, building their cultural capital to draw on the appropriate class or cultural response when called upon. As Shusterman (1999: 6) points out, a change of discursive practice may modify the social field itself.

**Cultural Capital**

*Habitus* is not what Bourdieu terms ‘symbolic capital’ nor is it ‘economic capital’ but cultural capital (Calhoun 1993: 197). The *habitus* can be oriented primarily to the
accumulation of symbolic capital (honor, prestige) or to the accumulation of economic capital. But the *habitus* itself, even in tribal societies, is made up of cultural capital, or, in the very widest sense of the word, knowledge (skills). Cultural capital is generally thought of in terms of life-chances on labour markets – that is, as on the production side – in which it is comprised not just of knowledge but of rhetorical ability, titles and academic qualifications. But the family and the education system also enable the accumulation of cultural capital on the consumption side for instance, the ability to appreciate works of art or the uptake of Information Technology (IT) may be simultaneously conditional on existing accumulations of cultural and economic capital.

Just as knowledge of language is itself a form of social capital, unevenly distributed in social groups and subject to competition and struggle, communication is a form of cultural capital which functions within a ‘linguistic market place’. As Hanks (1996:13) points out, anyone who has stumbled through a job interview, a meeting with a lawyer or doctor or a written exam will recognize knowledge of language is a valuable skill. Mastery of these interactions is a form of capital that people can acquire by training, compete for, and put to use for strategic ends.

The notion of strategising is an important link between the notions of practice, habitus and field (Jenkins 1992: 83). The concept of strategy and strategising synthesises three elements: rational calculation tempered by constraints, particularly to do with resource allocation, oriented towards the achievement of objectives in the medium to long term. Practice, according to Bourdieu is not consciously organised and orchestrated. Nothing is random or purely accidental, but, as one thing follows on from another, practice happens. One of his most potent metaphors is the centrality of ‘a feel for the game’ (Jenkins
1992:70) which echoes Goffman’s metaphors of social life as a kind of theatre or as a game.

But Jenkins (1992:98) says that Bourdieu’s argument that social practice is not rule-governed underestimates the importance of rules as one resource which contributes to the overall mix of freedom and constraint which characterises behaviour. Entering the game implies a conscious or unconscious acceptance of the explicit and/or implicit rules of the game on the part of the players. The players must possess a ‘feel’ for the game which implies a practical mastery. Such competence is shared unequally by the players and determines their mastery of the game in proportion to their competence. Competence and mastery of the game are analogous to a person’s habitus and possession of capital as they exist within the field.

Various capitals constitute the value of an individual on the market. Bourdieu demonstrates that language is a form of capital which can be transformed into economic capital, not a given but something that is struggled over. English functions as an international gatekeeper. Levels of English are bound up with socioeconomic levels and the knowledge of English language (where English is not the first language) leads to jobs with social and economic prestige. It has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion or exclusion from further education or employment. Communication skills are then a form of cultural capital and knowledge of the dominant norms can lead to an accumulation of economic capital.

The knowledge of information technology is another form of cultural capital and undoubtedly a route to social mobility. In a survey of Indian computer professionals in
Melbourne, the two most important reasons forwarded for initially coming to Australia included the urge to advance career prospects and dissatisfaction with employment conditions in India (Lakha 1992: 95). As one Indian Sociologist (Fieldnote: Srivastava 25/2/99) observed, people from the middle classes might do arts and have more options. People who pursue the technical path have narrower life options. They are thinking 'how can I get a good job, how can I get more money, and that will probably mean I will have to go overseas' and their first choice of destination would be America, not Australia. He suggests that Indian Information Technologists choose the technical professions over the arts precisely because they are a more direct route to social mobility.

Together English and information technology are a 'global commodity' to be bought and sold on the world market. Outsiders, those not in the know, are kept on the economic periphery. Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital is not a fixed one, in that you either have it, or you don't. It is dynamic and with varying degrees of difficulty, it is possible to acquire both social capital and cultural capital and convert them into economic capital. It is not a level playing field, there is unequal opportunity and clever outsiders don't get in if they lack 'fit'. Minority participants are going to suffer more from the consequences of non-understanding as the way they handle it is often more decisive.

Agency

A key issue in contemporary theory is that of resolving the relative significance of the determining structures be they economic, linguistic or social and that of the role of the individual ie agency (Walton 1993: 95). Bourdieu conceives of agency in such a way that everyone is an agent whether they like it or not. Agents occupy positions within fields, which effectively limit the range of actions or options. Neither the objective social
structures (which limit the options) nor the dispositions of agents (which make a choice between options or strategies) are independent entities – one is embedded in the other (Harker et al 1990: 203). Yet as Calhoun (1993: 134) points out, while the configuration of capital, habitus and field provides general constraints on the discursive or interactive, Bourdieu’s theory of language itself does not allow sufficiently for contradictions, dilemmas and divisions as discursive agency can fissure in unpredictable and dynamic ways.

Bourdieu’s general arguments about language are consonant with those of Gumperz. Like Bourdieu, Gumperz pursues a line of research in which diverse elements are understood as forming systems of relational options (Calhoun: 130). Bourdieu’s approach alerts us to the pregiven structuring of situation and Gumperz alerts us to the plurality of interpretations (ibid). However, according to Bourdieu:

The ‘interactionist’ approach fails to go beyond the actions and reactions apprehended in their directly visible immediacy, is unable to discover that the different agents’ linguistic strategies are strictly dependent on their positions in the structure of the distribution of linguistic capital.

(Bourdieu 1991: 64)

As outlined already, agents’ linguistic strategies may depend on access to the educational system and the structure of class relations. In both their linguistic capital and linguistic habitus, one group possesses what the system offers, in the form it expects, whereas the other lacks what the system expects and is less able to appropriate what it offers. So rather than viewing culture in terms of knowing the rules, it is more accurate to see it in
terms of strategies. It can be accompanied by a strategic calculation of costs and benefits. Societies conceal or mask the calculations involved in many social and cultural practices behind an ideological screen, the main purpose of which is to conceal from the participants themselves the economic basis of such calculations. It follows that the capacity to manipulate is greater the more capital one possesses.

Conclusion

Bourdieu attempts to capture the relationship between structure and agency ie both culture and identity are fluid constructs that are being constantly re-negotiated. The implication is that stakeholders can change the outcomes of interactions as the process is by no means static but a dynamic one. Social changes already mean employees are operating in heterogeneous, relatively unstable groups, with fragile scattered family connections and multiple identities.

However, for the Indian Information Technologist who is constructed as having 'agency', (the ability to influence the interaction to their own strategic ends in a workplace encounter), there nonetheless remain severe constraints on what is allowable. As Gee (1999) points out:

To “pull off” being an “X” doing “y”...it is not enough to get just the words “right” though that is crucial. It is necessary, as well, to get one’s body, clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, ways with things, symbols, tools, technologies...and values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions “right”, as well, and all at the “right” places and times.

Gee (1999: 7)
Bourdieu's ideas highlight the relationship between speech and nonverbal communication in constructing context. Context is *habitus*, a set of dispositions which includes genres and postures and meanings of gestures. In terms of cultural capital, a knowledge of English and information technology would be insufficient when seeking overseas contracts. It is also necessary to be familiar with the dominant norms of workplace culture which take account of the *habitus*.

This chapter has been mainly concerned with developing one aspect of the theoretical argument, the need to widen one’s cultural repertoire to increase one’s cultural capital. The next chapter will take up the more concrete questions of analytic practice within workplace linguistics. I explore many instances of naturally occurring data in the workplace which do not fit into a unified single theoretical framework but provide a guide to the kinds of tools employed in an analysis of institutional talk. This is followed in turn, by a review of pioneering studies showing the importance of nonverbal communication.
5 Workplace Linguistic issues

Introduction

Workplace linguistics is a relatively new area of linguistic application and the theorists are few and their views relatively uncontentious. This is in contrast to the field of intercultural communication, where the literature is vast and fragmented and slightly more controversial. For instance, Clyne (1992: 5) points out that the field of intercultural communication alone is informed by pragmatic and speech act theory, the ethnography of communication, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and the neo-Prague School of post-structural linguistics, just to name a few. The literature is multi-disciplinary, drawing on anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy. The impossibility of covering such a vast area is readily apparent and as all of these schools of thought contain some insight of relevance to the topic of ‘cultural fit’, the choice of literature will be governed by its potential to contribute to the research questions set out in the introduction.

Workplace linguistics is the study of language use in work contexts and is a multi-disciplinary area. ‘Workplace’ as defined by Firth (1995: 36) is used as a cover-term for an array of organisational settings and institution-related activities, where at least one party is in paid employment as a representative of an organisation. The major practitioners in the field of workplace linguistics, in Australia and overseas, over the last decade include: Coleman (1989), Beal (1990), Clyne (1990), Drew and Heritage (1992), Tebble (1992), Willing (1992), Scollon & Scollon (1995), Candlin et al (1995), Neil (1994), Fitzgerald (1996) and Sarangi & Roberts (1999).

**Changing nature of work contexts**

Coleman’s (1989) edited collection *Working with language: a multi-disciplinary consideration of language use in work contexts* sets out to deal with the broadest possible spectrum of work areas. The contributors draw their data from diverse geographical, linguistic and occupational sources; consequently only two out of the nineteen chapters directly pertain to the thesis. Coleman’s edited collection of articles however, provides a very useful introduction to the major themes explored in this thesis. The collection covers the socio-economic changes to work and migration (Coleman 1989); and the special needs of overseas trained professionals (Burton 1989).

According to Coleman (1989: 8), current research into language use in work contexts is limited in two ways: by its tendency to restrict itself geographically to North America and Europe and by its equally strong tendency to concentrate on the professions. He sets out to bring together research which is drawn from more extensive geographical and occupational sources than is customary (1989: 3). His concern is that current research in the field of language use in work contexts is a very parochial pursuit, primarily Anglo-American, and quotes as an example his study of the contents of two recent volumes of the journal of *English for Specific Purposes* which shows “that people working within the
boundaries of the discipline known as ESP are in fact busying themselves most greatly with efforts aimed at encouraging the spread of English-medium tertiary-level education” (1989: 4).

His second major concern is that this situation has led to a severe imbalance between research into language in professional contexts and investigations of language use in non-professional contexts. He makes the point that professional workers constitute only a relatively small proportion of the population of societies. By restricting research to “the most prestigious - though numerically smallest - group within that system inevitably means that the resulting picture is seriously incomplete” (1989: 8). However, this is not necessarily true of Australia. According to Hawthorne (1994: xv), the literature on migrants has been dominated by concern for immigrants with clear labour market disadvantage - typically refugees, skilled immigrants who have failed to secure qualifications recognition, low-skilled workers displaced by industrial restructuring, and women, for whom English is not a first language.

Taking up Coleman's concern, Burton (1989), a teacher trainer and applied linguist, in her article 'Language training for immigrant professionals' looks at the movement of professional workers from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe into working situations in Australia. Overseas professionals coming to Australia must not only acquire new language skills but must also satisfy the certification processes of the Australian professional organisations. Burton's language course for immigrant professionals in Australia catered for microbiologists, a dental technician, a dentist, several medical research workers, general medical officers, and a number of specialists in various medical fields (Coleman 1989: 15). Burton (1989: 83) points out that “these professionals encountered a range of problems which are not necessarily connected with their
competence in the language of the host community”. For instance, they needed to learn how their professions were organised in Australia; they had to find ways of maintaining their own morale as, over an extended period of time, they struggled to come to terms with the fact that the qualifications which had brought them prestige in their countries of origin could not be relied upon to attract the same degree of prestige in their new situations.

Teachers recognised from the outset the importance of bringing the learner into contact with native speakers through work placements. Of the fourteen engineers who started the course, three found permanent professional employment with the organisations which had offered them work placements. In the case of the medical group, there was not the same success in obtaining employment on account of the necessity of having up-to-date dental or medical expertise and knowledge as well as social language for working with patients (Burton 1989: 95). Regarding this question of how relevant was language alone to the learners’ individual achievements, she found it to be variable. Learner success in terms of gaining employment depended on market forces. Engineers were in short supply; doctors and nurses were not. Language proficiency was, therefore, almost totally disregarded in the case of engineers, although they did need writing and meeting skills. Yet, in the case of the doctors and nurses, language proficiency was considered highly important (Burton 1989: 99).

In the contribution from the same text, Coleman (1989) The present and future of work, takes up two questions: why bother to study language use in work context; and what is work anyway? Regarding the latter, he surveys the state of work, which shows that changes in the boundaries between work and non-work are taking place with great rapidity. Changes such as large scale unemployment in industrialised societies and
migration of rural populations to urban areas in primarily non-industrial societies force us to reconsider the meaning of work (Coleman 1989:127). The majority of the various definitions of work are based on the 19th century capitalist socio-economic system and are rapidly becoming irrelevant (Coleman 1989: 120).

Coleman sees two advantages in adopting an anthropological definition, such as that proposed by Wallman (1979b: 7):

...work is the performance of necessary tasks, and the production of necessary values - moral as well as economic... On this basis, work may be defined as the production, management or conversion of the resources necessary to livelihood (quoted in Coleman 1989: 115).

Firstly, we are able to see that, in different cultures, different types of activity have the label ‘work’ attached to them and secondly, in different cultures, different values are attached to those activities which are labelled ‘work’. The implication for the future of work is “that societies can create new activities which would match the sets of values currently attached to work, or that current value sets should be shifted onto activities which do not at the moment bear those values” (Coleman 1989: 127). This definition foreshadows the increase in contract work and globalisation in the last decade and allows cross-cultural comparisons.

**Talk in institutional settings**

Drew & Heritage’s (1992) *Talk at work: interaction in institutional settings* is a diverse collection of studies of social interaction and language use in a variety of institutional contexts focusing on the exchange of talk between professionals and lay persons which
they term 'institutional interactions'. In their introductory chapter they give an historical overview of the key developments within the study of interaction so as to situate their own studies within a single research tradition, that of conversation analysis (CA). The analytic outlooks expressed in the collection emerge from converging lines of investigation in sociology, anthropology and linguistics. The two central tendencies in this convergence are a) the development of sociolinguistic approaches that address the contextual sensitivity of language use; and b) the emergence of analytic frameworks that can handle the dynamic features of social action and interaction (Drew & Heritage 1992: 6). In relation to the first point, earlier studies of sociolinguistics treated context in terms of the social attributes speakers bring to the talk - for example age, class, ethnicity, gender, geographical region, kinship and other relationships. However, studies of data from natural social settings later showed that the relevance of these attributes depended upon the particular setting in which the talk occurred and in some cases it was found that the nature of the social setting heightened the relevance of speakers' social attributes (Drew & Heritage1992: 7).

A second impetus to connect linguistic structure to social context was highlighted in a key collection of papers by Gumperz and Hymes (1972) Directions in Sociolinguistics which demonstrated that any aspect of linguistic behaviour - lexical, prosodic, phonological and syntactic choices together with the use of particular codes, dialects or styles - may function as a contextualization cue (Drew & Heritage1992: 8). By signalling significant aspects of the social context, interactants are able to make inferences about one another's communicative intentions and goals. Gumperz using data from a wide variety of social contexts shows how in interethnic interactions, these inferences are miscued through ambiguities and mismatches in these cues. This is important because it suggests that a wide range of linguistic details might be implicated in the
contextualization process.

Drew & Heritage (ibid) further make the point that the linguistic concept of 'contextualization cues' as outlined by Gumperz is similar to the sociological concept of 'frame' as developed by Goffman. Goffman's notion of 'frame' focuses on the definition which participants give to their current social activity - to what is going on, what the situation is, and the roles which the interactants adopt within it. Instead of treating context as unitary and invariant, he suggests a conceptual framework which captures the changing activity frames that can emerge in a given setting. Goffman's frame theory, the authors say, has contributed to an increasingly sophisticated and dynamic approach to the analysis of social context. Gumperz's notion of 'contextualizing' and Goffman's conception of 'frame' both relate linguistic choices to the social activity concerned.

While their studies highlight the importance of cultural contextualization to the understanding of language, what is overlooked according to Drew & Heritage (1992:10), is the nature of social interaction and its organization, by which they mean speech acts and discourse analysis. A speech-act based approach that focused more directly on the sequential organization of action was developed by the Birmingham discourse analysis group, which examined classroom and medical interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) in terms of hierarchically organized sets of acts, moves, exchanges and transactions.

Although Sinclair & Coulthards' (1975) approach represented an analytical advance, it was vulnerable to the criticism that the notion that sequences of discourse can be abstractly specified in terms of well- or ill-formedness (Drew & Heritage 1992:14). Also, there was an incompatibility between the Birmingham investigators' underlying assumption of an association between a fixed social context and a formal syntax of
action, on the one hand, and the active context-cueing approach embodied in Gumperz and Goffman's analyses in the more general tradition of "context analysis" and the then emerging perspective of conversation analysis, on the other. There was, in short, a tendency, to conflate linguistic rules and social relations and an analysis was apt to slip between descriptive and prescriptive view of rules (Drew & Heritage 1992:15).

In summary, ethnographic studies were the starting point for an understanding of the sociocultural context in ordinary understandings of utterances and events but they did not develop analyses that focused on the organization of specific sequences in social interaction. The speech-act theorists, on the other hand, recognized the importance of sequence in interaction and worked to establish formal models of the linkages between one spoken interaction and the next:

Yet the effort to develop analyses of these linkages using linguistic frameworks and metaphors that denied the relevance of contextual considerations resulted in flawed conceptual tools and empirical analyses.

(Drew & Heritage 1992: 16)

CA emerged with an approach to social interaction, which avoided the sterile restriction of the speech-act to dialogue, and it admitted the context of the utterance which ethnographic approaches had insistently advocated. Four major features of the CA perspective which have a particular relevance for the analysis of talk in institutional settings are:

1) Its activity focus: CA begins from a consideration of the interactional accomplishment of particular social activities.
2) Sequential analysis: focus on the units that were larger than the individual sentence or
utterance and their component unit turns as turns-within-sequences, a departure from the
speech-act analysis.

3) The conception of context: utterances and actions are context-shaped. Also utterances
and actions are context renewing. Every current utterance will itself form the immediate
context for some next action in the sequence. The CA perspective conceives of ‘context’
as being transformable at any moment. This is in contrast to the Birmingham School of
analysis, which treats context as containing the participants’s actions - the so-called
‘bucket’ theory.

4) Comparative analysis: Since ordinary conversation is the predominant medium of
interaction in the social world, this forms the benchmark against which other more formal
or ‘institutional’ types of interaction are recognized.

The methodological implication of all of this for my research is that in the context of
institutional talk, an empirical analysis must first accomplish the normal CA tasks of
analysing the conduct of the participants but must also be responsive to the constraints
which are institutional in character. This is best deduced from a comparative analysis ie
distinctions between ‘institutional talk’ and ‘ordinary conversation’ (Drew & Heritage
1992: 21). An example of institutional talk would be the constraint on the ‘professional’
to withhold expressions of surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation in response to lay
persons’ describings, claims, etc. Such withholdings would be interpreted as
disaffiliative in a conversational context, but not necessarily in a professional encounter.
Another example is when speaking as a member of an organization, persons may refer to
themselves as we, rather than I so an institutional identity is invoked over a personal
identity.
A central theme in research on institutional interaction is that in contrast to the symmetrical relationships between speakers in ordinary conversation, institutional interactions are characteristically asymmetrical. Drew & Heritage conclude that CA offers both a powerful and coherent perspective from which to investigate a range of studies of interaction. However, a criticism often levelled at CA is its obsessive interest in detail exemplified by the Sacks-Schegloff-Jefferson tradition which ‘freezes’ phenomena and takes language out of its social and historical context (Bargiela 1997: 39). In other words CA focuses on a fragment at the expense of the whole. A problem with using the CA approach exclusively in analysing intercultural communication is that 1) it assumes a shared level of understanding between the interactants; 2) it does not account for asymmetry in the dynamics which is a prominent feature of majority/minority situated encounters; and 3) the focal point of conversation is often repair (Bremer et al 1996: 30).

**Institutional Talk – Australia**

Clyne and Ball’s (1990) article titled *English as a lingua franca in Australia especially in industry* reports on a project examining the use of English between speakers of differing non-English speaking backgrounds in an industrial context. The authors selected five workplaces reflecting a diversity of industry type: automative, electronics, textiles and health located in Melbourne. The research funded by the Australian Research Council takes up and develops two issues: 1) how people communicate in the work domain, a multilingual domain in Australia and 2) the differences in the way in which particular cultural groups communicate (Clyne & Ball 1990: 1).

They point out that given the high proportion of non-native speakers in the workforce in Australia, “there is a considerable chance that any two people interacting in the work
domain will be native speakers of different languages other than English with varying cultural expectations of communication" (1990: 2). Thus there is a need for research into the factors promoting successful and unsuccessful communication of this kind. Previous research had been directed towards communication between non-native and native speakers, in other words a “majority group” interacting with one or more “minority groups”. What is lacking was a “multicultural” framework that was valid for the Australian situation where various ethnic “minorities” are interacting with one another. For example, Turks and Vietnamese, Lebanese and Chinese, Maltese and Serbs, Chileans and Cambodians are all working together in large numbers which makes the Australian workplace somewhat unique. At all the sites a basic European-Asian distinction emerged, as well as intra-European and intra-Asian.

After collecting naturally occurring data in the workplaces mentioned above and conducting follow-up interviews, Clyne and Ball (1990: 12) found that lengths of turns and use of silence proved to be radically different across ethnolinguistic groups. Rising and falling tones played a role in inviting backchannelling or turntaking as well as being a “floor maintenance” technique. Hierarchical structures varied across cultures and it was a common mistake for someone not to acknowledge the correct distance required by subordination, thus appearing too formal or overly familiar. Greeting and farewelling procedures also played an important part in the work routine. There is the problem of how often one greets people throughout the day: at the first encounter, the first few, every time, or never? They make the interesting point that if differing expectations are not met attitudes can build up such as:

She never treats me with respect; never says good morning, but always talks about work as if I’m only a machine.
or conversely

He's forever wasting my time with chit chat and stopping to say 'hallo' five times a day! (1990:13).

The authors conclude by recognising that there are many factors influencing discourse in the work situation and that a given informant cannot be used to represent a culture in general; a much larger sample is needed before any sort of general statement could be made.

Beal's (1990) article 'It's all in the asking': a perspective on problems of cross-cultural communication between native speakers of French and native speakers of Australian English in the workplace - is a report of an inter-cultural interactive pragmatic study of French workers in an English-speaking environment in the Melbourne branch of a French-based company. She isolates three major causes of tension and misunderstandings between these workers and native speakers of Australian English: differences in politeness strategies, differences in the assessment of what constitutes a 'face-threatening act' and clashes between 'face wants' and other wants. Her theoretical assumption was that although many French people in Australia may be able to speak English fluently and correctly at a morphological level, their interactional rules might be carried over from French into English, leading to misunderstandings and tension with speakers of Australian English. She quotes Tannen (1990:18) who points out that conversational control habits are learned early and are automatic which explains the research findings that increased exposure to members in different groups often leads to increased rather than decreased negative stereotyping.

Particularly useful are the concepts of positive face and negative politeness derived from
Brown & Levinson's (1988) notion of face, which was first introduced by Goffman (1967) as a central concern in most interactions. Positive politeness is aimed at satisfying one's desire to be acknowledged and approved of while negative politeness deals with minimizing a potential threat to territory, privacy or freedom of action. A striking difference between the French and Australians concerns the 'ritual' of being approached. Observing the French interacting at work, there is a clear sense of territory and the onus is on the 'intruder' to placate the person being disturbed (negative politeness). As soon as someone comes into their field of vision, French people will establish eye contact. The opposite is true of Australians where the onus is on the person being approached to make sure the other person is not made to feel like an intruder.

This 'acknowledgement' constraint is a typical feature of positive politeness. The Australians often feel that the French 'barge in' and invade their space (Beal 1990:23). In turn, French people, because they don't expect to have to make the first move when they approach someone, feel that they are treated like intruders when eye contact is not immediately established. Occasionally the two clashing styles will further degenerate into 'shismogenesis', a process where each of the speakers reacts by intensifying the opposing behaviour, and vice versa. 'Positive' and 'negative' politeness are two different types of strategies addressing the two paradoxical needs of communication: to be recognized and valued and also to be left in peace. These represent a deviation from the Gricean maxims for maximally efficient communication as utterances in general represent a face-threatening act, which is itself culturally bound. This raises the question for teachers who set out to teach socio-cultural competence - are learners expected to give up their own personality by taking on a different communicative style? Beal (1990: 31) concludes by advocating moderation, trying to find a balance between having enough socio-cultural competence to avoid discrimination but which at the same time does not
lead to identity loss.

Another piece of research undertaken by Tebble (1992) "The Systems Analyst’s Interview” applies Halliday and Hasan’s concept of ‘generic structure potential’ to the interviews that a system’s analyst conducts in their day to day work with clients. Generic structure potential is defined as “a summary of all the optional and obligatory elements and their sequence for every text that shares the same contextual configuration” (Tebble 1992: 258). Contextual Configuration is in turn composed of the field (the content - in this case finding and checking facts); the tenor (social roles - formal, co-operative); and the mode (the channels of communication - phonic and graphic). For instance, in a systems analyst’s fact-finding interview, it is possible to identify eight significant stages: Greeting through to Leave Taking. Of the eight elements, six are obligatory and two are optional. For instance, commenting on work and leave taking are optional.

The above approach to the description of the generic structure is top down but for a full analysis of the discourse structure, a bottom up approach is also needed. A typical transcription (using modified conversational analysis conventions) of an hour long interview produced sixty or more A4 sized pages. “Faced with this amount of data the linguist needs a comprehensive set of procedures to describe this type of discourse” (Tebble: 1992: 262). Tebble combines Hasan’s top down approach to specifying the generic structure with Sinclair & Coulthard’s (1975) bottom up approach which delineates the ranked units beginning with the speech act moving up to the genre. One of Tebble’s contributions to the methodology is of ensuring that a full discourse analysis does take both a top down and bottom up approach.

‘Top-down’ refers to the interpretive strategy of working by prediction and expectation
from a higher-level frame in order to comprehend an item which matches an element of structure within that frame, for example, the immediate comprehension of a newspaper headline through a familiarity with the conventions of the genre. ‘Bottom-up’ processing is achieved by associating elemental units of data and matching them with lower-order frames, building this up through ever higher-level frames until all the relevant contextual knowledge can be brought to bear. A piece-by-piece process is applied to other elements in the utterance and its context, to yield gradually a comprehension of the whole (Willing 1992: 48). This kind of approach combines context to attention to detail, the latter being a characteristic of CA. A limitation however, is that it does not account for asymmetry in the interaction, a feature of majority/minority situated encounters.

A completely different approach is represented by Willing (1992) in his book *Talking it through: clarification and problem-solving in professional work* who concentrates on identifying the interactive skills needed to deal with intercultural communication difficulties when they arise. The main source of data was a corpus of tape-recordings of task-oriented interactions between white-collar professional collaborating in the course of their daily work which was carried out during 1989 and 1990 under the sponsorship of the *National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research*, Macquarie University, Sydney. The project was called ‘Communication Tasks in the Professional Workplace’ (CTPWP). The CTPWP project sought to redress the lack of work-related discourse in white-collar workplaces by collecting extensive samples and drawing some conclusions about its central characteristics. Most of these interactions involved at least one participant whose native language was not English. The book takes as its central assumption though, that all communication is problematic to some degree.

The main functions of task based interaction are identified as acknowledgment, guidance,
clarification and repair and these functions are typically used within a problem-solving dynamic. Some commonalities that were found between the white collar professionals studied in the project were 1) the physical setting - they spend a major part of the day at a computer terminal which often has pride of place on their desk and 2) the nature of their work predominantly consists of problem-solving. Characteristically, people working at the monitoring, planning or organisational levels of an enterprise will spend the greater part of their time dealing with uncertainties and obstacles, foreseen and unforeseen (Willing 1992: 6). Certain interactional and communicative signals facilitate this process:

Such devices - for example, discourse markers which provide guidance ('next one is...'), which show information receipt ('right', 'yeah'), which clarify ('I mean...'), which label moves ('I'd suggest...'), which summarise ('so they are worried...'), and so on.
(Willing 1992: 6)

Such signals have the social function of keeping the interaction going and they are supporting devices for 'managing' it, which involves updating, fine-tuning, and clarifying meanings, as they are exchanged. This notion of 'managing' the discourse is also related to the concept of communication strategy. Observations by the CTPWP project supported what may seem intuitively obvious: in the high-precision, often high-tech working modes which characterise white-collar occupations, the premium is on managing information flow and on getting it right.

1. Information Structuring

Following are some observations relating to information structuring discussed by Willing (1992) which relate specifically to cross-cultural communication. Firstly, in an utterance,
the predication of the new upon the given is a basic act of information structuring in communication and is signalled by fundamental linguistic structuring devices. In English, the given is mentioned first and the new comes afterward. The informational status of given and new elements is generally signalled by stress, pitch and intonation, the given being mentioned in a low unstressed tone and the new being marked with a higher pitch and greater stress (Willing 1992: 33). The different means of signalling importance in a cross-cultural communication can result in puzzlement for both parties. Similarly, when a speaker unconsciously transfers features of rhythm, stress and intonation from the first language, the message heard can be weighed down with pragmatic implications completely unintended by the speaker. Conversely, intended messages, signalled inappropriately can be missed (Willing 1992: 35).

2. Prosodic and paralinguistic features

In addition to problems of signalling given and new information, the CTPWP data corroborates the importance of prosodic and paralinguistic features in the signalling/interpretation of meaning context (Willing 1992: 53). For example, the meaning of subtle cues can be missed or misread by either participant. Cueing can be supplemented by redundancy, the phenomenon of conveying the same information more than once in the utterance. The following two points are key findings relating to the paralinguistic aspects of interaction:

- *Volume of sound* is an important guide. It can organise information structure - to what degree the information is to be taken as new. It also gives clues to its interpretation ie a more quietly segment may serve to indicate an informal break in discourse of an otherwise more formal nature. A quiet tone has many possible readings and this ability to bear several simultaneous meanings is typical of paralinguistic features in general and
one reason for the particular importance of such cues in miscommunication cross-

- **Pacing and tempo** the data included several examples of ‘inappropriately’ fast tempo
engaged in by non-native speakers eg men from Eastern Mediterranean cultures. There
was what appeared to observers to be a strong effort on the part of the non-native speaker
to match the pace of the native speaker “even if the speed of speech processing necessary
to do this resulted in stumbles and an impression of pressured, breathless haste, possibly
anxiety and nervousness, and abruptness of expression” (Willing 1992: 56). Willing
(1992:109) comments that CTPWP researchers noted in such contexts that there was a
specific strategy which could have been more effective, and which was in general not
being exercised, that of ‘cooling down’ the pace. To cut the increasing adrenalin charge
it would have been helpful if either the native speaker or the non-native speaker had
made a clarifying move such as “Now, hang on a second, let me see if I’ve got what
you’re saying here...”.

3. **Routine formulae**

Routine formulae can serve a social function of providing context cues for interpretation
and a psychological function to reduce anxiety. Some phrases are obligatory for some
contexts like greetings and polite phrases such as ‘hello’, ‘g’day’, ‘thank you’, ‘it’s a
pleasure’, ‘nice meeting you’. The data revealed that a large number of cliches and
stereotyped expressions can also be obligatory eg ‘the tip of the iceberg’, ‘it’s a catch-22
notes that such signals, functioning as conversational control mechanisms are deeply
rooted in specific cultural backgrounds. Not only do such cues regulate the interaction,
they are one of the foundations of ethnicity. According to Tannen:
It is the very sharing of conversational strategies that creates the feeling of satisfaction which accompanies and follows successful conversation: the sense of being understood, being 'on the same wavelength', belonging, and therefore, of sharing identity. Conversely, a lack of congruity in conversational strategies creates the opposite feeling: of dissonance, not being understood, not belonging - therefore, of not sharing identity. This is the sense in which conversational style is a major component of what we have come to call ethnicity.


4. Modality

Yet another consideration is the expression of indirectness. The Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns project (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989) found that different cultures varied widely in their preferred standard ways of modalising or shading the illocutionary force of, for example, requesting. Being subject to directives ('orders'), was found to be a fact of everyday life for white-collar professionals, as for anyone else in work contexts; but the discourse of managers appeared to have developed a broad and varied repertoire of directives, ranging from the low-key, to the peremptory and insulting. A low-key and collegial style of directive in the English of white-collar management tends to show a high degree of modality and thus portray the speaker as modest, non-authoritarian and unassuming:

S: If you're going to, I think it's easier just to sit down and really set up a sheet and you know rank them like that just sort of

(Willing 1992: 122)
Willing notes that in general, *could, might* and *may* used for the performance of polite suggestions and requests were virtually absent from the repertoires of non-native speakers and that this was "in fact, the single most prominent of all measurable differences between the language of native speakers and non-native speakers" and further "this emerged as a crucially disadvantaging aspect of the linguistic-pragmatic competence of non-native speakers in the CTPWP sample given the central importance in professional-level problem-solving discussion." (Willing 1992: 124).

As 'communication awareness training' has developed historically, it has been valuable to investigate and analyse instances of cross-cultural pragmatic 'failure'. However, what is needed, says Willing, is a large corpus of instances of cross-cultural pragmatic success: relative success, of course, partial success, but in any case there should be a focus on what interactants actually do to deal with communicative difficulty, and how these clarifying sequences unfold. Conversational interaction is something which people collaboratively accomplish. Virtually any extended sample of spoken interactional data in English will contain examples of processes whereby participants work together to agree on conversational goals, repair trouble, agree on acceptable detours, redefine goals, and so on.

5. Negotiating meaning

New perspectives on spoken interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers focus on observing how interactants deal practically with such difficulties. The process of communication is portrayed as a mutual collaborative effort of 'negotiating meaning', brought about through the analysis of discourse which has highlighted 'repair' as a collaborative strategy to deal with communicative 'trouble'.
An example of this kind of research, was carried out by Deborah Neil (1994) in her PhD thesis titled *Collaboration in intercultural discourse: examples from a multicultural Australian workplace*. She collected her data from the Mercy Hospital in Melbourne, a research site where there was a wide range of recent and more established ethnic groups from different backgrounds working in the laundries and kitchens who regularly interacted; and where there was also a degree of communication with Anglo-Australians. Originally she was looking for cross-cultural conflict but instead found evidence of collaboration and repair strategies. Neil’s research addresses a concern of Clyne and Ball (1990) expressed earlier about research being directed toward a ‘majority group’ interacting with one or more ‘minority groups’. They complained that what was lacking was a multicultural framework where various ethnic minorities are interacting with each other. Neil’s research while not providing a framework as such, nevertheless highlights the relevance of joint text production in the intercultural context and shows that a collaborative style of discourse is part of successful intercultural communication.

**Different value systems**

Fitzgerald (1996) in *Misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication: the influence of different value systems as reflected in spoken discourse* examines the spoken discourse of immigrant professionals’ problem solving in small groups in order to see how different cultural values both influence, and are reflected in, the way a problem is defined and solutions proposed. In the data analysed by Fitzgerald, the participants were all overseas-trained, immigrant professionals from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) in symmetrical relationships, interacting in the comparatively relaxed context of a classroom. The problem was a typical situation of the workplace in the ACT (Australian Capital Territory) and the three groups were each assigned the same problem-solving roleplay.
The findings corroborated evidence of cultural values influencing the way in which participants viewed the problem and the solutions they proposed. For example, C believed there was a need for indirectness in dealing with problematic behaviour. A felt that a more direct approach was acceptable in her culture among professional people which highlighted the point that individuals may not hold the same values as others in their culture, that variables such as class and educational background can play an important role in forming values and that cultural values are constantly undergoing change. The study confirmed the need for greater explicitness and more feedback and clarification of intent in cross-cultural communication. The implications for teaching and workplace training is that sensitising people to expect different attitudes to direct confrontation (that directness is seen as vulgar, uncivilised and offensive in some cultures and indirectness as evasive, devious and dishonest in others) might avoid exacerbating conflicts. The current model for communicative competence is culture specific but the author (Fitzgerald 1996: 35) concludes that in a multicultural society, “competence in cross-cultural competence must be aspired to”.

Byrne & Fitzgerald (1996) from the Canberra Institute of Technology take up this theme of cross-cultural competence in the management training manual and video *What makes you say that? Cultural diversity at work*. The authors examine cultural diversity in work and business settings through authentic case studies which were filmed in Australia and Asia. Their approach is informed by a number of disciplines, social psychology in particular, which highlight the key role of attitude formation and attitude change as a prerequisite for learning intercultural skills.

They adopt Milton Bennett’s model which suggests a continuum of stages of personal growth that can be used by individuals to diagnose their own level of intercultural
sensitivity (Byrne & Fitzgerald 1996: 7). The six stages are denial, defence, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, integration. The final stage is marked not only by sensitivity to many different cultures but also the flexibility to evaluate situations depending on their cultural context. Judgements are no longer ethnocentric and differences are experienced as a basic and enjoyable part of life. People who reach the stage of integration can act as cultural mediators, explaining one group to another. This developmental model shapes the ordering of the sequences within the films. They make the point that intercultural effectiveness is measured by the ability to perform, which means developing the skills to respond flexibly and appropriately in situations involving people from other cultures.

Much of the material is directed at management and business reinforcing new Australian Government policy directions which promote the idea that cultural diversity is not a burden to be overcome but a resource to be managed, partly in the interests of ‘fair play’ and partly for business advantage as represented by two documents: The Access and Equity Strategy (1985) and the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (1989). Two further reports on employment: Working Nation (1994) and Enterprising Nation (1995) identify managing diversity as one of the key challenges Australian organizations must confront. In addition, restructuring, multiskilling, new technologies, quality management and industrial democracy contribute to a radically different approach to the nature of work and how it is organised, for example, working in teams and meetings have become routine events for everyone not just senior management.

Intercultural skill pays dividends and these dividends relate to greater productivity. Global competition, tourism, Australia’s participation in Asia-based economic forums are compelling arguments for a greater understanding and appreciation of the needs and
interests of different cultural groups in the workplace. Different cultural value systems form a fundamental, yet hidden level of meaning when people from different backgrounds talk together to form the starting point for a discussion on intercultural communication. A helpful distinction is made between generalising and stereotyping:

Working generalisations are flexible and always open to modification in the light of new evidence. In contrast, stereotypes are usually inflexible and need to be protected by rejecting evidence that does not support them (Byrne & Fitzgerald 1996: 16).

Regarding cultural value systems, the broad patterns or frameworks they identify as useful for skill development are the individualist-collectivist dimension, obligations, face, equality and hierarchy, achievement and ascription (the latter is promotion based on the status of the family, ethnic group or university attended), cooperation and competition, ethics, one or more truths (truth is seen as multiple), and lastly, time. Another measure of intercultural competence is the ability to deal with different communication styles which cover the way information is organised (linear or circular), taking turns to speak, different turn-taking styles (overlaps and interruptions), conflict, self-promotion, and body language (proxemics and kinesics). Misunderstandings often occur because of language problems, cultural problems, scripts, and intonation. While a comprehensive list, the authors (Byrne & Fitzgerald 1996: 31) note that this can only be a very incomplete overview of a complex field.

**Discourse hybridity in professional communication**

Next, a set of papers titled *Macquarie Working Papers*, edited by Candlin et al (1995) deals with the issue of hybrid discourses in the professions and is written for an audience
of linguists and professionals. The main topic of the six papers is interpersonal communication and legal discourse. The authors show how legal discourse is not homogeneous but consists of competing discourses. Legal discourse is a hybrid, owing much to law, counselling and therapy. As an example, adjudication and mediation are socio-legal activities and practitioners with social science backgrounds tend to favour the therapeutic approach and those with a legal approach tended to favour the bargaining approach.

The authors draw upon insights derived form current discourse analysts in intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Foucault 1984, Fairclough 1992, Halliday & Hasan 1978, Levinson 1979, Poynton 1985 and Gee 1990). While the papers showed a common theoretical approach (Halliday et al) there was little uniformity in the analytical approach to the data. The tools differed markedly from one paper to the next and the insights gained were modest along the lines that there is a great deal more collaboration in interpersonal communication than first meets the eye but heightened sensitivity to the variety of discourse that lawyers use.

Another significant aspect of professional communication comes from Scollon & Scollon's (1995) chapter on "Ideologies of discourse" in *Intercultural communication*. It is useful to include what they have to say about the Utilitarian discourse system, a discourse system central to the white-collar workplace and in corporations and relevant to the kind of professional discourse, Information Technologists would be expected to use. In their review of books on communication in business, Scollon & Scollon found in most cases, these books explicitly state that the purpose of professional communication is to convey information, and the philosophy of communication which is explicitly stated is that information should be conveyed as clearly, briefly, directly and sincerely as possible.
This has also been described as the C-B-S style for 'clarity', 'brevity' and 'sincerity'. This very focused form of communication is widely put forward as the most effective and even simply the 'normal' form of communication.

C-B-S style is a system of discourse, which represents the style of the preferred forms of discourse within a larger system, which they call the Utilitarian discourse system. The Corporation best exemplifies utilitarian ideology (Sprat 1667, Bentham c18, Stuart Mill c19) which grew out of the enlightenment. As science and technology have risen in the West to their current central position, business has risen with them and this preferred style has been carried with it into near total dominance in our thinking about effective communication (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 99). The Utilitarian concept of the individual is that humans are defined as logical, rational, economic entities and this emphasis on rational, individualistic, economic behaviour led the Utilitarians to believe that technology and invention would be the key to the developing sciences. Utilitarian discourse can be characterised as:

- Anti-rhetorical
- Positivist-empirical
- Deductive
- Individualistic
- Egalitarian
- Public (institutionally sanctioned)

(Scollon & Scollon 1995: 107)

For professional communicators this CBS style is taken for granted as the natural way to communicate. As Scollon & Scollon (1995:118) point out, intercultural communication is
interdiscourse system communication. Communications, which cross discourse system lines are subject to either not being heard or being misinterpreted. The utilitarian ideology would say "the Utilitarian discourse system is both the means of communication and the source of the success in the worldwide market economy. Learn this system and you will thereby become a member of this political and economic world":

Another aspect of this discourse system is that it tells you that all you have to do to participate in it is to communicate clearly, briefly and with sincerity; if you quite deductively say what you want to say and quit, you will have done all that is required of you as a member…what this ideology does not say is that, in fact, it will be impossible to become a part-time or partial member of this discourse system. It will continue to demand complete allegiance. All other communications and views will be rejected as confused, illogical, or non-self evident, the worst rejection.

(Scollon & Scollon 1995:120)

The utilitarian discourse considers scientific thinking to be the best model for all human thinking in all institutions including western and international corporations, schools, businesses, professional associations etc - the role of discourse is simply to state observations and results as clearly and directly as possible. Scollon & Scollon’s description of CBS style corresponds to both ‘institutional talk’ and ‘professional talk’, using the terminology of Roberts and Sarangi (1999) described next.

In their chapter “Hybridity in gatekeeping discourse” from Talk, Work and Institutional Order, Roberts & Sarangi (1999) examine the hybrid modes of talk of oral examinations for the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) in the UK. In this case study, the
authors ‘collaborated with’ the researched as opposed to a ‘research on’ exercise. The RCGP exam board recognised that in the assessment procedures, there was the possibility of discriminatory outcomes for certain groups of minority ethnic candidates.

Roberts and Sarangi (1999: 479) point out that the oral exam is an ‘activity-type’ (Levinson 1979) jointly constructed out of a precarious tension between ideological assumptions about the cultural Other on the one hand, and participants’ moment-by-moment interpretive processes, on the other. They found that “great emphasis is put on ‘markable’ answers which must meet the criteria of rationality and consistency (an institutional concern) but the main thrust of the interview is to assess the values and attitudes of GPs (a professional concern)” . Yet, values, attitudes and self awareness are not easily subject to markable and rational criteria.

All three modes of talk: the personal, professional and institutional, are present in the oral exam but the institutional mode dominates. Since the oral exam is an institutional ‘activity type’, it aligns itself more to the institutional mode rather than to the professional mode. This is in contrast to the mixing of personal experience and professional modes of talk in doctor/patient interaction. Whereas it is fairly straightforward to distinguish the professional mode from the personal experience mode, a distinction between the institutional and the professional is problematic. They quote (1999: 482) Candlin who suggests it is useful to start the process of distinguishing the two. He suggests a contrast between ‘professional’ on the basis of articulated skills and knowledge and ‘institutional’ as the exercise of authority and gatekeeping. Thus the oral exam is a professional activity licensing some to belong but it is also an institutional one exercising its gatekeeping role in assessing who shall have access to the symbolic capital implied in its membership.
Some candidates taking the exam for a second time had recognised that they needed to shift from professional mode (‘what I would do’) to institutional mode (‘I would consider other options’). One candidate’s attempt to use professional/personal experience modes to convey a caring persona was interpreted by the examiners as a weakness because this orientation was not conveyed in a rational accountability statement. The examiners were looking for a response which calls up the institutional mode. This analytic distinction between institutional and professional modes “seemed to be a useful way of monitoring the examiners’ own interview style rather than offering a set of tips on ‘how to interview’ (Roberts & Sarangi 1999: 499).

Conclusion

Over the last decade, the contribution of ethnography, the speech act approach, CA, contextualisation cues/ frames, genre and hybridity in institutional discourse in workplace linguistics offers an inexhaustible array of tools of analysis to choose from. An overall trend reflects a desire to move away from monolithic constructions of culture and the attendant negative consequences of miscommunication ‘problems’, ‘troubles’ to some of the more positive insights about cross cultural communication including collaboration and repair.

A constant theme is the need for communicative flexibility or cultural competence on the part of the main players. An understanding that discourses are hybrid may contribute to a more heightened sensitivity to language demands in the workplace for interviewers and candidates. What is missing so far from this discussion of workplace linguistic issues is a more holistic consideration of communication, made salient with Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. The importance of nonverbal communication is explored further in the next
chapter and completes this overview of the literature on workplace communication in an intercultural context, the purpose of which has been to develop a suitable theoretical framework for analysing the data.
6 The importance of nonverbal communication

Introduction

In the data collected for this investigation, recruiters made frequent reference to the appearance, posture and gestures of candidates in the shortlisting process, making nonverbal communication a critical factor for understanding 'cultural fit'. The starting point for this section then is the interdependence of linguistic and kinesic factors in gatekeeping encounters. Although there is nothing new about the recognition that gestures play a role in communication, for instance, broad linguistics does not ignore space and distance as studied in proxemics, gestures and postural variables as studied in kinesics, and includes paralinguistic phenomena (Kendon 1975: 49). In the workplace linguistic studies reviewed here, however, its importance is somewhat overlooked. As Birdwhistell (1970: 84) puts it, the linguist has tended, like the schedule and questionnaire-bound psychologists and sociologists (as well as anthropologists) to live in a sentence-shaped universe.

The term 'nonverbal communication' as it is currently employed, is most frequently used to refer to all of the ways in which communication is effected between persons when in each other’s presence, by means other than words (Kendon 1981: 3). There are few studies of the nonverbal language of persons in business organizations and few studies of
the distinctive nonverbal styles of cultural groups. Moreover much of the literature is comprised of experimental data collected in contrived sets as exemplified by Mehrabian’s studies of nonverbal communication.

In *Silent Messages* (1971: 42) Mehrabian drew attention to the significance of nonverbal communication with his dramatic conclusion that nonverbal channels such as facial expression, body movement and voice tone contribute to 93% of the “attitudinal” message to the receiver. He produced a simple linear model from conducting a series of experiments in a lab situation which showed that 55% of the message is visual (facial expression, eye contact, gestures), 38% of the message is vocal (voice, tone, volume, pace) and 7% message is verbal (actual words you use). Thus the impact of facial expression is greatest, then the impact of the tone of voice, and finally that of words.

When this is applied to an employment interview, for example, Mehrabian (1971) points out that:

The applicant may say all the right things, but his contradictory behaviour may cost him the job. He may say positively that he is interested in the job, that he will work hard and believes very much in what the company is doing. But the interviewer may find that his bland and expressionless face and voice do little to
confirm this verbalized enthusiasm and may intuitively decide that he does not really mean what he says. As most of us do, in trying to estimate how enthusiastic an applicant really is about getting a particular job, an interviewer tends to give more weight to his nonverbal than to his verbal responsiveness.

Mehrabian (1971: 44)

Participants in an interaction continually distinguish actions that are ‘intentional’ from those that are not. The general rule for understanding the effects of such inconsistent messages is that, when actions contradict words, people rely more heavily on actions to infer another’s feelings (Mehrabian 1971: 56). Or to put it another way, it appears that less-controllable behaviours are assigned greater weight in an interview.

A number of linguistic-kinesic researchers (Birdwhistell 1952, 1970, 1986; Ellis & Beattie 1986; Kendon 1975, 1981, 1990; Goodwin 1981, 1984; Scollon 1981) have shown that within social interaction there is a continual flow of body movement from eye and facial movements to major shifts in postural orientation in tempo with talk. In Birdwhistell’s pioneering work Introduction to kinesics: an annotation system for analysis of body motion and gesture (1952), he attempted to establish the study of bodily movement as a communicative code, analogous to language.
Birdwhistell, who trained as a cultural anthropologist but was influenced strongly by descriptive linguistics (Kendon 1972: 443), observed that body motion is a learned form of communication which is patterned within a culture and which can be broken down into an ordered system of isolable elements which are in turn hierarchically organised as in the case of head nodding:

There are three kinemes of head nod: the "one nod", the "two nod", and the "three nod"; two kinemes of lateral head sweeps, the "one sweep" and the "two sweep"; one of "head cock" and one of "head tilt". There are three junctural, that is connective, kinemes which use the entire head (but with allocines from the head and brow regions), one of "head raise and hold", one of "head lower and hold" and a third of "head position hold". All of these full head kinemes have allocines of intensity, extent, and duration.

(Birdwhistell 1970: 99)

The isolation of gestures and the attempt to understand them by Birdwhistell and his team led to an important finding of kinesic research. At first it was thought that kinesic structure is parallel to language structure. But by the study of gestures in context, it became clear, argues Birdwhistell (1970: 80), that the kinesic system has forms which are like words in language in the sense that there are body behaviours which function like
significant sounds that combine into simple or relatively complex units like words which are combined into much longer stretches of structured behaviour like sentences or even paragraphs. Therefore, nonverbal behavior can exhibit the same kind of patterning as language.

It was his belief that gestures not only do not stand alone as behavioral isolates, those aspects of body motion which are commonly called gestures turn out to be like stem forms in language. That is, there are bound forms which require suffixual, prefixual, infixual or transfixual behavior to be attached to them to determine their function in the interactive process (Birdwhistell 1970: 80).

Small stretches of film and access to a slow-motion projector by 1956 laid the groundwork for Birdwhistell's systematic analysis of the American kinesic system. Tentative distinctions were made between *kine* and *kineme*, *kinemorph* and *kinemorpheme*. The smallest elements are *kinemes*, named in direct analogy to phonemes. *Kinemes* combine in various ways into configurations which he calls *kinemorphs*. Thus a raised fist plus facial display would be called a *kinemorphic construction* using Birdwhistell's language or a 'gestural statement' using Kendon's language (Kendon 1972: 448).
In “The Cigarette Scene”, an interactional sequence of some 18 seconds in duration, Birdwhistell (1986) demonstrated that the study of speech in interaction is part of the study of communicative conduct as a whole and showed that nonverbal signals can replace speech:

...as Doris talks, her right hand drops to the table edge and then past it slightly to the left to adjust her shoe strap before she drops her hand backward to the couch. This movement, with its momentary shifts are still in concert with Gregory’s, who, after Doris’ cigarette is lighted, forms a triangular movement in the air which terminates with the extinguishing of the match and its disposal in the ash tray.

(Birdwhistell 1986: 384)

Not only is the body movement relevant to the content exchanged by the participants, there is a glove-fit coherence with the rhythmic movements of the two participants to the instrumental act of lighting a cigarette. This is very similar to a point reiterated by Kendon (1990: 6) that as an ‘utterance axis’ is established, two individuals involved come to move in synchrony with one another which suggests that the synchronization of movement that results, plays an important part in the maintenance of coordinated
attention. By picking up the rhythm of another person’s movements one can establish a connection.

**Talk and rhythm**

Scollon in a 1981 article “The rhythmic integration of ordinary talk” also drew attention to the importance of rhythm, timing, tempo and pace underlying talk. This stemmed from his interest in understanding gatekeeping encounters where a few critical minutes of face-to-face interaction can affect one’s life. His concern was that many Alaska natives find their participation blocked by ordinary processes of face-to-face interaction within institutions. Scollon relates having had an uneasy feeling that something critical was missing from the discussion about institutional discursive practices which he later pinpointed as the notion of tempo. The relevance of tempo can be seen when the length of pauses taken by speakers in an interview is an indicator of states of anxiety or comfort. Individuals can be stereotyped negatively or positively depending on the length of their pauses. Scollon’s investigations of a sample of situations (table talk, university lectures, radio baseball game etc) of Alaskan natives echoed Erickson’s earlier insight that talk is timed, pauses are critical in negotiating turn exchange, and talk itself is rhythmically timed to a regular underlying metric of tempo (Scollon 1981: 338). Some non-native English speakers superimpose a pattern of relatively few syllables per beat while others superimpose a pattern of a very high density.
In Scollon's view, "institutions are best regarded as conventionalizations of ensemble" (Scollon 1981: 345). By 'ensemble', he means the coming together of the performers in a way that either makes or breaks the performance. It is not just the being together but the doing together. Ensemble in music refers to the extent to which the performers have achieved one mind, and tempo is the guiding element (Scollon 1981: 342). It is ensemble which holds participants together in a mutual attention to the ongoing situation. This has clear implications for outsiders who it can be predicted will have difficulties with the tempo of the interaction in institutional encounters. Speakers in general time their entrances according to the tempo set by preceding speakers and any deviations can affect the success of the encounter.

Elements of nonverbal communication

1. Facial movement

The main kinesic channels of communication are movements of the face, gaze, head and body, posture and gesture. Of these, the face is perhaps the prime source of human nonverbal communication. Birdwhistell (1970: 99) mentions that over 20,000 different facial expressions are possible. There are a number of basic emotions that are conveyed by the same facial expressions but research has indicated that there are important cultural differences in emotional display (Ellis & Beattie 1986: 34). Facial displays can serve to
mark out points of emphasis in speech, they can serve to mark off whole segments of
speech as distinct units or they can provide a commentary on what is being said. Below
is a summary of some significant features to take into account in the data transcription
from Birdwhistell 1970; Goodwin 1981; and Ellis & Beattie 1986.

2. Eye gaze

Just as with facial expression, there are cultural differences in the display of eye gaze.
An important piece of work on gaze in interaction is that of Goodwin (1981) who
considered the way in which participants employ gaze direction, bodily orientation and
posture in the construction of speaker-recipient relations within and between turns in
corversation.

The amount of eye gaze in social interaction is affected by a number of variables. The
amount of mutual gaze in an encounter will increase in proportion to the degree to which
two people are relating to one another and that the amount of mutual gaze will decline in
direct proportion as the individuals want to avoid or withdraw from the relationship.

Generally speaking, people who look more and with longer glances create a more
favourable impression and are liked more than those who do not. People who look away
can be described as ‘defensive’ or ‘evasive’ (Ellis & Beattie 1986: 36).
3. Head movements

With head movements there is a distinct subclass of nonverbal behaviour termed 'emblems' by Efron in 1941. An emblem is usually an intentional deliberate effort to communicate as in the case of head nod meaning 'yes' and head shaking meaning 'no'. However, not all forms of head nods or head shakes are emblems. Head movements can perform different functions in controlling interaction. Birdwhistell (1970: 161) claims brief single head nods serve to sustain the interaction without significant change in the level or content of the communication. Longer lasting single nods could result in a disruption of the flow of speech and an elaboration of an earlier point. Double head nods either modify the speech rate of the speaker or result in the elaboration of a previously established point. Triple head nods were said to result in a termination of the speaker's turn.

4. Posture

The positions of the head, trunk, feet, knees and arms were systematically decoded by James (1932), say Ellis & Beattie (1986), who asked subjects to identify the attitude expressed by each posture of a masked male model and to pinpoint those aspects of the posture which were most significant in the communication. Four main postural categories were identified:
• **approach**: an attentive posture communicated by a forward lean of the body

• **withdrawal**: a negative, refusing or repulsed posture communicated by drawing back or turning away

• **expansion**: a proud, conceited, arrogant or disdainful posture communicated by an expanded chest, erect or backward-leaning trunk, erect head, and raised shoulders

• **contraction**: a depressed, downcast or dejected posture communicated by a forward leaning trunk and bowed head, drooping shoulders and a sunken chest

(Ellis & Beattie 1986: 44)

Posture is learned and passed on from person to person and from culture to culture. Contact between cultures can also lead to a certain amount of diffusion of postural habits. Ellis & Beattie (1986: 41) cite the example of the ‘formal British’ becoming less formal posturally as a function of the influence of American pop culture.

5. **Hand movements and gestures**

There are a number of different classification schemes for describing hand movements and gesture but a useful system developed by Ekman and Friesan (1969) in Ellis & Beattie, distinguishes between ‘emblems’, ‘illustrators’, ‘regulators’ and ‘adaptors’:
• **emblems**: nonverbal acts which have a direct verbal translation and used with full awareness eg a salutation, a kiss

• **illustrators**: hand movements that are directly tied to speech and which illustrate the message content and rhythmically accent the ideas. They cannot be replaced by a word or phrase and they usually fall outside the speaker’s awareness eg a man who is talking excitedly and as he does so, his arms gesticulate vigorously

• **regulators**: particular hand movements which maintain and regulate the back and forth nature of speaking and listening between the interactants. They are usually on the periphery of awareness eg an “attempt-suppression signal” which suppresses a listener’s turn-taking attempts

• **adaptors**: hand movements which are rarely intended to communicate eg nose rubbing, smoking, driving a car, movements relevant to attacking or protecting oneself from attack.

(Ellis & Beattie 1986: 47-52)

**Cross-cultural gestures and meaning**

Apart from at least six facial expressions found throughout the world (happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger and disgust) which would suggest that they are inborn rather than learned (Collins 1999: 26) gestures do not carry an invariable meaning just as no word has a precise meaning:
Insofar as I have been able to determine, just as there are not universal words, no sound complexes, which carry the same meaning the world over, there are no body emotions, facial expressions, or gestures which provoke identical responses the world over.

Birdwhistell (1970: 34)

If no body motion or gesture can be regarded as a universal symbol, this has implications for transcribing linguistic and kinesic data. It would be linguistic naivete says Birdwhistell (1970: 186) to assume that each gesture eg ‘knit brow’ has a ‘real’ meaning just as words are supposed to have. Not only is kinesic activity systematically patterned but the pattern varies significantly from culture to culture and even from subgroup to subgroup. As Kendon (1975: 5) notes, trying to "feel" Slavic or French or Indian requires an American to reconstitute his mouth-holding muscles and to literally alter his appearance which can cause discomfort. Even with the minimum of cross-cultural data at their disposal, the evidence is clear says Birdwhistell (1970: 190), that cultures will tend to concentrate activity in certain body areas and permit the activity of others only under certain very limited circumstances. This may account for the relative absence of inventories of cross-cultural repertoires for posture.
The integration of nonverbal communication with talk

Birdwhistell (1970: 110) admits even the preliminary data made him face the difficulty of the simultaneous observation of linguistic and kinesic material. Gestures are hard to classify and as Crystal (1985) points out, linguistics or kinesics as disciplines have been unable to develop a methodology which is bias free to avoid the pitfalls of ethnocentric observation and extrapolation. In addition, the extent to which one can handle body language by distinguishing between ‘kinemes’, ‘kines’ and ‘allokines’ is controversial as analytic criteria are less clear than in phonology, and kinesic transcriptions raise several problems of interpretation. And as Birdwhistell (1970: 34) himself makes the point, there are no gestures which carry an absolutely denotative meaning. Thus any linguistic-kinesic method remains a somewhat crude instrument. The implication for transcription of data is that the breadth of depth of transcription will depend a lot on the research question and that any interpretation of body movement will unavoidably be culture bound.

It can be assumed however, that people in interaction behave in highly organized, patterned ways. The first step in any analysis is not to record everything as objectively as possible. If the pattern can be dissected in a single episode, then the way in which the pattern illuminates itself in other episodes can be compared. In looking at head movements, it is not necessary to plot out every deviation of head position from the vertical, every degree of rotation or tilt. Instead, says Kendon:
One seeks to note recurrent patterns of movement which function equivalently or in contrast to one another. Some of these are immediately recognizable as "headnod" or "headshakes". Others may be detected only after repeated viewing, as when one comes to notice that a speaker may tend to end a spoken utterance with a head tilt of a particular sort whenever he asks a question.

(Kendon 1990: 36)

Within the course of a given interaction, participants may engage in a series of shifts in bodily posture but throughout, these posture shifts are within a certain range and within a certain spatial location. It is also important to note that not all of the observed shifts of the human body are of equal significance.

Conclusion

By recognising the incompleteness of studies of word exchange as measures of social interaction, linguistic-kinesic investigators have come up with a few different approaches to making body language an integral part of the communicative system. This process has been aided by the camera, videotape and slow motion analysis. Nevertheless, linguistic-kinesic methodology remains quite crude, although an evolving and less compartmentalized field. Since people regularly operate with multiple frames of
reference, they are oriented to a multiplicity of signals. As a consequence, it follows that linguists need to take a more holistic approach to the interaction, paying more attention to facial expressions, eye contact, the degree of tension in posture and probing for more information when there are discrepancies between verbal and nonverbal cues. Second, it is desirable that the whole body of all the participants should be kept in the frame at all times.

In the present study, a constraint of this naturally occurring data relating to Indian Information Technologists is that only the candidate’s body is visible in the videotape so a linguistic-kinesic transcription is limited to the movements of the head, trunk, arms and hands. Facial changes and details such as eye movements, gaze, and rhythm are omitted since the quality of the videotapes did not allow their accurate transcription. It would not be necessary to go into anywhere near the detail of Birdwhistell’s kinemorphic configurations since nonverbal communication is only one aspect of ‘cultural fit’, albeit an important one. What is considered significant in the transcription is for the most part guided by the comments of the recruiters themselves.

**Summary of Theoretical framework**

Together, Critical Discourse Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Bourdieu’s theory of language, workplace linguistic studies, studies of nonverbal language form the basis of
an interdisciplinary linguistic framework for analysing the data in chapters eight, nine and ten. This is the scholarly field for investigating the salient features of 'cultural fit'. I began with a definition of 'critique', and explored what it means to take a critical approach to workplace studies. Critical Discourse Analysis takes into account power relations between the dominant and minority group, and considers ideological factors such as 'new capitalism', along with a more detailed analysis of the institutional site and workplace practices.

The virtual absence of studies to do with studies of interaction in an intercultural context in CDA, led next to an exploration of the significant trends within Interactional Sociolinguistics where there is well-developed body of literature for understanding the job interview and traces the reasons for the changing nomenclature from "cross-cultural difficulties" and "miscommunications" to "mismatches". Early studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics did not take account of multiple identities, a reality in a multicultural society in Australia, as in Britain. Nor did they take into account the multi-layered nature of job interview practice which led to Roberts and Sarangi's (1999) elaboration of discourse hybridity in the interview – the institutional, the professional and the personal.

To better understand the part that class and agency play in the gatekeeping encounter, Roberts and Sarangi (1995) point to Bourdieu whose ideas make connections between
family and schooling practices, which are based on class, which in turn, determines one’s cultural capital, of which communicative flexibility can play a pivotal role. Bourdieu’s analysis while useful for an understanding of ‘cultural capital’, ‘habitus’ and ‘agency’, is too abstract and not empirical enough for my purposes.

For this reason, I looked at recent Workplace linguistic studies especially in Australia, characterised by their focus on naturally occurring data but also by their omission of nonverbal aspects of the communication, apart from some paralinguistic observations. Chapter six dealt with some of the pioneering work done on the importance of nonverbal communication from a range of disciplinary perspectives which were relevant to the videotaped interviews.

The central themes in this discussion overall emerge as being the importance of balancing macro considerations (institutions/power) with micro considerations (interaction including body language/power) and the difficulty of extricating the individual from the culture. Institutions and cultures are not monolithic or static constructs. Instead, within certain constraints they are more likely to be dynamic, constantly shifting and open to negotiation. On the one hand, Goffman reminds us, participants are able to manage their own appearance and manner according to conventions, tailoring themselves to the corporate world to increase their chance of eligibility. On the other hand, Indian
Information Technologists do not share institutional assumptions, nor do they share assumptions about the nature of discursive practices within these institutions. The institution is a site of ‘power struggle’ but there are distinct limits to how much the dominant discourse in institutional settings is open to contest and little space for negotiating differences, as institutions are much slower to change. Nonetheless, within these innumerable constraints, there are resources, which are available to an individual so that they can effect a transformation of their habitus.

The work of Goffman (1959), Gumperz (1979, 1992), Bourdieu (1991) and Roberts & Sarangi (1995, 1999) has been presupposed in much of the analysis that follows in the data analysis. I have been influenced in particular by Goffman’s notion of ‘frames’, ‘impression management’, and what happens frontstage/backstage; Gumperz’s ‘contextualisation cues’ and the importance of prosody and pitch. The recent work of Sarangi & Roberts (1999) bridges many of the gaps between the different discourse approaches (‘frame mismatch’, ‘discourse hybridity’, ‘institutional order and workplace interaction’) described above.

In chapters eight to ten, I apply the ideas discussed in the last five chapters, describing the nature of the partnership between the interaction (frontstage) and the larger institutional order (backstage) in an intercultural context. My goal is to throw light on the meaning of
the recruiters' expression 'cultural fit' in relation to Indian Information Technologists.

But first I begin with an explanation of the research design including a description of the different sources of data collected.
7 Research Design

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the process of obtaining data on the recruitment of Indian Information technologists for employment in the Australian workplace for the Y2K project. The research design draws on multiple data sources, first, the collection of naturally occurring data, in the form of ten videotapes of job interviews conducted in Bangalore, India (the primary data). The second data source is in the form of focus group commentary on these interviews collected from a recruitment agency in Melbourne (the supplementary data). The third data source is in the form of fieldnotes including interviews with relevant professionals and is intended to fill out the background to the multiple issues raised in the associated fields of Human Resources and Recruitment.

This chapter is divided into three sections reflecting the three types of data collected. It should be noted that there are two distinct functions for the primary data and supplementary data. The purpose of the primary data - video footage of the job interview - is to establish 'technical fit' while the purpose of the focus group commentary, is to establish 'cultural fit': "Is this person going to fit into the Australian workplace?" Transcripts of the interviews and focus group commentaries are provided in Appendix 1, 2, and 3.

The focus on interactive discourse in the interviews and focus groups necessitates a qualitative approach to the study as opposed to one undertaken within a positivistic paradigm. Qualitative studies focus on the meticulous description and explanation of a sample of naturally occurring data from a small number of individuals, sometimes only one (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 170). As pointed out earlier, the kind of investigation undertaken here is not a neutral inquiry. The marketplace is not neutral for the knowledge of English alone leads to jobs with social and economic prestige. The set of discourse practices
involved in this field including institutional, corporate, recruitment, job interview to name a few, involve the interplay of power and knowledge which leads to the construction of sets of understandings which legitimate social attitudes and practices. The discourse analysis performed here and the next two chapters is in a highly specific setting, the job interview, and whatever is discovered, is not the whole truth but a particular linguistic perspective, drawing on a wide variety of sources.

Some quantitative data is included in the form of biodata (See Table 7) which is intended to identify some of the variables. The problem of establishing validity is minimised if variability is minimised. In the case of the Indian information technologists, the variables are limited to the same ethnic group, the setting, the interviewer, his questions, the candidate’s skill level, and the recruiters’ perceptions. In the case of the recruiters who view the videotapes and shortlist the candidates, variables include age, gender, socio-economic status, level of qualifications, length of work experience, overseas work experience and so on. A limited profile of the recruitment consultants can be drawn up, mainly for the purpose of knowing whether recruiters speak a second language or have worked overseas. It was not possible to obtain similar data on the candidates themselves mainly for logistical reasons. It would have been interesting to know more about candidates’ socio-economic status and overseas work experience to see if it does indeed correlate with recruiter judgments about ‘cultural fit’. But it is unlikely whether such information would impact on the shortlisting process in view of the fact that the recruiters in Melbourne make split-second judgements about ‘fit’ from the video-taped interviews. Candidates were interviewed in Bangalore and once the videotapes are viewed their shelf life is short-lived. They are viewed against current vacancies and rarely, if ever, viewed again.

Even though many observations and insights in this investigation are culture specific to Southern Indians, it is possible to extrapolate some overarching issues relevant to overseas-
trained professionals as a whole for instance, the shared background knowledge of the communicative style favoured by recruiters. This, in turn, has to be balanced against the danger of over-generalising by assuming that this set of data is representative of a larger social phenomena. However, as shown in chapter one, studies in intercultural communication have verified and reinforced the claim that the actual ability to communicate depends on much more than a knowledge of the grammatical features of English. The studies have shown that misunderstandings or mismatched frames in communication that so often occur between members of ethnically distinct minority groups and the majority group often arise, because of a lack of cultural and contextual knowledge concerning the procedures and the conventions underlying the job interview.

1. The primary data: a collection of naturally occurring discourse

Setting up the project

This research project took place over a period of three and a half years from 1996-1999 in a period of large funding cuts to migrant resources and job skill training courses in Australia. A number of migrant resource centres and recruitment agencies were approached in Melbourne for data - by phone, letter and in person. As the migrant resource centres were gradually being closed down, recruitment agencies emerged as a more likely source of data. At this stage of the enquiry, many recruiters I spoke to, though initially enthusiastic, often baulked when pressed for data and cited legal reasons from senior management when the time came for dates to be fixed for recording.

A year later in December 1997, a large international recruitment agency which cannot be named for reasons of confidentiality, which specialises in information technology in the city, offered access to their videotapes after many months of delicate negotiation incorporating face-to-face meetings, phone calls and email correspondence. Previous personal contacts
proved vital to gaining access. It was then necessary for me to establish a relationship with senior management to gain supplementary data in the form of focus groups. I had to persuade them of the usefulness of such a study and establish a climate of trust, as well as demonstrate that there would be a degree of reciprocity in the relationship through the exchange of information and contacts. I undertook, as part of the ethics procedure, to provide feedback in the form of a seminar about the findings and to provide a copy of the thesis to the agency.

The research site

The recruitment company is a subsidiary of a larger multinational employment agency which recruits information technology personnel from India and other parts of Asia including Singapore and Hong Kong for large corporate clients like IBM, Wang, Fujitsu and Telstra. The agency has set up a small office in Bangalore, India, and videotapes of job interviews conducted there are sent back to Melbourne and Detroit, Chicago on a continuous basis. I was offered access to these video-tapes which form a small portion of their overall clientele. At the recruitment agency, recruitment consultants make quick judgements about who will be shortlisted for their clients, regardless of whether they are Australians or overseas-trained professionals.

The interview context

Both the setting and the interviewer remain the same. The ‘setting’ for the recruitment interview is a hotel sitting room in Bangalore, functional and sparsely furnished. The main props are the sofa and the video camera. The interviewer has an English accent and has a background in Information Technology. The goal of the interview in Bangalore is to check the candidate’s technical skill against their resume.
The interviews are videotaped in such a manner that only the candidate, seated on a hotel sofa, is visible. The interviewer’s voice is heard but the camera focus remains on the candidate for the duration. The dynamic between the interviewer and candidate is then only partially visible. The candidates’ responses to questions about their technical competence and their accompanying body language is of major interest to the recruiter. The recruiter judgements are about the candidates’ performance, not the interviewer’s, although clearly, the interviewer’s performance can affect that of the interviewee.

The interviewer (T) at the time of the recordings had spent three months in Bangalore already with his family. T is British, in his fifties and has a background in information technology: “He has been around computers most of his life” (Company executive 24/6/98). The employer is called a ‘client’ and the potential employee is called a ‘candidate’.

Each interview is videotaped and the videos have the name and skill set on them and are sent back to Melbourne to be viewed. The interviewer’s face is not shown. T’s job in Bangalore is to establish and verify the candidate’s ‘technical fit’ in the field. The recruiters’ job in Melbourne is to establish the ‘cultural fit’ because they know their clients well and are looking for a match. The recruiters have had training in Behavioural Interviewing Technique and do not necessarily have an IT background.

The job interviews average about five minutes in length. The interviews begin and end abruptly and do not include the conventional openings and closings. A typical transcript goes like this (Table 3):
Table 3

Job Interview Transcript - Candidate 9

01 IR: Perhaps you can tell me about this project you're working on for PTS.

02 IE: Yeah. Actually the project belongs to everybody, because everybody is a client of ( ) Reporter's Project (right) actually that report is going to be throughout the world. They want the date form to be reform throughout the world.

03 IR: Right.

04 IE: ( ) slashed ( ) at the moment. Because it's a little bit confusing in Japan like the... so they won't be having um definite which is understandable throughout the world. So they made a... they formed a decision ( ) throughout the world. This GD in it ( ) precise ( )

05 IR: Right.

06 IE: This GD... uh... they actually did this date form and they changed 2 character. Right MX represents character. Today's date is what ( )... Ninth. Today is represented GD MX as zero nine hyphen zero... uh... SC. This is trans ( ) of that. You isolate this. So we have to write a... some quoting for the negotiation of the... date uh... languages and all this involved. Cobalt, when I was just formulating programs JC was ( ) uh... and then DB2, databases DB2. The impact is 911 connection. Uh... 911 connection represents the law of possibilities and the person in Japan for instance ( ) program. A lot of possibilities... like a person from Singapore and in Japan ( ) So it... the batch uh... batch programming, put the lock in the database. Particular table uh... You put a lock. So this modelling program won't be able to access this database, so we are ( ) on the deadlock conditions in all the programs, the modelling program, the batch programs. So we wrote the 911 Connection ( ).

07 IR: Right, okay. In... the the summary of your skills, you say you've also had some exposure to IMSDB.

08 IE: Well DB actually. IMSDC.

09 IR: Just DC? Okay... uh... So database you've been working with is DB2?

10 IE: Yeah, database is DB2.

11 IR: Okay... uh... tell me, so the previous projects' work you did with DB2?

12 IE: Yah... all the previous projects all DB2

13 IR: Right. Just tell me in a little more detail

14 IE: Uh... ( ) projects in all DB2 uh... we use X DB2 and we use Workbench, well for testing. For ( ) Project, in the case of ( ) Project, we use Workbench. That case we will have everything in X DB and we started using that one (right) Once again we look to the effect and we once again test.
Right, okay, was that an existing database or...?

Yeah, existing database. And now guarantee we are involved in changing all the JCL. Actually responding to COBOL. Actually it is a 3 year project. And next phase it must ( ) in the sense, they want to make uniform this thing, any convention, for example they reported us uh... for example, ( .420) in order to name a particular name, just common to whole world, not a separate separate world, that is not to get ( ) no change. That is the second phase, we are going to do that one. Meanwhile we are doing the production dataset. This thing is there; JCL is there. We are doing all the production ( ) we are converting (right — clears throat)

Okay, in your current role you're saying your project needs a team leader (yeah) and the team is six (yeah) Just take me through what that involves you doing.

Yah, first of all, what I have to do. I have to take all the programs from a... this this project has different sub systems. What we... I have to pick some 3 programs from each sub system. Then I have to try first, if everything goes fine then I have to to leave that thing. That's the way we have to proceed. After that all the ( ) follows that way. First thing I have to explain ( ) Then effort sheet. Weekly I have to send an effort sheet to the client. Then they say, who are the ( ) which this program has to go like this... the location (right) ah then time duration for each program, how much duration we have to take. Then conference program... I have that under conference program. We have 2 conference programs, one is one Wednesday, one is on Friday. Wednesday is about 2 O'clock. We'll be delivering on Thursday, the previous Thursday. We'll be having a walk through on Wednesday (right) next Wednesday. So I have to communicate with them and we'll be having walk through compare members. Here we having compare members. Their renewals will also be having compare members. Then we have a work through about the program. Some ( ) some changes has to be done. We will follow the thin thing and we will make the changes and we send it to the client.

Right: the activities you're doing you need in the team are only part of what you do. You're still involved in the design?

Yeah everything I'm involved. I'm involved in coding. I'm involved in testing.. plus uh I relay the things then they'll be following me.

I have to take that responsibility.

Okay... on the technical side, what would you say your strengths are, your best program would be?

Um... BL and Cobalt.

And database would be?

DB2
The nine other interviews in this sample follow a similar format. The language is technical and questions take the form of describing what the candidate was doing in his previous job and tend to be along the lines of “Tell me about the projects you have worked on”. The interviewer could ask more standard questions like “Where do you expect to be in five years’ time? Why are you interested in this job? Why do you want to move to Australia?” But in this situation, the interviewer’s job is to check their technical qualifications and check their literacy in the field by how well they answer. The interviewer sets out to ascertain the breadth of their experience and what particular contribution they made to the teams: “when you say ‘we’ do you mean ‘you’?”

The sample

The ten candidates were being recruited for a short-term project - a specific problem concerned with the manual conversion of mainframes (the so-called millennium bug) which refers to the potential for computer systems to collapse at the turn of the century because their internal clocks are not programmed to recognise the new millennium.

Many operating systems and programs, from the COBOL code running giant databases to most copies of Quicken before the year 2000 could not calculate four-digit dates. The year 2000 would appear simply as 00, leading the program to treat any post-millennial date as a repeat of the 1900s. There are packages to make the alterations but an estimated 40% of the work had to be done manually. There are three kinds of employment for short-term contracts at this point - onsite, onsite and offshore. In this study, I am dealing with offshore employment from the perspective of Indian Information Technologists and onsite employment from the perspective of the Australian client.
The current IT skills shortage has been well documented but for the years 97/98, Indian IT professionals made up 87 out of 1288 overseas born arrivals coming from mostly the UK (320), the USA (232), South Africa (76) and the Philippines (62) (Source: Centre for Population and Urban Research 9/10/00). Birrell (2000: 81) points out that the skill selection system has been structured such that those who hold university qualifications in occupations deemed to be ‘in-demand’ in Australia, currently including IT professionals, are almost certain to be accepted for permanent residence (Table 4).

Table 4

Permanent and Long Term Arrival of Computer Professionals by birthplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial years</th>
<th>1998-99</th>
<th>1999-00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
<td>Permanent Arrival</td>
<td>Long Term Arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGAPORE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONG KONG</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>1,217</td>
<td>3,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>3,507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Canberra, 2000.

However, the Government’s preference for computer professionals has to be weighed against the reality that Indian IT professionals are perceived by recruiters in this multinational agency as being “hard to sell”. For instance, the account manager whose job it is to liaise with clients finds out what their needs are in IT ie “I need five KICKS, COBOL, DB2 analysts, programmers whatever it might be” so that the account manager comes back to their team who go about finding them, maybe running ads, searching the database, looking on the internet and then all the means available to them to find these resources and then present them to the client. If the client likes them they say they’d like to interview them. It then goes through various processes culminating in being hired if the ‘fit’ is right.
Indian Information Technologists are “hard to sell”

The problem that emerges is twofold: first of all, recruiters in Melbourne are reluctant to look at the videos. They would rather look at their data base for the local resources first:

...Look I'd rather keep looking for the needle in the haystack than use these resources from India is my feeling

and

We’re not even good at getting people to look at the bloody videos... people think India’s a bit far away, a bit hard. I'll look at the local market

Secondly, recruiters find it difficult to ‘sell’ them to their clients:

Well, it’s also educating your clients as well. A lot of clients would prefer, because they see it as easier to get resources from Australia rather then go international

(Recruiter comments Focus Group 2: 8/10/98)

An underlying problem was that they find Indian Information Technologists difficult to understand but when the term ‘cultural fit’ is unpacked, intelligibility is just one factor. There are other considerations to do with how they will fit into the workplace and these are multifactorial. These multiple factors form the basis of chapters eight and nine, where a macro/micro analysis of the data is undertaken designed to explore both the spoken and unspoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’.
"Market forces can be an overriding factor"

The issue of ‘cultural fit’ can be overridden by the client’s urgency of requirement. ‘Cultural fit’ can be more important for permanents as a typical three months’ contract is very much a skill-based placement initially:

When you’re looking at a permanent employee that ‘cultural fit’ is probably a lot more important, I mean we would really want to know who they’re working with, what culture of the place is like, young, conservative, whatever and that becomes more of an issue but when you’re putting someone in for a short-term contract it’s much more skill-based in terms of who you put in because it’s less important that they’re long term ‘cultural fit’.

FG1 4/9/98

There are a number of other variables in the labour market operating as well. Just to name a few: the ideal candidate is determined by country, state, by a client, backroom or frontroom, ‘technical fit’ and ‘cultural fit’ (Company Executive 1/10/98). In other words, while culture is a significant factor in the shortlisting process, market forces can be an overriding factor at the recruitment stage. For instance, two candidates who were placed in Sydney through another Software House were perceived to have worse English than those in the corpus and had various other communication problems but nevertheless, they were selected “because the skillmix was right and the price was right and there was the urgency” (Sydney Company Executive 30/6/98).

None of these candidates were selected at the time the videos were first sent and there is no second chance. The success rate is very low - hundreds have been interviewed but very few selected. An agency in Sydney receives 400 local resumes and 240 from overseas in a week and that was in response to the internet (Executive 30/6/98). A few had been placed in Sydney, a handful in Melbourne, more in Singapore. The result of setting up an office in
Bangalore has been disappointing for the agency whose job it is also to promote the candidates to the clients who make the final selection from a shortlist. They cite the preference for local sources first even though there is a shortage of information technologists – “Employers are not feeling the pain enough” (Melbourne Company Executive 24/6/98).

Sample size

Sufficient instances of cross-cultural data, which are authentic, are difficult to collect. A methodological problem at the outset was to decide what constitutes a large enough sample for a macro/micro analysis of data? One constraint would depend on whether the analysis is a clause by clause transcription or a unit by unit transcription (a unit in Conversation Analysis is considered to be a turn). It is possible that one interaction alone might reveal enough information to make generalisations about the genre, reveal the nature of conflict and communication breakdown or detect repair strategies. As in fact Schegloff (1988: 442) makes the case out for a single case conjecture:

a single fragment (of talk) serves to launch a proposal about how a certain mechanism operates in ordinary conversation. Grounded as it is in a single occurrence, I characterise this proposal as 'a conjecture'.

But what if the one sample turns out to be atypical or unusual in some way? A sample of five or more can verify a pattern. A quick scan of the literature on intercultural communication in the workplace reveals that the samples are quite small. For instance, Marriot (1990: 33) makes the point that most lack a base in rigorous empirical data but, on occasions, perceptive observations are incorporated. Marriott (1990: 57) for her analysis of business negotiation between Australian and Japanese business personnel relied on one video-tape and two follow-up interviews and makes the claim that the sample in the study
may be representative of a common occurrence in respect to the disparity in negotiating experience.

Beal (1990) in her study of cross-cultural communication between native speakers of French and native speakers of Australian English in the workplace was allowed by a large French company to interview and tape some of their employees in the first stage of the project. In the second stage, she spent several days observing and taping interactions between various people and was thus able to collect examples of interaction with all the possible combinations of French/French, Australian/Australian and French/Australian. The data yielded a number of examples where there was actually some amount of tension or awkward moments.

In his 1992 study, Gumperz reports on a comparative study of two job-training program interviews recorded in the early 1980s in the British Midlands. Hawthorne (1992) analyses the videotaped job interview performance of two East European engineers who answer questions poorly in interviews conducted by the Institution of Engineers, Australia. The two videotapes are roleplays conducted at the Institution of Engineers and in these roleplays, two senior members of the Institution of Engineers act as interviewers.

Neil (1994) collected her data from the Mercy Hospital in Melbourne, a research site where there was a wide range of recent and more established ethnic groups from different backgrounds working in the laundries and kitchens who regularly interacted, and where there was also a degree of communication with Anglo-Australians. She does not specify how many informants there were but mentions that she collected 36 hours of tapes which amounted to a corpus of over 60 transcripts.
The data samples briefly outlined here are few ranging from one to an indeterminate number. Nevertheless, as Marriott (1990) points out above, useful observations and conclusions can be drawn from even small samples. For this investigation, however, a sample of one alone would not be sufficient for investigating the notion of 'cultural fit' which entails looking for a wide range of communicative phenomena. To understand the job interview genre alone, more than one data sample is necessary in order to discern the common patterns and critical moments. It would be appropriate to look at a few interviews, limiting the variables as much as possible. The current sample of ten authentic interviews collected for this project is therefore considerably larger than most of the samples mentioned above and lends itself to a systematic and comprehensive study.

Transcription conventions

The unit of analysis for the primary data and supplementary data is turn by turn. However, the primary data requires a more detailed linguistic and kinesic analysis as judgements about 'cultural fit' are being made, not only about candidates' speech but also about their body language. Comments by recruiters show that body language is an important factor in deciding 'cultural fit', for example: "His body language is fine", "He seems a little more relaxed", "He's not moving his hands", "Some of his body language is very good I think". So for the purpose of analysing 'cultural fit', an analytic problem is how to relate linguistic phenomena (talk) with non-linguistic phenomena (non-verbal). Some turns can be nonverbal, as in the turn of the head or a hesitation and too much head-nodding can violate cultural norms in an Australian setting.

The transcription conventions for nonverbal language are either too detailed as in the case with Birdwhistell's (1952) notation system or else, is not widely agreed upon. Auer (1992:14-16) in an article on John Gumperz' approach to contextualisation provides a
model of combining kinesic information with turn-taking in a shaded box which is followed by a spoken turn:

Right elbow propped up on the table, left arm rested on lap, sits upright on chair, smiling.

In this discourse analysis I include details of talk, appearance, proxemics, gaze, and gesture relevant to the specific situation being analysed.

The speech in the interview is very fast and it is to be noted that there are many omissions in the transcript, especially technical jargon. After transcribing the interviews to my native speaker limits, I employed two Indian postgraduate students to further transcribe the interviews to capture the numerous omissions. The Indian transcribers encountered similar difficulties to me in picking up some technical expressions and phrases. In terms of judgments about ‘cultural fit’, such omissions can point to a problem with intelligibility from the native speaker perspective. The omissions which are not transcribable are indicated by the brackets ( ), overlapped talk by [ ] and highly stressed words are capitalised.

2. Supplementary data in the form of focus groups

The videotapes show an interesting dynamic between the interviewer and candidate in India but a more interesting and less tangible dynamic is the relationship between the candidate and the recruiter back in Australia. Since the videotaped interview forms the basis of the recruiter’s decision whether or not to shortlist a candidate for a client, it is necessary to explore what recruiters are thinking as they do this. An additional data set was therefore required and it was determined an appropriate research method for this task was the focus group. Consent was given by the agency to record a group of recruiters narrating their thoughts as they reviewed the videotapes.
A focus group is essentially a group interview, held to gather data about attitudes usually with 6-10 participants, and a moderator following a pre-determined topic. Focus groups are an increasingly well-known method for collecting qualitative data (Greenbaum 1993; Kreuger 1994; Morgan 1997; Myers 2000). They give participants the freedom to discuss judgments amongst themselves rather than just responding to questions. A strength of this data collection technique is that it relies on interaction in the group to produce the data which will be an invaluable source of insight into complex behaviours and judgments. A corresponding weakness pointed out by Morgan (1997:15) is that the individual can be influenced by the group in both a tendency toward conformity, in which some participants withhold things that they might say in private, and a tendency toward ‘polarization’ in which some participants express more extreme views in a group than in private. A goal is homogeneity in background but at the same time avoiding homogeneity in attitudes. Identical perspectives on a topic would lead to a flat, unproductive discussion. Notwithstanding these risks, the discussions in the focus group sessions turned out to be very frank and lively. Five sessions were conducted with the opportunity to review two videotaped interviews per session. This appeared to be an optimum number as, by the end, the range of issues appeared to be exhausted and further sessions might well have become repetitive.

The responses of the recruiters to the videotaped job interviews in Bangalore are, in effect, simulations which involve people being themselves in enacted situations. Simulated gatekeeping data is open to the criticism that it is set up. However, according to O’Grady (1994: ix) simulations create to a considerable degree the demands of dynamic, authentic discourse. On the one hand, the recruitment consultants shift constantly from a professional mode of talking into a conversational one and it is often at these points, one can see the social control happening. The direction of the responses to some extent is shaped
by the moderator, myself, as researcher. As an involved participant, this was probably less
disturbing than being a fly on the wall observer. As pointed out by Cameron et al (1992: 5),
the subjectivity of the researcher should not be seen as a regrettable disturbance but as one
element in the human interactions that comprise the study.

To highlight some of the salient components of the two communicative events covered in
more detail in the next two chapters: The ‘genre’ is firstly the interview – Indian
information Technologists are interviewed offshore for short-term contracts in Australia.
Videotapes of the interview are sent to Melbourne where the candidates are shortlisted. In
the interview, the ‘topic’ is the technical fit of the candidate, specifically their experience of
mainframe conversion for the Y2K project. In the shortlisting process, the topic is cultural
fit. The interview has a screening function, that is, candidates are checked to see if they have
the requisite technical experience and in the case of the shortlisting process, the purpose is
to make a judgment about whether the candidate will fit into the Australian workplace (Table
5).

Table 5

The interview and the shortlisting process serve two different purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TECHNICAL FIT</th>
<th>CULTURAL FIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Videotaped Job Interviews</td>
<td>Shortlisting – Recruiter Judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 1</td>
<td>Focus Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 2</td>
<td>Focus Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 3</td>
<td>Focus Group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 4</td>
<td>Focus Group 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 5</td>
<td>Focus Group 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRONTSTAGE TALK</td>
<td>BACKSTAGE TALK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two different goals of the interview and the shortlisting, i.e. technical fit and cultural fit, correspond approximately to ‘frontstage talk’ and ‘backstage talk’ using Goffman’s (1959) terminology. This distinction is elaborated upon in the following two chapters, eight and nine.

**The recording process**

Five focus group sessions were carried out on company time lasting between half an hour and an hour with time to re-view two videotaped job interviews. These sessions took place approximately a month apart and were audio-recorded using a high quality Marantz stereo cassette recorder Model CP 230/CP430. The microphone was able to pick up the interaction around a large corporate table. Membership of the group fluctuated from session to session depending on recruiter commitments but on average, there were three recruiters to comment on the videotapes. A decision was made to audiotape rather than videotape the recruiters’ responses to the videotaped job interviews as this was judged to be less intrusive, and a request to videotape the sessions would have jeopardised the cooperation of the participants and lessened the spontaneity of the interaction.

**Ethical issues**

In addition to the University’s Ethics Committee clearance, legal clearance from the University solicitor was obtained to allay any fears that the material would be in any way dealt with commercially but used solely for academic purposes. Written permission was sought from the company to copy the videotapes of interviews held with potential candidates in Bangalore, India. The candidates had previously handed over the rights to the material to the company for them to use for any reasonable purpose. I would have liked to gain consent directly from the candidates themselves and interview them for their perception of the interviews but this scenario presented some unsurmountable obstacles, chiefly the use of company time to contact candidates in India which would have most certainly exhausted the
company’s goodwill at an early and crucial stage. However, to protect the identity of the company, the recruiters and the candidates, ‘confidentiality’ in the ethics procedure requires that all names and any other information which might identify participants be removed from any excerpts quoted. Candidates are identified by number (1, 2, 3 etc), the Interviewer by his initial (T) and the recruiters by their initials.

**Empowering research methods**

Empowering research is characterised by interactive methods and takes into account the subjects’ own agenda for research and provides feedback to subjects (Pauwels 1994: 228). Cameron et al (1992) spell out the means by which research can be used to the benefit of both researcher and researched. The three basic principles put forward are 1) the use of interactive methods 2) the importance of subjects’ own agenda and 3) question of feedback and sharing knowledge. Regarding principle number two, an executive informed me before the focus group sessions began that he would give the project his full support because “there is an economic advantage in it” and he had been wanting to set up links with universities (Company executive 1/10/98).

Participants showed goodwill, good humour and openness in the face of outside scrutiny and intrusion in their workplace. The group was mixed in terms of age, gender and experience. Some were beginners and some were ‘old hands’. The unofficial leader of the group who had twenty years’ experience in the profession had been a former high school teacher and was keen to educate the younger members of the group. He also had the most exposure to Indian Information Technologists, had travelled to India and was keen to promote this particular group of candidates to his colleagues.

The other members of the group professed a lack of familiarity with the group of Indian Information Technologists (and few had travelled overseas) but were open to learning more
about them so that the focus group turned out to have an educational function. As mentioned earlier, the Indian candidates were perceived as being “hard to sell”. For instance, every morning, the recruitment consultants do a search of the internet and their database to match candidates with clients. Videotaped job interviews from Bangalore are kept in a filing cabinet and are just one resource among many. Information technologists can walk in off the street and there are other offices in Singapore and Hong Kong. It takes a conscious effort for a recruitment consultant to get up from their chair, go to the filing cabinet to retrieve a videotape from India and find a free room in which to view it and fill out a Video Assessment sheet (see Appendix 3). Another factor which explains some reluctance on the part of the recruiter to view the videotapes of Indian Information Technologists is the stated perception that there is a lot more paperwork involved in processing this particular group. Whereas previously, recruiters might have been reluctant to shortlist Indian candidates for employment, after these sessions, they commented that they might be more disposed to consider an Indian candidate.

Each session, I brought photocopied articles of relevance, new books on job interview strategies or information from the internet on Indian information technologists so that there was an incentive for the volunteers to attend the session and see it as productive and a good use of company time. I undertook to provide feedback about the results of the research and this was welcomed.

I also shared with the consultants the information I gained from the academic literature regarding intercultural communication. As an example, a consultant was unaware that speaking in “a roundabout way” from an Australian management perspective was in fact, a characteristic South Asian way of organising information. The consultant’s perception had been that they had been covering up for deficiencies. Another result of sharing information
was that a colleague was able to obtain a job tutoring Indian information technologists on their English pronunciation, which was useful for the company.

3. Fieldnotes

The videotapes and recruiter commentary are further supplemented by fieldnotes collected via a number of channels. The following groups were interviewed:

- Overseas-trained professionals to find out their experience in the Australian workplace to ascertain their understanding of workplace culture and current issues in the workplace.

- Management organisations eg Australian Institute of Management, Australian Chamber of Commerce, Australia India Chamber of Commerce et al for their experience of working with overseas-trained professionals.

- Over 35 Recruitment agencies for their experience of placing overseas-trained professionals in employment.

- ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) executive for his view of restructuring and how it would affect migrants.

- Migrant Resource Centres for their knowledge of funding cuts and the distribution of resources concerning migrants.

- Universities and TAFEs, to contact overseas-trained professionals upgrading their qualifications and to talk to Language Institutes that ran AMEP and DEET job skill courses for migrants. Some meetings were set up with overseas-trained professionals through the
course providers. Initially there were a number of cultural misunderstandings about the nature of the research project. For example prospective informants thought the research was a survey or they were hostile to the idea of ethics clearance, having fears about surveillance and confidentiality, especially if they were from China. Others had unrealistic expectations that I might be able to find them jobs, although in these scenarios I gave them as much information as I could about networking.

- Indian Senior Management for their perceptions of the issues in recruitment and intercultural communication difficulties

- Indian Academics for their knowledge of the broader socio-economic issues at stake.

- Indian Information Technologists for their experience of working Australia.

The information collected here provided signposts at various points over the course of the research process as to the pertinent issues and is interwoven throughout the thesis.

**Recruitment company background**

This company was formed in 1989 to provide specialist information technology (IT) contract and permanent placement consultancy to major Australian corporations and government departments. It has offices in major capital cities around Australia, New Zealand and international representatives in Bangalore, India, London and through another IT arm has affiliations in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Where the Australian labour market is unable to supply personnel with the required skill set, the company uses its international contacts to source and sponsor suitable candidates for temporary placement. The company works with the candidates to arrange the necessary
visas in addition to providing assistance with transport, accommodation and local assimilation upon their arrival in Australia. The stated goal of effective recruitment is by meeting the individual needs of both client and candidate. As an example, an interview with an IT recruitment consultant confirms that two professionals negotiating their terms and conditions of employment after having been offered a position may end up with a different salary outcome from the other. But, in general, according to one informant, the interview often proceeds something like:

What kind of rate are you looking for?
The candidate might say ‘45K’ and the recruiter might offer ‘50K’
The discussion is a combination of ‘What do you expect?’ and ‘What are you worth?’

The recruiter will let them know if the expected rate is unrealistic. They might underestimate or overestimate their worth. A senior analyst programmer with three years’ experience might expect to get $A45K. If they don’t know their market value, they are shown a schedule and asked where they see themselves fitting in. How much they get depends on their skill.

The agent’s philosophy is that they try to steer a middle course between the candidate and the client’s interests as “It is better to get the salary right from the start because if the candidate goes on site and finds out they are paid less, it can cause a lot of resentment”. The agency’s goal is for the candidate “to walk out happy when they walk out the door”. The package gets reviewed as the contracts go on. The average contract is for 12 months, sometimes six months or two years. They aren’t told about the client before selection for the reason they may go and approach them directly. A high premium is put on loyalty and candidates are not encouraged to break their contracts. Account Managers are the ones who
are doing the matching and who are selected for their knowledge of both information technology and the business world. Clients make the final short-listing. Below is a diagram (Table 6) of the complete recruitment process.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment and Job specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange Advertising If Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Screening of Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Preferred Candidates with Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Preferred Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine Shortlist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange Client/Candidate Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Reference Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate Offer with Successful Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with Induction of Employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Follow Up at Agreed Period with Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debrief Unsuccessful Applicants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Company Handbook

Bolded categories reflect the focus of this study
Recruiter Background

Even though management representatives are of an English speaking background, they are not a homogeneous group. There are differences in gender, age, and some are second generation migrants. Accordingly, essential information about the social characteristics of the participants was obtained about gender, age, birthplace, socio-economic status, educational attainment and experience of cultural diversity – either through speaking a second language or having worked overseas.

Table 7

Recruiter Biodata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>42-50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Speaks Greek</td>
<td>Speaks basic Spanish</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic background, Father's occupation, Mother's occupation</td>
<td>Photographer Secretary</td>
<td>Store Manager Home Duties</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Security Chief Homemaker</td>
<td>Mechanic Computer Operator</td>
<td>Carpet Layer Nurse Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>degree</td>
<td>degree</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>diploma</td>
<td>diploma</td>
<td>Degree + diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
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<td>20 (prof)</td>
<td>5 (prof)</td>
<td>20 (prof)</td>
<td>3 (prof)</td>
<td>2 (prof)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 (nonprof)</td>
<td>8 (non prof)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas work experience</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were six recruiters involved altogether ranging in age from early twenties to mid-forties comprising three males and three females. The group represented an average of 10
years' experience in the field and all but one had a tertiary background. Only one recruiter had overseas work experience. She was in her forties and had spent time in Brazil and Venezuela and spoke a little Spanish. Five of the participants were born in Australia, one in the UK and only one spoke another language apart from English, which was Greek. One senior executive had travelled to India.

**Indian Information Technologists**

Applicants who are for the most part, Southern Indians, submit their resume beforehand and the interviewer, as well as checking their technical literacy in the field in the job interview will also check their resumes. A comment was made by the company executive that "they can get more information from the reference checks than from the interview itself" and this they can do more easily in India than in Australia. A problem in the past has been that candidates have often exaggerated their experience and that their work experience was not sufficiently documented. For this reason, an office was set up in India so applications could be vetted. Australian employers are reportedly reluctant to engage someone if the interview is not face-to-face. This is in contrast to American practice where some interviews take place over the phone. Australian employers must sight them according to an executive in the company.

This recruitment company has an agreement with the Australian Government’s Immigration Department to minimise the paperwork and to arrange a working visa/Permanent Residence for the successful candidate, which can later lead to Australian citizenship. The salary is approximately $A50,000, before tax, which represents roughly quadruple purchasing power in India:
If the goal is to score a contract of $A50,000, then you would want to maximise your chances in the interview, you would want to present yourself or promote yourself in a way that the person whose job it is to choose you will want you.

(Company executive 14/9/98)

One successful candidate interviewed in a debriefing session, was a civil engineer with 4 years’ experience from Hyderabad and had applied for a consultancy through the internet. He waited for six months and had a telephone interview. An offer came from the US but an Australian offer came sooner. I asked him why he thought he was successful and he answered “how I present myself, how I conduct myself, how I speak” (15/1/99). The wider issues of self-promotion, maximising your chances of “fitting in” are not limited to Indians alone.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the rather serendipitous route that I followed in obtaining the data. For the most part, I did not have a preconceived idea of the data that I would obtain other than that it would be inside the parameters of intercultural research to build on my previous work experience with overseas-trained professionals. Nor did I have an idea of the framework that I would use in advance, except that it would need to look at the larger social, political, economic context and consider micro-level issues. In this, I have followed the ethnomethodologist’s approach which is to allow the data to determine the shape of the framework rather than vice versa. It became clear at an early stage that one theory would not be sufficient for explaining the different dimensions of the research problem – to critique the recruiter in-house term ‘cultural fit’ - which was thrown up by the data.

Consequently, in the next two chapters I go on to apply the interdisciplinary framework set out in the previous chapters. I critique ‘cultural fit’ in the Australian workplace by bringing
to the surface some of the invisible elements and revisiting the visible elements. It is clear that no one universal or unified framework can be regarded as relevant for all situations, but that in any one situation, any number of perspectives might legitimately apply. I choose different tools to explain observations which consist of a critical examination of the power relations implicit in the two interactions guided by the discourses of Critical Discourse Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Bourdieu and various workplace linguistic issues (including the nonverbal), which share a concern for linguistic and socio-political issues. The final two chapters to do with the data analysis are structured following Goffman (1959), Drew & Heritage (1992) and Sarangi & Roberts (1999) into frontstage talk and backstage talk respectively.
8 Frontstage Talk - the candidates’ interview

Introduction

In these next two chapters I examine two instances of institutional talk by doing a critical intercultural discourse analysis of the interview and the recruiter judgements that follow.

I employ Sarangi & Roberts’ (1999) terminology of an ideologically based notion of ‘institutional order’ and ‘workplace interaction’ which are embedded in backstage talk and frontstage talk. An analysis of the frontstage talk (‘talk to’) dealing with the interaction, precedes an analysis of backstage talk (‘talk about’). The purpose of both chapters is to clarify the unspoken and spoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’ respectively.

The terms ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ were originally coined by Goffman (1959). His analysis revolves around the metaphors of drama, ritual and game, metaphors that draw attention to the manufactured aspects of social life, hence the language of the stage. Goffman speaks of performers and audiences; routines and parts; coming off or falling flat, of cues and stage settings. Performances often depend upon the segregation of social space into ‘front regions’ and ‘back regions’:

The front region refers to ‘the place where the performance is given’ and the back region may be defined as ‘a place, relative to the given performance, where the
impression management fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course.

(Goffman 1959: 114).

Goffman understood that social relations are organized more around the appearance than the content of things, ie impression management is a managed impression (Lemert & Branaman 1997). The interviews in this study are the face-to-face encounters in Bangalore which are the public performances. The recruiter commentary on the performance in Melbourne is away from the public gaze, behind the scenes, and where institutional workplace values are acted out. The spoken meaning is more obvious from the unguarded behind the scenes talk between the recruiters, whereas the unspoken meaning is hidden behind the less visible, institutionalised rules of the interview game pointed out by Roberts (1985) in The interview game and how its played.

The Conversation analytic tradition has played a key role in developing an understanding of frontstage talk in Goffman’s sense, eg Drew & Heritage (1992: 22-25) discuss some of the basic features of institutional talk:

• it is goal oriented

• there are constraints on participants’ contributions (eg constraint on professional to withhold expressions of surprise, agreement or sympathy)
• Inferencing takes on a special character

• Institutional talk is defined in terms of the public face of the institution

• Questioning and answering are the prime organising elements

Three omissions from this list are first, institutional talk is defined in terms of the public face of the institution when it is present backstage as well; second, a characteristic of the interaction in an interview is that relations are asymmetrical, hence power relations are involved; third, institutional talk is not uniform, there are a number of intertwining discourses operating in the workplace.

A central theme in research on institutional interaction is that in contrast to the symmetrical relationships between speakers in ordinary conversation, institutional interactions are characteristically asymmetrical and in gatekeeping situations, even more so. I will explore the asymmetry in the interview through a discussion of the intertwining nature of the discourses present in the interview: institutional, professional and personal. Thus the notion of discourse hybridity (Sarangi & Roberts 1999) will underpin this framework for analysing candidates’ interviews. For an understanding of the interrelationship between the frontstage and the backstage in the discussion so far, see Table 8.
Table 8

The interrelationship between frontstage and backstage talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Talk (1)</th>
<th>Institutional Talk (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction &amp; institutional order</td>
<td>Interaction &amp; institutional order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frontstage</td>
<td>backstage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 recruitment interviews</td>
<td>5 simulated shortlisting sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘talk to’</td>
<td>‘talk about’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unspoken meaning ‘cultural fit’</td>
<td>spoken meaning ‘cultural fit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hybrid discourses</td>
<td>workplace values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basic features of institutional talk outlined above (Drew & Heritage 1992) together with asymmetric relations are recurring themes which run through the analysis that follows but for this research problem, are made subordinate to discourse hybridity. Workplaces are held together by communicative practices and are also sites of social struggle. According to Sarangi & Roberts (1999: 1), a ‘thick’ description of communicative practice includes both an interaction based notion of talk and an ideologically based notion of institutional order. Although the distinction between institution and profession is reasonably clear, they (1999: 16) point out it is more problematic to distinguish between institutional discourse and professional discourse. What emerges from workplace studies though, is the dominance of the institutional order over professional discourse. Sarangi & Roberts argue that there is a need to engage both with interaction and the institutional order and not one at the expense of the other.
I treat the linguistic categories of genre, questioning and answering, collaboration, clarification and repair, forms of address and frames (contextualisation cues), discussed in the literature review earlier, as subcategories of institutional talk and separate them from professional and personal talk. An analytic challenge is determining which part of the interaction is part of the institutional order or which part is interculturally grounded. In this way, I can identify which areas of the frontstage talk are open to change or adjustment by the players.

The Interaction and the Institutional Order

1. Discourse hybridity - Institutional Talk (1)

Institutional discourse according to Sarangi & Roberts (1999:15) comprises those features which are attributed to institutional practice, characterised by rational, legitimate accounting practices which are authoritatively backed up by a set of rules and regulations governing an institution. Institutional discourse thus includes the gatekeeping functions of interview, selection and assessment. In relation to the Bangalore interviews, under the umbrella of institutional talk (frontstage), I discuss genre/moves, questioning and answering, including turntaking restrictions, collaboration, clarification and repair, forms of address and lastly, frames (contextualisation cues).
Genre

The structuring of texts is often described as being made up of a series of moves, each of which may contain one or more steps/sentence and clause level choices (Paltridge 1997: 25). In this corpus, all ten interviews follow a similar pattern consisting of three moves from the general to the particular. Questions are asked about firstly, what candidates were doing in their previous job; secondly, what their experience is of using mainframe in relation to Y2K; and thirdly, their role in teams. Following (Tables 9, 10, 11) are three extracts for each of the three different moves to illustrate the interview pattern:

Table 9

Move 1: Questions to elicit candidates' previous experience

Extract 1

C2 Line 1 IR: So...you've got two and a half years total IT experience (correct) er and
you're currently working er on mainframes, IBM mainframe

Extract 2

C4 Line 1 IR: Okay, you mentioned that you've been involved in unit and parallel testing
er I want you to tell me about that. Tell me about the projects you've
worked on

Extract 3

C7 Line 1 IR: ...you mentioned in your CV using Animator (yes) okay, tell me about
that, I'm not familiar with it. How does that work?
The interview is an opportunity to show the relevance of the candidate’s professional experience to the position at hand realised in the question “Tell me about the projects you’ve worked on” (C 4). The first opening move is marked by questions which indicate that they are getting down to business. There is no small talk or conventional openings, at least in the video-recording. The questions are direct and to the point, for instance, with candidate 5, the question is abbreviated considerably to ‘Experience?’

Table 10

Move 2: Questions about candidates’ experience of Y2K solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 1</th>
<th>C1 line 9 IR:</th>
<th>What’s what’s the solution they’re choosing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extract 2</td>
<td>C2 line 13 IR:</td>
<td>okay tell me about the things you’ve been doing there then with the mainframe side of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 3</td>
<td>C4 Line 5 IR:</td>
<td>okay so the projects you’ve been working on are Y2K (um) whatss sol...solution have, have they chosen? Okay there are several approaches to deal with the Y2K problem (what do you mean?) you can look at File Expansion, you can look at Fixed Windows (yeah) Sliding Window..what, what solutions have been chosen?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second move on the part of the interviewer to elicit technical experience is straightforward except for the fact that the pressure is enormous. The candidates seek to display their ‘technical machismo’ having five minutes to prove that they have Y2K experience eg “He’s trying to ram 15 minutes with his whole life” (C3). Recruiters watching the videotapes in Melbourne pick up on Y2K solution names eg DB2, FIXED WINDOW with a view to client requests eg “He hit a couple of technology things I might have been interested in” (C8) or “He knows how to answer some fairly technical questions in terms of what he has done and how he would handle…” (C1).

One candidate (3) makes the mistake of assuming that the interviewer does not know what Y2K is, thereby threatening the interviewer’s face. The candidate attempts to explain it but is cut short:

IE: two thousand means zero zero

IR: Yeah, I understand the problem (yuh) okay…

This faux pas was not picked up by the recruiters in the related focus group session as the viewing of the videotapes is fast, but in any case may not necessarily rule the candidate out.
Table 11

Move 3: Questions about candidates’ role in teams

Extract 1

C1 line 61 IR: when you say WE (yeah) do you mean YOU?

Extract 2

C3 Line 22-44 IR: see you keep talking about WE (yeah) and I need to know what it is that YOU have done (yeah) ...

Extract 3

C5 Line 23 IR: okay, when you say you have completed 4 modules, what does that mean that YOU do? I’m interested in finding out the things that YOU do (yeah) not the things the team does so I need to find out the things that YOU have done.

Most of the cultural mismatches from the perspective of the interviewer and the recruiters viewing the tapes back in Melbourne were in the area of the third move. Interviewer’s questions are very direct but candidates often do not answer directly. Recruiters take note if the candidates pick up on the request to spell out their personal role in a team: “Seemed to home in on ‘what I was doing’ (C6). The interviewer likes them to get to the point eg T. asks: “right..okay..in..the summary of your skills, you say you’ve also had some exposure to IMSDB and the candidate responds succinctly “Well DB actually. IMSDC.” (C9) This was picked up by a recruiter as being atypical and commented upon positively.
The candidate’s body language which signalled ‘NO’ also underscored his reply in the negative (FG 5 15/1/99).

By contrast, with Candidate 3, the interviewer is determined to establish who was doing what and it takes twenty-two turns to do that by which time he becomes both impatient and insistent until finally, he is satisfied “okay, I understand, okay” (Table 12, line 44):

Table 12

Who was doing what?

Extract (C3)

22 IR: ... see you keep talking about WE (yeah) and I need to know what it is that YOU have done (yeah) and not the project also resolves altering the database?

23 IE: that’s altering alter unit testing, my role is unit testing

24 IR: okay, tell me about unit testing (yeah) um what’s devising the test plan? WHO devises the test plan?

25 IE: yep Micro... um MS Word 2, Yeah MS Word 2 and the DB excel here is our own DB excel tool for data simulation, we have used data simulation for deeper (1) and Supereq for the refining of the data and files some.

26 IR: Right, but who creates the overall test plan in terms of planning what you should test?

27 IE: This... ah... For this one uh... we have to analyse it. We have used analysing, after that we can use the unit testing.

28 IR: right

29 IE: um yuh
when you set about and testing, you must have a plan. So you have a plan of what you're going to test? (yep) Who creates that test plan?

The unit testing haven't I...

so you created the test plan? do you create the test cases?

yes, test cases

okay, do you have running the tests? (yeah unit test) And analysing (Yeah, analysing the results) And the tools you're using to do that? (yeah) Are what? What tools are you using to do that?

don that is Explorer

okay, okay so your involvement on this project is been restricted to data analysis phase (Yeah) You altered some of the programs?

pause...

you've altered some of the programs?

yeah we have modified some of...

don't say WH, YOU...

yuh yuh, I altered the programs.

okay have you written any of that data conversion programs? (yeah) and you've been doing the testing?

yeah I've been doing the testing

okay, I understand, okay. Tell me about the other project, the Student education assistance and evaluation project (okay) you mention that was an inhouse development... (yeah inhouse development) Was it an operating project or was it a real project?

NB The parts of the dialogue relevant to the question of 'who did what' are Bolded ie We vs You.
With Candidate 3 (Table 12), the interviewer becomes increasingly irritated but we do not know how the candidate feels who, in any case has little opportunity to repair the interaction in a situation of hyper-questioning in which the interlocutor is all powerful. This theme of 'who was doing what?' was common to all other interviews except that not as many turns were given over to this question, 4-6 turns as opposed to the 22 turns above. As a Senior recruiter points out:

Every one of them will tell you what the project’s doing rather than what they’re doing and that’s T’s skill - to always, to keep saying ‘Yes, but what did YOU do?’ (Focus Group 3 13/11/98).

In the transcribed encounters, all but one of the ten candidates (C9) missed the point about their role in the team and were pressed for more details, which suggests that even if candidates do pass on the information about the interview questions, they still do not pick up this point which provides evidence for a cultural frame mismatch (see Table 13).
### Table 13

**Cultural frame mismatch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1 line 61 IR: when you say ‘we’ (yeah) do you mean ‘you’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2 line 45 IR: okay, do you personally run the test?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Line 22-44 IR: see you keep talking about ‘we’ (yeah) and I need to know what it is that ‘you’ have done (yeah) ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4 Line 69-79 IR: okay, okay, you say your role in the project is as team leader. Can you just explain a little more about what that involves you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5 Line 23 IR: okay, when you say you have completed 4 modules, what does that mean that YOU do? I’m interested in finding out the things that YOU do (yeah) not the things the team does so I need to find out the things that you have done also lines 51-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6 Lines 29-34 okay and that’s the next stage that YOU do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7 Line 15 IR: And what was YOUR part in that planning process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8 Line 2 IR: right, okay and what was YOUR involvement with the IMSDBC, what, what did YOU actually do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9 Line 17 IR: okay in your current role you’re saying your, your project needs a team leader (yeah) and the team is six (yeah). Just take me through what that involves YOU doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10 Line 35 IR: Okay so what did you need to do when you got that design?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB Words which are capitalised are words stressed by the Interviewer

This issue of perceived ‘relevance’ in answering the question will be elaborated upon under Frames (1.5).
Questioning and Answering

An interview is an example of what Levinson (1979) defines as an activity type – it is a goal-defined activity with the purpose of matching client’s requirements to applicants. A salient characteristic of the interview is that it consists of talk that is organised into a series of questions and answers. In this study, the interview consists of probing questions to assess the technical fit of the candidate. Candidates do not deviate from the purpose of the interview, which is the clear exchange of technical information. The interviewer’s function is to explore the extent to which the candidate possesses the skills, qualities and aptitudes to fill a casual skills shortage specifically for the Y2K.

The predominantly question-answer pattern of interaction brings about an asymmetry in the relations between the participants in an institutional interaction. Through questions, the topic and direction for what follows is chosen – the routine question and answer format of interview question is context-shaping ie the answer forms part of the context for the next set of utterances and in the process the participants are negotiating their role identity as information technology professionals. The Interviewer strategically directs the talk through the means of their capacity to change topics, selective formulations and in their “next questions”.
Another characteristic of the job interview is that it is monologic, as opposed to dialogic, in the sense that it moves in one direction. The candidates interact with interviewer by following, interpreting and responding to his aims. The interviewer's control over the agenda of the talk is limiting of candidates' opportunities to speak, to repair misunderstandings, to interrupt or change the topic. In terms of speech acts, the interviewer's statement "Tell me about the projects you've worked on" can also be interpreted as a command. The fast pace of the interview constrains the candidates considerably. There is no space to ask questions in regard to problems in understanding.

The interviewer does not give overt signs of approval beyond 'right' or 'okay' in response to candidates' answers. Job interviewers by withholding a response to candidates avoid giving any indication as to their assessment of them. Such withholdings would be interpreted as disaffiliative in a conversational context, but not necessarily in a professional encounter. Another factor involved in withholding a response is that there is an effort to treat the candidates in an even-handed way, to give them an equal chance: - "T being analytical and clinical". Any further signals might reveal too much and the information passed around quickly to other potential interviewees.

Also where interviews are conducted in a language which is not the first language of the candidates, an unequal encounter is constructed from the start. As candidates may be
unaware of the purposes lying behind particular questions, they may not grasp the line of enquiry which the interviewer is pursuing. The candidates’ lack of access to the hidden agenda underscores the asymmetry. Recognising the hidden message behind questions and answering them in ways considered appropriate in content and manner keeps the interview running smoothly. Such skills enable the candidate to offer the ‘acceptable’ responses, which provide a basis for recruiter judgements about ‘cultural fit’. In regard to Table 13, the interviewer and candidate have different perceptions of what is a relevant interpretation in the area of move relating to role in teams. Whilst both candidate and interviewer are operating in accordance with the co-operative principle, conflicting expectations about what is relevant can lead to exclusion.

Collaboration

Here there are three issues to consider: the rhythm, backchannelling or feedback and overlapped speech. In regard to the first issue of rhythm, conventions of Australian English in the Australian interview context dictate that only one speaker should talk at a time. The natural rhythm of Australian English leads speakers to expect about a second’s pause between completion and uptake of turns (O’Grady 1994: 98). Turn-taking is about power and who regulates it, and varies across cultures. The timing principle is culturally influenced in regard to pauses. In this case study there is a disparity in the speaking rate reflecting the fact that the interviews are taking place in Bangalore and the consequent
faster rhythm of Indian English plus the assembly line nature of the interviews. The interviewer’s questions and responses are slow by contrast with the candidates’ answers, which are so fast that they are barely comprehensible to the recruiters back in Melbourne. Recruiters made the comment that they would ask the interviewer to tell them to slow down. T. often asks a question twice as though to slow down the response:

…okay so the projects you’ve been working on are Y2K. What solution have they chosen? Okay there are several approaches to deal with the Y2K problem (What do you mean?). You can look at Fixed Windows (yeah) Sliding Window. What solutions have been chosen? (C4 : line 5).

Feedback in terms of ‘yes’, ‘right’ ‘okay’ and minimal vocalisations such as ‘uh uh, hmm, ah’ have a role to play in developing and maintaining the rhythmic pattern which is characteristic of smooth conversation, regularly punctuating the important points of the speaker’s talk. Giving minimal responses indicate attentiveness and support. The frequent use of ‘yeah’ by the candidates provides feedback. If the feedback is mistimed, uncomfortable moments may occur but on the whole, the feedback or backchanelling plays a part in developing and maintaining an easy but fast rhythm between the interviewer and the candidates in the interview. The small set of words ‘right’ and ‘okay’ on the part of the interviewer serve the additional function of indicating boundaries -
end of one stage and the beginning of the next. They are working together towards a common goal of establishing Y2K experience.

Backchannelling is also a sign of being a good listener. If backchannelling occurs frequently in the wrong place, it may imply impatience or boredom. To signal ‘received with interest’ a participant is more likely to use ‘mm’ aha’ ‘uhuh’ (Bargiela 1997:189) and it is noteworthy that in these interviews these signals do not occur. The interviewer’s use of ‘right’, ‘okay’ at regular intervals are matter of fact, rather than serving the function of eliciting a response from the listener. Candidate 8’s interview stands out because it is almost entirely a monologue and the interviewer responds minimally with 5 ‘rights’, 1 ‘right okay and 1 ‘yes’ denoting boredom. Head nods which occur often in these interviews also count as a turn. Rolling the head from side to side provides feedback to the speaker and shows strong agreement.

The phrase ‘overtalking’ was viewed by recruiters in a negative light signalling poor listening: “he keeps on talking and he’s giving no opportunity to answer a question and have an exchange” (C3). Candidate 4’s speech overlaps six times in the interview but this was not remarked upon by the recruiters. Overlapped speech is not necessarily dysfunctional or an indication that the turn-taking system has broken down: only that this ‘activity-type’ is competitive and there is a lot of pressure to perform in an interview and
in front of a video-camera with a ‘ticket to Australia’ at stake.

**Clarification and repair**

In ordinary conversations, displays of understanding are open to correction. Just as hearers inspect the answer to a question, recipients also monitor the response to an answer. They can initiate some form of repair by elaborating upon, extending or in some way returning to the answer. Explicit clarification strategies are employed by the interviewer who makes frequent requests for more specific information about candidates’ role in teams:

**Candidate 4**

71 IR: when you say you were involved in that, does that mean that you do that testing?

72 IE: Yeah, I was responsible for that

73 IR: because involved is is too general a word (yes) so do you actually do that testing?

74 IE: Yeah

75 IR: So, so all the programs that you have written YOU have written the test plan?

76 IE: Yeah, I have written the test plan

77 IR: And you’ve written the test bases

78 IE: Yess
The Interviewer displays that the answer does not fit the question in line 71. His questions orient the answers yet there is very limited use of repair strategies in the candidate's responses. In line 75, the interviewer uses accenting 'YOU' to convey key information but the question is not reformulated or elaborated upon by candidate 4 above, but repeated in line 76. According to Gumperz et al (1979:13), in Asian-English (sic), it is customary to repeat some part of what the speaker has just said which can give a sense of being repetitive. Though the candidates may have misunderstood the question, their misunderstanding nevertheless is allowed to stand and the possible lack of fit with the question is allowed to be a feature of the candidate's answer. The candidates could use clarification strategies earlier eg

a. so what you want to know is....?

b. When you say...do you mean...?

c. repeat the question 'what is my role on the team?'

d. Do you mean ...or ...?

Such readjustments are particularly important in cross-cultural communication to avoid misunderstanding. In workplace communication, Willing (1992:154) found that native speakers used a wide variety of comprehension checks. Non-native speakers use fewer
comprehension checks because they are reluctant to draw attention to difficulties, which would disturb an apparently successful interaction. It is difficult to clarify and repair in job interviews too because of the unequal relationship in a sustained questioning approach, which establishes a dominant/subordinate relationship. It is difficult also to stop the interaction long enough to clarify misunderstandings. These critical moments of misunderstanding can translate into antagonism, which can lead to misjudgements about suitability. Notwithstanding the dominant/subordinate relationship in this type of interview, meaning in face-to-face encounters is negotiable which requires communicative flexibility on the part of participants.

**Forms of address**

The one jarring note occurred with the first candidate when he calls the interviewer “Sir” eight times during the short interview and the recruiters rejected this candidate outright during shortlisting for “showing insecurity”. Using “Sir” was interpreted by recruiters as showing respect “somewhat quaint, but not offensive” but the more damning “he needs to be more relaxed” means almost certain rejection. Gumperz et al (1979:17) make the point that one of the means Mr Aziz, a candidate for a librarian’s post, in his interview uses to convey respect and politeness, is to use ‘Sir’ as a form of address. In Indian languages, politeness and respect are conveyed through adding a particle to the end of someone’s name – for example ‘Gandhiji’. Mr Aziz is using the word ‘Sir’ as – ‘ji’ is
used. The first candidate was noticeably younger in relation to the other candidates and in respect to the interviewer. A further complication is that this candidate had American experience where it is not uncommon for employees to use 'Sir' with employers. This form of address does not translate happily to an Australian workplace context which, while also hierarchical, the use of 'Sir' violates social norms of 'egalitarianism'.

**Frames (Contextualisation cues)**

One of Goffman's key theoretical ideas is that social experience is governed by 'frame' or principles of organization which define the meaning and significance of social events. Framing involves bracketing an activity and providing some sort of cue as to what the bracketed activity means. According to Drew & Heritage (1992: 8), there is a close affinity between the linguistic concept of 'contextualisation cues' as outlined by Gumperz and the sociological concept of 'frame' developed by Goffman (Wodak 1996: 22). Goffman's notion of 'frame' focuses on the current social activity ie what is going on, what the situation is, and the roles the interactants adopt within it. Gatekeeping situations are contexts in which frame mismatch in interviews are complicated by the communicative-style differences between the participants in the interaction. There are moment by moment reassessments together with realignments which participants may make in a move from one frame to another.
Rather than starting from sentence meanings, analysis should begin from the study of sequences of actions and the ways in which context forms a resource in their interpretation. Interactional context is continually being developed with each successive action. In the context of institutional talk, this means that empirical analysis must first accomplish the normal CA tasks of analyzing the conduct of the participants and reveal the underlying organization of their activities (Drew & Heritage 1992: 20).

Accordingly, I take two interviews for candidates 5 & 6 and break down the interaction into institutional sequences in order to pinpoint and/or corroborate any cultural frame mismatches. To accomplish this task, I consider the critical moments and bracket them (See table 14). The intention is to background the sameness between the interviews to foreground any differences in responses. There is a sameness in the goal, the setting and moves. The interviewer accomplishes the goals of the interaction by eliciting the answers. The candidates accomplish the goals by answering the questions ‘correctly’ according to a hidden agenda. As noted earlier, small talk/greetings and closings are omitted. The interview questions are purely technical but by seeing how each step is accomplished, it becomes clear that when candidates respond to the question about ‘what did YOU do?’, their responses consistently “miss the point” or “tip toe around questions a bit” (FG 5 15/1/99:1) which is interpreted as being evasive by recruiters.
Since the interviewer’s questions provide a frame which candidates orient to, I am looking for ‘frame conflict’ where there is a clash between institutional and client frames. In regard to the third move, the interviewer is looking for an answer where the topic comes first or the ‘correct’ answer is ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and his increasing impatience or irritation is a cue to a frame conflict. The recruiters who watch the recordings some time later are also very tuned into candidates’ responses to the question about their role in teams ie candidate 5 “missed the point” and candidate 6 honed in on “what I was doing”. This was a major issue for all candidates as shown in table 13, which shows without doubt that these frame conflicts have a cultural component. Following (Table 14) is how candidate 5 and candidate 6 compare, showing the shift from an institutional moment to a cultural moment:

Table 14

Critical moments in the interaction – Interviewer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Candidate 5</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Candidate 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Mainframe experience - general</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Mainframe experience - general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-22</td>
<td>Mainframe experience – detail</td>
<td>9-16</td>
<td>Mainframe experience – detail Things you’re doing on the medical project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Things you have been doing on mainframe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>Things that you do, not the things the team does</td>
<td>17-28</td>
<td>Tools being used for Impact analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-42</td>
<td>Y2K solutions</td>
<td>29-42</td>
<td>Next stage you do – unit testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-50</td>
<td>Who creates the test cases?</td>
<td>43-48</td>
<td>Your role in that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-68</td>
<td>Who creates the test plan?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69-94</td>
<td>Which Y2K solutions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-107</td>
<td>Your involvement with DB2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bolded comments showing ‘cultural frame mismatch’*

The background is the same yet they are doing the interaction differently. Candidate 5 accomplishes that step differently from candidate 6 and his chunk was longer than candidate 6’s. It is not certain that candidate 5 is taking longer to get to the point or that the interviewer finds it more fruitful to pursue that line of enquiry with him? But taking the recruiter judgements into account, a recruiter commented that he “missed the point”.

A question is raised as to whether the interviewer couldn’t elicit the answer because the candidate didn’t have the cultural understanding or he might have had it but didn’t know how to express it in this cultural context. The underlying meaning of the interviewer’s question is that he wants the candidate to distinguish between his skill and the skill of team members. But this leads to an answer, which does not advance the candidate’s case. Such uncomfortable moments can lead to negative outcomes. Candidate 6 has a better understanding and when prompted was able to meet Interviewer’s expectations or was he? He may have been bull-dozed into giving the ‘right’ reply.
To flesh this out a little more, it is enlightening to see how the candidates respond to each sequential question and what their body language showed – discomfort, confidence or unconcern? A feature of contextualisation cues is the fact that they often cluster together in order to frame a whole activity or channel a specific response eg gaze, postural change, prosodic features and a particular lexical choice may work together to evoke a particular response (Bremer et al 1996: 225). By looking to see what the body language was at the critical moment, I discovered I had already shadow-boxed in the vicinity of the critical moment showing that there was a clear link between (un)subtle changes in body language and shifts in sequences (See Table 15).

Table 15

**Critical moments in the interaction - Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Candidate 5</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Candidate 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Q: One year with mainframe? Mainframe? A: Yes BL: Head nods up and down, eye contact direct</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Q: and one year with …IBM mainframe? A: Yeah BL: head nods up and down, pushes body back, arms form triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-22</td>
<td>Q: Okay...tell me about the things you've been doing on mainframe A: Uh, actually we are doing at present the ? project... BL: leans back, hands clasp and unclasp</td>
<td>9-16</td>
<td>Q: okay, take me through the things you're doing on that project A: so to start with er...um... we are working on some uh R&amp; D on all the processes like, we are like ( ) of a whole team BL: hand movements moderate, begins to make points with all fingers tapping into palm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>Q: okay, when you say you have completed 4 modules, what does that mean YOU do? A: okay, that is, er in the inventory, I have take, I have taken one module BL: rubs hands in steeple position</td>
<td>17-28</td>
<td>Q: okay, can we just step back a little bit? You said impact analysis. You can do impact analysis? A: Yeah, I've been doing that BL: right arm resting comfortably on knee to make points, head nods often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 31-42 | Q: Okay, what’s the solution being chosen for the Y2K?  
A: That is we have our opted selector expansion, that means wherever it is necessary we are doing the expansion...  
BL: hands up in front of him, forms circles with his thumbs (precision) | 29-42 | Q: okay, and that’s the next stage that YOU do?  
A: Yeah, that’s the next stage  
BL: stops to listen carefully as if to check meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| 43-50 | Q: ...have you created those test cases or are they given to you by the client?  
A: Uh, client will give only the sample data, so date will have only the er present year, or past year, all those things...  
BL: hand gesture lively, to the right and to the left | 43-48 | Q: so your role...covers all of that and basically finishes there  
A: yeah  
BL: nods head to side in agreement and raises hands in steeple position |
| 51-68 | Q: Who creates the test plan?  
A: test plan we have to do it before going for test cases  
BL: inclines head to listen attentively | | |
| 69-94 | Q: ...We talking COBOL?  
A: COBOL, JCL, KICKS is there, ASSEMBLER is there  
BL: holds fourth finger to list | | |
| 95-107 | Q: okay, what’s been your involvement with DB2 on this, on this project?  
A: uh, it’s not very much  
BL: hands clenched, thumbs interlocked | | |

*Bolded comments showing ‘cultural frame mismatch’*
It is difficult to identify what the candidate’s frame is from the interview itself but some possibilities include the following:

a) The Indian candidate didn’t realise what the interviewer was getting at (ie didn’t pick up the significance of contrastive stress)

b) The Indian candidate realised what the interviewer was getting at, but deliberately fudged his reply to cover up his lack of personal expertise

c) The Indian candidate realised what the interviewer was getting at, but had a strong sense of the collective and so had difficulty wording it in personal terms

d) The Indian candidate realised what the interviewer was getting at, but for modesty reasons felt unable to explain his personal role explicitly

e) The Indian candidate realised what the interviewer was getting at, and was trying to explain his personal role, but the interviewer was unable to pick up on his meaning because of the way this was presented.

I wish to focus on three possible explanations for the mismatch in institutional/client frames to do with firstly, the individualist/collectivist paradigm; secondly, different ways of structuring information and thirdly, a preference for the utilitarian discourse system in corporations foreshadowed by Willing (1992) and Scollon & Scollon (1995) in the literature review earlier.
1) Individualist vs collectivist paradigm

For professional discourse the question to be considered is the relative difference between two people in their concept of the self as an individual or as part of a larger group. One possible explanation for the recurrent mismatch is that in collective cultures, it is not customary to emphasize the individual over the group (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 171).

The idea of 'self' which underlies western studies of communication is highly individualistic whereas there is reason to believe that the 'self' projected by South Asians is a more collectivistic self which is more connected to membership in basic groups such as one's working group. Negotiating between the 'I' as an individual and some form of collective identity (we) changes from workplace team to interview, resulting in shifts in collective identity. In such instances, speakers use the self-referring we to invoke an institutional over a personal identity, thereby indicating that they are speaking as representatives on behalf of their work. Shifts in 'I' as an individual and 'we' collective identity involves tactical choices in positioning between 'we' as a task group or corporate 'we'.

2) Different ways of structuring information

Different systems of information structure are probably at the root of the interviewer's irritation. All languages distinguish between foregrounded and backgrounded information and different languages signal the main aspects of a message in different
ways. Where they do not share the same ways of foregrounding, Interviewer and candidate may be unable to perceive where the other is placing emphasis. Candidates 5 & 6 do not seem to notice that the interviewer, by strategically positioning his accent is attempting to direct his attention to significant points in the argument where he may expand his answer. By virtue of their communicative background as native speakers of languages that employ other linguistic means to highlight information in discourse, candidates do not appear to recognise that accenting is used to convey key information, and thus do not recognize the significance of the interviewers’ contextualisation cues. The interviewer listening for more foregrounded information stops the candidates and indicates he is sceptical about their contribution.

As pointed out by Willing (1992: 33), the predication of the new upon the given is a basic act of information structuring in communication and is signalled by fundamental linguistic structuring devices. Candidates maybe stating background information first before stating the main topic. In English, the given is mentioned first and the new comes afterward. The informational status of given and new elements is generally signalled by stress, pitch and intonation, the given being mentioned in a low unstressed tone and the new being marked with a higher pitch and greater stress. The different means of signalling importance in a cross-cultural encounter can result in puzzlement for both parties. Similarly, when a speaker unconsciously transfers features of rhythm, stress and
intonation from the first language, the message heard can be weighed down with pragmatic implications completely unintended by the speaker.

In line with Gumperz et al (1979), the candidates fail to note the inferences behind the interviewers’ questions on these points and make their answers seem relevant and direct. In some Asian English styles of speaking, too direct a response is avoided. The speaker responds first of all in a general sort of way, only moving later to his important specific points. English style of logic is the opposite so the English listener may switch off before the important point occurs (Gumperz et al 1979:13). In many Asian languages, speakers create a shared context by building up a background so that when the important aspect of their message arrives it is expected and shared. Australian recruiters expecting the main point to be made early switch off and feel the candidate is evading the question. By the same token, South Asians may perceive the Australian style as abrupt and aggressive.

3) Corporate ideology – Utilitarian discourse system and CBS

It is likely that the Indian candidates do not consider their responses to be rambling. Therefore there is another factor apart from the different structuring of information to understand the interviewer’s impatience with candidates’ ‘roundabout answers’ and that is the institutional preference for the utilitarian discourse system (Scollon & Scollon 1995) discussed in chapter five. According to the utilitarian discourse system, the role of
discourse is to speak as clearly and directly (brevity) and with sincerity as much as much as possible.

2. Discourse Hybridity - Professional Talk

What professionals routinely do as a way of accomplishing their duties and responsibilities can be called professional discourse – a form of habitus in Bourdieu's sense (Sarangi & Roberts 1999:15). Becoming a professional involves acquiring certain types of knowledge/discourse and so credibility. A technical interest and 'scientific attitude' constitute the professional mode involving efficient problem-solving. Candidates fully embrace their professional role. Because corporate discourse is goal oriented it tends to emphasize information over relationship, consequently, candidates are not so concerned to embrace the role of 'nice guy' making their personal style hard to detect. Third person forms also dominate technical discourse. No 'I' speaks to a 'you', there is little space for dialogue, disagreement or differing points of view. Questions are abrupt: 'COBOL - explain how you’ve used it' or 'What’s the solution being chosen for the Y2K?'.

3. Discourse Hybridity - Personal Talk

These interviews are notable for their lack of self-disclosure, small talk, humour or questions about interests which might bring out candidates’ personalities. This was
commented upon a number of times by recruiters observing the videotapes (See Table 22, Chapter nine). There were opportunities for small talk as in the case of Candidate 4 where the camera fell over and the dog began barking. The candidate sat frozen. But at the same time, as Twitchin & Roberts (1991: 10) observe, relaxed chat aiming to put someone at ease may be confusing to someone who expects formality and directness in a job interview.

**Conclusion**

In terms of the unspoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’, Indian Information Technologists in this case study can be seen to have control of the professional discourse but have less control over institutional and personal discourses, despite a knowledge of the English language. The Frontstage talk in these interviews comprise for the most part, institutional discourse and professional discourse (technical) omitting the personal entirely. This analysis corroborates research by Sarangi & Roberts (1999: 15) which shows that it is the dominance of the institutional order over professional discourses which emerges from workplace studies.

An analytic challenge was determining which bit of the interaction is part of the institutional order or which part is interculturally grounded. Frames is an area which pinpoints an intercultural moment as opposed to an institutional moment. Here, I have
concentrated on a salient area of client mismatch, that of ‘getting to the point’. Given
that the communication is jointly produced but the interviewer is in control of the agenda,
the effect of cumulative interactions where candidates are seen to miss the point puts the
candidates at a real disadvantage. Candidates have little social power to frame events or
to combat interpretive frameworks applied to them except in the area of clarification and
repair. Problems have to be reframed before they can be addressed and thus this is an area
suitable for intercultural training.

In exploring the unspoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’ through paying attention to the
linguistic detail, I have made an attempt to synthesise the speech and body language.
Body language is important because it underscores the spoken response (or otherwise).
The candidate can continue to look confident while he has missed the point and has not
inferred the hidden agenda. Something that was not obvious at the start, that marked
body language changes co-incide with critical moments in the interaction, became more
apparent.

Overall, what is at stake for candidates is some kind of institutional literacy so that they
get to know what their options are and how to go about putting forward their case.
Candidates/Interviewer/recruiters might find it useful to understand that that there are
different discourses operating in the workplace. According to Sarangi (fieldnote:
International Pragmatics Conference July 2000), it is the management of these critical hybrid moments for all parties which amounts to interactional competence. The challenge is for stakeholders to manage the hybridity and the points where they start to adjust or merge is a sign of widening cultural repertoire.
9 Backstage Talk - the recruiter judgements

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate what are the spoken (ie visible) criteria for judging ‘cultural fit’ by an international recruitment agency, when shortlisting Indian Information technologists for short-term contracts in Melbourne. These criteria are captured by paying close attention to the backstage talk. The recruiter commentary on the performance in Melbourne is away from the public gaze, behind the scenes and a place where institutional workplace values are acted out. Mediating between the corporate/technological and recruitment/human resource worlds, the recruiters are a conduit for multiple institutional values.

What takes place backstage often tends to be ignored by workplace researchers. As Sarangi & Roberts (1999: 22) argue, ‘talk about’ clients should be given the same emphasis as ‘talk to’ clients. In contrast to the last chapter where the focus was on the interaction and dynamic between the interviewer and the candidates, in this chapter, I am focusing on the dynamic between the candidate and the recruiter (‘the backstage’) which is only made visible through recruiter talk about the interview, always after the actual event.
Backstage talk may involve more informal discourse than frontstage talk and is characterised by:

...reciprocal first-naming, co-operative decision-making, profanity, open sexual remarks, elaborate griping, smoking, rough informal dress, 'sloppy' sitting and standing posture, use of dialect or substandard speech, mumbling and shouting, playful aggressivity and 'kidding'...

(Goffman 1959:129)

This is the not so public face of the institution which is in direct contrast to the frontstage (cf Drew & Heritage 1992) discussed in chapter eight. The recruiters in this study dress in a corporate fashion - suits for men and women, behave in a professional manner for the most part, certainly do not smoke at the table but do engage in playful and at times, aggressive banter, with some veiled sexual innuendo. There are not many hedges or mitigations in their judgments, of the kind mentioned by Van Dijk (1993: 148) in the first chapter on CDA workplace studies. Comments, by contrast, are frank and relatively uncensored: "I still can't understand a bloody word they say" (C9, FG 5).

There are no written selection criteria for the judgments beyond those on the video assessment sheets (appendix 3). Nevertheless institutional labels and categories are
applied to individuals against a set of established practice, revealing the institutional order. The judgements about cultural fit are split-second and are rarely reviewed. Often the decision is based on a feeling about somebody, not something which can be defined exactly eg “…in terms of the fit, in terms of the cultural fit I don’t think I’d have too many worries with this guy” (Recruiter 13/11/98). The macro-analysis in this chapter relies as much as possible on the recruiters’ own words.

The interaction and the institutional order

Institutional Talk (2)

The participants in a workplace setting are not just those who are physically present – there are webs of significance which reach out beyond it which reflect the larger institutional order. The institutional order is held together by regulating discourses whose function ideologically is to make specific courses of action accountable to the wider institution (Sarangi & Roberts 1999: 16). Modern business organizations and institutions are a site of power struggle. People enact their gender identity, their ethnicity, their professional status and so on as they talk to others throughout the working day and these workplace interactions are seldom neutral in terms of power.

I begin an analysis of the backstage talk with a definition of how ‘fit’ is defined by corporations and recruitment agencies in order to clarify what it has in common with, and
how it differs from ‘cultural fit’ (See Table 16). It is worth noting that both the terms ‘fit’ and ‘cultural fit’ are not mentioned in front of candidates, marking it as a term belonging to backstage talk.

Table 16

Number of times ‘fit’ and ‘cultural fit’ are mentioned by recruiters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Fit</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>**********</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fit is a generic term used by recruiters who also use the more specific terms: personal fit, technical fit and social fit. Three comments by recruiters underscore this:

• Most corporations believe that interviewing is essential to determine whether a candidate will fit in well with the organization’s value system (Milia & Smith 1997:14)

• Fit is essential – a candidate is wrong for a job if they don’t share the company’s values: “a candidate could look good on paper and appear the best qualified but
be wrong for the job because they don’t share the client company’s values”

(Headhunter Rochford International 24/6/00)

• “We’re very careful in that recruitment process to make sure that the person who comes in not only has the qualifications and the ability to carry out the task but also has a personality that fits the culture” (Parkin & Bourke 1999:169).

In short, ‘fit’ is associated with values: “an organization’s value system”, “a client company’s values”, workplace “culture”. For a recruiter, it would be important to know whether the candidate could work within that environment. ‘Cultural fit’ has a different meaning, ie someone who will fit in with the prevailing way of doing things in the company. The expression straddles a range of industry sectors and professions from the education to the building trade. It is not just a term pertinent to non-Australians. There are many instances where ‘cultural fit’ is an issue with people born in Australia and with indigenous Australians. However, widely different customs would make things ‘awkward’ according to an informant (Recruiter 1/10/98). Either way, the goal is to maximise the chances of achieving a mix of skill and cultural fit. In the words of a recruiter:
Skills and competencies aside, that's obviously what's being checked here...you often find out the cultural fit...by finding out a bit more about the person and their behavior...

FG1 4/9/98

When an outsider is judged in the shortlisting process, that judgment becomes more problematic because the participants are constrained not only by their English speaking ability but by their ‘cultural fit’.

“Work on the similarities”

To illustrate why the expression ‘cultural fit’ is problematic, I take a quote from a 1997 guide to getting a job on the topic of ‘fitting in’ which reflects one position about the issue, albeit in the extreme:

I was coaching the young Indian man and I was explaining about small talk. He said:

‘Oh Philip, I think it is in this area I have been making a mistake. Just last week I had an interview and the interviewer asked me if I smoked and I told him that I did not. I also went on to tell him that I do not eat meat. I do not eat anything with sugar added. I do not eat anything with salt added. I only eat natural products such as brown rice and vegetables.’
If the interviewer was looking at Kumar and thinking, 'You look different, you sound different, you will not 'fit in' Kumar's response was to in effect say 'Yes, I look different, I sound different, and in fact I am very very different. In fact I am probably more different that you ever thought I was. I will almost certainly never 'fit in'...But if I know that interviewers are looking at Kumar and thinking 'you look different, you will not 'fit in' then I have to get Kumar to say "I look different, I sound different but underneath I am no different to you. My values are your values."

(Garside 1997:108)

The author goes on to recommend he eat pie and sauce and coaches him to go to the football on Saturday and have a barbecue with his family on Sunday. In this assimilationist position described here, one discards the old and puts on new robes. Is this view reflected in the comments by recruiters here? Are they more open than this?

Following are two recruiters' quick response to the above scenario (Table 17):
Recruiters' response to assimilationist scenario

D: Yeah look I think that’s (if exaggeration,) um... no I could imagine a scenario like that happening if it’s probably a good one, the most recent chap that D brought out from India, that came through the office just the other day um (M) who’s our Senior Account Manager um, to whom I report to he just said was making a bit of small talk and this guy was quite good saying you “I believe you bowls leg spin,” because D’s organising a cricket game here at 7 and he said oh yes you know he started talking about cricket and this type of thing which we all appreciate and can um relate to so he was quite good yeah but that’s (laughs) I mean small talk is probably is probably one thing we’re very different.

J: and it shows the degree of acculturation (D: yeah, that’s right) .

D: that’s right there’s another I suppose exemplified by another chap we’ve got out here at the moment who we haven’t been able to find a job for um he’s a very serious fellow and just can’t do any of the small talk at all.

J: what about this advice about taking it basically? If you don’t if you’re vegetarian

B: you see, I don’t like that.

D: no I don’t think

B: that’s so dishonest.

J: well do you have to go that far? It is a valid issue if you want to be accepted

D: I mean that’s a bit of all

B: You can find other points of contact cos we are all the same under we all complain about the weather, we all love our children you know there is a lot we have in common as cultures you don’t necessarily have to focus on all the differences all the time.

J: so he’s more or less saying you know if you’re vegetarian or um pious you won’t be accepted you won’t fit in maybe that’s underestimating Australians

D: I think so.

B: I think it’s actually putting Australians in a very very limited box. (D: um, uhuh) you know I think Australians are a little more sophisticated than that I mean if I went and hired someone who sold that to me
The recruiters in this focus group session reacted strongly against Garside’s (1997) position. There was agreement that ‘faking it’ would be unethical, ‘dishonest’ and they would be “pissed off” to find out later that it wasn’t true. It was putting Australians in a ‘limited box’ and it would be possible to find other points of contact apart from diet and Sunday leisure pursuits. The comments raise the point about small talk being an indicator of acculturation for instance: a recruiter was chuffed by a candidate who was able to say “I believe you bowl leg spin”. Another recruiter’s response to the above scenario was:
you can find other points of contact cos we are all the same underneath, we all complain about the weather, we all love our children you know there is a lot we have in common as cultures. You don’t necessarily have to focus on the differences all the time.

(FG5 15/1/99: 7)

Focusing on difference is perceived as focusing on deficit. Professionals often prefer to look for the similarities in an assumed solidarity against racism and discrimination. However “such an undifferentiated view of racism denies the reality that people from black and ethnic-minority groups are regularly discriminated against because of differences in interactive behaviour (Roberts et al 1992: 371).

The extract above (Table 17) illustrates the ethical and strategic problem of who has to adjust to who and to what extent should the insider adjust to the outsider and vice versa.

**General patterns in the Shortlisting**

*The setting is a corporate boardroom in Melbourne for the shortlisting.*

When the videotapes arrive in the Melbourne Office, they are put in a filing cabinet. If the recruiters are unable to match a client with a candidate from their local resources, they will then look at the videotapes. A perception is that Indian Information
Technologists are ‘hard to sell’ or they are put in the ‘too hard basket’. But if recruiters do choose to look at the videotapes, they do not watch the whole interview but scan through with a remote and quickly decide if a candidate matches a client’s specification. Technical expertise is virtually a given. Their interest is whether the candidate might fit into the workplace – culturally speaking. So what does that mean?

Of necessity, the focus group data examined here can only reveal the spoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’. It would be difficult to ascertain what else the recruiters are thinking. It is possible they censor what they really think; maybe they disagree with their colleagues or the younger recruiters feel unable to contradict their Seniors. Maybe also, they are willing to give them a second chance with an observer (me) watching. Where are the candidates succeeding and where are they failing? What are the spoken criteria for the intuitive judgements made by recruiters who develop an antenna for who will ‘fit in’ and who won’t? And given that recruiters do not have written selection criteria, how do they arrive at their decisions so quickly? The pace in Focus Group sessions was very fast and viewing fleeting: “I don’t need to see a lot more. I’ve formed my opinion”. And how do they justify their decisions?

The candidates are reviewed in pairs hence a few of the comments are comparative and the sessions were held 4-6 weeks apart. The categories for analysing ‘cultural fit’ were
arrived at by studying the Focus Group transcripts (Appendix 2), listing the comments made about each candidate, and then categorising them. Using the language of the recruiters to guide the categorisation, their comments fell into a regular and systematic pattern, relating to firstly, whether they could understand the Indian accent, whether the candidates’ presentation was within the norm and whether their body language was relaxed.

This process of “discovering categories” by grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is termed inductive analysis (Lindsley 1999: 149). It is very much a case of defining as you go as these categories have not previously been described. The quantity of comments on a given topic was a good guide to their significance. Initially the comments seemed to fall under the headings of:

- Intelligibility
- communication style
- body language
- presentation.

Of these headings ‘communication style’ could be further divided into ‘vocalization’ and ‘posture’. Vocalization could cover ‘intelligibility’, the recruiters’ first concern. ‘Posture’ could have been dealt with under ‘body language’, likewise ‘presentation’.
There were a number of comments made by recruiters in the form of reflections, while not dealing with the candidates directly, which were relevant to their concerns about ‘cultural fit’ and these I have categorised as ‘workplace values’ which accords with recruiter definitions about ‘fit’ being related to workplace culture/values. Work values are made visible in comments like eg “you know there was an opening there to do something (make a joke) but he doesn’t know that, he hasn’t been schooled in those sort of…” (C4). Some comments under ‘communication style’ could be subsumed under intelligibility or workplace values. So after an interval of a few months, the categories metamorphosed into a more binding shape in the form of:

- Intelligibility
- Body language
- Technical expertise
- Workplace values.

(See Tables 18-21, Analytic categories 1-4)

These categories also follow the order in which the comments were made, so it is clear that intelligibility is the first concern, followed by body language that is congruent or not with current social norms, and then workplace values which are mainly mentioned as asides or reflections after the videotape is on pause or stop. Comments about technical expertise are self-explanatory. Intelligibility is a large enough category to include accent,
comprehensibility, ‘rolling’ and so on. Although the recruiter comments were relatively straightforward to categorise, it was less easy to disentangle which categories are more important for ‘cultural fit’. If more comments are made about body language for argument’s sake, does that mean that body language is more important, that is, the quantity of comments may not reflect their overall importance in the final judgment. The quantity of comments which depends on the method of categorisation may have to be considered in conjunction with other factors like the extent to which they overlap with workplace values. There may be some blurred boundaries which may not be evident from the neat classification system worked out in tables 18-21.

Some written comments were also made available and these were categorised in the same way described above. As the recruiters watch the videotaped interview, they fill out an inhouse Video Assessment Sheet (See Appendix 3 - with the exception of candidates 1 & 2). The headings cover:

- Presentation
- Communication,
- Resume skills confirmed at interview
- Would you present to a client?
- Any other comments
Comments about presentation were categorised under body language. Comments about communication were sorted into intelligibility or body language, depending on whether they related to speech or the latter. Resume skills confirmed at the interview were categorised under Technical expertise. There were virtually no comments on the video assessment sheets relating to workplace values. These mainly came out through discussion in the Focus Groups, usually after a judgment had been made. What follows is a summary of the recruiter comments in Tables 18-21 (Analytic categories 1-4) and at the end of each table, I comment on these, coming to some general conclusions about the spoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’ in the backstage talk.

Table 18

**Analytic Category 1 - Intelligibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Intelligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1         | I can’t understand (yeah) a word he is saying  
You have to really listen to pick up what he’s actually saying (really hard)  
He does actually sound as if he’s speaking another language  
His accent is so thick (yeah) and he’s speaking very fast but I’m thinking if he slowed (yeah) it down a bit you could understand it (what he’s saying)  
..if he’s communicating with other people, they’ll be going what’s he saying?  
These people do actually have to define user needs and uh know what the end result is going to be, that just that communication would be a major problem also there would be a question of whether he’d have an understanding.  
I still can’t pick up what he’s saying, I heard the word ‘conversion’ |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 2    | It’s a bit better to understand  
Yeah not speaking so fast (quickly)  
You can understand him a lot better, he’s talking at pace  
He’s still got this big accent (yeah)  
Whilst this guy’s accent is quite strong...at least he is speaking more slowly so you can actually... |
| 3    | Can you understand the guy? Nuh  
He’s not far off the mark, it’s just his words – can’t pick them all up  
...I think he could possibly do a certain amount of interaction with other people and they would understand him  
But I think if you were sitting in front of him you’d probably understand...  
I don’t think he’s talking too fast  
His English skill can be improved a little bit or I consider his English appropriate to be appropriate for the role that you’ve described  
He is not a nervous talker but he he keeps on talking and he’s giving no opportunity to answer a question and have an exchange  
So if he did come out he would require some schooling because sometimes they talk and they just keep rolling, keep rolling and keep rolling  
This guy needs to be schooled a bit in terms of giving a response and stopping  
It can come off rude you know as you and I might just want to talk  
It’s a nervous thing, I mean the Indians tend to do that more than the others (hold the floor) yeah  
I think it’s possibly because they feel their lack of communication skills (yes, yes) they have to prove themselves in the technical  
This guy knows he’s given an hour for his ticket to Australia...he’s trying to ram 15 minutes with his whole life  
**Talks quickly**  
**He is understandable**  
*Very poor. Very difficult to understand. He doesn’t talk too fast which is good but his words seem to go around one another but it is over video. When you’re in front of someone it’s much easier to understand them* |
| 4    | Well, I can’t understand what he is saying (yeah)  
I can understand  
...I think for understanding you really have to concentrate with this guy in comparison to the first guy  
**Reasonable**  
**Not clear** |
| 5    | His diction is pretty good  
I think he’s understandable  
His speech is better than most we’ve seen |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6    | Clear pronunciation  
Fine, O.K. on video  
Communication is okay. I can't understand that well but you know how they kind of have rolling? Yeah that's what I find. It just seems to roll all into one yeah.  
His speech was not too fast  
Ok - speech was slow enough but I find his words roll a little too much  
Verbal – quite good, is understandable  
Fine, O.K. |
| 7    | It's difficult to understand  
He's not speaking too quickly, his enunciation is the problem. He's running one word into the other in a sort of homogeneous mix but doesn't give enough colour and allow us to distinguish what the words are, the inflections and so on are all a bit funny and different and I find him very hard to understand  
I think he's very frustrating for a client  
I'm not all that inspired by the way he just runs his words into everything  
Ok, it could be difficult for a client to understand. You have to really listen  
The words really roll into one another, can't understand what he is saying |
| 8    | His language is still a problem  
It would just be a matter of saying to slow down your speech, just separate the words  
I can't understand him... the too hard basket  
I haven't said that – if his speech was improved enough it's only a matter of saying slow down and doing the interview again and I think he'd be alright  
Needs his speech to slow down  
His language is still a problem (would present to a client) if he slowed down his speech |
| 9    | His communication is not too bad, pretty straightforward I think  
I can make out one word in ten which isn't much but I don't know if that is because of the sound quality or if it's just he's unintelligible. You can hear 'DB2' every now and then  
He's not too bad, I can understand him reasonably well  
His communication is not too bad  
pretty straightforward  
I still can't understand a bloody word they say  
Words very unclear |
<p>| 10   | I found him easier to understand than the previous two (sic) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He spoke much slower than the others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whether that was just his command of English isn’t as good he was a lot easier to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t have any trouble understanding him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good. Spoke slowly, very understandable I thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice a bit strident, slower voice pace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bolded comments are written comments from the video assessment sheet*

## 1. Intelligibility

More recruiter comments relate to intelligibility than any other category. It is mentioned first as candidates would automatically be rejected if their pronunciation were difficult to understand as in the case of candidates 1 and 4:

> These people do have to define user needs…communication would be a major problem, also there would be a question whether he’d have the understanding

(C1) &

Well, I can’t understand what he is saying  (C4)

Three issues in particular are picked up by recruiter comments about candidates 1-10. These concern accent, pace, and “rolling” which in linguistic terms (Gumperz et al 1979; Scollon 1981), correspond to prosodic features.
Indian Prosodic features

Following Gumperz (1982), O'Grady (1994:110) points out that there are systematic differences in the use of prosody in Indian English and that these differences can contribute to misunderstanding and misjudgment in cross-cultural communication. In Indian English, the smallest unit of information is the phrase rather than the clause. No syllables are stressed significantly more than others and almost every content word is highlighted. At the same time there appears to be a great deal of stress as consonants are clearly articulated. An Anglo-Australian listener responding to the marked consonants may perceive the Indian's speech as staccato and somewhat aggressive. Simultaneously they may not know what to attend to and perceive the talk as disorganised and tedious:

“He's running one word into the other in a sort of homogeneous mix but doesn't give enough colour and allow us to distinguish what the words are. The inflections and so on are all a bit funny and different and I find him very hard to understand” (C 7)

By the same token, an Indian listener may perceive Australian speech as overexcited and aggressive and, with its constant stress on key words, as somewhat patronising (O'Grady 1994:110).
In the English of native speakers, each message portion is expressed within the contours of a tone group, like a phrase in music, and within each tone group the speaker stresses one and sometimes two syllables to give prominence to the key aspect of the message. So the speaker guides the listener through a stream of talk in sequences, giving pitch prominence to what the listener is to attend to against the background of already known or less important talk (ibid). A recruiter comments about C1, “he does actually sound as if he’s speaking another language.”

Recruiters’ complaints about Indian accent overlap with complaints about ‘rolling’: and note that it is hard to get a word in:

...they just keep rolling, keep rolling and keep rolling (C3)

&

he keeps on talking and he’s giving no opportunity to answer a question and have an exchange (C3).

An example of ‘rolling’ (C3 lines 9-10)

9 IR: ...Tell me what you’ve done for the project?

10 IE: Yeah, I’m telling you. My project ... my role is analysing. After finding that one, we can prepare the sheet. The data control...what 3 types of data (yeah) data control, second one is data transfer and third one is data manipul... er..
operation (right) Data control will have ...of course, when we use the data base in the ( ) section and second one is um RD section, Record Description section and third one is Linking section. Whatever the data we use in the three sections, it will come out on the Re-entry Paper Control (right) When we use the data fields in computations, they will displace and move statements, uh that will control uh ... uh.. data transfer. Third one is data operations (right) When we use the data fields in operation computing, for interest ... suppose calculating interest rate just as an example ...

"Rolling" means that the pace is fast and the topic is not very clear. For instance, near the beginning of the candidate's turn, he says "after finding that one". It is not clear what "that one" refers to. 'Rolling' (above) was viewed very negatively and the listener can switch off. Recruiter comments highlight that 'rolling' affects interaction skills, or the ability to have an exchange but it is pointed out that candidates can be "schooled" to slow down. Indian candidates are being interviewed on their territory and may not have adjusted the rate of utterance accordingly to that of the interviewer.

Willing (1992: 98) describes research showing cross-cultural communication is more likely to be successful in a professional encounter when participants use 'semantic introducers'. These are labels or signposts which signal to the listener what is to come and so provide a means of structuring the incoming information. In the interview, such labels are invaluable in guiding the interviewer through the talk and directing attention to the important aspects of an answer eg:
• Organise information flow

I’d like to refer back to my point about...

Getting back to...

Moving on to...

• Structure a list

The first point I’d like to make is...

Secondly...finally...

• Assign emphasis

My main point is...

The most critical thing is...

• Identify a purpose of motive

I mention this because...

I’m raising this in order to...

(Willing 1992: 98)

Another issue concerns the length of turns. Clyne and Ball (1990: 12) found that lengths of turns proved to be radically different across ethnolinguistic groups. Rising and falling
tones played a role in inviting backchannelling or turntaking as well as being a floor maintenance technique. In the case of C8, the speaker continues his solo talking for the whole of the interview and there is little space for the interviewer to take back the floor. It's almost as if he gives up altogether (See appendix 1), taking only two turns. This behaviour provokes a strong objection: "It can come off rude you know as you and I might just want to talk" (C3). Holding the floor in these interviews is seen as both rude and as a sign of nervousness: "It's a nervous thing, I mean the Indians tend to do that more than the others (hold the floor)" (C3). It could well be that these floor maintenance strategies reflect neither rudeness nor nervousness. This is a case of where it would have been interesting to find out how Indian candidates interpret their behaviour. They may have been eager to demonstrate their skills in a short 5-minute timeframe.

An added complication to the discussion about intelligibility is that it is important to recognise that Indian users of English come from different regions and have different mother tongues. As Gupta (2001) points out, a Bengali's English carries influence of Bangla, A Tamilian's English has several features of Tamil and a Panjabi's English has several features of Panjabi. These influences operate at all levels of the structure of English but are most noticeable at the levels of sounds. But as Indians belonging to different linguistic backgrounds move up the educational ladder, and as they interact more and more with other Indians belonging to different linguistic backgrounds, they
tend to drop certain regional features that mark their English and move towards a form of English that is acceptable as standard educated English (Gupta 2001: 153).

Some of the characteristics of Indian English evident from the data such as the omission of articles, leaving off the 's' and a repetition of phrases do not necessarily present a problem for recruiters. That all ten candidates spoke Indian English in this corpus may be an indication that they did not have much experience speaking English outside their own countries and even those who had worked in America, may not have mixed socially. The evidence for this is, there are no marked American expressions or English colloquial expressions to be found.

Table 19

Analytic Category 2 – Body Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Body Language</th>
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</table>
| 1         | He’s like very expressive  
            I don’t find it too bad, he’s quite expressive... his body language is fine, he is obviously very expressive but um fairly, but not in an intrusive sense  
            Has the thing in his pocket, he didn’t have a tie on and stuff |
| 2         | I would say his presentation is better  
            He seems a little more relaxed, he’s not ...so movin his hands, not so mobile with the hands  
            He’s sitting back a little more than the other guy  
            His body language was fine...we have a lot of people who are very expressive |
<p>| | |</p>
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</table>
| 3 | Nothing wrong with his body language, is there?  
...the head’s not flying around it’s not the head nodding and so which disconcerts concerns (sic) people (yeah)  
Do you think a tie would be required for Australia though?  
He’s got a fresh white shirt  
...he hasn’t got a tie but um so I don’t think he’s too bad  
... Sat openly and talked openly with his hands...  
Well presented, very clean and neat  
(comunication) quite good, use of hands to explain good  
(Doesn’t move around too much, focused on the interviewer  
(Presentation) good, moves head, making it quite difficult to understand initially - slow to warm up but then quite good  
(Presentation) is suitable, a jacket and tie would be required in Australia  
(Communication) Is good, body language is relaxed  
(Presentation) Good, clean white shirt  
(Presentation) no tie or jacket (I realise it’s hot)  
He has good body language techniques |
| 4 | ...moves the head, is a trait but I’m saying is offputting...  
... The head nodding is there but it’s not too bad, not too distracting  
he seems a lot more nervous than the other guy  
(sitting in the corner of the couch) T might have placed him there but in terms of body language it shows to me a lot of insecurity  
(Presentation) appropriate for the interview, again in Australia, jacket and tie would be required  
A little reserved in the interview, nervous, head movement  
(Presentation) fine, looks good  
(Presentation) not bad – no tie or jacket  
Seemed very nervous – sitting at side of the couch  
Not relaxed, body language classic Indian “shake the head” |
| 5 | Um seems a bit nervous and camera shy  
Nervous eye movements  
He seemed to relax a bit...his body language is really quite okay which is you know the Indian head nods and so on  
He’s sat there in a very submissive way sort of opening up a little bit  
His hand movements I think are quite good  
His hands, (his speech) is better than most we’ve seen  
(Presentation) excellent, body language is quite good  
Nervous eye movements, relaxed, body language quite O.K.  
Very nervous but good presentation; cultural fit good - body language relaxed, yet professional; hand movement and head movement good, |
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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</table>
| 6 | **not too over the top;**
|   | Straighten up lad
|   | I’d tell him that before going to a client, that’s sloppy
|   | We commented on him being very relaxed maybe slouching and so on but the point is I think he’s got a very relaxed comfortable style but he would make an interviewer feel nervous, do you know what I mean?
|   | His tongue actually just poked out
|   | But also in fast forward here, you can see that the gestures are not bad, they’re very comfortable, the hand gestures, not too much headnoding, the eye contact, he’s moving his eyes away, just coming back to make the relevant point
|   | **Needs to straighten up, relaxed comfortable style, body language good, eye contact, doesn’t wave too much or nod his head**
|   | **(Presentation) a bit slouchy – well presented, (communication) ok at times too quick, gets more nervous**
|   | **Relaxed**
| 7 | I think his presentation is not that crash hot either
|   | He’s not wearing a tie
|   | The eye contact was not very solid either with T
|   | **(presentation) good**
|   | no tie, didn’t look T in the eye
| 8 | He’s open, he’s trying to be convincing and he’s talking with some passion about what he’s doing, that’s much more saleable and much more believable
|   | Hand movements – he was using them without going overboard.
|   | It’s a contradiction – he’s open and closed, he’s sitting up the other end of the couch, yes he’s been told to sit, it’s not his nature
|   | **Good presentation, very open communication**
|   | **But he was relaxed and more open, better body language**
| 9 | He’s quite relaxed which is good
|   | doesn’t have too dramatic head noddy thing...because that does bother clients you know if the head’s going like crazy all the time
|   | I thought his body language was quite good, a lot of eye contact, he’s animated enough, he’s not like sitting there like a wooden dummy so he’s quite relaxed about the process
|   | **Fine, relaxed-good, strong personality, animated, not shy at all**
|   | **Body language relaxed, eye contact good**
| 10 | Very handsome fellow
|   | Young, competent, you know just the way he sat forward
|   | ..seemed energetic in the interview, he was leaning forward, he was listening, he wasn’t overtalking
|   | he listened and answered again, that eye contact was very good
|   | presentation a lot better, a nice crisp shirt and pants
I think like his body language was eager, leaning forward listening very carefully um they’re all important things
You could see he had that piece of paper in his hands but he wasn’t too nervous, he wasn’t really playing with it too much
Wasn’t afraid to smile through it - that’s something T must have said something that amused him you know he just had this big beautiful smile on his face
eager, well presented, presents as a good opportunity
good body language, eye contact

*Bolded comments are written comments from the Video Assessment Sheet

2. Body language

Kinesics is the pattern of body movements including posture, facial expressions, gesture head and arm movements which carry meaning in communication. These features signal attitudes and feelings, the degree of affiliation or liking one person feels towards another and relationships of equality, submissiveness or dominance. They also reflect responsiveness to what is being said. In cross-cultural encounters, these signals may carry unintended meanings as in the case of headnodding to the side. We only see the body language of the candidate, not the interviewer so it is not always clear what the triggers are, as the triggers are crucial.

The category of body language is commented on next most frequently after intelligibility (without any prompting from the moderator) and the pattern of comments relate to presentation, proxemics, gaze and gesture.
Presentation

Many of the recruiter comments related to appearance for instance, “his presentation is better” (C 2) and “his presentation is not that crash hot” (C7), “good presentation (C8), “well presented” (C10). Whether the candidate was wearing a tie or had a pen in his pocket was commented upon specifically. At this point, it was noticable who had travelled and who hadn’t. Younger recruiters who hadn’t travelled made the observation about the lack of tie or pen in the pocket:

Has the thing in his pocket, he didn’t have a tie on and stuff (C1)

More ‘seasoned’ recruiters pointed out in India it’s hot (“I realise it’s hot”) and that a pen in the pocket is a statement of being a white collar worker as opposed to being a manual labourer. The dress codes described here are conservative: “he’s got a fresh white shirt” (C3) and “a jacket and a tie would be required in Australia” (C3). It is interesting to note that dress codes for IT professionals at the time of writing are becoming more casual or relaxed. The trend began in the United States in the early 90s when workers in the technology industry favoured casual dress. Many were setting up companies straight after university and saw no reason to dress in suit and tie for the office.
Proxemics

Body language involves proxemics, that is the way space is used between people in interactions and how that use of space is perceived. The corpus consists of 10 videotapes of “Indians on a settee trying to sell themselves”, as one recruiter bluntly puts it. Whether they sit in the middle of the sofa or the corner is noted eg “seemed very nervous, sitting at side of the couch” (C4) compared with “seems a little more relaxed” of Candidate 2 who sat in the middle. But we don’t know if the interviewer has told them where to sit eg of candidate 8, “he’s sitting up the other end of the couch, yes he’s been told to sit, it’s not his nature”. Sitting in the corner of the couch, “shows to me a lot of insecurity” (C4) comments one recruiter.

Gaze

In Australia, eye contact is used not only to show that a person is listening and interested but also as a signal in exchanging speaking turns reflected in the comment about C10: “he listened and answered again, that eye contact was very good”. It also communicates honesty and trustworthiness: “the eye contact was not very solid either with T” (C7). The length of time one gazes is culturally determined but it is difficult to interpret from the data, what might be the norm. Nervous eye movements were picked up on with candidate 5 and a lot of eye contact by candidate 9 was seen as a good thing.
**Gesture**

Headnodding can eliminate a candidate (Senior Recruiter 1/10/98). There are two kinds of head nod, up and down and side to side. A head nod is a positive gesture used in most cultures to signify ‘yes’ or affirmation. A side nod is confusing because it can signal the opposite.

Headnodding is a problem firstly because it causes confusion between yes and no and ‘because it causes humour in.. (FG1 4/9/98)

&

It’s almost the archetype in respect of the Indian with the accent and head nodding and everything else so you I guess start to label a little bit (mmm) (FG1 4/9/98)

The head nod can reveal the degree of acculturation to the host culture. In a stressful situation such as an interview, the first culture is likely to override the second culture as pointed out by Hawthorne (1992: 100). And being interviewed on one’s home turf (in Bangalore) would make their body language more marked. Members of minority groups might alter their behaviour when meeting with the majority group and the gestures might be more muted if these candidates were interviewed in Australia.
Expressive hand gestures were less of a problem from the recruiter perspective. Expressiveness was shared by the cultural group but there were differences in the gesticulation which were more individual for example in the way, points were made – into the palm or listed off the fingers. With candidate 1 who was rejected for showing insecurity, closer analysis of the videotape showed he was using the trigger gesture to make his points which can be interpreted as hostility together with an unsmiling countenance:

…the pointed finger becomes a symbolic club with which the speaker figuratively beats his listener into submission. The pointed finger is one of the most irritating gestures that a person can use while speaking (Pease 1998:43).

Based on comments in the focus groups, recruiters intuit ‘flex’ from the body language. They seem to be able to recognise flex or lack of it from the posture, the gestures and gaze. Someone who appears too insecure or rigid would not fit in. A recruiter is paid to be highly discriminating. The agency’s reputation is at stake every time they send an employee off to an employer. Nevertheless the fact that candidates can be rejected for headnodding is an indication of the limits to tolerating cultural diversity at the time of writing in an Australian workplace setting. When participants go beyond what is
‘allowable”, their contributions will be regarded as ‘marked’ and it is precisely these deviations which point to a rethink of the potential boundaries.

Table 20

**Analytic Category 3 – Technical expertise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Technical expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1         | Comes across as serious about his work  
Methodical manner which you would expect with people in this highly technical background  
He knows how to answer some fairly technical questions in terms of what he has done and how he would handle…  
He sounds like he does know what he’s talking about |
| 2         | Not mentioned |
| 3         | He’s talking a bit too technical  
But it’s a technical interview  
– possibly because they feel their lack of communication skills they have to prove themselves in the technical  
Skills were confirmed at the interview (2)  
Couldn’t really understand what his skills are – analysis  
Skills seem to be confirmed but it was a little hard to understand exactly what he is confirming, I can hear a lot of “data”, “analyse” |
| 4         | Not mentioned  
Y2K projects, analysis SDLC – been involved in the whole process  
(Resume skills confirmed) I think so, couldn’t really understand him once again |
| 5         | I’d feel very comfortable with him if his technical skill is right  
He’s believable, he’s believable  
His skills are very difficult to understand… yeah I found that he missed the point a bit with T’s question. I felt that T has to repeat it a couple of times in a roundabout manner in a technical sense.  
(Resume skills) very broad at interview  
explained things well, seems to understand and know what he is talking about, although he talked more about what the project did |
rather than what he did within the role

6 Seemed to home in on 'what I was doing' which was good and relevant to the Australian scenario
He talked more about what he did, which is good (not the team)
Homed in on what he was doing

7 Not mentioned
(Resume skills confirmed at interview) Not really because I couldn't really understand him, not professional

8 He hit a couple of technology things I might have been interested in
I could hear the technical skills eg Cobol, IMS but didn't really hear what he did with it

9 Very straightforward, explained role well, didn't tip-toe around questions, straightforwardness was refreshing
If I had a role that was a good technical fit I would present

10 ..Talking in the third person quite a bit.. 'we are doing this'
...the other guy (9) didn't do that, it was 'I'
I don't think technically he's as strong as the other guys but I think he'd fit probably just as well as any of them
Weaker than others

*Bolded comments are written comments from the Video Assessment Sheet

3. Technical Expertise

The purpose of the interview is to check the skills mentioned in the resume. All the candidates were 'believable': "he sounds like he does know what he's talking about" (C1). Their professional credibility was enhanced by talking in a methodical manner (C1), by talking in a straightforward fashion (C9) and by not talking in the third person (C10) eg "explained things well, seems to understand and know what he is talking about, although he talked more about what the project did rather than what he did within the role" (C5).
Thematic condensation and monologic orientation are characteristic features of technical discourse (Lemke 1995: 60) and are borne out in the ten interviews:

We used um animators and two kinds of ( ), one is CA Impact ... uh .. CA Realia workbench we have. And on the other side we have MBS workbench. This MBS workbench, what it expects is there is .. there is a hardware lock for that. So you have to have the hardware lock in order to use MBS workbench. It is not same like CA, realia workbench. Uh .. in both the workbenches you have this animated option. Basically this animator ... okay, it help us in executing the steps of the program ... uh statements step-by-step. The advantage what you get is you can actually see the flow of control and check whether that particular segment is carrying the value properly, what it is supposed to. So that is what we are actually doing in unit testing. That is called a side box testing (right) basically the date variables are going to be critical if they have been used in say comparison, like calculation, if the sort gate is being used as a date, and there is a vissam file key a primary key ( ) date so we have such programs, events or dates. So in comparison, say for example, you skip the cursor to the place where you have the comparison statement. That is you start executing from that statement and you supply the necessary values, you monitor the values. You supply the values and execute them, that is execute that step check whether the value that is being monitored is properly changed or being accepted to some other variable or whatever (C7)

It is difficult for the interviewer to break into this monologic explanation of how a Y2K problem is solved. All ten candidates possess a technical literacy, demonstrating control of the professional discourse.

However, a major problem in the selection of IT employees in general according to Thite (1994), a specialist in Human resource issues in the Indian Information Technology
Industry, is an over-emphasis on specific technical matters by technical interviewers at the cost of assessing the candidate’s overall personality, integrity, communication and interpersonal skills. The over-emphasis on technical matters in the interview was raised by recruiters themselves in the focus group sessions “we need the individual character to come out along with the technical skill”:

…but if you saw him being asked questions perhaps about his hobbies or his interests then like B said you would see a lighter person (FG1 4/9/98) &

so there’s no questions asked about hobbies, things like that…because I think that would make a difference as well, to see what their hobbies are, what, just to see the human side

(FG1 4/9/98)

A good answer according to Garside (1997: 74), from the perspective of Human Resources, gives the information requested about the experience, brings in progression of experiences in a logical way and finishes with a comment. It is conversational and therefore demonstrates more personality than the response above (C7) and hence more likeability.
### Table 21

**Analytic Category 4 – Workplace values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Workplace Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(re use of ‘Sir’) Maybe he needs to be a bit more relaxed? If you were to work in an Australian environment you know, you don’t go up and ‘g’day, how you’re going?” but maybe if you address someone as ‘Sir’ it’d be kind of I don’t know. Probably see it as being very respectful probably somewhat quaint but not offensive (no). He lets T finish the question and then delivers his answers. …he sounds very earnest. Not clear about his role and that of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>If he had the skills that we were looking for in that particular environment (yeah) I would see nothing there that would concern me about him. It depends on what type of role. He’s earnest, he’s trustworthy. “he keeps on talking and he’s giving no opportunity to answer a question and have an exchange.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(Re all the interruptions at the start), there was an opening there to do something but he doesn’t know that, he hasn’t been schooled in those sort of .. <strong>I would need to school him in a few areas before seeing a client</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>…in terms of cultural fit, I don’t think I’d have too many worries with this guy <strong>seemed serious and responsible</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You warm to this one more or don’t you? He’s a friendly bloke…comb his hair though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Very honest in terms of his skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A reasonably impressive sort of candidate, listened and answered again, presented well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bolded comments are written comments from the Video Assessment Sheet*
4. Workplace values

The recruiters have certain expectations of how candidates will conduct themselves in the interview and these expectations are revealed in the informal comments backstage. Candidates were perceived to be too serious. For instance, Candidate 4 endured a few interruptions to his interview – the camera fell over, the dog barked, T’s wife sang out and in that situation, an Australian would have made a joke – “there was an opening there to do something but he doesn’t know that”. The use of small talk i.e. about cricket signals someone is easy-going. They are looking for someone who will relax more and show their personality.

In general, it is of particular interest for a recruitment company to gain a deep understanding of a company’s culture so that they match candidates to a role – both technically and culturally illustrated by the following comment:

When we recruit for roles in Victorian Government, we look for a particular “type” – a strong team player, diligent, not brash or opinionated (these are not desired by a conservative body such as Government), a person who values the work rather than the salary/rate (as commonly Government will pay up to 20% below market rates, but there are lots of other benefits to offset this), good communication, especially interpersonal, tolerant of bureaucracy and processes, have good presentation skills, a professional demeanour etc. When we recruit for
an internet start-up company, the profile will be significantly different. Young, full of ideas, technically expert, looking for reward in salary, expectation of learning new skills, flat management, fast moving environment, casual dress.

(Fieldnote Senior Account Manager 17/10/01)

In this context, the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists for the Y2K project falls somewhere in between. The nature of the interviews is that they are technically oriented to the total exclusion of the personal which measured against normal practice is atypical. This explains recruiters' frustration in making judgments about 'cultural fit' where the personal is absent. In practice, the information they have left to rely on, is body language which is evidence that in 'the new work order' (Gee et al 1996), habitus is an important consideration. It also shows how wider social forces do impact on the recruitment process.

Following is a summary of all the points made by the recruiters in the Focus Group Sessions and on the Video Assessment Sheets (Table 22) over one year.
### Table 22

**What really counts in the decision-making process?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not okay</th>
<th>okay</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intelligibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intelligibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid speech ‘rolling’</td>
<td>Indian accent</td>
<td>Understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tie</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pen in pocket</td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>no pen in pocket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bright purple tie with blue shirt with greens stripes in it and brown jacket”</td>
<td></td>
<td>a nice crisp shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td></td>
<td>fresh white shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headnodding</td>
<td></td>
<td>clean shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waving hands</td>
<td></td>
<td>combed hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slouching</td>
<td></td>
<td>eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never looks you in the eye</td>
<td></td>
<td>upright posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace Values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Workplace values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Workplace values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too serious</td>
<td>relaxed</td>
<td>relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking over the top</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>sense of humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>smile</td>
<td>friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘likeability’</td>
<td>smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>young</td>
<td>‘likeability’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>straightforward</td>
<td>young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>honest</td>
<td>straightforward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serious/earnest</td>
<td>honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsible</td>
<td>serious/earnest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>believable</td>
<td>responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>methodical</td>
<td>believable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>listening and answering</td>
<td>methodical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nice person</td>
<td>listening and answering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>small talk</td>
<td>nice person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talk about sport (cricket)</td>
<td>small talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>might have a joke</td>
<td>talk about sport (cricket)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proactive</td>
<td>might have a joke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB Technical expertise is a given.
**Portrait of an ideal candidate**

In Table 22, it can be clearly seen what the recruiters ostensibly focus on in their judgments. Some judgments are mentioned in response to the videotapes, others came out in the group interaction afterwards. The prevailing culture is a conservative one and a masculine one at that. The ideal candidate wears a white shirt and tie, speaks slowly, makes eye contact, seems friendly like he might have a joke about cricket, listens and answers to questions, responding in a methodical manner and looks trustworthy. Therefore, a knowledge of information technology does not diminish the importance of and the need for effective communication skills.

**Table 23**

**Snapshots of candidates who are shortlisted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Recruiter Responses</th>
<th>Shortlisted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Focus Group 1</td>
<td>No/Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Focus Group 2</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Focus Group 3</td>
<td>Yes/Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Focus Group 4</td>
<td>Yes/No-Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Focus Group 5</td>
<td>Yes/Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We need to get a snapshot comfortable feel for it all” (FG2: 4)
There was general agreement about whether candidates were to be shortlisted or not except in the case of candidates 1, 4, 7 & 8. On reviewing the tapes, most of the candidates would have been chosen for shortlisting provided that their 'technical fit' were appropriate. In fact seven out of the ten in the second viewing, were deemed to be 'culturally fit' if the employer demand was there. Negative comments still led to selection in 7, although it is difficult to detect whether candidates were being shortlisted on the reviewing to please me, the observer.

Two remaining key issues in the shortlisting is a process of familiarisation and how they would present him to a client:

I wondered too whether our exposure more to the program and to the people like I remember the initial videos that we saw I mean apart from the fact that they were very poor quality but we were probably almost critical of them because their heads were going like crazy and all the rest of it I think we've actually as a group been exposed to a lot more as well so maybe there's a bit more flexing in what we may present to a client now versus 12 months ago

(FG 5 15/1/99:2)
It seems reasonable to expect employees who have had prior working experience with a diverse workforce to be more effective interculturally than those who have not (Mamman 1995:532). Similarly it can be argued that the longer an employee stays in a multi-cultural workplace the more likely he/she will acquire the knowledge relevant for reducing uncertainty during intercultural interaction. So how do you persuade the employers that don’t have the same amount of exposure?

It’s the way you actually sell it (FG 2 8/10/98)

An example in focus group 5 was selling an overtly gay guy into a conservative work environment – “we went through process of educating them ...you’ll find there’s got to be a re-education of our clients that they have to perhaps flex a little bit more in terms of who they bring on board”. However, when they “sell” their Indian candidates, one strategy is “when you package them, no reason to say they’re from overseas”:

We have clients that we know, we can’t sell some of these people to...well, you can get on the white charger and take the client to task ...but you won’t make a sale (FG 4 11/12/98:8).
Ethnocentrism relates to positive feelings towards one’s own group and negative feelings towards others. Thus, in an ethnocentric work setting, employees will be required to conform to the dominant group’s standards of behaviour. In such an encounter the dominant group may expect to hear standard ‘appropriate’ language and when faced with linguistic variability may react negatively.

**Conclusion**

The recruiter judgements in this case study, besides revealing the spoken meaning of ‘cultural fit’ provide an interesting reflection of current workplace values in Australia (ethnocentric) and the limits to what is culturally acceptable in a multicultural society and an increasingly globalised one. As dominant group members, recruiters are engaged in discourse about ‘them’ - an ethnic minority group (Southern Indian) who wish to find work in Australia. The data has served as a guide to what things really matter in their judgements about ‘cultural fit’. The lack of technical knowledge is never mentioned as a reason candidates fail the shortlisting process. From the perspective of the recruiters, there is partial ‘cultural fit’. Leaving aside the issue of intelligibility, the lack of which can lead to outright rejection, there are tensions between presentation, body language, role in the team, seriousness and lack of small talk.
The interview and shortlisting process serve two different purposes. Nevertheless 'cultural fit' is judged from a technical performance which points to an element of unfairness in the interviewing procedure. Candidates in Bangalore are not given an opportunity to show a lighter side to their personalities although this was recognized by the recruiters themselves ("...but if you saw him being asked questions perhaps about his hobbies or his interests then like B said you would see a lighter person" FG1 49/9/98). By specifically incorporating non-technical assessment factors in the interview, the assessment made by recruiters of the candidate's suitability, could be enhanced. Although as mentioned earlier, this may be a characteristic of 'the new work order' where 'cultural fit' is less important for short-term contracts.

Overall this study draws attention to the importance of communication of a nonverbal kind in backstage talk. In essence, recruiter judgements about 'cultural fit' were made from a quick impression of the body language. Speech was listened to for a split second to see if it was intelligible. Very rapid speech, eg 'rolling on', was rated negatively and could interfere with their ability to interpret clients' needs in the area of systems analysis. But after that, comments about 'cultural fit' were inferred from candidates' body language covering presentation, expressiveness, headnodding etc. There was a preference for candidates who on the whole displayed culturally congruent nonverbal behaviour. Too much headnodding, for example, can lead to confusion between 'yes' and 'no'. In
terms of workplace values recruiters also took note of an ability to engage in small talk and looked for evidence of a sense of humour. Their comments underlined large differences between the Australian workplace and the Indian workplace. Taking technical competence as a given, the comments of Australian recruiters revealed their preference for a more relaxed easygoing candidate ‘who knows how to have a laugh’. A too earnest and serious presentation in the interview tended to work against the candidate being shortlisted for employment in Melbourne.

The recruiter comments backstage give some insight into the institutional order. While examining the discourse practices of the recruitment agency (an intermediary institution), the information exchanges in the data showed an orderliness to the comments which were a complex mixture of objective procedure and subjective assessment, where the latter (“my feeling is...”) determines the final outcome. Time constraints were a feature. Just as the interviews themselves were fast, the judgments were fleeting and seldom reviewed, reflecting the fast pace of corporate life. The comments reveal an intertwining of corporate values (Anglo-American) and Australian workplace values. Differences can be found in the level of formality and expectations of humour.

The Australian workplace is very diverse and the culture of business is to maximise the chances of achieving skill and fit bearing in mind, a demographic shift to non-white
employees reflecting too, a changing pool of customers. The recruiters in this case study strive to balance the interests of the clients who pay the agencies, with 'candidate care'. Ultimately it is the candidate who can improve their chances of eligibility with a greater knowledge of the culture and institutional values. There is equally room for adjustments by the gatekeepers to open the gate wider, to meet both the requirements of equal opportunity legislation and demands of productive diversity.
10 Conclusion: The politics of presentation

In this thesis, I set out to understand what recruiters meant by the expression 'cultural fit' through undertaking a case study of the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists to fill a casual skills shortage for the Y2K. I problematised the expression and by considering something which might be considered mundane or commonsense, brought informal patterns to awareness and revealed multiple agendas. A critical approach aims to reveal what these agendas are and thus promote an awareness of the issues which, apart from their intrinsic interest, can be of value to those who wish to 'cross over' or 'pass' into another group to gain occupational or social advantage.

I began with a review of critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and the comparatively recent field of workplace linguistics to see what the salient issues were. I found that the data threw up an issue that was not really dealt with sufficiently in the literature, which was the importance of body language. This led to an investigation of Bourdieu's ideas about habitus, the idea that culture is encoded in the whole body, and an exploration of some of the pioneering research done on the interdependence between linguistics and kinesics, across a range of disciplines. Over a twenty year period, there has been a gradual shift in thinking about culture, moving from a deficit model to an intercultural model, to an institutional model. In this context, my research illustrates the
nature of the partnership between the interaction order which is characteristically asymmetrical, and the larger institutional order following Sarangi & Roberts (1999).

This involved elaborating on the interplay between the frontstage and backstage talk and unravelling the hybrid discourses occurring in actual interactional routines, involving the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists. Frontstage talk (‘talk to’) revealed ‘cultural fit’ to involve literacies apart from a knowledge of English such as a knowledge of institutional discourse over and above the professional and the personal. A lack of knowledge of the institutional (Australian workplace) and corporate (international) culture puts candidates at a severe disadvantage.

Backstage talk (‘talk about’) revealed ‘cultural fit’ to be made up of intelligibility, body language, technical expertise and Australian workplace values. The expectation that candidates’ English be intelligible to a native speaker is not problematical per se although perceptions of that intelligibility could differ according to the amount of familiarity recruiters have with Indian candidates. For instance, the interviewer appeared to have little difficulty understanding the interviewees but he was interviewing thousands. Nor is the expectation that candidates have the requisite technical experience/professional credibility, problematical. All candidates in this study showed themselves to be technically literate. What is problematical, though, is recruiter judgments made about
body language, for example, head nodding which leads to rejection, and which shows the current workplace to be an ethnocentric one. This is at odds with official government policy of equal opportunity and productive diversity.

The area of highest tension was to do with workplace values, which shows that being bilingual does not automatically equate with being bicultural. For instance, the issue of 'getting to the point' is a core value, not just in Australia but in the corporate world as a whole. Thus being bicultural implies an institutional literacy which includes semiotic resources. Ultimately it is speech together with other semiotic resources ie dress, presentation, and body language, which count in the decision-making process.

Frontstage studies bias workplace studies towards talk, but once there is a shift away from the set piece interaction, talk becomes only one aspect of workplace life. Frontstage studies have been limited in ignoring the backstage aspects of institutional life. This study provides evidence that backstage studies are necessary to broaden the base of professionals' work as backstage practices affect how frontstage practices are carried out. Backstage studies provide more insight into the institutional order. For instance, the recruitment and computing worlds are very masculine worlds as shown by the frequent use of sporting metaphors in the backstage talk. The kind of individual favoured in the
current global economic climate is very much a conservative one notwithstanding the oft stated need for lateral thinkers and the wearing of Hawaiian shirts on a Friday.

Every utterance and every action can be understood as symbolic capital. Using the right discourse form is a kind of institutional literacy, which forms part of one’s cultural repertoire which in turn, is part of one’s cultural capital. Having control over certain discourses – and hence of their literacies – can result in greater acquisition of money, power, status. Together these resources or lack of resources undoubtedly affect one’s life chances. With a knowledge of the institution, candidates may be better able to interpret interview talk and respond and behave in ways which will be positively evaluated.

Theoretical implications of this study

I consciously rejected a single method approach to research to impose order on the confusing variety of experience that characterises much of organizational life. From a range of different approaches to analysis of interaction within intercultural communication and workplace linguistics, I drew on various strands of discourse analysis that grasped different aspects of the problem for understanding ‘cultural fit’. My purpose was to map the field of workplace studies and adapt it to investigate naturally occurring data. I have attempted to tie in the abstractions of Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and cultural capital with more concrete studies of intercultural communication foreshadowed
by Gumperz et al (1979), and developed by Sarangi & Roberts (1999) which explicitly connect workplace interaction with the larger institutional order.

This research is a demonstration of a distinctive cultural capital and habitus at play and a reminder that body language is important in creating the institutional context. Indian Information Technologists have a knowledge of English and information technology (cultural capital) but lack a knowledge of the Australian habitus. There is some continuity between this research and a point made by researchers in the past (Hall 1959, Mehrabian 1971, Bourdieu 1977, Gumperz et al 1979, Roberts 1985, Lemke 1995) that interaction is at two levels: speech and body language. Speech is never a purely linguistic phenomena – it relies on other semiotic resources such as gestures, facial expressions, movements etc. This point gets lost or is neglected in actual data analyses understandably because there is more than enough to attend to in the speech. Linguistics considers speech to be important but in communicative practice, recruiters make judgments about candidates’ ‘cultural fit’ from their body language.

There are few studies which take a critical approach to intercultural communication. For this critique, I have sought to make the power relations central rather than subservient to the linguistic micro-level categories of analysis and interpret the narrative in such a way to show that the interaction is dynamic, not fixed (as opposed to the institution which is
more static). Hence participants can be constructed as having ‘agency’, the ability to influence the interaction to their own strategic ends unlike the bewildered Mr Sandhu of Gumperz et al’s *Crosstalk* (1979) who is passive and would find it difficult to survive in today’s globalised work environment.

A recognition of existing hybridity in institutional talk allows an openness to new forms of hybridity, those which are not just mainstream, giving meaning to the expression ‘productive diversity’. Getting employers to recognise that their own practices are hybrid invites a greater tolerance of difference with regard to the outsider. The perspective I am advocating is a bifocal one – stakeholders need an interactional competence and a cultural competence, which means monitoring their own discourse style. Adjustments need to be made on both sides. At stake is widening cultural repertoires for both parties which would result in opening the gate wider to outsiders. A dominant culture doesn’t necessarily override cultural differences. There is space to negotiate with the mainstream.

So to sum up, an interdisciplinary framework in an intercultural context as formulated in this thesis (influenced by CDA, IS, Bourdieu et al) has the following features:

- Data is taken from real life
- Research is methodologically and theoretically pluralistic
• Wider contextual knowledge is included ie balance the socio-political and linguistic

• It connects the institutional order (macro) with the interaction order (micro)

• It balances frontstage with backstage talk

• Work practices are more than talk ie one has to take account of the nonverbal

• Hybridity (institutional/professional/personal) is teased out in the discourses

• Institutions maybe relatively static but the interaction is dynamic and open to change

• One needs to redress imbalances in cultural competence through training of the stakeholders

**Implications for Training - ‘from diagnosis to prognosis’**

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide guidelines and strategies for overseas-trained professionals and management to improve their interactions with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, as Gee (1999) points out:

> Your own Discourse grid is the limit of your understanding, and it is the fundamental job of education to give people bigger and better Discourse maps, ones that reflect the working of Discourses throughout society, the world, and history in relationship to each other and to the learner.

Gee (1999: 23)
It is axiomatic that stakeholders can benefit from intercultural training to heighten cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity means being conscious of the ways in which one’s own communication may be perceived. But as Sarangi & Roberts (1999) observe:

> The models of communication beloved of workplace trainers and those who produce ‘how to’ manuals of skills are thin and often absurdly simple. Rarely informed by ethnography, sociolinguistics or discourse analysis, these models are usually borrowed from traditional psychology.

Sarangi & Roberts (1999: 2)

What resources does a global citizen need to possess? Communicative competence is required to use language appropriately in cultural situations but as Sarangi & Robert’s model shows, the game is moving from an intercultural domain to an institutional domain. Managers are required to examine their own recruitment behaviour and develop skills relevant to the wider context of their company’s equal opportunity policies. Responsibility for change needs to be shared: Australian recruiters may need to be bilingual and bicultural just as Indians may need to be bicultural as well as bilingual.

The approach taken here leads away from prescribing rules for overseas-trained professionals to follow. The process is shown to be dynamic, players are conceived of as
being able to choose strategies as the situation dictates. Rendering overt the 'rules of the game' (cf Roberts 1985) cannot offer definitive solutions and knowing the rules doesn't guarantee a job. For example, direct questions can be answered directly but for all that, market forces can override everything.

A more realistic approach is to align training to expectations and build it together. That is, understand what's happening and move forward from there - these are the barriers and there are huge gaps in understanding on both sides: 'why don't they get to the point?' and 'why are Australians so aggressive?'. Different styles, ways of speaking, presenting oneself become the basis of negative stereotyping. It has been assumed that if a minority group understands and speaks the host language he/she will be interculturally effective. But while 'intelligibility' is undoubtedly a language issue, the data shows 'body language', 'technical expertise' and 'workplace values' to be cultural (institutional) issues.

Corporate culture is itself not monolithic. Organizations are complex and fragmented and several cultures influence the individual in the organization. Cultural values are acquired in early youth while organisational practices are learned in the workplace, in other words, there is a second time acculturation. Candidates need an institutional literacy – knowledge of cultures – at a national level, company level and interactional
level. None of the problems will be solved by sending candidates or management representatives on a two or 3-day general communications or presentation skills course. Their problems are highly specific and need tailored training and may well involve changing one's habitus. From a critical perspective, performing well in an interview is not just a matter of giving candidates a script, it is equally important to give them the larger cultural and social picture.

Teaching needs to be congruent with what happens in the workplace ie the ‘schooling’ that a recruiter refers to in regard to slowing down the speech:

He was convincing, his hand movements were, he was using them without going overboard uh so I think he was more of a ready product than I think it would just be a matter of saying to him slow down your speech, just separate the words the other one, you'd have to go through a greater educational process I feel but that again would have to happen at T's end and say T just get him to go again and ask him to speak more slowly and see if we can do anything and if we can do anything it would be great but...that's my feeling

(Senior Recruiter FG 4, C 8)
The diversity of today's workforce makes it harder for employers to offer only one kind of membership. There exist a range of strategies to promote intercultural awareness including bridging programs, pronunciation training for Indian English, customising courses to market requirements, employing more bilingual staff or a cultural diversity manager to work alongside management representatives.

**Limitations of the research project**

It would have been preferable to do research *with* informants in a more reciprocal relationship/exchange rather than *on* them. And it would have been interesting to ask the minority group questions about the majority group as judgments are unidirectional. This is an issue to do with the *ethnographic gaze* rather than the *ethnographic voice* in regard to candidates. But in the circumstances, there were real and considerable problems with gaining access to candidates who live in India as well as problems with setting up control groups for comparative purposes on company time.

A paradox is that the workplace practice of relying on intuitive judgements or gut instinct evident in backstage talk runs counter to empirical/positivist/rationalist explanations of institutional behaviour or corporate ideology. This is not to say that recruiters' subjective impressions are invalid. Intuitive judgments are a reality of workplace practice. As an outside observer, these judgments while confirming cultural and racial stereotyping, also
appeared to involve a high level of skill in the selection/rejection process as a whole. However, a fuller understanding of intuitive judgements falls somewhat outside the scope of linguistic analysis. For a more complete understanding of psychological phenomena such as emotions, perception, personality, motives, needs and cognitive processes, which cannot be read off from social facts and linguistic probing, the researcher could turn to cultural psychology except that the methodology is still in it infancy.

Where research leads to next

A further comparison of how Indian Information Technologists are shortlisted in the US and in Germany would corroborate, or not, the corporate cultural imperative of getting to the point and/or the importance of body language. If Indian Information Technologists were recruited say, in Indonesia, a neighbouring country, would it be an advantage to know more about the institutional culture at a local and international level? Once in the Australian workplace, it would also be of interest to explore how long it takes Indian employees to slow down their speech and how does their ability to make friends at work affect their performance or vice versa?

In current research, rational processes are kept separate from emotional and affective ones. However, communication also includes intuition. Linguists are unable to capture these intuitive judgements precisely, nor can they capture what thoughts recruiters might
be withholding in the backstage talk. Only an approximate understanding derived from the talk is possible. In future research, deficiencies of incomplete standpoints can be added to other disciplines such as psychology to gain a fuller understanding of the research question.

The politics of presentation

The case studies show that there is 'partial cultural fit' for Indian Information Technologists in an Australian work context and that there is room for more communicative flexibility on the part of candidates, interviewer and recruiters. In the competitive job market, different ways of speaking and behaving are not always valued and can result in discrimination. Culture and identity are fluid constructs that are being constantly re-negotiated. The dilemma inherent in changing communication style is balancing the need to retain personal and ethnic identity whilst speaking and behaving in ways that achieve personal and professional goals. When dealing with diversity, it is not enough to look at the culturally specific style of the individual. What also has to be taken into account is the cultural style within the context of institutional discourses including a knowledge of corporate values. This research has shown that talk is less important than presentation as recruiters do not actually listen to the words, or if at all, they do so only fleetingly. Depending on the research question, studies of workplace interaction may
need to take greater account of the nonverbal in the interaction, of which talk is only a fraction.

With potentially exponential growth in international migration, with many cultures far from their place of origin, not necessarily for any length of time, what is needed is a paradigm of culture, which is increasingly deterritorialized. This requires a shifting of focus from the uncomfortable notion of cultural variety as a misfit to a broader transcontinental view of recognizing and valuing difference between cultures and the active role that the individual plays in creating that culture rather than being regulated by it. The constant positioning and repositioning of the individual between cultures each time gives new vantage points. Effective management has to be able to cope with conflicting interests that groups with unequal access to power resources bring into the corporate arena.

The gatekeeping situation investigated here is typical of institutional life and acts as a magnifying glass for the ways outsiders may be denied access to resources. Different ways of framing an event may cause the candidate to be ‘failed’ in some way by the gatekeeper – the recruiter. Different ways of presenting oneself can be perceived as a lack of ‘cultural fit’ which has real life consequences. People can be disadvantaged by
different cultural styles and hence the workplace is a site of social struggle where
imbalances within the system can be ignored or preferably, redressed.
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Appendix 1
Job Interview Transcripts

PhD Thesis by research

A critique of 'cultural fit' in relation to the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists for the Y2K project in Australia

Under supervision of Professor David Birch
Associate Supervisor: Dr Helen Tebble

Judith Booth
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Job Interview Transcript Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 1 6/12/97

01 IR: ninety six; ( ) er you’ve worked on- on a couple of projects

Hands clasped together, resting on knees. Looks nervous, nods head a few times and points with right hand to indicate agreement

02 IE: right Sir

03 IR: okay. hh take me through the (th Fingerbot) project and then the things that you did on that

opens hands and clasps them together

04 IE: right Sir like the first thing is I er was placed in this contract I mean I’m employed for formulaic software. I was placed as a contractor to the client place late like I’m on in India

Looks downwards, legs wide open, hands apart to make point

05 IR: right

06 IE: mainly the first reason was like I should get the exposure to the IT industry and I should know the responsibilities what I should have, so that when I come back to our own country, I can manage the project and all (right) The first project was Sip 2 finger Sip 2 like Fingertees ( ) are a mail ordering company which is located in Milwaukie, USA so the whole project has been divided into 18 Sips and it was the analysis was done by the client itself the Imaruse ( ) people and the client has a cer certain date and the first project was the pilot so the second er was Sip 1 and the third which I entered was Sip 2 so in Sip 2 was new to this er environment so all they did was they just told me about er give me the part of promotion, and this unit testing phase because I knew nothing about the testing and all so (okay) that I can get experience

gestures with right hand and points with forefinger like a trigger, looks in eye, opens and closes hands to underline points constantly

07 IR: okay this, this is the way you take

08 IE: yeah this is way to keep project, so that my, my

Pokes tongue out a few times

09 IR: what’s what’s the solution they’re choosing?

10 IE: Ah, they’re using the Fixed Window Logic

11 IR: okay

raises right hand in air

12 IE: that is the hardcoding of value of 50 whenever we have so that for the next 50 years, there’s no problem of having the web
13 IR: okay

14 IE: so...

15 IR: so they don’t have to alter the structure of the data base

16 IE: no sir

17 IR: right

18 IE: that’s ...and another thing also in some cases they had some logical expansion, mostly they have physical file expansion, in some cases they’ll have er logical expansion in the sense, suppose if you do data key file, you can’t decide about the data key, that’s the maximum limit so what we used to do is is suppose a variable is being moved to another variable to see that if it is an expanded variable is to see that it is faster working storage and only that expanded is being transported so that to maintain, we have to maintain that file as the data key, sir otherwise providing you see that only 16 ( ) not the unlimited one so that’s the logical file expansion we used

hands open and close constantly right hand shoots up regularly to make a point

19 IR: right

20 IE: so there I did only unit testing in the sense I did the conversion, conversion means we have er Iowa ( ) has its own transport tool, that is, transform 2000 Iowa we can bring back to this, and depending upon that, you do the

Conversions

right hand out, gaze direct

21 IR: right, so you don’t alter the whole thing just bits of the COBOL program

22 IE: right sir. And we have to compile the programs and keep it ready so that I’ll design 2000 for one company which has been recognised, at the time so again the review has to be done by another guy so that he knows what, er wrong I’ve done in this one programs

23 IR: okay

hands clasped together briefly

24 IE: so after that we have the unit testing phase the testing, the main important thing so in the testing phase we used to do er, unit testing means programs Indian programs we tested as I know er it’s not like a pan flow

25 IR: yes

26 IE: so we do individual testing in that case so in that project only unit testing while I was there, I was released from the project and I interviewed the next one that is Finger Sip 3
right
so in Finger Sip 3 I saw the entire multiple cycle from analysis, conversion, testing, all types of testing except some certain discs which are done by the client itself there
right
right that I can’t say
okay, tell me a little bit more about the testing in this, in this second project so you deduced testing eh
pilot testing, all of the testing
okay, in the unit testing?
yeah
who, who created the test plan?
ah the test plan was created by us only, like suppose before IC is, we take as a group five means five programs
yes
so what we do is, we, in the test in the individual job, individual program we see that the whole output is coming correctly or not wherever the fields are expanded we see it, whether it is coming correctly or not but in the parallel, the client has given us the test cases how he has to run the flow so depending on that we just in case control deport can be bad there so what happens is, the client has done one date and we’ll be running it on a different date here so that there is no difference in the date so it will give a mismatch, suppose he’s alone so what we do is we use an hour glass that is how we get same date which the client has used so strictly he wants only the date to be changed and although the field are there he wants it to be intact
right
what we do, we do a supersede on that. We get an output on that and we do a supersede we cannot er we might move the base line in that area and only that like the date we remove that and next we compare all the fields except that date so that everything is there
right so that’s what you’re normally doing on the parallel test
yeah
okay, going back to the unit test then, you’re operating the test cases
yes sir
okay, um and robbing ( ) that, then moving on to the parallel test

yea

okay in terms of that parallel test, the test data

yeah?

you've got to modify that test data

yes sir

in terms of the dates

yes

who's doing that?

er like, if you remember they have something except for the data base roll ups, suppose if er we are going to do a roll up in that case we have a screen we're doing it from a data base so if are doing it for roll-up like 1999 then the new date will be 1999 so in that case we have to write a roll-up bridge for the data base and that will be done and that will be given by only the client

okay

he has to tell us for which data bases we are to provide the roll-up bridges, and for which of the data bases we want because we are not at all of concerned with our Sip because we are not at all concerned with other Sips

right

we want to only to be what is given to us

your client

yes

when you say 'we' (yeah) do you mean 'you'?

no sir in terms of the team

yes but I mean in terms of these, these bridge programs

right sir, you have written those ...what happens is when I go through the job I see that the output is not expanded, it's coming from a different Sip which is er non-expanded. This job is given to me my job is complete that job and do that so that the thing is whatever you put I want everything I should do it on my own, so suppose if I'm to have an input to my area this one job if it is expanded naturally it is expanded input is my job so I should write a bridge in such a way that an expanded input comes (right) there

okay these data bases you're writing programs to expand a lot
66 IE: yes sir
67 IR: they are ...what are they? IMS, DB2?
68 IR: IMS database...only IMS
69 IR: so you've got sole knowledge (right sir) of the IMS data base in terms of writing these programs
70 IE: writing these programs and how to access the date and suppose we have an IMS an all to go to the structure and see whether it is true or not how to go to the structure because sometimes what happens is we have a CALL program in COBOL we have like that IMS data base so suppose the particular data is not there and if he is training to access that data that suppose that particular key it will naturally, not happen
71 IR: right
72 IE: so what we have to do is to see if the likely data, that particular data is there or not. If it is not there we have to give a call to the client and tell him that the data which you have given is wrong so and to give us the proper data and make the necessary changes
73 IR: okay
**Job Interview Transcript Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 2**

*Wearing striped blue shirt, wide purple tie, pen in pocket, mustache*

01 IR: so... you’ve got two and a half years total IT experience (correct) er and you’re currently working er on mainframes, IBM mainframe

*sitting in corner of sofa, knees spread apart, hands clasped together, one on top of the other, pleasant countenance. Leans forward to hear question*

02 IE: yeah IBM mainframes I’ve been working on since April ’96

03 IR: right

04 IE: okay actually it would uh ... be along the one of fields of experience uh would only mainframe

05 IR: right

06 IE: okay. Earlier I was, you know, for instance since 1995 April to you know 1996 April, I was basically into uh ... you know, the software core distinction of silver line where I was involved in a .you know, I was a techno commercial executive for handling both support and marketing train of activities

*uses right hand to make points trigger and circle, touches 4th index finger*

07 IR: right

08 IE: for uh ... silver line case 2

09 IR: right

10 IE: and informat side we use Fogian product. Okay, this was the job I was doing since ‘96 April

11 IR: okay and then you got into the...

12 IE: yeah and then I was uh I moved to the, you know, mainframe division of silver line There I was put on the project only by now

*hands mimic ‘moved to’*

13 IR: okay... tell me about the things you’ve been doing there then with the mainframe side of things

*head moves to side to indicate attentive listening, direct gaze. hand gestures balance each other from one side to the other*

14 IE: okay with uh only by Nov 1996 ...okay, I was primarily put on the project. Until then I was under some training activities. Then I was put on uh... probably, uh ... I was not immediately put on a project (okay) I was generally, you know, doing kind of self study kind of activities. Okay, by Nov. they put me on a project called CUBIS, which is a customer user billing
interface for, you know media interaction carriers of you know like TANT and MCA and STRING (okay) Uh...this...our client was. uh is nine X now

15 IR: right
16 IE: and CUBIS is a customer user billing interface. Okay I was put on the uh... you know, the team, the testing team there
17 IR: right
18 IE: okay as a member of the testing team. Okay, my primary job uh... then was uh you know, to actually come with a test plan, okay, and basically try it with the development team or the client probably, to get the, you know, requirement for the tests and create a plan. Okay this plan I sent it to the client, or what do you call, and he was actually, you know, he was generally very afraid of what will I send to them and when he approves whatever I am sending to him then I proceed with it test data appropriation
19 IR: right
20 IE: okay. Uh... for the test data appropriation we generally don’t use any tool. Okay, what we do is, uh... the client, uh the carriers, they send the carrier frames to us. They equip frames to the CUBIS system, they send it to us. Okay, what we do is to do the system testing and data appropriation for all the particular test. We take some uh old carrier size, input data search this time, I make the necessary modifications to that, I make it now test data for the uh... present (right) test. Okay, this was the primary jobs we was involved in And then I know we used to go through uh various itresions ( ) of system testing
21 IR: Right. Okay. Take me through those

22 IE: Yeah. You see we generally, you know, go through a first... to a primary system test activity, where we apply our own test data which we prepare, we run through the system, and our job is basically to run through the system and find out what the output is. My job is basically to plan works... uh testing.
23 IR: right
24 IE: I just know this is the input I should be given. Okay, I know what is happening in the system but I don’t know how it is happening in the system.
25 IR: right
26 IE: I’m just worried about what is my input. If my required output comes, my test is okay. Otherwise, I identify, I intrude the problem, why or where the problem is. I give back and do the printing and tell them this is where the problem is, and this is where we ought to make the modifications and then they go over it, analyse it and make the changes, and get back to us
27 IR: okay
Okay that is the first part of system testing. Once the system test is gone through perfect, (okay) what the carriers do is they send their own book files to us. Okay, they will want to doubly make sure that (right) whatever has happened (okay) is perfect. Okay, so we run through various iterations of the carrier test. They maybe sending in multiple number of carrier price to us and we just run through the system and..., you know just supply the output to them

Okay and so you’re not checking data

No, we check the output, we check the required output, everything, you know

Okay

and we try and send it back to them so that they’ll also go through their way of verification and if everything is perfect, (okay) then we proceed with the revision test

touches nose, inclines head to listen to question, wide open gaze

okay um in terms of that test data they provide the input (yeah) do they provide what the output should be?

no, they provide just the input

okay

and we know this is the kind of input we are sending in, this is the kind of output we should expect (okay) because we have already done the systems (IR cuts in)

and that’s what you do to predict what the output should be? (Yuh) okay I need to differentiate between the ‘we’ and the ‘you’. I need to find out what kind of things you do

okay

smiles and touches nose, turns fully to right to listen with full attention, raises eyebrow

okay how do you do that? What do you work from to know what the output should be, you work from functional specifications?

yeah, what happens is whenever there is a modification requirement okay the client will send us up a program change request called the PCR. Okay, based on the PCR, we in order to develop the test bank, we have discussions with the development team. (okay) Employed within them will be doing the fact analysis including the proceeding of coding and testing. They do the unit testing part of it and model testing. Our job is to do the system testing, the testing team’s job is to do the system testing
okay like you’re you’re working from the business specification ...

business specification

to say this input should generate that output?

that output I’m not bothered about what the programs are exactly. (right), how
the programmers n’ all are going through the conditions (okay), I’m not even
bothered about that, I’m just bothered about the input and the output

touches table to emphasize ‘exactly’, sits still, clasps hands together and inclines head to
listen for question

Okay. Do you personally run the test?
yup, yup

Okay, So, what’s been your involvement with JCL?

Yah, JCL what happens is ... uh we generally take ... uh we arrange the skills
to execute the jobs

right

okay we keep somebody... we have a sequence of JCL’s which needs to be
submitted, you know, so we submit the jobs and ...uh after each JCL, run JCL
is submitted, we verify the outputs. You know, after each ...that is what we do
actually. JCL ways, you know we generally don’t have any kind of, you know,
kind of writing JCL and all, we don’t quote JCL’s (right) Okay, our job you
know is to include some overhead statements, you know, certain things need to
be done in the JCL’s, those things we take care of

touches nose ‘we generally don’t have’, relaxed looser gestures

okay so our’s there’s total JCL changes there you know, has taken place. That
JCL will be provided by the development team to us, these are the JCL’s, these
are the progs (right) these are programs we should be pointing to. (okay)
What manages it is having a tool called the project management tool for the
Endeavour (right) Okay, so whenever there’s a code change the development
team will move the modules in different stages of endeavour you know, high
stage and sheet stage and worksheet stage, then we’ll move the models in
different stages of endeavour and we will be pointing to those stages and
manage the jobs so unless you point to the right model and all, it doesn’t work
successfully. (yeah) So we know where should we be pointing to (right) and
we take up with that kind of procedure with JCL’s?

so you’re altering bits of the JCL (yeah) you point to the right areas the right
data sets? (correct) okay what’s been your overall involvement with the
technology ...say I mean the system we’ve talked about is COBOL, IMS and
DB2 (yuh) do you get much involved very much with COBOL or DB2 or
IMS?
Smiles, head inclines to side and then forward in exaggerated listening posture, touches eye

54  IE:  okay see. As far as IMS goes, we generally, you know, we do not do anything about IMS. IMS what happens in like this CUBIS project (right) we have our endless data base okay which is referenced. It's a referenced database. (right) Okay, what IMS data base it has all the telephone numbers in that and uh our CUBIS system will just verify with that, you know, reference to the IMS data base for certain kind of information that is what the IMS data base is used for (okay) Otherwise there is no development, nothing is concretized at all. (Yes) DB2 and COBOL is used in, you know, is the product which is used heavily on bits and our involvement with COBOL is very, very little. Okay, as well as where testing paper is concerned (right) What generally know, and, you know, we know about COBOL and we know how to read COBOL n'all but actually we don't generally code on it

55  IR:  okay

56  IE:  okay we know to track the problem. (okay) If there's an issue or something else (okay) coming in, we know how to track the problem and we go and track and tell them this is the problem

leaning forward to...catch question

57  IR:  okay, what's been your involvement with DB2?

58  IE:  okay DB2 is ... uh concerned... uh again I'd say that we've not actually coded any DB2 but I have a conscience of DB2. (okay) Because I was heavily involved with uh data base like Infomax and Case 2 products for design and all those things so I've got a better knowledge on DB2 and data bases

60  IR:  right

61  IE:  but that's personally speaking, but if you look at my job on DB2, again we generally don't go into details of DB2 but when we work on DB2 in the lab, a bend which is coming in because of DB2 then definitely skill codes will come and based on those skill codes we go and track the problem. This is (right) what we do on DB2

still, clasps hands together, leans forward to catch question

62  IR:  okay but part of the testing must be to make sure that some of the DB2 tables have been updated correctly (correct, yuh) so how do go about doing that?

63  IE:  Yah, what we do is uh .....we go into the QM part of DB2, credit management facility and uh we select output and select we use output ah tables and we go and we refer there in the tables (okay) There are particular columns have been updated in the details of that (right) or okay that is why we go through the DB2 part of it so we are, you know, quite strong DB2, Ace Case and all (right) Okay, we have to be knowledgable of at least basic case squares depending on what was the required output

64  IR:  right

65  IE:  okay that we attend and um that is what we generally use in DB2
okay and you you also need to understand the structure of the database and what’s in the various tables

Yeah, right. Those things we generally know, like when we look in the system initially we were all uh, we were given all the details of the structural region, the tables, DWV’s and all, you see, we have that knowledge

okay and you’ve been involved in this testing team would you say (yep) for about a year?

Yeah, you see from November ‘96 I was put on the testing team on a project called CPE. Okay, we just basically ... the inclusion of () carrier like ATNT and CN springs exit conatal data (okay) It’s called CP project. I was initially involved in data and it was seven month project where I did all these activities of testing. Okay, that was where I learned the computer artist in activity. After that for a brief period, you know, for a couple of months time I just booked in the development for some time
gestures more excited, fist to mouth, hand to eyebrow

right

Okay, just, you know, people were not there at that point of time and ...you know this industry (yes) people keep moving. So I was put in that uh... development team for a brief period for about 2-3 months. After that, again I now moved into testing team as a team leader (right) I worked as people are working under me on this

Finishes with hands clasped together

okay
01 IR: Okay, tell me about your role in micro-technologies sector

02 IE: I'm working since '96 May. I did three projects in uh micro-technologies, one for.. one is CD02 project, that is American Express Project (right) that is a Y2K project and the second one, is uh student admission and evaluation project. This is a development project. And the third one is Inventory Control systems. This is also development side. In the uh first one, CD02 project, it is ongoing projects, my role in that one is, analysing needs, corresponding the database, what is the impacting on the uh ...system? What is the source module?

03 IR: Okay Uh... this is a Y2K (yeah) project for American Express (yeah) in the States

04 IE: Yeah

05 IR: What's their solution? How are they solving the problem, I mean they're actually altering the data base? (Yeah) So they're not taking the Fixed Window approach, they're just altering the database

06 IE: Yeah in the problem we come across in the database, it's source module we have to ( ) it, what are the impacts of them ( ) And we ought to find out the source module they will give. We can, using the Embiss Report tool, we can find out how many lines are impacting on that er ... source module and then we calculate the first weekend that is we are using the impact analysis with it. There's the Prior Plenary Inventory System and Detailing Inventory System analysis. First we'll calculate the impact and ask how many modules are there and what are the impacting lines. With this, we can estimate the cost of the ... project, how much manpower we'll require, what is the time it will take. We can ... it is for the tendering the.. for the client (right) If it is accepted, then we can go to the detailed analysis and then scope of the project. What is the scope of the project? We can analyse it, how many programs are there, how many DB2 programs are there how many faults are there, how many JCL's are there, how many ( ) are there ( ) And then we can find out the high level performance. What are the impacts on the client, how did the severity in the source module and how is it affecting in each module and we... to ...for this module too how it is affecting the test second module. We can analyse this one, we can uh... make a sheet uh for the easily coding system. For this one there is three types of database in a setting. What we're doing is comparing database, one to another and when we're computing this database, when we are solving the database, this mainframe gives a vital ( ) Because, suppose when we are comparing database, as a ( ) backing, suppose one person may have deposited (yeah) some money in this year, we also try to be inclined or to calculate the next year interest. We can calculate to '92-'98 easily but if it
goes on to 20th century, the data ... the computer will take only 2 digits

hands clasp and unclasp; uses index finger and thumb to make points, twisting torso to underline points, touched nose (negative thought?)

07 IR: yeah

08 IE: two thousand means zero zero

09 IR: Yeah, I understand the problem (yuh) okay. Tell me what you've done for the project?

10 IE: Yeah, I'm telling you. My project ... my role is analysing. After finding that one, we can prepare the sheet. The data control...what 3 types of data (yeah) data control, second one is data transfer and third one is data manipul... er... operation (right) Data control will have ...of course, when we use the data base in the ( ) section and second one is um RD section, Record Description section and third one is Linking section. Whatever the data we use in the three sections, it will come out on the Re-entry Paper Control (right) When we use the data fields in computations, they will displace and move statements, uh that will control uh ... uh... data transfer. Third one is data operations (right) When we use the data fields in operation computing, for interest ... suppose calculating interest rate just as an example, it will come into the operations (right) So we can analyse this one, we can prepare the sheet, serial number, line number which is... line is impacting on the date, we can code on it. Suppose it is the tenth line (yep), it is 10th and sort out statement. What is the paragraph, what is the ... um ... the data type, is it data control or data transfer field? We can prepare this sheet. Within we can easily code it ... uh...for the impact ...

Coming alive, more animated. Tapping index finger of right hand into fingers of left hand to make points; bit more upright

11 IR: okay

12 IE: but with preparing with the specific --- program, source program, whatever impact ... suppose the data field is impacting on the tenth line, we can go to the tenth line and we can comment on the tenth line and we can move in or add in working ( ) section as century field. There is a 3 field spike (yep) like year field and data field and one field. We can add the century field to that one. We can drop the century field adding, we can move the previous one to the Y2K ( ) Suppose the second one we added the century field, we can name it as Y2K... or 'something data 2'. We then ... we can move on data 1 to data 2. And then we can go to the ( ) Suppose it's deposited on seventy-eight. If it is more than seventy-eight, we can move it in 19th century, 19. And if it is less than 70, we can move it 20th (right) This is the fixed window technique. We are using fixed window technique.

Movements calm & measured, eye contact

13 IR: so you're using Fixed window technique on that ...

14 IE: yuh, fixed, fixed..

15 IR: so, so the data base has not been altered?
Counter opinion underlined with hand movement.

16 IE: data base is altered... Or when the data base is altered after moving that, we can... suppose in the data base...

17 IR: okay so they’re using fixed window technique to alter the data base (yuh) okay, I hear... and you’re changing the program (programs to change...)... programs for the century which is in the data base.

19 IE: Yuh, what is the problem? If you want to solve the data base according to the data joined, or data deposited (uh?) we can go into data base. If you in data base the substring is there. Substring date of joining (yeah) And if we...previously what we could do is, we’ll take eight fees for the data. At that time we’ll add six and seven eight for getting the last two digits of year. It’s ‘78. If you want to ‘78 you can do six, seven and eight. After the...er in doing this coding, after modification, if you use the same seven, eight what is the problem, if you want to solve the data according to seven and eight it will come. Because we have moved in 19th or 20th for the seven and eight fields. If it is not a change in data base we can..., suppose we want to retrieve that data, it will come through on the 19th (yep) So we can move the ninth and tenth, according to that one we can substring, we can change the data bases (yep)

Gets more excited as being contradicted, defends himself, right hand sits upright, wants interviewer to understand his point.

20 IR: Yep. okay I... I understand the problem. (Yah) So... But the project involves you analysing the programs (after analysing...).. Are you, are you changing the programs?

Hands relax back to clasp position, smiled briefly, beginning to connect.

21 IE: yep I change

22 IR: see you keep talking about ‘we’ (yeah) and I need to know what it is that you have done (yeah) and and the project also involves.. altering the data base..?

23 IE: that’s altering after unit testing, my role is unit testing

24 IR: okay, tell me about unit testing (yep) um who’s devising the test plan? Who creates the test plan?

Head turns to side to listen intently.

25 IE: yep Micro... er...MS World 2. Yah, MS World 2 and the DB excel base is our own DB excel tool for data simulation, we have used data simulation for deeper ( ) and Superreq for the refining of the data and files some

26 IR: Right, but who creates the overall test plan in terms of planning what you should test?

27 IE: This... uh.. For this one uh... we have to analyse it. We have used analysing, after that we can use the unit testing
30 IR: when you set about unit testing, you must have a plan. So you have a plan of what you’re going to test? (yep) Who creates that test plan?

Fingers intertwine more, sitting up straight (he’s proved himself), confident, slight smile, thumbs interlock (secure?), glimpse of excitement

31 IE: The unit testing haven’t it ..

32 IR: so you created the test plan? do you create the test cases?

33 IE: yes, test cases

34 IR: okay, do you’re running the tests? (yeah unit test) And analysing (Yeah analysing the results) And the tools you’re using to do that? (yeah) Are what? What tools are you using to do that?

35 IE: um that is Expredator

36 IR: okay…okay so your involvement on this project is been restricted to data analysis phase (Yeah) You altered some of the programs?

37 IE: pardon?

38 IR: you’ve altered some of the programs?

39 IE: yeah we have modified some of ...

40 IR: don’t say ‘we’, ‘YOU’

Smiles, looks calm

41 IE: yuh yuh I altered the programs.

42 IR: okay have you written any of that data conversion programs? (yeah) and you’ve been doing the testing?

43 IE: yeah I’ve been doing the testing

44 IR: okay, I understand, okay. Tell me about er the other project, the Student the Student admission and evaluation project (okay) you mention that was an inhouse development ... (yeah inhouse development) Was it an operating project or was it a real project?

He leans backwards, moves whole torso and touches nose

45 IE: We are having an assistant concerned about the training program and one Engineering college is there. For a gentleman we are developing these projects. That’s why we have named the unit in-house projects. (right) In this one, six modules are there (right) for the administration and student details( okay)

46 IR: and this was um a DB2 KICKS (yeah we are using DB2 KICKS...) Okay,
in terms of the work you did, what features of DB2 did you use... on this project?

Head inclines forward to listen intently

47 IE: yeah for maintaining the students uh records DB2 we have used (right) yeah? and second one for the marks what are the students marks, we get we have to store in the data base in relation to the one to one. DB2 is the relationship to one table to one table (okay) and er for the subjects wise we are used

48 IR: okay so you, you’re updating ( ) retrieve data from the data base?

49 IE: yeah

50 IR: okay who, who created this data base, who designed the data base?

51 IE: the data base.. for this one I’m not created. My role in this one is creating and forwarding the administration modules (right) and transferring to the corresponding two modules (right) and designing the screens and third uh.. third one is after getting the student’s details and admission details. In the third one projects, inventory control is there we have to design the data

Makes point with index finger on palm and raises eyebrow

52 IR: so you actually designed the data base. How, how big a system was this? This inventory control system?

53 IE: inventory control alright this this having this six model

54 IR: so it’s quite a small system

55 IE: yep
Job Interview Transcript - Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 4 15/11/97

Sitting in right hand corner of sofa, hands fully clasped, thumbs touching, right elbow resting on corner of sofa, head tilted to right, full gaze, white open-necked shirt, pen in pocket and mustache

01 IR: Okay, you mentioned that you've been involved in unit and parallel testing or I want you to tell me about that. Tell me, tell me about the projects you've worked on

02 IE: (Lot of loud noise with microphone) Basically, all the Y2K projects

Waits until loud noise is over before speaking, looks serious

03 IR: Right

04 IE: Can say like ( ) analysis (telephone rings) and (ignores loud telephone rings) () () ()

With second loud interruption, touches neck briefly (keeping something back?) hint of smile, hands open

05 IR: Just one moment (stops and starts again) okay so the projects you've been working on are Y2K (um) What's so. solution have, have they chosen? Okay there are several approaches to deal with the Y2K problem (What do you mean?) you can look at File Expansion, you can look at Fixed Windows (yeah) Sliding Window.. What, what solutions have been chosen?

06 IE: yeah we have used the file expansion

07 IR: right

08 IE: File expansion we have used (sound of woman shouting) and in two of those projects we used, we have followed file expansion

Listens intently, hands clasped again, does not react to woman's shout

09 IR: right
That's the ( ) we have followed will directly expand the files and accordingly we'll make the changes to the programs, existing programs.

Opens hands to make point, gazes intently, purses lips

right

We need to write new programs ( ) ( )

Okay (program) Okay and the work you've done is some analysis in terms of...

Raises left hand in air, brings it down to make point, smiles

[yeah] building analysis power analysis then design then er this type of operation this coding, coding you would say one six four section unit testing, parallel testing, background testing pan flow testing,( ) then first then last item testing

Okay tell me about the testing side um so you'd be doing the the whole full phase of all the testing from unit testing (yeah) integration parallel testing, okay, who created, who creates the test plan?

Clasps hands together, thumbs in steeple gesture

basically what happens usually in the US (right) they create the test plan, the follow-up

right, okay and what form does that kind of test take? How do you get that test plan?

test plan pardon uh, no idea

Okay, they they design the test plan, to to what level detail is it? What do YOU get from them? The other people involved with testing? Yes...well, what do you get from the onsite team? In terms of, of the test plan?

Smiles, hands open, left hand goes up
20 IE: Yeah when something is problem then ask to see these problems otherwise we cannot ask for help from them

21 IR: No, no you say the onsite team they create the test plan (yeah) what do they give you?

22 IE: [It's government, it's government] ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

Hands part width of body, full eye contact

23 IR: okay both will be available and this will be an analysis process then they'll create it and compare the test plan okay, does it also contain expected results?

Raises left hand, points with index finger, closes eyes

24 IE: Yeah, expected results like one thing they will do is, they will one ( ) base level without doing any modification to programs they will run the system once and they will take be available in flat files

25 IR: Right

26 IE: These ( ) I told you file expansion room, file expansion programs for all this files what ever it is and write expansion files ( ) DB2 and expand the programs there and we'll expand these on our own and this will compare with that testing also

Hands apart width of body to underscore points, points two index fingers together

27 IR: Right

28 IE: ( ) ( )

29 IR: okay

30 IE: ( ) ( ) online testing (right) given for the testing

31 IR: okay, tell me about the online testing
32 IE: Tools like play back come from WA

33 IR: Right, uh what, what does play back do for you?

34 IE: [mainframe] I told you that build base level but when they’re doing the base level they will capture the screens, capture the screens only resulting in screens then catch then will be available as a character script. What we’ll do is I mean ( ) as a they will later play the script for us, for the new system, for the newly coded system

35 IR: Right

36 IE: Er I’m building ( ) after the testing (right) ( ) ( )

37 IR: Right, okay do you need to alter that script since you’re, since you’re dealing with file expansion? Play back script can you just play that back directly or do you need to alter that script?

Hands clasp together again to listen carefully to question

38 IE: Yeah we have to alter the script now all the dates and the calculus ( ) century and we’ll play that script

39 IR: Right

40 IE: Because the data ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

41 IR: Right

42 IE: The filter transponder ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

43 IR: Okay.. right.. okay so in terms of the testing you’re doing the..the onsite team are actually creating all the test data

44 IE: Yeah [ ]

Nods head up and down and then side to side
45 IR: Because your team is not [my] creating the test data at all, what about the bridge programs you’re writing, you’re presumably testing those (yuh) yourselves so so you’re creating the test data for those bridge programs

46 IE: Yuh like uh suppose your output says ( ) x yes, suppose some values some variables are coming from outside outside system some value term so those values will be coming without ( ) but we need that value to be ( )

47 IR: Yess

48 IE: So we need a program?

Gestures enthusiastically, smiles, uses trigger gesture with left hand

49 IR: Yes

50 IE: We’ll write a bridging program for those and we’ll profit on those systems

51 IR: Right

52 IE: This is one type of bridge can say one kind of bridge (yeah) some clients are going outside the system to some other system then when that happens write a bridge program to ( ) ( )

53 IR: Yeah

54 IE: Uh in the course of ( ) system

Licks lips, clasps hands together again

55 IR: Right okay in in your resume you mentioned unit testing, parallel testing and date roll-down roll- down testing (yeah) what do you mean my um roll-down testing? (yeah)

56 IE: [roll-down] system suppose uh like I’ll try (sighs) Like normally when hand touches nose, hands move in unison from side to side to make points
sometimes in the test data 4 weeks will be 1997 below 2000 as we want to know after we so we’ll roll the data, roll up the dates in the files like we can pass parameters to a particular program the program will do the roll for us yeah but not expand the program will expand the program as a to roll up the data base once the roll-up suppose the date is 1997 roll-up by 2001 so we roll the system and what we do 2001 also (right) the same thing at all levels if the system 1990 through that one means can roll it out

57  IR:  okay right okay in terms of the data bases, you’re deal with a data base expansion. Is your team doing that expansion in terms of ( ) the databases or is that being done with the other onsite team?

58  IE:  No, we are doing that

59  IR:  You’re doing that (yuh) okay

60  IE:  Plus we do a supercede

61  IR:  Yes

62  IE:  On the exchange actually we don’t have the right equipment but we will they try to the max to change the rotation (right) but we have done once but most of them will be done by ourselves

63  IR:  Okay

64  IE:  The expansion of ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

65  IR:  Right so…

66  IE:  ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
67 IR: okay okay, you say your role in the project is as team leader. Can you just explain a little more about what that involves you doing?

68 IE: Project leader yeah I was responsible in writing these expansion programs to see the writing is not enough the expanded program involved in testing the expansion programs then programs most of the time I mean some things we can all use the file or supercede or something like that I mean we can all do those things for compare to fly test (right) and we say that even that I was INVOLVED in that testing also (Yeah okay) and expansions program till There

69 IR: when you say you were involved in that does that mean that you do that testing?

70 IE: Yeah I was responsible for that

71 IR: [BECAUSE INVOLVED] is too general a word (yes) so do you actually do that testing?

72 IE: Yeah

73 IR: So so all the programs that you have written YOU have written the test plan?

74 IE: Yeah I have written the test plan

75 IR: And you’ve written the test bases

76 IE: Yess

77 IR: And printed the results and then run the test is (yes) okay right

Looks down, hands clasped together, then wipes sleeve on face
Sitting in the middle of the sofa, shirt off-white colour. Pen in pocket, light-skinned, not too obvious mustache, eye contact direct and hands clasped together comfortable, arms resting in knees, looks calm and confident.

01 IR: Experience?

02 IE: Yes

03 IR: One year with mainframe? Mainframe?

04 IE: Yes

05 IR: Okay, so you're working at the moment er with a company called INTER.?

06 IE: INTER. Communication Public Limited

07 IR: Okay and that's where you gained your mainframe experience?

08 IE: Yes

Head nods up and down, eye contact very direct.

09 IR: Okay, take me through that, tell me about the things you've been doing on main frame.

Leans back, hands clasp and unclasp, accent clear, slow speaker.

10 IE: Uh, actually we are doing at present the ( ) project, that is, uh, I am included in all this to use of convertible process, starting from the inventory, uh, so just now we have completed some modules in a project, that is workcare project that is in the mainframe we are having a link from ( ) that is company that is our parent company that we use, so we are doing that project (right).

11 IR: Okay, take me through the stages that you, you've completed so far

Head leans to left, purses lips, hands interlocked (serious consideration?)
so far, first to take up the project, I'm do the inventory so that we will build a data base, er, so from that data base, we can go back any, at any point, so that we should not lose the track of the project that is the main ( ) within the data base and the inventory

right, what do you mean by inventory? What's an inventory? What?

Inventory of the whole project, that meaning what are the objects are there in the project so, how to handle each object (right) so from object to object how are we going to connect it, so that er we have to plan before taking that er project, real one. So in the inventory we have to decide all these things, so I have involved in these things

Brings hands together in prayer position to underline last point, very alert

right…what, what does that involve you actually doing?

so, we build up the data base (dog barks) after that, er, we take up the objects one by one, so, we apply the vertical process on each module

right

okay, the module will consist of all objects which are already defined in the inventory, and so we have to process as per vertical process, that is all the stages, five stages of that, so all those five stages, we have to pass through that. At the end, each modules should work

right

that is the, er, segment testing, so if that segment testing is proper, then we can integrate the whole system, that, that is the whole project

right
22 IE: so, at present we have completed four modules

23 IR: okay, when you say you have completed four modules, what does that mean that YOU do? I'm interested in finding out the things that YOU do (yeah) not the things the team does so I need to find out the things that you have done

rubs hands in steetle position and purses lips

24 IE: okay, that is, er, in the inventory, I have take, I have taken one module, than uh, initially I got all the information about the objects, what are the objects in that application, in that module

25 IR: right

26 IE: so, how can I go through it, how can I handle each object in that module, that er, we have decided through the results, that is building the data base and uh, applying the ( ) to get the objects from that

27 IR: right

28 IE: after that, so, by having that tested our from the customer, from the customer, we have to test it, that their given module IS working properly or not

29 IR: okay, this after you've changed it?

30 IE: no, no, before change, before change, so if it is working properly, that means that the condition is good then we can take it and we can apply our techniques our Y2K techniques

Hands up in front of him, forms circles with his thumbs (means precision)

31 IR: okay, what's, what's the solution being chosen for the Y2K?

32 IE: that is we have our opted selector expansion, that means wherever it is necessary, we are doing the expansion, expansion of the data base (right) but if is is not necessary we are not applying, we are applying only the Indian logic that is just if you add the four digit
IR: right

IE: don’t be four digit, just as it’ll act as a four digit, wherever the processing severity where the criticality will come in the program

IR: right

IE: that is, there are our selective expansion, we have in our pitch

IR: right, so you make those changes?

IE: yeah

IR: and then what?

IE: after changes, we are doing the unit testing, that is er, so what we have done the changes, whether that is correct or not. And that should be an industry standard, our company standard should make it, it should be a standardized one (ignores dog barking) so if that unit test is, processed very well, then we can go to the frontline level, that is the next element, so each element has so many programs, so the each program, we have changed it, and we have tested the unit, that is the unit testing, after that, after testing all the programs, we gone to the segment, that is the diskette (right) so each diskette we have er, we are going to test it, the segment testing, so we are applying all the test da..., the test datas and test cases, after tested time we are applying our own cases, we should work with our own cases

IR: right

hand gestures become more lively, alternately up to the right or up to the left

IE: if it is working properly, then that is the ( ) segment testing (right) so if you process that, we’ll apply the whole same thing for all the modules, so finally we integrate all the modules, that should work as for that (okay)

IR: in terms of the test cases

IE: yeah
IR: where do they come from, have you created those test cases or are they given to you by the client?

IE: uh, client will give only the sample data, so date will have only the er, present year, or past year, all those things, we have to operate the future years and just er, before and after the window, windowline and in '99 19 that is the year, and zero zero, that is two thousand (okay so you) like that we have to build the cases

uses right hand to emphasize last point, showed agreement with interviewer by inclining head

IR: so you are expanding the test stages

IE: yes

IR: and building more cases?

IE: yes

IR: what about the test plan? Who creates the test plan?

IE: test plan we have to do it before going for test cases

IR: okay

IE: we only have to decide that as plan, because we’ll be having the test data, so we know where it is, how can be all these things will be knowing so that er, can apply it very well

IR: okay

IE: so according to this

IR: [you keep say WE again] does that mean YOU are doing this?

IE: yes, WE are doing that
59  IR:  YOU

inclines head to the side to listen attentively

60  IE:  so, ya

61  IR:  YOU personally?

62  IE:  personally?

Shakes head but doesn't laugh

63  IR:  okay (laughs)

64  IE:  yes, because initially I told er, I'd taken one module

65  IR:  right

66  IE:  so like that there will be, in our project, we have 42 modules

67  IR:  okay

68  IE:  so each person, will be have, will have modules, so under that person, three or four persons for the action ( ) will be there

69  IR:  right, okay, right now what we call in American terms is the technology on this project, we talking COBOL?

70  IE:  COBOL, JCL, KICKS is there, ASSEMBLER is there

holds fourth finger to list technology

71  IR:  right, but the things you have worked with?

72  IE:  yes

73  IR:  things you have done?

Inclines head forward again to listen attentively
IE: yes

IR: for all those?

IE: yes

IR: okay, um

IE: [because we can’t give]

IR: [what about the past structures?] what are they? Is it, is it using a data base, is it using a data base or is it using Visam files?

IE: ya, Visam files are also there, Visam files also there, so we have to handle that also, if the Visam key is used as a date (right) and that IS used for sorting

IR: okay

IE: so very much critical, so we have to sort it out that problem also, before going into the site, we have to expand it that er, full data set, data base we have to expand it and give it for sorting

IR: okay

IE: the JCL and we have a composite of the sorting

IR: but in terms of the actual application?

IE: yeah

IR: is it a data base application or, or not?

IE: uh…database application?

Repair very relaxed but swallows

IR: DATA..BASE..APPLICATION
90  IE:   database application
91  IR:   yeah
92  IE:   yeah
93  IR:   what, what database is it using?
94  IE:   so there, it is the DB2
95  IR:   DB2's okay what's been your involvement with DB2 on this, on this project?
96  IE:   uh...it's not very much
97  IR:   okay
98  IE:   it's very less
99  IR:   okay, so , so
100 IE:   yes
101 IR:   rather than database expansion?
102 IE:   [expansion yes] yes, there is a combination of both that is why we are calling
103 IR:   () expansion
104 IE:   right
105 IR:   okay
106 IE:   so, we'll be having some hundred database, that hundred database we are not
107 IR:   going to expand all of the database, so we are expanding the database
108 IE:   where ever it is necessary and it is possible
107 IR: right

satisfied nod
Job Interview Transcript - Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 6

Sitting left of centre, slouched, head down, hands clasped down between knees. Light mustache, white long-sleeved shirt, pen in pocket, folder beside him.

01 IR: you’ve been, you’ve had two years overall experience?
02 IE: Yeah
03 IR: and one year with ...IBM Mainframe?
04 IE: Yeah
05 IR: Okay and you’re working on those IBM Mainframe projects now?
06 IE: Yeah
07 IR: It’s a Y2K?
08 IE: Yeah, it’s a project, a medical project.
09 IR: Okay. Take me through the things you’re doing on that project.

Head nods up and down in agreement, pushes body back, arms form triangle.

10 IE: so to start with er..um ... we are working on some uh R& D on all the processes like, we are like ( ) of a whole team.
11 IR: Right
12 IE: That’s first. THEN ... my part is like CSES, like I’m like in the programs that is wholly given to me so that part I’m doing the whittaker processing. So that thing.. was inventory also, it it has impact analysis base also. So I was doing PCS also, that is program change for ( )

Hand movements moderate, tongue comes right out, makes points with all fingers tapping into palm.

13 IR: Right
14 IE: Documenting the process also. Then I’ve been managing the people who.. do actual conversions, like uh .. we have DEEMO proj ... Deemo models. They do the conversion
15 IR: right
16 IE: so we'll be there telling them how to do the conversion and all and next thing is as soon as the conversion is over, we sit for unit testing data. So we do it in uh ... MR Word Punch, here, then we do it in Inter test 2 in the IBM Mainframes. So we see what’s the coded view, that is how ..

Palm is up to make point.
[Okay] can we just step back a little bit?

Yeah?

You said impact analysis?

Yeah?

You can do impact analysis

Yeah, I've been doing that

What you... using to do that? You using any tools to do it?

Yeah. We do it in 2 phases. Like first thing we do is um on the mainframe sensor. That is CA 2000, CA back 2002.

Okay, what does that do for you?

So we give a pattern, the mask in pattern 5 and we say, "Just scan a set of files and just tell me the date when it was". So it gives a report, a broad report like. Then we go for something called CC4, then we convert it into an access table, then after we code that, we can find some queries. Then we can eliminate the false positives, that is some other variables which come because of the uh patterns, D& D and all. Then we do some Scenaring proc'ssing, that is the problem which I give may not be the date variable. That person, he may use EAE as a date base so for that we do some scenaring processing. That is, if he's moving in E, anything from a date variable to such strange variables that's scenaring processing, then we'll store... that. Then we find out the criticality of each state variable, that is its usage and positive situation, how it is used. If it is positive then we just ignore it. Otherwise if it is used in any critical things like course selection or sorting or a guards control or any similar thing, any arithmetic calculation or whatever

Right arm now resting comfortably on knee to make points, getting into it, nods head often

Right

There we start recording the PCs. There is a program change specification. So if we include some code there

okay, and that's the next stage that YOU do?

Yeah, that's the next stage

and you then pass that on to members of your team to do the code change?

Yeah, the code changes.

Are you doing any of that yourself?

Not exactly. Just we tell how to do that, we'll uh give all the instructions to the
PC assessor. The PC assessor will directly give him an idea of how to convert it. Anyway I'm sitting with him so he'll do that and we go further in the next stages, that is unit testing.

35 IR: Right

36 IE: There, actually what we do is ... We have a set of unconverted programs, that is a draw of things. Then whatever we have converted, we are comparing object-wise. Like suppose a program is there, it's converted copy is there, we compare the two. So it will tell me whatever changes made in that program. So we can list out, "Okay, yah, the PC assessor says so-and-so code has to be inserted, he has inserted that". Yes, like that. That is the first part of, that is the code that we use.

Voice sounds more excited, poke tongue out twice

37 IR: Right

38 IE: Next thing is the unit testing. Like I've introduced a branch, we have window in logic. But is it doing what I am um thinking? That is the unit testing. (yeah) So that we are going by say ... step by step is executing that particular pattern. That is we call it a slice. Whatever changes we have made in the constitution, we take it as a slice and test it, whether it performs .. what it's expected to do. Then through some test cases. Like we go for the century change, that is zero zero ninety-nine. Whether it adds 19 when I say 99 and whether it adds 20 when I say 9 or zero zero.

39 IR: Right

40 IE: Then your window that is if the customer recommends a window from 56 or 55. The we go for 55, 56 and 57. If it's like that and in the window range then it's okay and that's what we are testing.

41 IR: okay

42 IE: That is unit testing (okay) We take the snapshots of uh the things, the program how it executes and we store it there

43 IR: Okay, so your role... covers all of that (yeah) and basically finishes there

44 IE: yeah

45 IR: that's what you're doing?

46 IE: This is for uh ... uh .. Batch and online. But something is different for online ... like uh .. the importances if self ... uh .. it a little bit difficult ...like you have Narks also so you should first tell the customer, "there are some date variables which require expansion .. like some years are there, which won't fit in your window, some won't fit in your window or houses built which is some 200 years folder, it won't fit in yourrr things. So for these things, you have to confirm. Whether you want it to be displayed in 4 digits, so far it's displayed in 2 digits" like that. So all these things are there for online.

47 IR: okay
IE: yeah, the unit testing is different for that (yeah, okay)

He leans back to emphasise the point.
Job Interview Transcript - Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 7

Younger, white shirt tight fitting, pen in pocket, eyes cast down, looks shy, holds right hand for support with left hand, no mustache, wearing glasses

01 IR: Okay so now that was on SONY so take me back to (yeah) to the unit testing again (fine) You mentioned in your CV using animator (Yes) Okay, tell me about that, I’m not familiar with it. How does that work?

02 IE: We used um animators and two kinds of ( ), one is CA Impact ...uh .. CA Realia workbench we have. And on the other side we have MBS workbench. This MBS workbench, what it expects is there is .. there is a hardware lock for that. So you have to have the hardware lock in order to use MBS workbench. It is not same like CA, realia workbench. Uh .. in both the workbenches you have this animated option. Basically this animator ... okay, it help us in executing the steps of the program ... uh statements step-by-step. The advantage what you get is you can actually see the flow of control and check whether that particular segment is carrying the value properly, what it is supposed to. So that is what we are actually doing in unit testing. That is called a side box testing

Hands gestures very comfortable, accent is easier to understand, slower, looks at wall (right) basically the date variables are going to be critical if they have been used in say comparison, like calculation, if the sort gate is being used as a date, and there is a vissam file key a primary key ( ) date so we have such programs, events or dates. So in comparison, say for example, you skip the cursor to the place where you have the comparison statement. That is you start executing from that statement and you supply the necessary values, you monitor the values. You supply the values and execute them, that is execute that step check whether the value that is being monitored is properly changed or being accepted to some other variable or whatever

Mild trigger finger, looks a little bit bored

03 IR: Right

04 IE: Uh ... you check for both the true values as well as the false values

05 IR: Okay. So ANIMATOR just let you run that little bit of code (right) and only that bit of code and then you can keep repeating that with, with a whole different set of values for the rest.

Head went up and down for agreement

06 IE: Yesss. For different test cases, you repeat uh the same experiments that satisfies with that (okay)

07 IR: Obviously when you’re doing that, you’ve got a plan for which test cases (exactly) you’re going to do. Where did that test plan come from?

08 IE: Right, basically when before we go for conversion itself, we prepare the conversion plan or the commercial plan test bed, we say, because all these preliminary activities before testing, say for example creation of test data itself,
is a preliminary activity to test, or an input for testing.

09  IR:  right

10  IE:  Uh.. during that time itself, of course, we had talked and discussed a lot before the project itself had commenced regarding the type of test cases involved, I suppose. But even then specific to this project, we decide about the test cases that we decided before conversion itself because we had a conversion plan, a distinct plan. Before the phase commences we have to have a plan

11  IR:  right

12  IE:  So basically we decided to have some 5 test cases ...like um current and this century, uh .. like when the century turns over to the next century um some typical ... like you have some leap year dates ...but basically for this century as well as the next century dates

13  IR:  right

14  IE:  we decided ....

15  IR:  [And what was YOUR part in that planning process?

16  IE:  In planning process, of course, it was not a big deal to decide whichever dates have to be involved in that (a bit of laughter from both) isn’t it?

Big broad smile

17  IR:  Right

18  IE:  But basically ... like how to go about planning uh sorry, how to go about testing. Um .. like what are the procedure you are supposed to do while testing. Like uh ... which are the options which uh need to be on and er we do take the snapshots of the testing also. Like for example, the customer has to be believed in whatever we have done. Like .. if I say I have done unit testing, what is the proof that er I have done unit testing isn’t it? So we have to take the snapshots. So ... I have given that suggestion of taking the snapshots. Second thing is ..uh ... uh ..what else? What kind of uh review could be done for testing? (right) um basically for unit testing, again, can’t do any big deal of review apart from ...if you have any documents saying that you have some unit testing of what..are the date variables.

After smile, makes more eye contact, looks more centred, hands clasp more evenly

19  IR:  right

20  IE:  What is the test cases you have supplied. basically going through the test documents to. see uh .. and help out ...put it ...uh. sorry, tick in the check list saying that you have done it um that was one more thing we have planned.
Smiles after 'sorry'.

21 IR: Right

22 IE: basically review of unit testing, test documents (right) and how to carry on unit testing.

23 IR: Right but you can do more when you get to the integration testing, can't you? (Yes) in that respect. Okay. (long pause while next question is sought) okay, you also mentioned that you were involved in the documentation .. (Yah) configuration management ..(Yah) intermediate data sets. What did that involve you doing?

24 IE: Okay. Documentation .. like uh it started off .. I mean, I started off documenting from the very first phase, from where my role started. See .. as I told you that I started from my planning phase so starting from the planning phase itself ..I mean till whatever project is going on .. till now I'm documenting and I'm .. like er I'm responsible, because I'm an active member of configuration management also (sound of bicycle horn)

Trigger finger gesture to make point, then held little finger

I see that the others are documenting their uh uh WORK otherwise it would be difficult for ME, as a configuration management active member in order to document all this .. documented .. sorry documents, right (right) So documentation, basically... the planning documents, like uh as

Head leans backward

I told you the mapping of DD ----, DSL names. Next, in the.. of course .. when the, during the phase of development of the new programs, add to documents, a lot of things such as my analysis document, design document and um before that we write what's called a system requirement specification. First requirement, analysis design .. and of course testing was done by some other person.

25 IR: right

26 IE: And uh like then how the data should reside, where it should reside, what kind of documentation has to be done for different versions of the data.

27 IR: Right

28 IE: All this part.

29 IR: Okay. Is your part in this project also getting involved in in parallel running ..in terms of running date on the old system and running date on the new system and comparing results?

Head leans back

30 IE: Uh .. I think that is what is being agreed upon between we and the customer (okay) because he is not going to.. um change the system overnight, he is
going to run parallelly the systems.

31 IR: Okay, so you're not involved in that in that side of things. You're just been involved in things up to the integration testing.
IE: Yes, like er being mainframe, I was involved in CSC, DB2 to COBOL, JCLs okay, I can tell you, I must able to see to performance programming when I was dealing this, er New Order Project, this project was for use in Holland New Zealand and that was a way to get a Y2K solution to them, so first, er, that whole project had, er, DB, DB2 we had COBOL and IMS but what personally I had involved I was DB, data base (right) because, er it was something like even the er..pilot part to give to us, that you complete this pilot and the V – section part of it, successfully when we completed it, we got the incoming orders, so we did it, so this gave us, I was the DB part and er, COBOL to have and DB2 to have, that the whole model I can say the whole pilot project consisted of about 16-17 (prompts?). Out of the 17 prompts, 15 was IMS DB and remaining there, COBOL and DB2 (right) so I, first, I can say it like for the making of the solution to Y2K, it is seen the year 2000 and the following, and we have to find the solution so first off is to see is first we want to see the good, we would like to see the quality of the good, and the meteority the way it has been coded and the different thing among the I can say the working story, the processing divisions, how the value has been used, how many times, so it all depends on how many values being used, how many times, so it all depends on how many values being used, is been given all the datas and things like date for basically who lacks the storage for CC part, that is for where ever like the data, er the CC in the unit output, so we just, er first of all we want to look at all the whole code, which is the code I used since we accessed the 6th or you can say 9 of 6 or 9 of 8, in for I see it had used somewhere like I would say in this particular project, er, they knew they had coded it 90, 90 for 92, so some of them had been in mind that we are going to first of all key in the year 2000 problem, but they were not at all knowing how to, I mean prevent it and give it complete solution, that’s how it came to us and we can see it (right) that’s how we want the project, so what we got in this is first of all we saw the code, and when seeing the code, er, we just made an estimation we can say,
very enthusiastic in explanation, quite extrovert, no phatic language from interviewer

like manually the code that..it doesn't particularly this PROjectt, it does not require much of changes I can see like somewhere we need to write this programs, somewhere we need to change physically some of the ( ) doesn't allow at all so by seeing the whole code we understood that, er, fortunately we can say for us, like the storage was defined, we call it the newly written, it was written in 1991, or 90, so the storage was give us the CC also, so what this particular project what we did is, er, we saw the storage that was given in the CC and what we did is, er what, er, unfortunately or fortunately for us, we had Not used it for the compilation, they are simply filed input as it is. Because that time I, we didn't believe that 1991 because there was not much awareness of the Y2K things, so, er, it, that, that's how it came to us as a project (right)

Interviewer's "right" very faint, IE speaking so fast, no room to enter

2  IR:  right okay and what was YOUR involvement with the IMSDBC, what, what did you actually do?

Hands clasped together tightly, then rise over left shoulder

3  IE:  [Yes sir] ya, I was doing IMSDBD stuff like, er, we, err, first of all the new thing to us was IMSDB. We took out two months to study the IMSDB completely. I studied book and then I understand what the date unit is, what the date estimate next is, what the hold is, and how to delete, and to just get an idea, a whole idea, of how it can be the access is and the whole define of each storage, how the functions coded, defined so we could just get an IDEA then we have a look on the program and we can understand how that can lead onto the problem and I'm talking about this particular

tongue out, touched nose, hands move constantly

project (yes) so then we got an idea that is what we can have a problem and we just, I told you we have, we are fortunate that it destroys ( ) was already given so just by understanding the whole collapse of the system we can go through only 15 programs so just by seeing the programs altogether, it does not require much in it except some redefinition, so I got an overview of IMS, how to use it no, I think I was dizzy, but now I took the chance
4 IR: Right, so it was just the DB, but prior to that you'd been using DB2?

5 IE: yep...we used DB2 excessively because er 44 for 45 programs, a total out of 60 you know, 15 years for Winwire when was er, DB then the remaining 45 was DB2 and COBOL, COBOL and DB2

finishes with hands clasped together tightly.
Dark skinned, sitting in left hand corner of sofa, elbow resting on sofa edge, looks trapped, mustache, shirtsleeves rolled up, hands spread on knee

01 IR: Perhaps you can tell me about this project you’re working on for PTS.

But then points with index finger, looking authoritative

02 IE: Yeah. Actually the project belongs to everybody, because everybody is a client of ( ) ( ) Reporters Project (right) actually that report is going to be throughout the world. They want the date form to be reformed throughout the world.

03 IR: Right

04 IE: ( ) slashed ( ) ( ) at the moment. Because it is a little bit confusing in Japan ... like the .. so they won’t be having um definite which is understandable throughout the world. So they made a .. they formed a disclos ( ) throughout the world. This GD hi fi ( ) precise ( )

Body stays still and only right hand index finger moves

05 IR: Right

06 IE: This GD .. uh .. they actually did this date form and they changed 2 character. Right MX represents character. Today’s date is what ( ) ... Ninth. Today is represented GD MX as zero nine hyphen zero .. uh ..SC. This is trans ( ) of that. You isolate this. So we have to write a ... some quoting for the negotiation of the ..date uh .. languages and all this involved. Cobalt, when I was just formulating programs JIC was ( ) uh .. and then DB2, databases DB2. The impact is 911 connection. Uh .. 911 connection represents the law of possibilities and the person in Japan for instance ( ) program. A lot of possibilities ..like a person from Singapore and in Japan ( ). So it .. the batch uh batch programming, put the lock in the database. Particular table uh ..You put a lock. So this modelling program won’t be able to access this database so we are ( ) on the deadlock conditions in all the programs, the modelling program, the batch programs. So we wrote the 911 Connection ( ).

Swallows, Stops, inclines head to listen

07 IR: right..okay..in .. the the summary of your skills, you say you’ve also had some exposure to IMSDB.

08 IE: Well DB actually. IMSDC.

09 IR: Just DC? Okay .. uh .. So database you’ve been working with is DB2?

10 IE: Yeah, database is DB2

11 IR: Okay. uhm.. tell me, so the previous projects’ work you did with DB2?
IE: Yah, all the previous projects all DB2

IR: Right. Just tell me in a little more detail

Licked his lips

IE: Uh .. ( ) projects in all DB2 uh we use X DB2 and we use Workbench, well for testing. For ( ) Project, in the case of ( ) Project, we use Workbench. That case we will have everything in X DB and we started using that one (right) Once again we look to the effect and we once again test.

IR: Right, okay, was that an existing database or ...?

IE: Yah, existing database. And now guarantee we are involved in changing all the JCL. Actually responding to COBOL, actually it is a 3 year project. And next phase it must ( ) ( ) in the sense, they want to make uniform this thing, any convention, for example they reported as uh ... for example, ( ) 420, in order to name a particular name, just common to whole world, not a separate separate world, that is not to get ? no change. That is the second phase, we are going to do that one. Meanwhile we are doing the production dataset, this thing is there, JCL is there. We are doing all the production ( ) 2 we are converting (right – clears throat)

IR: okay, in your current role you're saying your, your project needs a team leader (yeah) and the team is six (yeah) Just take me through what that involves you doing

IE: Yah, first of all, what I have to do. I have to take all the programs from a ... this this project has different sub systems. What we .. I have to pick some 3 programs from each sub system. Then I have to try first. If everything goes fine then I have to to leave that thing.

To make a point, index finger on right palm

that's the way we have to proceed. After that all the ( ) follows that way. First thing I have to explain ( ) Then effort sheet. Weekly I have to send an effort sheet to the client. Then they say, who are the ( ) which this program has to go, like this .. the location (right) ah then time duration for each program, how much duration we have to take. Then conference program .. I have that under conference program. We have 2 conference programs, one is one Wednesday, one is on Friday. Wednesday is about 2 o'clock. We'll be delivering on Thursday, the previous Thursday. We'll be having a walk through on Wednesday (right) next Wednesday. So I have to communicate with them and we'll be having walk through compare members. Here we having compare members. Their renewals will also be having compare members. Then we have a walk through about the program. Some ( ) some changes has to be done. We will follow the this thing and we will make the changes and we send it to the client.

IR: Right, the activities you're doing you need in the team are only part of what you do. You're still involved in the design?

Gives time to interviewer to ask question, slight smile
IE: Yeah everything I’m involved. I’m involved in coding, I’m involved in testing, plus uh I relay the things then they’ll be following me

IR: Right

IE: I have to take that responsibility

IR: okay... on the technical side, what would you say your strengths are, your best program would be?

IE: um BL and Cobalt.

IR: And database would be?

IE: DB2

IR: DB2 and .. you’ve used both KICKS and ... ?

IE: Both KICKS and MSDC.
Job Interview Transcript - Bangalore, India between T and Candidate 10

01 IR: What I want you to do is tell me about your role with Golden Infotech.

Seated in far right hand corner of sofa, dark skinned, tall, off-white open-necked shirt, no mustache, hands holding envelope size of book, serious expression, making direct eye contact

02 IE: uhh.

03 IR: [Tell me] about what you’re working on and what you do

04 IE: We are in a project of ( ) and a project of database input. Where then we are in the form three months duration, we are in database input project then we shift to Dugas ( ) Project. There we missed the ...( ) ( ) drug analysis. We missed the Drug analysis ? and project with patient model, then the drug model and the ... student’s model and drug analysis model. Then the details about the report. Then we have white models in which I turn ...uh then the patient model ( ) ( ) in which it has um information name, code, uh patient division and goes by information name and code (right)

Speaking very fast, underlining points with right hand only – thumb to tips of fingers, left hand still and holding envelope

05 IR: This was...a new project?

Holds envelope in both hands, inclines head on right to listen to question

06 IE: Yeah JCL code

07 IR: Take us through more detail about what it was you did on your part of the project.

08 IE: Just we are going and coding it, test ? we are coding the projects by COBOL, using COBOL and DB2, KICKS. Then we are testing by unit testing.

09 IR: right... in this new project, tell me about the design of the database.

10 IE: Database will be in .... uh we we want to access the database tables with the..It will mean access so that we have an ( ) ( ) there. We are going to access .. most probably in all the cases, I have the access occupations model.

Pleasant countenance, half-smile, slight head nod, sideways, pokes tongue out just before next question

11 IR: Right, who who designed the database?

12 IE: It’s our project manager.

13 IR: So the project manager designed the database and you then utilize that.. database. Okay, the part of the system that you were doing, how how big was it? How many modules are we talking about?
Nods head up and down in agreement, hand grip open palm towards himself.

14 IE: I'm only one model and that's the patient model in which uh around 150 um programs in which, we are having uh .. adding, attachments, technicians, ( ). in which blows ( ) we are in blows patient name, patient code.

15 IR: And your user for this was ( ) ( ) ?

16 IE: Yeah very ( )

Looks intently at interviewer.

17 IR: Okay, tell me about the interaction then. How, how did you find out what it was that you were supposed to do, how did you check up if what you were doing was right and then getting feedback from the user?

18 IE: The feedback .. we don't have any specific plan. The bottom line is that I have it ( ) I have the ( ) line, in such a way that he has given the project details. Then you you design the system design and we are given the .. just logic design. Then we are to code by using a Cobalt and DB2 KICKS . Then by testing only we are in authority to do unit testing.

19 IR: right

20 IE: the final project we'll be ... the... most link will be, will be project manager.

21 IR: right, so the starting point for you was... the specification?

Holds envelope lightly in both hands.

22 IE: Yeah

23 IR: In what detail was the specification?

24 IE: The specifications will be ... by our specifications. Like that would be ... would be given, the client will be given specification in such a way that for this length it should work like then we will code it and the project manager will give us in details. In this it has to work. Then by testing, you'll get unit testing then we'll hand over to the... manager.

Changes envelope and disc to other hand.

25 IR: right ..okay, but in terms of of the development, what specifications were you working from?

26 IE: Specifications ... uh out of 50 specifications we are able to work.

27 IR: Right ..okay, but you said the project leader was doing .. uh what level of design?

28 IE: Uh?

29 IR: What level did he take the design to? ....
Holds envelope in both hands calmly and considers question at length

30 IE: (long pause) I didn’t get you, Sir
31 IR: Okay what you needed to take is the design?
32 IE: Yeah
33 IR: Well, to what level? …so did you do it at a very low level or a very broad level?
34 IE: No, it’s medium

Smiles and underscores "medium" with horizontal cut gesture

35 IR: Okay, so what did you need to do when you got that design?
36 IE: The ..... project manager was given a logic design
37 IR: Right
38 IE: Then we have to code it. We have to code that thing by using COBOL in such a way it has to work keeping the testing because the specifications will be given in such a way that it has to work. It will give and take of 3 months like that. Then we are working ( ) ( )
39 IR: Okay. And the program has worked with ( ) ( )...or back processing?

Stops and listens carefully to question

40 IE: Back processing
41 IR: Back processing only?
42 IE: yes
43 IR: Okay, so so what has been your involvement with KICKS?
44 IE: KICKS .. is rating (or reading) your mean rating or main reading. Rating is okay ...find in KICKS. DB2 around 7, COBOL is 9
45 IR: Right ..
46 IE: then JCL is 5.
47 IR: Okay, so what were work have you done with KICKS?
48 IE: KICKS ... almost all readings. Read KICKS, like uh ...detailed readings like uh the access then deleting the files. Like that the full ... uh .. We attend.. almost all the ( ) we have used all the ( ).
49 IR: Right, but in in terms of the development .. you have told me .. you said it was a Backs development then
50 IE: yeah
51  IR:  So you wouldn't be using KICKS then ( ) ( ) very much?
52  IE:  yeah
53  IR:  Okay how are you using KICKS in the batch development?

Uses both hands to explain, direct eye contact
54  IE:  Batch ... we are using in year 2000 --- in which it will be in ...er, in small letter so that the accessor can ... the--- can be used in which the other person cannot access the system, the data
55  IR:  Okay, then you said you worked on one other system when you worked on ( )
56  IE:  ya
57  IR:  and that was Back system also?
58  IE:  ya

Nods head up and down, touches eye and tongue pokes out fleetingly
59  IR:  okay, so you have not worked on Line systems with COBOL/KICKs at all?
60  IE:  silence
61  IR:  okay, you also mentioned that you used ( ) as well as DB2, so what sort of ( ) ( ) DB2?
62  IE:  This time we are using ( ) Pan flow, in this project and in JCL we in activity programs, in JCL we have activity programs such that we got... I consider my levels quite low (broad) I mean my reading is 5 ?
63  IR:  Fair enough, okay, er... what's more competent program than DB2? You did say that your skills are with DB2 rather that with ...(yeah)

Eyes blink questioningly, looks a bit weary
64  IE:  DB2/KICKs/COBOL
Appendix 2
Focus Group Transcripts

PhD Thesis by research

A critique of 'cultural fit' in relation to the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists for the Y2K project in Australia

Under supervision of Professor David Birch
Associate Supervisor: Dr Helen Tebble

Judith Booth
Deakin University
Melbourne Campus
TRANSCRIPT: Focus Group Interview 1 4/9/98

Candidates 1 & 2
Present: Moderator: Judith
Volunteers: B, Bel, L

Extract video interview - V

J: okay, it’s quite short just five minutes but just so far, what’s your general impression?

I can’t understand him (yeah) a word he’s saying

no, no you have to really listen to pick up what he’s actually saying, (really hard). He does actually sound as if he’s speaking another language (yeah). His accent is so thick (yeah) and he’s speaking very fast but I’m thinking if he slowed (yeah) it down a bit, you could understand it (what he’s saying)

J: Well, do you think that would have affected the decision about whether to employ him?

Definitely, yeah

Definitely, because you know if he’s communicating with other people, they’ll be going what’s he saying? You know, yeah

J: I’ve got a transcription (job interview) here - It took me hours and hours just to get it

There is a concern I guess that would be reflected immediately by a potential employer is because these people do actually have to define user needs and uh know what the end result is going to be, that just that communication would be a major problem, also there would be a question of whether he’d have the understanding...

um - so the main thing is um his speech. What about his body language?

I don’t find it too bad. He’s quite expressive, yeah he’s yeah his is ok some of them it’s a bit.. I think his body language is fine. He is obviously very expressive but um fairly, but not in an intrusive sense. But it’s probably because the stuff that’s being done in the house

J: Yes that’s in the office in Bangalore, in the hotel (uh, okay) I think that’s T’s hotel bedroom

uh right with the sitting room that’s where I imagine it looks like a home (yeah)

J: Well you can see the fridge in the background

You might have to press the pause.. again

J: Oh, is that it?

Oh no, that’s fast forward or rewind.
J: What do you think of him using the word ‘Sir’?

Oh, I think a lot of people in India, Thailand all those places, they do do that uh maybe it shows I mean, I could be wrong here, it shows respect for that other person? you know kind of like you know yeah (um, um) but this is the way they’ve been brought up

They all use that. They have respect for what they perceive as hierarchy uh uh

J: especially the older male talking to younger male talking but what about in terms of fitting into Australia? So you take that as a sign that um...

Maybe he needs to be a bit more relaxed? If you were to work in an Australian environment you know, you know you don’t go up and ‘g’day, how you’re going?’ but maybe if you address someone as ‘Sir’ it’d be kind of I don’t know

That would come with time though, I think (yeah)

and I think particularly if he was working with like a 40 plus manager, I don't think he’d have a problem but they’d probably see it as being very respectful, probably somewhat quaint but not offensive (no)

J: and as you say he’d stop after a while when

That’s right the culture

J: so that’s not a big deal

no

I’m glad you could actually even define that word because I couldn’t (what’s that uh?)
I still can’t pick up what he’s saying

J: uh

I heard the word ‘conversion’

J: but pause, maybe just need to press play

extract video V

(after that unique testing phase...)

J: Do you agree with N that he was um, too serious, he wouldn’t fit in with a bunch of Swedes or...?

No, I don’t

I don’t think because in an interview if you wanted to come and sit there um and laugh um you know

and the questions that T’s asking (yeah) aren’t like you couldn’t
Maybe if he (asks) him what his interests were

He might kind of, you know he’s not asking that (that’s right) He’s kind of asking serious questions

He’s coming across as very serious about his work but also he’s a very good listener. He lets T finish the question and then (answers) delivers his answer.

Right, very seriously I guess methodical manner (right) which you would expect with people in this highly technical background (um)

J: Yes and it was that seriousness that N thought might mean, not you know take, not be able to have a joke or too uptight

I don’t think you can really tell (yeah) from that

He’s not announced anything that he’s got to give a fairly clear, a fairly left-brain kind of answer to (Right)

He knows how to answer some fairly technical questions in terms of what has he done and how would he handle this, I mean that’s really not a matter for humour is it?

No, but if you saw him being asked questions perhaps about his hobbies or his interests then like Bel said you would see a lighter person

J: yeah... When you compare him with some others then you can sort (uh okay) see a little bit more uptight than say some of the ones who are older

umm

extract V cont.
(What we can see that...)

J: Um how sincere do you think or how genuine do you think he is his knowledge of the technical field do you think from that, because (Well it’s hard to say) when I, because you know I’ll just explain when I’m doing the transcript uh he’s very repetitive, you know he doesn’t get to the point?

uh, okay

J: you know, there’s a lot of redundant information

I’d have to read the transcript I think because I can’t understand what he’s saying

I can only pick up a few words

J: Just what’s your instinct? What’s your impression about...

He’s sounds like he does know what he’s talking about (uh, huh) but he sounds very earnest

I can’t understand what he’s saying (no) I can only pick up a few words
so yeah that kind of makes it hard for us to interpret if he’s telling you know, not repeating himself

yeah

**J**: but based on body language, do you think he’s um genuine?

yeah, well yeah

**J**: not fudging it?

No, he’s like very expressive, you know you know

**J**: Because I think part of T’s job I think being based in India is to check all the the you know the technical qualifications to see if they’re genuine

That’s right

I think the other thing that’s probably coming across in terms of him being very serious I mean, this is terribly important to these people to

that’s right

given the opportunity so you know you would expect them to be so focused on how they’re coming across, getting the information across, it would be very earnest about that (yeah, yeah) so that also could contributing it might be er

the importance of it

that’s right, yes

just better go on to the next one, otherwise we’ll run out of time

I was going to say, also you’re dealing with an English second language as well (yeah) he may not feel the need to repeat so much in his own the first time

**J**: yeah, he wants to try, he wants very much to be understood...(yeah) okay, thank you and ....eject... the next one’s an older guy

extract V 2
( so you’ve got two and a half years IT experience Correct)

**J**: So what’s your...?

It’s bit better to understand

yeah not so speaking as fast (quickly) and I would say his presentation is better because that other guy has the thing in the pocket, he didn’t have a tie on and stuff, you know (yeah)

he seems a little more relaxed, he’s not so movin his hands (earnest)
not so mobile with the hands (yeah)

he does seem a little more relaxed even just he’s sitting back a little more than the other guy up front but you can understand him a lot better he’s talking at pace

He’s still got this big accent (yeah)

J: so um before you would have rejected V because he was speaking too fast, what about this guy would he be, have a chance of being shortlisted, at all?

Yeah, I think so, if I had a requirement like that

yeah, if he meets all the technical

you think the other fellow is was more that speaking fast, it wasn’t just you just could not understand a word (no) so whilst this guy’s accent is quite strong still I think at least he is speaking more slowly so you can actually saying a, bit more

I think it’s more important for them to understand you know if they’re gonna be in an interview or something you need to able to talk slowly and you know, being told that beforehand you know type of thing (yeah)

but I think um with the other video we didn’t watch the whole video, did we?

almost

so there’s no questions asked about hobbies, things like that

J: no, no it’s not the conventional job interview, it’s more for just checking the experience of mainframes

okay...because I think that would make a difference as well, to see what their hobbies are, what, just to see what the human side

that’s right

J: all of these interviews don’t do that (that’s right) they’re very very functional

skills and competencies aside, that’s obviously what’s being checked here the cultural thing is important too because you often find out the cultural fit by a little bit more about the culture by finding out a bit more about the person and their behaviour you know their behaviour is a separate issue to deal with competencies (yeah)

like I mean maybe for example you know you go into an interview here and you’ll sit down with the person right ‘How’s your day going?’ you know, did you find it’s okay, have a little bit yeah a bit of conversation, just general chitchat beforehand

take it off the technical

yeah just I mean

they could be you know for all you know it could be some psychotic person um you know in some situations or something
J: well this shows a little bit of a problem so these interviews set up to check the qualifications but then they’re used here for people to decide whether to shortlist (yeah), so you’ve got two separate roles their job is to check quals and your job is to shortlist them but the information is perhaps a little bit restricted

yeah that’s right

I think there is another aspect too is when you’re looking at a permanent contract. When you’re looking at a permanent employee that cultural fit is probably a lot more important I mean we would really want to know who they’re working with, what culture of the place is like, young conservative, whatever and that becomes more of an issue but when you’re putting someone in for a short-term contract it’s much more skill-based in terms of who you put in because it’s less important that they’re long term cultural fit

J: How do you define short-term? Is that.. what one year or 3 months?

3, 3 months, six months, six weeks

two weeks sometimes

yeah it depends on what the client needs at the time but 3 months would be a typical (yeh) contract, short-term contract

you want someone being there doing the work because a lot of the time, people do the short-term contracts because they want to get away from the politics n’stuff of the company or contractors need to get away from that side of things

so it becomes very task-based

yeah, very much so

they get hired for what they mechanically can do, basically

and typically the 3 month contract, it’ll roll-on if there’s fit, if they’re right but it’s very much a competency based placement initially

J: Have you had any experience then with Indian technologists being chosen here?

( ) does but I haven’t personally (right) um just purely because our clients, we don’t have a lot of mainframe sites (right) um so a lot of our clients don’t actually look at taking overseas resources (right)

J: I understand only about 3 chosen altogether in Sydney

yeah in Melbourne
one here (is there?) Sam almost ticket in hand to hop on a plane to go to Sydney then they found a site for him down here

J: oh okay I check that out

Yeah I mean, you might talk to like clients about you know about whether they’d be interested in that you know if there’s a need um and I find I mean this is mainly on the
premise I know these guys are mainly on contract and they kind of go first ‘How much will it cost me?’ and you know

A lot of them don’t want the hassle really yeah it is a hassle and can sometimes be a hassle for us as well because you know we’ve got to get through whole lot of follow-up stuff - immigration, bureaucracy yeah

so it would only be like if they had a really rare skill I would even consider

yeah

J: So it’s really the exceptional ones who are going to be shortlisted

yeah definitely

And that’s probably in the current market the market gets tighter and tighter and tighter particularly with the Y2K problem um I think that our clients and candidates are going to have to sort of expand their thinking somewhat because yes um we have been resourced fairly heavily at the moment by overseas organizations

right?

from the United States and the UK and Europe and er so it’s going to deplete our resources here as well so I think you’ll find there’ll be organizations will be continuing to think a lot more globally than they are now

J: right .. when you say they’re resourced from the US & Britain, does that mean you’re getting people from US and Britain to..?

They’re coming here to Australia by

J: So it’s basically up to the employer to decide and if they’ve got a choice between a British a US, an American or an Indian they might choose the like culture?

(Interruptation: Hi, Excuse me 2 seconds how did you get on with the videoconference? no worries, thank you)

It’s becoming I guess a worldwide problem in terms of resources for example I was quoted this figure and don’t quote me on this because I don’t know how accurate it is but a fellow from Lendlease went to a conference (uh uh) and they said that there’s 400,000 vacant IT positions in the United States they just can’t fill, they haven’t got the skills

J: I see what you mean

so, what’s happening is that the United States is just recruiting organizations places like Australia (Uhhh) quite cheap still in world terms (right)

and there’s organizations coming over here from the UK (right) and Europe and um starting to cannibalise (laugh) our people over here (right) and so you know there’s obviously going to be global shifts in terms of where resources are pulled from so at the moment perhaps it would be fair to say that some pretty exceptional ones from India are being chosen
J: Quite a few of them too seem to have had experience already in America (yeah) they’ve done a bit of job placement or something

I think in America at the moment, they’re not, people can’t go over there at the moment, is that right?... They’re not giving out any more Green cards or something...so that’s why they’re looking at bringing Indians over here because they can’t go to America. I could be wrong on this

J: oh no that’s a good point

know what I mean

yeah, so that’s why we’re looking at them more now I think they would rather go to the USA rather come to Australia yeah

J: Well, T was telling me that employer preference still would be for um Australians over Indian if you’ve got a choice that makes sense in terms of culture fit avoid all those other problems of misunderstandings

yes

that’s right

There’s so much to just to look at, I mean, I just been doing a bit of study on that and just you know how they might for example not show this particular um feeling or somewhere you know that can really people can really kind of maybe take it the wrong way I mean (yeah, yeah) and a lot of when I did a lot of reading on a lot of what I found was people actually coming over, the organizations taking them on, just forget about their rest of their family, which is

J: it’s important for their wellbeing, everyday wellbeing and performance (yeah) uh I’d be interested to know what the reading is

um Robert C Clark?

J: Human Resource course material? (yeah) I’d love to know what you’re reading. I don’t want to keep you any longer because it’s half past. Could I just quickly get (yeah) to fill that out... one minute? (biodata questionnaire)

quick um Robert J Clark I think it is and er... what’s the other guy’s name?

um........I’ll think of it

not Arthur C. Clark? (laugh)

J: What’s he written about?

It’s just human resource management but he’s got a lot about expatriates

(right) a lot about information about that in the second edition (um um) 1995


just Human Resource Management I think it’s called
I’ve got the book here actually *(yeah?)*

**J:** I’ll show you what I’m working from too

um with completed level of education, what about graduate diploma?

**Yes**

Shall I just add that in?

**yeah**

(sounds of packing up)

Since both my parents are dead, is the occupation important?

**J:** um just because that’s socio-economic background you know. If the father’s a manager, or the mother’s a professional

okay

okay It’s just a variable

Do we just give the work contact number?

**J:** *yep...most questionnaires leave out the mother*. I deliberately put in the mother *(laughter)*

What do you define as a professional or a non-professional?

**J:** *uh well, many migrants who come over have worked in other areas you know, like waitressing and you know restaurants cleaning (okay) factories...they’ll start off in a factory then they’ll get a job as a professional*

yep

**J:** Thanks very much...um so I’d be interested to confirm that the speech is the most difficult thing, and you didn’t say a lot about body language so I was wondering if... how significant..

I didn’t the first time. His body language was fine, we have a lot of people who are very expressive

so that’s not a problem if they wave their hands around or if they’re doing

no, no

unless the body language with Indians is a problem as the head nodding you know more because it causes humour in

**J:** *yeah also misunderstanding between yes and no* *(that’s right)*

It’s almost sort of, the archetype in respect of the Indian with the accent and head nodding and everything else so you I guess you start to label them a little bit *(mmm)*
but they didn’t do that at all

I mean the hand movements, hey, I’m half Irish I use my hands all the time

I mean I didn’t find that invasive or intrusive at all

I think that it’s good you know to if you’re telling someone a story to move your hand you know we went over the mountain, down the gully you know (laughter) the full system development cycle they go like that, you know what I mean. I think what’s very typical too Judith, is when it is an English second language situation, that they do use more gestures to express themselves

J: uh huh uh huh mm ....alright, that’s terrific, thank you, thank you very much

okay?

J: I’ll go back to work and write that up, transcribe it and I need to do at least 2 more sessions like this so you know

when D gets back (great)

J: we’ll get him in the group as well.

It’ll be interesting to know the difference between us as women say as that’s right and what they say about the body language (that is right) if they find that kind of

but also because D’s actually watched a lot of these videos whereas they’re probably the first two

me too

J: yep so I’ve got a whole lot more. I’ve got 15 of these... so that’s a very good start

yeah. okay?

Thank you.

Good luck

J: If T’s around, I just want to give him, if eh’s not that’s alright, I just want to give him a little present, you know the promo that’s on TV about promoting mul that it, that’s a copy of the video if you want it (great) and that’s a kit of Business Victoria (fantastic)

Alright, good luck with that

J: Thank you I hope to see you again... Thanks very much

See you later
J: See you.
TRANSCRIPT: Focus Group Interview 2 8/10/98

Candidates 3 & 4
Present: Moderator: Judith
Volunteers: D, Bel, L, S

J: D, would you like to be moderator?.....
D: just a couple of minutes
S: Please stay with us listeners (laughter)....
D: We’re running. Go, okay

Extract video interview - C
...speed it up fella okay?
the value of it  (Is that okay?)
continued
D: Can you understand the guy?
Nuh
(extract continued)
D: Nothing wrong with his body language is there? His body language...
(extract continued)
D: He’s actually pretty good (extract continued) he’s not far off the mark . It’s just his words - can’t pick them all up
B: ( ) a little bit
something’s wrong
D: If you want to discuss anything, if you want me to hold it, I can pause it, then we can talk about it and those issues if you want to
(extract continued “second module you can system”)
D: okay just very quickly, my feeling is that this guy, if he had the technical skills wouldn’t be very far ...um?
I haven’t picked up his technical skills
D: no but for the sake of this exercise we’re not concerned (yeah)
but, it’s very hard we’re focusing on the cultural fit side I don’t have a problem (no)
here in Australia at the present moment with that sort of background (yeah)
S: he's actively working in the workplace and has no problem

D: if he had the skills that we were looking for in that particular environment (yeah) I would see nothing there that would concern me about him. It depends on what type of role?

B: like Q someone like that depending on what he’s doing

D: yeah I’ve got a bias when I make that statement. I’m thinking of where we traditionally place these Indian guys but um I think he could possibly do a certain amount of interaction with other people and they would understand him

S: Some of his body language is very good I think

J: What is Q?

D: no no it’s a client but the head’s not flying around it’s not the head nodding and so on which you know is disconcerts disconcerts people (yeah)

B: Do you think a tie would be required for Australia though?

S: yeah, plus you know where he’s sitting

B: suitable for that interview

S: He’s got a fresh white shirt

D: He’s dressed as smartly as S as a matter of fact (laughter) he hasn’t got a tie but um so I don’t think he’s too bad

L: but I don’t think he’s talking too fast

D: No..no

L: still can’t understand him going around

S: he’s talking a bit too technical

B: but it’s a technical interview (yeah)

D: but hopefully we do follow those ones cause

B: but I think if you were sitting in front of him you’d probably understand...they understand when I’m in front of someone I often pick up

D: yeah that’s a valid point because it’s over a video you know it’s not as easy. Do you want to see a bit more of him?

yep. okay ...just hold

(extract continued) “and there is the computing system data...”------”what is the...”
D: just one other thing is interesting when you’re looking at the cultural fit is he, he is not a nervous talker but he keeps on talking and he’s giving no opportunity to answer a question and have an exchange so if he did come out, he would require I think some schooling (yeah) in terms of because sometimes they talk and they just keep rolling, keep rolling and keep rolling. Now T, hopefully T’s skill would be there to just interject at the right time but he’s trying to

yeah, yeah

D: Well he need this guy needs to be schooled a bit in terms of giving a response and stopping

L: yeah because it can come off rude you know as you and I might just want to talk

B: but I think in an interview

D: It’s a nervous thing I mean the Indians tend to do that a bit more than others (hold the floor) yeah

S: because they want to prove

B: But I also think in an interview, it’s up to the interviewer?

D: It is to control it, it is yeah, you’re right

B: I mean, I’ve interviewed people like that before and if I ask a question and they don’t answer it I’ll let them speak and then I’ll interrupt and say “Going back to the question... (yeah) can you now answer it?” (yep)

S: I think it’s possibly because they feel their lack of communication skills (B:yes, yes) they have to prove themselves in the technical (J: um um)

B: you see, I always reassure them though

S: so what they’re trying to do is to try and make sure every part of what they’re doing to be able to prove they are relevant (yep) T of whom they’re looking or who T’s looking for

J: I think that is the point B made last time because they’re very earnest because they’ve got a short time in which to promote themselves

S: and this guy knows

D: they’re competing in the top market (yeah)

S: this guy knows he’s given an hour for his ticket to Australia

yeah um, yeah

S: because that’s what it is it, a ticket to Australia for one hour it’s make or break I mean it’s relevant with candidates that we interview here

D: but the typical Australian is if you don’t like what I’m saying you can get stuffed where this guy is you know they’re competing opportunities are not as good as here so yeah
you’re right S, it’s uh he’s trying to ram 15 minutes with his whole life (with his whole life) whether

J: why did you say an hour...is that because there are other things that go on before this interview

S: oh ..no, but I mean usual timeframe for an interview an hour up I wasn’t too sure

J: it’s about 5 minutes

S: this interview?

D: how long it lasts yeah but yes from the beginning to the end but physically getting to the place and you know I mean no it wouldn’t be an hour of talking to him although our interviews here

S: it could go 40 minutes

D: We’ve probably talked too long if we’ve gone past 40 minutes half an hour should do it

B: half an hour

D: Half an hour to get everything you need 5 minutes here is not enough (J: right) but for us to sit and look at a video for half an hour is not right we need to get a snapshot comfortable (snaps fingers) feel for it all. Do we want to keep running with this guy or do we want to finish him and run to the next?

S: finish him and let’s go to the next (B: yeah)

D: okay

B: but I’ve always thought just in terms of candidates coming into our offices and if they’ve been like worked in Australia for a year or something like that and their English isn’t that great um I will always they’re usually a bit nervous and don’t think you can understand them I would always reassure them that their English is quite good (S: So do I) just to make them feel a little more relaxed in the interview (um) and uh then I find that they don’t continue talking like that?

S: That’s right, they sort of just tend to relax (yeah) they tend to sort of sit back a bit and take but they’ve been in Australia they know what Australia’s like but they don’t have a clue what sort of, they do, but they don’t really relax how relaxed (but even if)

B: even if someone just comes in off the street I had one guy come in of the street. I don’t know where he was from but I couldn’t understand him hardly at all and he had his wife there basically interpreting and um I was just trying to reassure him that his English was... you could pick up some words but it was pretty bad but um he was really nervous trying to tell me everything and I just said to his wife “Look his English is going to improve over 6-12 months” whatever and um he made him feel a lot more comfortable. She obviously interpreted that back to him and um

J: yeah, that’s face-saving

D: how would we present him to a client?
B: What do you mean?

S: Here in Melbourne well obviously privy to the client saying to the client that this particular candidate has particular skills that you're looking for (D: well) he has the approach that you're looking for “He’s earnest, he’s trustworthy” (well trustworthy)

D: no hang on, I would say so yeah his English skills um can be improved a little bit

J: The employer yeah... is that a turn-off for the employer if you say English skills needs to be improved?

D: No I wouldn’t use those terms (B: no I wouldn’t either) I wouldn’t use those terms You must you always positive when you put it in the context of what he’s got to do. I would say “I consider his English to be appropriate to the role that you’ve described” and and that’s fair

B: I mean you’re not going to put him into a client where he has to contract other

D: your terms can be value-laden (um) and and people can assume something that is not necessarily the case (right) right this is guy number 2 - A

Extract video - A

(T: Tell me about...
noise from camera, phone ringing and shouting from T’s wife ?--- causes laughter)

L: The quality has to be improved I think

D: What do you reckon?

Well I can’t understand what he’s saying (yeah)

I can understand

D: but hang on but moves the head is a trait but I’m saying is it offputting is it (No it’s not that bad) is it...is it to an extent that is going to cause an issue with cultural fit?

S: No, I think for understanding, you really have to concentrate with this guy in comparison to the first guy

D: Yeah I agree with that but it could make it the head nodding is there but it’s not too bad, not too distracting

L: I mean that’s just you know I just stand there and go like this (twirling hair in fingers) and I don’t that’s uh

D: you can sit there and twirl you hair all the time couldn’t you (laughter) it would be very distracting but we’d put up with it

that’s right (laughter)

you talk all the time to yourself D

D: yeah it’s sending me crazy that’s right but anyhow
B: he seems a lot more nervous than the other guy

D: well let's face it I mean what a start ...the phone's gone, microphone wasn't on...T's wife was yelling out, the only thing hasn't been the dog wasn't chasing the cat across the couch (laughter) or maybe he's had a bloody hard start to it all

five minutes of fame

D: but in a way and I know he's nervous but in Australia, you'd say "you're alright there T?" you know, you could but that's that hard, that's hard there was an opening there to do something but he doesn't know that, he hasn't been schooled in those sort of..

yeah I find...

J: He's sitting in the corner of the couch too (yeah, I noticed) does that mean anything to you that he's uh

D. Well to me T might have placed him there but in terms of body language it shows to me a lot of insecurity

L: yeah yeah I agree

D: Where the other guy sat openly and talked openly with his hands (J: he was more relaxed) so you know the second half of the interview will probably be important because once he gets going does he warm up but I think some of these there's the cultural fit and what we can school them in uh to make them appropriate stuff that they would never know in terms of being relevant for Australia um

L: I think it's important because I know technical whatever that T would conduct but you don't really get to know their maybe humorous side you know how you know I could go into an interview and I could go really like this just talk if you know I'll come out the back and talk to you guys

D: Abso absolutely spot on there, L

B: you don't really see them kind of relax

D: "How hot do you have your beef madras?" (laughter) you know I tell you what and suddenly K. he's a pussycat isn't he, and he'll talk quicker to them and they cut loose and then you get a little bit of the personality and the personality is going to help a lot and they don't know see we're putting you're right I think it's a very valid point L in our interviewing we need to let the individual character come out more (yeah) along with the technical skills cos that's the real person we're trying to put in a job, not just the technical skills

J: yes his questions are all technically oriented (yeah)

D: but we've got to give T that feedback (right) I mean we're not saying that T's ideal of doing a perfect job. We've got to help T in doing this job

B: but does T only speak to them for the 5 minutes you know, surely not?
D: I wouldn’t think so what we’ve got to do is we’ve got to feedback questions on the type of questions we would like to be asked the information we need so we can get a better fit. We’ve been skinny at this stage Judith we’re not even good at getting people to look at the bloody videos...people think India’s a bit far away, a bit hard I’ll look in the local market.

L: Aren’t 15 coming over?

D: Where did you get that number from?

L: J, immigration

D: Well, how many coming to Melbourne? (yeah that’s right)

They’re going to Sydney ( )

J: Is it because of all the paperwork involved you don’t think it’s the extra paperwork immigration n’stuff?

D: No no absolutely not we we it is so easy my department’s responsible for bringing them out

L: For me I don’t really understand it that well so you know I think “oh” I’d look at the data base first you know I mean if

B: Well it’s also educating your clients as well a lot of the clients would prefer, because they see it as easier to get resources from Australia rather than go international.

D: Judith, the obstacle at the moment is quite clear in my mind is clarifying the process internally and the Account Managers. It’s not the client um that’s a big stalemate.

B: no I think we have to like with Q for example they just say “No, no, no (yeah?) we not want people (yeah) especially India”. They will take people from like America any place where they speak English (yeah)

D: If they get them, if they get them

( ): a lot of Indians I think (yeah)

D: if they get them. What I’m saying is that at the moment if if they need client the clients will take them if their need is great enough uh and they might want the English speaking people when I say Indians are English-speaking people but without the thick accent (yeah) and and I don’t think colour features I hope not no no

but I don’t think so I’d like to think we’re truly a cosmopolitan situation

J: on that note of colour did you notice that he was darker than the others. Did that uh

D: Yeah oh no now that you mention it, but that’s immaterial I would have thought

L: but there are some people to whom that could be an issue, that they are Indian, in the end no matter what the look of them are
B: I don’t think so in IT, you know, I think that would be in general

D: no you know the main obstacles here is with the account managers. If they cannot get these resources and we’ve got good resources that can do the job they should be looking at them now therefore it’s breaking down with maybe my way of facilitating this information and letting people know how they can go about it or their own perceived reservations I think it’s got to I’m pushing it a lot at the Account Managers saying it is which is not to say the Account Manager’s don’t want anything to do with it and they’re saying “look I’d rather keep looking for the needle in the haystack than use these resources from India” is my feeling

how...?

D: B I know in your case because I work closely with your group but yes, Q have added problems but don’t tell me that’s the case everywhere. It’s not.

B: Oh no, no I’m just using they’re the only client

J: Why would Q not want to deal with them?

B: because it’s just a hassle for them, basically that’s the way they see it

J: What’s the hassle?

B: the fact that they have to not that they have to do it but they see it as a hassle bringing them from overseas if they don’t fit in all of those sort of things which

J: like a risk?

D: but there is no risk you see this is the point I haven’t sold it well enough to you. We land them on the bench (but not only that) they don’t have to take them so

S: we just sell them

B: With us, with us at the moment we haven’t got the need because I’m still finding a number of resources within Australia

D: okay well that’s the issue isn’t it

B: yeah that is the issue I mean we’re they’re looking for about 50 people in the future and we’ve still have to do something at that stage but at the moment we’re still finding plenty

J: yeah the market hasn’t been exhausted yet

D: no no don’t be tricked by what you hear in the the papers um there are there is no huge pain being expressed by clients here in Australia of Y2K um we hear a lot of about it there’s certainly an escalation of activity you know N and so on yes there is an escalation but you know there is no screaming pain. I’ve got to get these resources quickly because they would not hesitate to look at the sources like this especially the way we’re proposing to do it so next year maybe but what I’m saying is that we we’re very reactive (J: responsive) and if the client is screaming out yeah we respond whatever is happening and it’s not screaming out (uh huh) in the massive numbers that the mania is supposed to be around so in society
J: so so why is it that the Accounts Manager has the final say or can influence it so much you mentioned

D: Well we empower the account managers the people that have to determine that this person is right or wrong for the role that is given to them from the client uh they’re the ones that are empowered I mean everything else around the companies I guess is the support system for making that sale they’re they’re very much empowered, the Account Managers (clears throat)

J: Thanks, that’s it I think

D: I don’t know, you don’t need to see anymore of him, do you?

J: no, that’s a great lot of information there

D: we’ve gone through all the issues that you were..

J: yeah that’s a lot more explanation coming out um so could you just tell me what is the Account Manager’s role? Has he got the final say?

B: He or she

J: He or she, pardon me (laughs)

D: Um well the account manager is essentially the person that liaises with the client um various clients to find out what their needs are in IT and the clients will then give them requirements which is “I need five KICKS, COBOL, DB2 analysts, programmers” whatever it might be so that the account manager comes back to their team as the individual goes about finding them maybe running ads searching the database (uh huh) looking on the internet and then all means available to them to find these simple resources and then present them to the client and generally presenting CV’s but if the client likes them they say I’d like to interview them it goes though various processes and then they’ll hire them if they like them or not

J: Isn’t that your role? Don’t you do that?

No me individually no my...well L is in, focuses on the resourcing part of the process L is an Account Manager, S’s an Account Manager (S: Bel) and L, Bel, “what did I say” I’m sorry Bel so um they liaise with the client. L will probably be at the backend of it as we would say, work with the computer and the resourcing part and the candidate may be be a little bit more where Bel and S would be across the full process

J: Right so so you perceive it as employer reluctance to to

B: with my client with both skill set I’ve only got one client that works with those skills

S: certain clients there is just the mention of overseas just

D: there is but that’s often it’s how we package them

S: I think it’s an Account Manager’s uh the way that we have marketed there is no reason why you should say (that’s right) they’re from overseas
D: I see that as my challenge to to um we should skill you up so you know how yourself for example Bel said...sorry...S, Bel said that it is the client’s it’s too hard to bring them overseas to do all this, do that. They’re not bringing them, WE’re bringing them

B: but they still perceive it as that

D: well therefore we’re not making that clear

S: it’s the way we actually sell it

D: exactly

S: That’s the way we sell it (that’s true but...) I’m no expert in selling certain things but I’ve had experience with a bit of overseas stuff at the moment but still that’s not perfect and they’re bringing this guy out themselves as a permanent

D: that’s much more complex

S: yeah but I’ve actually told them about what we do but still it’s not relevant to em because we don’t have a particular job skill set thing he’s got

yeah

S: if you find me a skill set I’ve had a look through

D: Judith I tell you one thing that is relevant because the bench notion of that we’ve got here of bringing people out and putting them on the bench uh exposes the company it’s we’re taking a risk by doing it we have to um maximise our opportunities in placing those individuals (um um) so if S came up to me and said D I’m desperately searching for a a clear case consultant (forget it) and I’d say that’s very nice but you’re the only one with that need um I can’t look at it so I have to look at areas where there is general and wide needs so that the best interests of the company going to be represented

S: biodata management representative?

B: I think we need a little package or something like that paint ad thing

J: It’s just a little variable

B: but we need those brochures

S: you want my details (J: yeah, yeah)

J: um could you put your name at the top (yes) you have done that, terrific, thanks

D: bench kit Bel said we need a bench kit
TRANSCRIPT: Focus Group Interview 3 13/11/98

Candidates 5 & 6
Present: Moderator: Judith
Volunteers: D, L, S

D: Just put Rao...R. A. O (Video Assessment sheet)

Extract video interview - R (so we have to process...)

J: What's your impression?

L: Um seems a bit nervous and kind of camera shy doesn't he? That's what I thought anyway

S: He keeps looking over at the camera you know

L: like you know I mean that's fair enough I can imagine you know (laughter)

D: I've got nervous eye movements which we've all picked up on but I don't think that was a big deal because he seemed to relax a little bit he's more relaxed with the camera man, his body language is really quite okay which is you know the Indian head nods and so on are not there. He's sat in a very submissive way sort of opening up a little bit (L: um) his hand movements I think are quite good and I think his diction is pretty good um

J: It's slower than the others so far

D: Yeah I think he's understandable so not not focusing so much on the technical skills which we're at a bit of a loss cause we need the CV and the rest of it but in terms of the fit in terms of the cultural fit I don't think I'd have too many worries with this guy (L: no).
By the way T landed the three that landed the night before last have already been sold and they're fantastic so um just T getting some successes now through this program in Sydney

J: In in what sense are they fantastic? What makes them fantastic?

D: oh well what makes them fantastic I think is that... people have to go through different levels for us. One is that you'll hear about and you'll see a CV but when you get to the final stage and meet them in person, you talk to them, you understand what they're like as a person and you understand what their skills are like. So all of these you know four or five areas of attributes that you need to be satisfied by, to place them with a client all come together when you meet them in person

J: Sorry, what are those attributes?

D: Oh well...

J: technical qual...?

D: I'd say obviously I guess it's two major things would be the technical skills of the person. They've got to comply with the technology that's required but the other ones the personal fit (yeah) and the personality. You you don't want to send someone they can't understand. You don't want to send someone that never looks you in the eye, you know there's all sorts of issues like that
S: Sorry to interrupt... can I see L for a moment?

D: yep

**J:** Watch out for the er (microphone lead)

D: so um that’s all that cultural fit ... nice person they might have a joke, they’ll talk about the cricket so you’ll feel confident that they’ll fit into that particular environment (um um) so I guess just technical fit and personal fit maybe two major areas

**J:** So so humour keeps coming up a lot. Is that is that a corporate value?

D: It’s international, it’s international, humour is international (uh huh) and I think if can get if you know two Australians too I think it’s important but if someone’s prepared to have a bit of a laugh at themselves or laugh at someone else (yeah) you feel like you can get a bit closer to them and I think that makes them, are a little bit more fit in terms of the work environment. What do you think S?

S: D has that skill of getting it out of people whereas I don’t think I have that sort of skill that D has, of being able to find someone’s humour points and being able to find that as being able to mix with you know a certain number of people and so forth (D: yeah but) they’re trigger points

D: well okay, maybe so we can work on those like for example, these guys invariably I’ll say to them “What are you? A batter or a bowler?” You know, you’re talking to an Indian about cricket or a Sri Lankan or a Pakistani, they love it and invariably say when you bring them out for example, Sam the last one that came out he’s I talked to him about cricket he’s playing subdistrict cricket here now yeah and (S: Springvale?) yeah he’s a good batsman (J: laughter) I don’t know but I don’t know where but I’m saying, we bring, we bring those issues up because it makes them feel more comfortable (S: except) it’s a very much an ‘in’ into our society talking about cricket

S: It makes them feel more comfortable in Australia

D: It makes them feel more comfortable

S: it breaks down barriers

D: I think it’s something we must explore a lot more. I’d even talk things like hockey you know understand what’s in their culture and understand what’s in our culture that’s a similarities rather than work on the differences. Work on the similarities and you know, the positives

**J:** You you used a sporting metaphor before (um) a while ago ‘reactive’ uh (D: back foot) that’s related to cricket right?

D: but I love sport that’s why I use it

**J:** Does that mean exactly the same as being ‘proactive’?

D: It does, yes, because if you step out to take the ball as it comes to you you’re being proactive but if you wait to see what it does, you then are very reactive (L: yeah) (J: ah) that’s where I tend to use the terminology
L: I was thinking about basketball you know where we’re told to go and get the ball. You don’t wait for the ball to come to you

D: yeah exactly, anticipate anticipation. I guess the key difference between ‘reactive’ and um ‘proactive’ is anticipating (J: right, right) and you’ve got to back yourself to think something is going to happen but as as I don’t know if we need to keep going... I’ll call him Rao I don’t know

J: yeah that’s that’s probably enough for him

D: I think it’s enough but I’d feel very comfortable with him if his technical skill is right

J: He seems pretty mature, sensible, (D: yep) responsible, trustworthy (L: yeah)

D: aw yeah? (nuh? you can’t ... say that?) I don’t know about trustworthy by listening to him talk he’s believable, he’s believable (L: listening to what T says and then responding to it) and his hands his speech is better than most we’ve seen

S: I was quite..

video extract cont

D: Yeah I think kill that, kills that one L because we want to hear what S says

S: I was going to say his skill...

D: (to L) just stop it or something until we get to the next one

S: I was going to say his skills are very difficult to understand,... boy

D: Who, this guy?

S: Yeah I found that he missed the point a bit with T’s question. I felt that T had to repeat it a couple of times in a roundabout manner in a technical sense. Did you find that?

J: Quite possibly, that’s a problem with all the ones I’m transcribing

D: Yep, I didn’t worry about that too much because it’s the same with every one of them. Every one of them will tell you what the project’s doing rather than what they’re doing and that’s T’s skill to always to keep saying yes ‘but what did you do’?

L: Which he just asked just before I..

D: yeah yeah so..

S: and it’s almost almost get to the point where I always then go on the backfoot and say “Well hold on, that’s what the project is, but what did you really do (D: yeah?) um and how is that going to fit in what I’m going to want you for for here”

D: That’s right but you should be getting that information from our group because we’re aware of what their personalities are like in terms of telling us about the team rather than them and that’s why T’s driving that harder and I should be driving that harder in terms of
supplying him with that information. If he gets if he gets to this level where you’ve got to be doing that I suggest that we’re starting to fail in our process

S: I haven’t been involved in that

D: No, no...

S: the only involvement I’ve had is (D: M..)

L: okay?

D: yep

Video extract 2 - M

D: (loudly) Straighten up lad

laughter

(T: ...working on those project... Take me through the things you did on that...)

D: I’d tell him that before going to a client though, that’s sloppy

S: Was this guy straight after the other guy?

D: don’t know (J: yes)

S: sounds like... you go in and tell him you have to say what you’re involved with, what he said, this is what I’ve done

D: I think that give him credit, give him credit I mean yeah

(video extract cont...)

D: Stop that for a sec. I don’t need to see a lot more, I’ve formed my opinion. What do you reckon?

L: Um communication is okay. I can’t understand that well but you know how they kind of have rolling? Yeah that’s what I find, it’s just seems to roll all into one yeah

J: (to S) Did you mean he was answering the question correctly as opposed to the other guy?

S: Yeah sounds like he turned around to the camera “this is it”

D: we can’t, I think we have to assume mutually exclusive events here you know it sounds like he’s connected to other guy somehow or rather but we can’t assume that (L: yeah). I personally found him fine too um his speech was not too fast yes possibly the other one was uh a little clearer but S’s point I think is a very relevant one this one seemed to hone in on ‘what I was doing’ um which which was good and relevant to the Australian scenario um again he we commented on him being very relaxed maybe slouching and so on but the point is I think he’s got a very relaxed comfortable style but he would make an interviewer feel nervous do you know what I mean?
S: Nuh

D: If someone’s doing this and they’re talking

S: his tongue actually just poked out

D: He’s looking at you, you see (laughter). He knows you’re going to be watching him in Australia - “Here’s one for you P” (laughter)

S: Nuh I think he was um stopped by T for for going in too quickly or something. I think T shot a question. Rewind it and his tongue poked out

J: can we see that?

D: Well, let’s have a look because I I haven’t seen any issues at all

J: Maybe maybe T gave him a nonverbal signal (D: cough) slow down or something

D: Where you’re going to S?

S: I don’t know just want to see it before the weekend that’s all

(video rewind)

S: don’t worry

J: Now you’ve got me intrigued

D: You’re casting nasturtiums here (J: yes... laughs)

L: Does it really matter if he pokes his tongue out or not?

D: no, no that’s okay

S: Don’t worry about it maybe it was just something I imagined I saw. We’ve gone way past where we stopped before.

D: But also in fast forward here, you can that the gestures are not bad, they’re very comfortable, the hand gestures, not too much head nodding, the eye contact, he’s moving his eyes away, just coming back to make the relevant point from thinking. I can’t, I can’t see how you’d be upset with any of that

L: Nuh... okay next one

J: no that’s it ...(L: oh) two two per session um

D: I thought both of those in terms of placeability that’s what I’m talking about fitting in here as far as they were concerned they were fine as long as they’ve got the technical skills. I mean that’s fundamental isn’t it? I guess you said before what are those two areas you know of the personality fit you know and all of the things related to it with the technical skills (J: um) I guess what we’re looking at now is all that sort of personality fit (J: right) side of it because the technical skills are obviously fundamental
J: so so we’re trying to pick up the communication skills from the nonverbal language? Is that right? and and plus the

D: Well no, we listen to it listen to him (yeah) and if we, if he’s you know understandable, and er he’s responding verbally to the question that’s being asked, that inspires you a bit more and in the nonverbal communication I think is vital (yeah) as well must be considered yeah

L: How do you spell n.o.d.?

D. : no, n. o. d ; n o d e is a node which is something else, a junction

J: um, can I just ask you a couple of quick questions?

D: Um huh

J: What do you think, what is the organisation’s value system? You know, you’re choosing people for um...

D: subjective

J: what is the corporate value that um (D: I think... underlying it) yeah

L: what do you mean?

J: um...well like humour is one of the things you mentioned, humour is important to oil the wheels to um

L: I actually interviewed a guy last night and um he was so nice like he communicated really good but we had a good laugh about, can’t remember what it was about but it was pretty funny you know, he showed the humorous side of things things like that which was good

J: right um but sorry that’s a hard one

D: like I said it’s highly subjective and there’s nothing you’re not going to pick up a manual and see you know all of these points written down so to talk about a corporate or ? (company name) view of all of this. It doesn’t really happen, it happens, it’s contained more in the individuals and their experience you know, what works and of course it rubs off cos we communicate with each other and therefore there will be a flavour that goes with the company (yeah) but in terms of our any base standards well we’re a member of RS what’s that (S: RCSA) RCSA which is an ethics recruitment standard we we tried to abide by those standards and apart from that we see that we’re the largest going around and we need to protect that so we think sound ethics and moral rest of it supports that scenario but other than that

J: Can I get a copy of that, could I get a copy of that.. ethics... that would be quite useful for me

D: um I think K might have it

L: I’ve got an overview

D: Well, you’ve seen our ? (company name) overview haven’t you?
J: no

D: Oh well, we’ll give you a copy of that but also the RCSA is um I think K’s got it but anyhow we can certainly chase it up for you

J: and one of the other things here is you know this article um that projecting happiness. What do you think about that?

D: We’re dealing with real people (L: yeah personality)

J: their grandmother just died or their...

D: You’ve got to understand that, you’ve got to understand that (J: uh huh) and that if it’s going to impact on the interview you’ve got to understand that you might have to prewarn the client that something traumatic has just happened to this person

L: what if this person comes in and doesn’t say anything about their Grandma you know what I mean, they’re really down

D: Well, you do form an opinion but again it’s the skill of the interviewer to just try get a little bit of a feel of the background. It’s not as though find out the dog’s just been run over but you know you’ve got to try get if you go in and sit down and talk to that person technically and go away and not got a feel for that person then you’re a dickhead because you’re fitting someone in a job and jobs where real people work with real people and it’s skills combined with personality and aspirations and desires and all sorts of things

L: a lot of the positions that you know we recruit for you know, they’ve got to deal with a lot of different number of people you know like on different levels type of thing always depending on the role so you’ve got to make sure that they can actually you know fit with the right people and that

J: right

S: I think one point that should be made I suppose (J: so you’ve got to be flexible is that what you’re saying?) um people in the IT industry as such what I’ve seen um coming into 4 months, 5 months now there’s a it is probably the most multicultural industry out there and you know and and you know D’s tapped on to Indians because of the certain skills but there would be no problem you know we do and try and sort of fit them um with the cricket and so forth being proactive and everything but at no time would they ever be feel uncomfortable because there are so many Indians in Australia already that are actually working in the industry and there are so many Asians there are so many it’s just the biggest multicultural and social fit all you have do is sit outside in our foyer and just see the people coming in for interviews it’s just

D: our client, our client base is probably skewed a little bit in that direction because the if you like the Australian that’s been working a while possibly got a little bit more of a network and is able to pursue direct options more than the other group so we’re an agency and I think I might have said this to you before agencies are very logical avenue for a lot of people from different backgrounds that don’t have immediate networks we are the network

J: You’re the intermediary

D: yep yeah
J: Uh huh um you know when I first met you you, when we had that interview you talked about cultural fit already happening in Singapore (D: yeah). How, what did you mean by that?

D: Well, we do we bring people directly from our operation in India to Australia but that they’re coming from a basically Indian environment to an Australian environment and that’s a fairly large cultural change but those that have gone from India and have worked in Singapore (J: oh right) and then we bring them by referred party or by some other means to Australia have already gone through a partial screening process in cultural fit (J: acculturation) partial cultural fit (yeah, yeah) and so that makes you feel a little bit more comfortable in terms of their ability to fit into a different culture and although there’s a heavy Indian environment it gives a little bit more comfort (um huh)

J: and last question um ‘benchkit’. You mentioned benchkit. I still haven’t grasped that idea what a benchkit is, it must be inhouse language (okay) or is it some secret?

D: funny you should say that because I’m thinking at the moment I’ve got to ring T this morning and talk about that we

L: could I interrupt for a minute, is it alright if I go because..?

J: Thank you very much

L: D knows more about the bench

D: See you

J: you can take an article with you, thankyou

S: I’ve got to go as well

D: okay, thanks S

J Thank you very much

S: possibly another (J: they’re for you) thank you possibly another (it’s a sweetener - gives multi-coloured paper clips) thank you very much

D: there’ll be a couple more sessions down the track but we’ll get plenty of warning and we can respond yes or no if we can or can’t

S: I responded

D: I know, good on you

L: okay

D: see you mate, see you... (L and S exit) um benchkit benchkit is a kit that will help us focus on making sure we’re doing absolutely everything correctly in terms of bringing these people out eg accommodation, tax file number, application form um we put them up for a certain time until they’re able to find their own accommodation (cough) potentially do they want to be put in contact with the VCA Victorian Cricket Association for example all of
those points have to be listed (right) and dealt with properly and and we may in future even outsource that function (um um)

J: Bench means like a standard or a  

D: bench is inhouse jargon for bringing we refer to the bench as a way of bringing people out to Australia where we make a commitment to bring them to Australia without a specific role in mind but have them immediately available because (oh) they’re in a desirable area for example again (benchmark) no no it would mean go to our sporting (it just means) it means sitting on the bench waiting

J: it means waiting waiting room is it? ah...

D: but we have to have good reason to put them in the waiting room or on the bench you don’t get to play the game straight away but you’re there we know you’re there (right) so we’ve got to get all of those little details together to make sure it’s smooth and professional (uh huh)

J: Is that from cricket as well? I could put a whole little section on sporting metaphors

D: Well, you know sport mirrors life

J: yeah yeah it’s a game (D: it’s a game) and it’s very competitive

D: People that in the other areas that I work people that have pursued sports or or hobbies with great gusto like your music and bands and stuff like that invariably are people that do well in the industry so it’s not only does it become part of parlance but it is part of something to keep an eye out for that people have got something going for them

J: because they’re learning or they would have learnt team skills more rounded, a bit more balance?

D: exactly it’s a, it’s a yeah most definitely most definitely (yeah..yeah) okay
CANDIDATES 7 & 8
Present: Moderator: Judith
Volunteers: D., L., Bel

(caffe lattes and mini-Xmas puddings provided)

EXTRACT VIDEO INTERVIEW – K

J: (prompt) I find it difficult...

D: No, it’s difficult to understand (J: um) this is Mr K not to be confused with Jean Crouper (?) who’s one of the world’s best drummers (J: right) but anyhow (laughter) it’s important to know these things Benny Goodman band (J: oh right, yeah) now he’s unusual because generally the ones that are hard to understand, speak too quickly. He’s not speaking too quickly (L: Noo) His enunciation is the problem, he’s running one word into the other in a sort of homogeneous mix but doesn’t give enough colour and allow us to distinguish what the words are, the inflections and so on are all a bit funny and different and I find him very hard to understand and I think he’d be very frustrating for a client and I, he might with appropriate schooling in India but I wouldn’t want to do anything, God sit back and be judgemental in two minutes.

J: but that’s your job yeah?

D: but we have to, my feeling is that I’m not all that inspired (J: um) by the way he just runs his words into everything

L: I think his presentation is not that crash hot either you know

D: when you say presentation, what do you mean?

L: He’s not wearing a tie

D: No, he’s not, and where’s he being interviewed?

L: In India (laughter)

D: a million degrees ad what do you think T said to him
J: Don’t worry about wearing a tie

D: I’m giving her a hard time. I’m being unfair but don’t judge by our standards sitting here it depends on what was said to him over there and I’ve got a feeling because most of them sit there with clean white shirts and I don’t have problems when they sit doing that because when they come here they always got the smart jackets. Indians very rarely are badly presented.

L: You reckon?

J: L., earlier...

L: sorry, they wear, I mean I’ve met some Indians who wear bright purple ties with blue shirts with green stripes in it and brown jacket you know

D: well that makes them at home in the IT market with all the rest of the dickheads. Well, you’re right but I’m not talking about taste, I’m talking about being well-presented um but I well you know I find but with their reefer jackets and and look smart not necessarily the taste I would like but I’m not damning them for taste as much as if they didn’t wear a tie and didn’t try to be smart and didn’t have clean shoes and didn’t have the rest of it I mean if they looked for example Sri was an interesting one who we’ve just placed last week. She’s uh a professional lady but she’s wearing not a sari whatever it’s called, looked beautiful, looks elegant but I said not to the interview, I think in the workplace that’s great, because that’s you, that’s, that’s your culture but we’re trying to create impressions so she was so worldly to say “Yeah, I hear you, no worries”

J: Uh huh

D: So she wasn’t at all offended so you know

J: (to L.) about 3 sessions ago you brought up the thing about the pen in the pocket. Is that a problem for you because I know that in Asia, you know I lived in China, I taught in China but so that’s a mark of professionalism where the mark of a professional, the guy who wears a pen in the pocket (L. Do they?) but you actually brought that up, yeah, so how does that, you know, how does that appear to you?

D: that’s cultures colliding I think, well if someone has a string of pens across here (um huh) I’d like to know where they’re doing the software development because it’s almost you know if that’s your propellor do you know what I mean, it’s almost like the lab coat
(laughter) it says something about the person if we saw the one pen and it had a Mont Blanc top on it (J: umm) you’d say that person is in management you know or aspiring to management (J: yeah, yeah)

J: and it is a sign in China definitly that this guy is a manager they have the pen in the pocket (D: good pen?) they might be all wearing blue uniform but the pen in the pocket marked them off

D: Does I matter which pen?

J: No, because what..this is ten years ago, it’s changed now, probably they would be into Mont Blanc’s

D: Yeah I would imagine so (J:yeah) With this guy, a pen in the pocket (sigh) I probably not want to see like L., it’s a cleaner presentation about having pens n’stuff it’s as if (J: but what does it mean to you?) it means they’ve dropped in from whatever else they’ve been doing on the way for the interview whereas we think if they’re going for an interview that should be their total focus. You prepare with that sort of thinking

L: You know I mean, I just don’t think professional. I’m not like I mean wanting 5 minutes or 5 seconds he might have an understanding

J: Well, as a non-professional, he didn’t grab your interest at all, he didn’t make eye-contact, he wasn’t talking in a colourful way. There’s no colour, there’s nothing to grab you (L: yeah)

D: actually you make a relevant point. The eye contact wasn’t very solid either with T. The ones you have faith in tend to look you right in the eye and say “this is why I’ve done it”, they could be bullshitting but they look you in the eye and you tend to want to believe them rather than someone who talks to you over there “Hey, I’m over here”

J: Shall we see if he warms up?

D: do give him another quarter of a minute (J: chuckle)

Extract video interview – K

(T: where does that test plan come from...?)
J: Enough of him?

D: I could, I'm starting to worry that I'm getting a bit T-like but as you get exposed to a lot of Indians you then starting to understand things that others don't understand and you then (J: you begin to discriminate) and then (J: between them rather not discriminate) again understand where you didn't beforehand than when you make a judgement about their level of communication you're coming from a biased view because you're speaking to a lot of them and when the client speaks to them they don't speak to a lot of them "You said he was easy to understand but..." you know?

L: I've written down it could be difficult for the client to understand

D: Well, T's certainly worried about that himself. T is our man in Bangalore not that he does see a few Indians

J: yeah, how many would he see a day?

D: oh shit, I don't know, you should ring him up

J: yeah I've emailed him yeah I'll follow that up but uh it looks like a queue

D: We have got we've got extremely high expectations on a number of people we're bringing next year from India it could be I'd say Australia wide we'd be looking at 8-10 a month so you know it's a lot of people we've got to get the process right (J: Mm)

L: It's always a lot of trouble though

(Bell returns)

D: alright who else have we got?

J: onto the next one um the next one's name is R

D: R, yep?

J: R.A.J.E.S.H

D: common name
J: (while inserting the next video) Oh I met an Indian yesterday, an Indian academic from La Trobe and he's looked through all the names. He told me who is a Southerner and who is a Northerner

D: They can tell immediately, whether they're from Madras

J: They're mostly Southerners

D: Well, yes they are and I think we see a lot from Chennai and ...well Chennai is Madras isn't it? Isn't Chennai now the new name of Madras?

J: Yeess Bombay is Mumbai or something

D: It's gone back to its old traditional name. Is that a tautology? No? Must be... You drink that coffee (to L.)

L: do you know that coffee makes you hungrier?

Extract video interview – R

D: Could I have a bit of volume? I heard 'database'

L: oh yeah

D: Can we stop it for a moment? I'm aware how much I dominate so I don't want to...

J: no, that's not a problem

D: No, no I know it's not a problem but what do you think?

L: I can hear the COBOL and the IMS

D: I'll give you my opinion, don't worry about that (laughter) What else about him? Stack him up against the last guy

B. He's sitting over to the side isn't he? I think that's important

L: But I reckon it's hard because T. might have kind of say “Sit here” or you know what I mean?
D: No, no, No that’s I don’t think it’s a matter so much of will be because of the camera but his body language is very very different um but he’s open, his body is open, he’s trying to be convincing and he’s talking with some passion about what he’s doing and that’s much more saleable and much more believable but his language is still a problem um I would feel I would rather put more time in that one than the previous one because this one he hit a couple of technology things I might have been interested in. He was convincing, his hand movements were, he was using them without going overboard uh so I think he was more of a ready product than I think it would just be a matter of saying to him slow down your speech, just separate the words the other one, you’d have to go through a greater educational process I feel but that again would have to happen at T’s end and say T. just get him to go again and ask him to speak more slowly and see if we can do anything and if we can do anything it would be great but...that’s my feeling

J: right...(to Bel.) just to pick up on that point where you said where he’s placed, where he’s seated um from the beginning somebody was sitting in the corner, some of them sitting in the middle and it does form a particular impression (um) yeah in this case a bit off balance or something (yeah) too far to the right or too far to the left.

D: You’ve got to be fair though, you’ve got to be fair. T. could have said to “Please sit here” because of the camera

B: That’s true I always look at that even when someone comes in here where they sit

D: so when you form your judgement (L: and what you, what you...) even though it should be based on something else you still make a judgement

B: if you go into yeah, it’s actually quite important when you at Uni, we did study on it in a classroom

D: but if this person and the camera is focused on this that’s where you sit

J: It’s called proxemics, proxemics

L: What does it say about them?

J: It says a lot – look D. to my right dominant (laughter) I mean and me dominant the way we’re sitting
D: But I don’t give a bugger really (laughter)

B: But people do though

D: No, I’m sorry, yes, you’re right do you know what I always try to position myself so it’s not an us and them, I always, this back from the teaching days of parent-teacher interviews. I refuse to sit on the other side of the desk because all it was here they are, they’re speaking to their maths teacher they used to hate maths, here we go again so I sit on the other side go round and see all the names probably sitting out there with them and left makes them feel uncomfortable to start off with but it sends a message “Hey, I’m trying to be equal with you, I’m not trying to challenge”

J: but that ‘s just what’s happened here you see, we’re all facing each other so we’ve created an equal (um, um) dynamic

D: If I’d sat over there that would have been, that would have been ‘us versus you’

J: That’s right (yeah)

D: yep, most definitely

L: in this style working together (J: collaborative)

B: I always, when I introduce someone, I always say “After you” where they are sitting

D: No that is that does but with this that’s the other point I’m making

L: Yeah, yeah

D: and I agree with you totally and how their body and how they go whether they take their jacket off “Do you mind if I take my jacket off” , all those little things it tells you a lot about people

B: whether they cross their legs

L: yeah I agree with you there where some people they kind of come in the guys you know, put a leg up here and they...
B: facing you or facing away from you?

J: is that a bad impression?

L: I just think they seem more relaxed. I think that

J: not too casual? Is that a bad impression?

B: they’re not really interested in the interview, they’re not or they’re a little bit anxious

D: but with the girl she’s wearing a dress, she doesn’t want to flash what she’s got, so you’ve got to yeah, yeah, yeah I don’t know but the hands

B: see when I’m in an interview I’m always looking

D: yeah, that’s right (sigh) but it’s passion and colour and involvement

B: personality rather than

J: these 2 books that I’ve just got out of the library, they’re the most recent publications on getting a job in Australia, one’s Melbourne ’98, they talk a lot about ‘likeability’ for ‘fit’ you know, they do mention ‘fit’ (D: oh (shows surprise)) and they mention this word a lot ‘likeability’ um because that does mean anything to you? ‘likeability’?

D: Oh, I think that’s spot on

J: What does it mean? (D: ‘likeability’) ‘Likeability’?

D: to me it means the client no, but it’s a broader term than just being a nice person um it’s almost giving the client a reason for wanting to have you and you’ve got to make the environment’s got to be conducive to the client wanting to think that way so you’ve got to work on a lot of little things to make sure that comes about

J: so...

B: so if think about ‘likeability’
L: like um you might have a job or something and they want 2 years experience for example and somebody has one years’ experience they’ve really got a great personality um you can sell their skills whereas their personality to their client to make their

D: but L. you talk to the clients and I’m sorry L. doesn’t get as much opportunity as say I do and Bel. but the clients even say to us the technology is secondary for example software specialist for example um they will say “look it’s the person we want, we’ll even fly them to the state to give them more training” if we think they’re a good person so um this so-called ‘likeability factor’, I think is essential, absolutely essential

B: if I’m in an interview with someone and I get along with them (J: um) even if you get along with them you know the client well enough you think okay that’s a stage suitable for the client but if I see someone

D: I think that is, I think is right though (so that…) you have to feel comfortable so the client is going to feel comfortable

J: but what that’s saying though is that they to some extent have to mirror the views, your values, the recruiter’s values

D: yeah

B: it happens all the time

D: but we manufacture ourselves to have the appropriate values in the first place, it’s not as if we are just, we’re not stacking our own little biases ours are very commercially focused

J: (yeah) and in academic terms, we talk about ‘multiple identities’ you know you have your corporate identity and your professional identity

D: that’s right, that’s why I’m polite to these two at the moment (laughter…) I’m not always polite

B: no (L: no)

D: slit my throat (laughter)

B: I guess…
D: the cold reception is 'yes'

J: well, I know what teachers are like (laughter) I'm a high school teacher too

D: who's a teacher? Who's a teacher?

J: you're a teacher, ex-teacher

D: EX-teacher, that's right

L: you're still a teacher (laughter)

B: but at university we did a ( ) on discrimination and there were just a few recruiters there and this is an awkward I'd rather not repeat we discriminate every day which is terrible thing to say but it's true and it happens and we're the first party between the candidate and the client (J: um) and we're the ones that basically make the choice instead of the

D: We're paid to discriminate

B: that's right BUT

D: unfairly discriminating is it discriminating on poor grounds is it straight discrimination on sex or race?

J: there are two meanings of discrimination: fine judgement and unfair judgement. You're talking about fine judgement yeah and you're trying to reflect what you think the client

B: the client but we could be wrong

D: course we would

B: you never know if that person and that client without us in between just get along

B: but that's a measure of our skill, isn't it?

J: Do you meet the client? Do you talk a lot with them, so you have...?
D: I don’t know. I’m sorry, I am the teacher now. I don’t know how we can do our job without doing that regularly, how can you dare to understand what the client wants unless constantly understand what they’re about

J: you pick up their values and their...

D: we have clients that we know we can’t some of these people to

B: yeah and that’s exactly

D: and then cos it is

B: that’s what I’m saying

D: well you can get on the white charger and take the client to task uh

B: but you won’t make a sale

D: that’s right so you’ve got to understand those realities um and even Melbourne versus Sydney attitudes are a little bit different too

J: How are they different?

D: well (SIGH) Melbourne is more conservative um Sydney don’t really give much of a bugger where you’re from, what you’ve done or anything but MELbourne there are pockets where there are I’d say from the account manager’s hesitation to send certain sorts of people from certain sorts of backgrounds I would even say sexist in certain situations which is really you know, not only is it morally wrong, it is legally wrong

B: yeah exactly

D: in terms of to think that way that we know what or strike rate is going to be in certain areas by certain representations and we just have to be worldly um there’s no way I’d ever say to a candidate I’m not going to put you forward because (B: no) you just don’t do that but you know what their chances of success would be and it’s not up to us to rearrange the values of the client although we will um put a bit of effort into letting them know they’re letting go some good resources here they do look at it differently but it’s a very fine line
B: it happens every day I think like with another agency that I worked at they, we had a call from a client and they actually said "We want an Anglo-Saxon...males. Do not send any other resume. I don't care if they have the skills"

J: oh well, that's that is discrimination yeah? Equal opportunity

B: but as head of the agency you can't say do you know that that's actually, legally you can't say that because you want a sale because I kicked up a big fuss about it and the account manager I was working for turned around and said "I want the sale so just find the right person"

J: which brings up the topic why are there no women here? Um I mean, why are there no females?

D: where?

J: information technologists in the videotapes are there? I haven't seen any so far

D: oh

J: I mean there are probably more constraints for women applying for jobs in the first place because you know they're going overseas leaving their families, lot of, I don't want to be discriminating here myself here but you know the social values are more conservative for women on their own to go to another country

D: well, we've yeah the number of women we've brought over that have been say Indian women have been generally with husbands um not by themselves and that is not discrimination against women it is just a straight cultural thing about women in their culture but in terms of how good they are um I brought V. came over with Sri only because I wanted Sri, Sri's the female you haven't seen these, she's fantastic, she's fantastic great forward personality I mean someone referred to her as "wearing the pants in the relationship" you know because she's got a more dominant but very good, very intelligent lady and she's a very saleable person. She was sold in the first couple of days um but we've S's wife who is coming and she's a BA of six years' experience I mean when we see that they're Indian and they're female doesn't make any difference I mean to me the professional Indian contractors as long as they have the experience, the English skills and so on, we'll find a slot for them and um there might be some bigoted sections that we know we can't do much with them but that's bad luck to them mainly they miss
out on a good resource there are still the places like Telstra and actively all welcome the skill without any thought of discriminating so that we know there plenty of good sites out there for these professionals (J: um, um)

J: well, that’s that’s an important point

D: but there are some avenues closed off (J: yeah, yeah)

J: well, you know the Karpin report which was a few years ago which was criticising Australian managers because the future is diversity, you know harnessing this diversity, diverse workforce make a better workforce

D: I think it’s natural selection these people not get the right people in and then they will cut themselves out of the market and that’s nature getting rid of the dickheads (laughter)

J: You have a Darwinian view

D: I certainly do, I certainly do

J: Okay, just quickly, I’ll just show a little bit more, time for a bit more and then we’re finished

Video extract continued

D: yeah, it’s a contradiction, he’s open and he’s closed. He’s sitting up the other end of the couch. Yes, he’s been told to sit, it’s not his nature. He’s a friendly bloke..comb his hair though seeing he’s got some, oh shit...hopeless (J: um...?) can’t understand him “objects” can we stop a moment? I think I think it’s vital that we bring home to T. what we’re, that these people are going to be gauged on their speech when they speak now he’s speaking to T. and T. understands him but we’ve really got to bring home we want to know how good they’re going to be able to communicate, how well they’re going to communicate with with the client and that guy could be okay bit I can’t get a handle on it so it’s almost the too hard basket you know what I mean? It looks like a good guy, skills could be right, can’t understand him, the too hard basket (J: uh huh)

B: See, I haven’t said that, I’ve said that if his speech was improved enough it’s only a matter of saying (D: giving feedback to T.) yeah slow down and doing the interview again I think he’d be alright after that because I actually prefer him to the other one
D: He's streets ahead

B: I understood the other one a lot clearer but um thinks it was a lot better

D: You warm to this one more or don't you? Yeah, yeah

J: Just one last comment um I just want to get your response to this Indian academic I was talking to, I mentioned how uh I summarised your comments right for each interviewed people and the thing that keeps coming up is how earnest and serious they are and he said that's because they um in India you know, the hierarchy is so much more formal and in some ways quite rigid.

D: you're talking about caste

J: yes, the caste system and um for them to be considered to be professionals that's how they present themselves as being very serious however it does not translate well to the Australian culture because Australian culture more, bit more relaxed, bit more open

B: But I think it's also the way they're interviewed because they're not interviewed, they're interviewed more for technical interviews, they're not asked so much

J: true

L: you know, "What are your interests"?

B: they're not asked that do they do come across as very serious

D: that's an interesting point, a very interesting point because you talk about these books and 'likeability' and it's important to us and we know they're Indian and we know they're going to be serious and there's not much room for humour and sit down "gee, did we kick your arse last week at Madras"? You know, it's the last test which shows (J: laughs) because the very first thing I mention is Dorker? You think I can talk like that but if we help T. to give him that feedback, to let him know that this is we want to see the person as well as the skills, that may make these more palatable what we're looking at it'd certainly help this end because it would come as a shock to them because it's not their way. They're thinking " you don't have interest in me as a person, it's just I can deliver my person and skills" where here in
Australia we want the person, the client wants to know that this person is going to be able to talk to their clients

J: There are dual functions that T..(D: yep) T’s only concentrating on one function as the judgement

D: he’s being very analytical and clinical about judging about what he’s needing

J: I guess he’s trying to keep it neutral, is he? Trying to keep a level playing field between all of them by doing that?

D: Nuhm nuh see this is the beauty of the initial enterprise. He wants the ones that we can sell off (J: laughter) so whatever feeds into that (J: yeah) is what’s there, there’s no fairness or it’s do whatever you can to make them agreeable to us so we can indeed sell them that’s the beauty of the commercial business, you don’t get lost in things like fairness

J: okay, well that’s it, thank you very much, can we um um do this again the final session in January, the 16th, that’s a Friday and there’s just two more and that’s it, I’ll have a total of ten... which is enough data

B: Yes, that should be alright

J: Oh that’s alright... (laughter) I’ll take it (to David) can you stay one sec? I know you’ve got to leave at ten.

B: thanks for that

J: I’ll just flash that in front of you, that’s a paper that I’ve written already just to show you know that there’s something coming out of this and I’ll be able to give it to you later you know, when I’m happy with it – it’s just a draft

B: yep, okay have a merry Xmas

J: you too, enjoy the day

B: and have a good New Year too

J: thanks
D: okay, catch you later

J: uh, yep

D: I’m not obviously going to have time to read much of this

J: no, don’t worry about it

D: Is there anything in particular that you wanted to bring to my attention?

J: uh, no just to show that uh um I that’s just an overview that is already being, end up being 100,000 words, a paper I gave a couple of weeks ago

D: How was it received?

J: GOOD everyone was very interested and found it fascinating... and as you said very topical

D: oh yeah, I might, I might um

J: just that uh ...internet address for the Y2K thing, I mean that’s not to do with the Indian Information Technologists per se

D: but, what’s this?

J: um on the um Radio National the other day, they were talking about Y2K

D: you talking about the government...no

J: just to follow up, you never know

D: I might have a look

J: yeah, I think it’s worth have a look

D: that’s um Graeme Inchley

J: um no there was another guy they mentioned but um
D: Graeme Inchley’s heading up the Federal stuff – is this State or Federal, this one?

J: not sure

D: he’s a teacher by the way, Graeme Inchley

J: yeah, I know you mentioned him before but this one was another one Morris, somebody Morris

D: probably another ex-teacher

J: yeah right, we’re multi-skilled you see

D: oh I’ve no problems about that, my next assignment is thinking how I get these people in the industry

J: What’s your industry?

D: PLACEment

J: which people, the teachers, oh right

D: see teachers where where teachers have technical experience not some of the more boring computer science teachers (J: yeah) some of them have embraced technology yet have all the people skill s (J: um) so, anyhow

J: I can’t leave that with you, sorry and that’s an article that Salim Lakha wrote and he’s on the list that I gave you if you want a copy or I can give it to you next time but that was written almost ten years ago and just showing the economic labour market dynamic behind all of this and he is just about to update it

D: fascinating, I’m just reading “under coercive conditions, colonial plantations in the tropics” so what you’re saying is the thrust what’s changed

J: NO, no, no (laughs) (D: is that the thrust? What’s changed?) um well

D: it’s like you know all the Indians we rolled out to like Africa you know when all the Indians went over there to the railways and stuff
J: yeah, yeah no it's only a tiny fragment of it. He told me it's Indians exploit Indians that in the United States (D: it's Europeans exploit Indians and Indians exploit Indians) he said, it's um in the United States, it's not the US people recruiting Indians, it's Indians recruiting Indians for multinational companies and he said that they're the worst exploiters, you know

D: but um are they exploiting?

J: Yes

D: oh well, they all deserve to be bashed on the head then see is the thing you don't need to exploit, you just need to be fair, you just need to be fair and then you get the return uh the it's the long term and the short term. If you approach these people and put them and give them a fair package and explain what's going on, you will still do well out of it (J: umm) but if you, if you go in for the quick kill some of these people (J: I agree) $12 an hour or something (J: um) and they're being billed out at $80 an hour they realize what's going on and they end up pulling the pin in six months or nine months or whatever " oh well, we've got return from them um you do tremendous damage to the country, damage to the name of the company maybe you don't worry about that but we do (J: um) because we're the largest one and we're going to protect it (J: um) but you know it's just nice that it's morally right too as far as I'm concerned. It's nice when they come together
TRANSCRIPT: Focus Group Interview 5 15/1/99

Candidates 9 & 10

Present: Moderator: Judith
Volunteers: B and Dam

Extract video interview – RK

J: I’ll just stop that for a sec uh any comments?

D: um he’s quite relaxed which is good um his communication is not too bad, pretty straightforward I think that’s pretty good um and tiptoe around questions a bit very straightforward “no, I don’t have this” like that “that is what I’ve done” so that’s good um he’s very straightforward in that sense which is something which is a bit of a variable

J: yeah

D: when we do see Indians

B: that’s right they often do that

J: they often take a long time to answer the question

B: they often can do everything when they actually can’t, bit like the Russians (laugh) (J: exaggeration) thought he was pretty he was good in that I agree with that, I can’t make out one word in ten which isn’t much but I don’t know if that is because of the sound quality (yeah) or if it’s just he’s unintelligible. You can hear ‘DB 2’ every now and then

J: yeah that’s right

D: he’s not too bad I can understand him reasonably well

J: and he’s positioned a bit away from the um the speaker so he um you lose some of it, the lips

B: he doesn’t have too dramatic noddy head thing (D: yeah) there’s bit there but he’s not enough that would I think worry a client here because that does bother clients you know if the head’s going like crazy all the time

J: and what about the colour, did you notice straight away how much darker he was?

B: he’s very dark (yeah)

J: would that be problem do you think, frankly speaking?

D: no

B: no, I don’t see why it should
J: cos at the beginning he seemed very nervous, a little bit insecure because aggressive (uh huh) with maybe just that totally initial bit where he was sort of GLARING at T

B: I didn’t pick that up at all okay I thought his body language was quite good, a lot of eye contact, he’s animated enough. He’s not like sitting there like a wooden dummy so he’s quite relaxed about the process and I thought that was quite important

J: Did you hear him say when T asked him a question ‘Have you had something experience?’ His behaviour ‘NO’!

D: yeah that’s what I referred to before (J: oh right) when I said you know he asked him “Do you have this?” and said straight out “No” which I think is a pretty good comment um

J: but he also...yeah I understand your point but he’s being very direct and looking but also a little bit abrupt?

D: um but that wouldn’t worry me in an interview, that wouldn’t worry me

B: He didn’t come across to me that way to be honest

D: no that wouldn’t worry me (J: okay)

B: I guess it comes back to whether you actually prefer them to care about (D: yeah, exactly) what they do

J: what would be your first impression when you saw him um ‘yes’... or ... ‘no’?

B: yes (J: potential candidate) I wouldn’t, I mean

D: potential candidate ‘yes’

B: apart from the fact that I couldn’t understand him I think it has as much to do with the sound quality but um

J: see these interviews all took place last year, a year ago (yeah) and at the time none of them were selected (B: um) (D: yeah) but by the same token very few people were selected it was usually very exceptional ones, one or two go to Sydney (B: Um )

D: what about technical stuff do you want to know about technical n’ stuff or are you not

J: no, no that’s a given a given yeah I’m looking at the notion of cultural fit, what does cultural fit mean?

D: no no I, I think he’d probably (B: yeah) probably cut

B: I wondered too whether our exposure more to the program and to the people like I remember the initial videos that we saw I mean apart from the fact that they were very poor quality but we were probably almost critical of them because their heads were going like crazy and all the rest of it. I think we’ve actually as a group been exposed to a lot more as well so maybe there’s a bit more flexing in what we may present to a client now versus 12 months ago
J: why’s that?

B: just with our own exposure

J: right but how do you persuade the employer that don’t have that same amount of exposure?

B: well I think you don’t have to because these are all like mainframe people so Dam., answer that question (laughs)

J: yes, you are the mediator

B: that’s right that’s right you can sell anything if you believe in it, you can sell anything

J: so when you say headnodding not a problem?

B: well okay going through, it’s part of conditioning of the client too I mean I had a recent experience where I’ve had to sell an overtly very gay guy, incredibly talented he’s very overtly gay into a very very conservative work environment and I did that very successfully. They’re actually very pleased

J: but how did you do that?

B: I guess I went through a process of educating them that I actually had to look pass that I had to pass that skills and everything that he had done and um

D um and the environment’s right, people screaming for people, prepared to be a bit more and loosen the criteria they use and the qualifications

B: absolutely

J: right so far the others you’ve been saying like headnodding a no, no (B: yeah) so...

B: it is but actually I think Dam. raises a very good point because an article in The Age yesterday for example that um there’s this huge brain drain happening in Australia getting our resources being taken elsewhere. They’re being paid more very very attractive packages happening overseas you know the whole bit so I think you know you’ll find there’s got to be a re-education of our clients that they have to perhaps flex a little bit more in terms of who they bring on board

J: so that’s market forces determining their flexibility

D: too the main client I’ve looked at these for these ex government there’s a huge environment and they don’t need everybody just only the plodders you know who can get in there and plod along um (J: right)

B: so the environment in it has to be right for them and accommodating of them

J: so there’s a there’s a wider repertoire could be acceptable

B: I think that is happening
J: oh that’s interesting, well, that is a shift (B: market forces, no question yeah) um show a little bit more?

D: yep

Video extract continued

J: very strong, strong presentation (D: yeah)...extract continued...that’s probably enough yeah usually D. I’ve noticed they don’t watch the whole thing, just snippets (B: uh huh)

B: I still can’t understand a bloody word they say (laughter)

J: I’ve got that one in every transcript — “can’t understand a bloody word” (laughter)

D: I don’t find that one too bad actually

J: his name is Kannan by the way KANNAN double n...an where did you pick that up?

D: the card at the start (J: oh yeah, you’re quick)

J: so I’ll move on to the next one (D: uh huh) and the next one is um, oh, did you want to make any more comments about him?

B: yes

D: how much do you need for us to put on? (filling out video assessment sheet)

J: just as much as you normally do, whatever comes naturally...basically say whether you’d select him or not if the right job is available... (B & D writing)

D: okay, that’s it

J: thank you... so far you know previously these were rejected but when we’ve been looking at them again

D: I’d say these guys are better quality than the guys we’re getting through recently

J: oh really? okay well that’s what people have been saying that they would all you know of the eight that I’ve done like six get a ‘yes’ (D: um) so it seems like um it’s a bit hard to interpret it the first time they were rejected straight out, the second time well ‘yes’ if there’s the right employer (D: um) the ones who get rejected outright it’s because of the headnoodling and the English is really incomprehensible

B: because then again we’ve had more exposure in our...to them (J: yeah) flexing more and there’s the market forces issue

J: yeah that’s an important point...um okay

Extract video interview - PR
J: it’s a...what do you think?

D: definitely

J: yes? really?

D: yeah very handsome fellow

B: um handsome? (laughter) is that a criteria?

D: no confident, no it’s not a criteria (J: yeah) just um I don’t know young, competent (J: uh huh) you know just the way he sat forward

B: seem like eager body language

J: (to B) what did you think?

B: actually similar, I wouldn’t describe him as handsome though (loud laughter) yeah I thought he seemed energetic in the interview, he was leaning forward, he was listening, he wasn’t over talking which a lot of them do (J: yeah talking over the top) that’s right (not allowing them to get in) that’s right, he listened and answered again that eye contact was very good he seemed to be looking at the interviewer (J: yeah)

D: it doesn’t matter, um sorry talk about talking right over the top of you there, doesn’t matter whether it’s Indian or English or you know Australian or Yank or whatever I I generally know within the first five minutes of when I do an interview whether I think they’re appropriate

J: so your instinct says ‘yes’

D: yeah

J: I thought his English though wasn’t as good you know he didn’t seem to be as fluent, he was a bit weaker uh quite apart from the you know talking fast I just thought his expression

B: yeah because yes it was interesting (D: yeah) talking in the third person quite a bit he said ‘what do you do (D: do in the project) project ‘we are doing this’ you know

J: Oh they all do that (B: yeah)

B: the other guy didn’t do that it was ‘I’ so his English his command of English I think was better

J: acculturation no doubt (B & D: um, um)

extract video continued

D: I don’t think technically he’s as strong as the other guys (J: uh huh) but I think he he’d fit in probably just as well as any of them
J: yeah can you sort of summarise why you think he'd fit in?

D: um I found him easier to understand than the previous two. Uh he spoke much slower than the others, no doubt about that, whether that was just his command of English isn't as good I'm not sure but I thought he's was a lot easier to understand

B: He was a little bit strident but I don't know whether that's the sound or whether that's him

D: I didn't have any trouble understanding him um yeah just um I don't know young fresh-faced (J: um huh) yeah looked like he'd be eager to get into it yeah like I say I'm not too sure how strong he would be technically but in terms of just the other things I think he'd be good

J: What about you? (to B)

B: probably similar thing you know I was just focused on the technical side of it you know, a bit of trouble understanding them anyway but the um I thought yeah I think was a reasonably impressive sort of candidate um

D: um I mean just the presentation compared to the other two that went before is a lot better a nice crisp shirt (J: right) and pants I thought he looked well-presented (J: right is this okay (pointing to sleeves rolled up) oh that's fine (J: especially in India) I imagine it's stinking hot so yeah but you can still tell the difference between say three people who've got their sleeves rolled up yeah in the rest of the way he presented and I thought he looked as though he presented well

B: then again as we said before you know I think like his body language was eager, leaning forward, listening very carefully um they're all important things

D: you could see he had that piece of paper in his hands but he wasn't too nervous he wasn't really playing with it too much

J: he wasn't shaking (laughs) uh huh

B: and sort of wasn't afraid to smile through it (D: yeah that's right) that's something that was T. must have said something that amused him you know he just had this big beautiful smile on his face (J: I didn't see that, yeah)

J: um right well that just about finishes it but I'll just read you a quote from a recently published book on Secrets to getting a job a script for your next job interview it's Melbourne last year and it's by a recruiter and he says oh he's coaching a young Indian man and I was explaining about the small talk he said:

"I think Philip it is in this area I have been making a mistake just last week I had an interview and the interviewer asked me if I smoked and I told him that I did not, I also went on to tell him I did not eat meat, I do not eat anything with sugar added I do not eat anything with salt added (B: laughter) I only eat natural products such as brown rice and vegetables (D: laughter). If the interviewer was looking at Kumar and thinking you look different you sound different you will not fit in. Kumar's response was to in effect say yes I look different I sound different in fact I am very different in fact I am probably more different that you ever thought I was (laughter) I almost certainly never will fit in so can I continue by saying you see Philip, I thought the fact that such pious man would impress them. Pious? When was the last time you heard 'pious' in the
conversational you know (D & B: pious) (J: sorry pious I'm a Queenslander that's my excuse) I said Kumar not for you pious from now on pie and sauce I coached him to say that he went to football on Saturday had a BBQ with his family on Sunday (laughter) did he do either of those things did should he have to say he did either of those two things no but if I know that interviewers are looking at Kumar you look different you will not fit in then I have to get Kumar to say I look different I sound different but I underneath I'm no different to you (D: um um) my values are your values so I'd just like to just find out, see what your response is to that I mean, this is pretty up-to-date

D: Yeah look I think that's er (J: exaggeration?) um...no I could imagine a scenario like that happening if it's probably a good one. The most recent chap that D. brought out from India, that came through the office just the other day um M who's our Senior Account Manager um to whom I report to, he just said was making a bit of small talk and this guy was quite good saying you "I believe you bowl leg spin" because D's organising a cricket game here at ? (company name) and he said "oh yes" you know he started talking about cricket and this type of thing which we all appreciate and can um relate to so he was quite good yeah but that's (laughs) I mean small talk is probably is probably one thing we're very different

J: and it shows the degree of acculturation (D: yeah, that's right)

D: that's right there's another I spose exemplified by another chap we've got out here at the moment who we haven't been able to find a job for um he's a very serious fellow and just can't, can't do any of the small talk at all

J: what about this advice about faking it basically? if you don't, if you're vegetarian

B: you see I don't like that

D: no I don't think

B: that's so dishonest

J: well do you have to go that far? It is a valid issue if you want to be accepted

D: I mean that's a bit of uh

B: You can find other points of contact cos we are all the same under. We all complain about the weather, we all love our children you know there is a lot we have in common as cultures you don't necessarily have to focus on all the differences all the time

J: so he's more or less saying you know if you're vegetarian or um pious you you won't be accepted you won't fit in maybe that's underestimating Australians

D: I think so

B: I think it's actually putting Australians in a very very limited box (D: um, uuhh) you know I think Australians are a little more sophisticated than that I mean if I went and hired someone who sold that to me you know meat pie and sauce and BBQ the weekend and footy person and I hired that person and found out later that was not that person at all I'd be very pissed off (D: yeah)
D: I've had people around here that know outside work hours just for the fact that they're all the same (J: yuh, yuh)

J: but you know in the job interview script they always want to know like what are your hobbies to get to see if you're a rounded person or not

D: I mean he got carried away here saying obviously he could have said 'No I'm not a smoker'

J: yes it's almost like the Australian one extreme and the Indian at one extreme (B: um) yeah the reality is something in the middle

B: no, it doesn't sit well with me at all

D: I mean that's very old school recruitment isn't it? Make up anything you want put it on a resume

J: oh really? okay

D: It's not very ethical

B: it's not ethical and actually having it printed so recently (D: yeah) really does surprise me

J: and it's Melbourne, it's Melbourne

B: yeah

D: you wonder where this guy is working (laughter)

J: I gave this reference by Garside um The secrets of getting a job I think D. was going to order it two books Sutcliffe, okay? Well, that's it, that's about it thank you very MUCH.

B: okay

D: do you need these written I didn't do anything on them

J: the other one is Pras if you just put P R A S

D: okay

J: so I've got to write this up

D: and what will be the outcome of this? Well obviously it's part of your doctorate

J: yes it's an academic exercise to do a PhD basically that's the bottom line, then um I do hope to use it to help people because my background is training migrants and I think that at the moment you know all the funding cuts to migrant education, nothing is happening much but I think it will start moving again and I would like to be able to to feed some of the things I've learnt back into migrant education

D: my sister works at the...
J: training teachers where?

D: My sister does that up at Holmes College (J: up at where?) up at Holmes (J: oh yeah)

J: okay

D: she doesn’t think they treat them that well at all

J: no no Holmes you mean, not HG?

D: No Holmes College

J: I taught for a while at HG yeah and they put migrants and international students together which was just appalling because their needs are so different

B: um

J: and also I want to feed this information to Managers as well actually it’s threefold it’s teachers, migrants and managers, maybe try and publish like a summary of it just a guide or something

B: well you know with globalization and the economy we’re going to see a lot more of this but different cultures through our culture

J: yeah

B: I mean it’s very strong in the IT area obviously (J: yeah) um I think that in any business international people

J: it’s expanding, an expanding area

B: I think we’ll become a global market

J: yeah yeah that’s what I see happening I think you know my thesis is actually um you know we all have to widen our cultural repertoire um teachers do, migrants do, the managers do (B: uh huh) That’s it. Thanks very much.

D: beautiful

B: Thanks so much
Appendix 3
In-house Video Assessment Sheets

PhD Thesis by research

A critique of 'cultural fit' in relation to the recruitment of Indian Information Technologists for the Y2K project in Australia

Under supervision of Professor David Birch
Associate Supervisor: Dr Helen Tebble

Judith Booth
Deakin University
Melbourne Campus
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

# 1

Video Number: 1

Presentation:
well presented, very clean and neat.

Communication:
quite good, use of hands to explain good.
doesn't move around too much, focussed upon the interviewer.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
Skills were confirmed at the interview.

Would you present to your client?

yes, I would, thought good candidate with technical skills that would not have problem fitting into a role here in Australia.

Any other comments:

tried to fill in his life in to ten minutes
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 

Presentation: No tie or jacket (I realize it's not)

Communication: He doesn't treat fun which is good so we would seem to be very poor. Very difficult to understand but it is over video. When you watch it in front of someone it's much easier to understand them.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Skills seemed to be confirmed but it was a little hard to understand exactly what he is confirming. I can hear a lot of "data" "analyzing".

Would you present to your client?

Depends on the role. Probably yes, he has good body language techniques.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name:  

Video Number: 1

Presentation: is suitable a jacket and he was to be required in Australia.

Communication: is good body language is relaxed

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Couldn't really understand what his skills are.
Analysing

Would you present to your client?

Depends on who it was and what the role was. If it was a production support role where there is a lot of client contact I would put him forward to a client.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: #1

Video Number: 1

Presentation:
Good
Clean white shirt

Communication:
Acceptable for the typical

Resume skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?
Yes, depending on role.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 2

Presentation: not bad - no tie or jacket

Communication: not clear

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
I think so, couldn’t really understand him, once again.

Would you present to your client?

Probably not - seemed very nervous - sitting at the side of the coach.
Not relaxed and couldn’t understand.

Any other comments:

Body language - classic
Nodded, shook his head.

I think the underlying problem is that we can’t understand the content issues they would offer.
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: #2

Video Number: 2

Presentation:
quite good

Communication:
talks quickly, moves lead, making it quite
difficult to understand initially -
slow to warm up, but then quite good.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
skills were confirmed at interview

Would you present to your client?

YES

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: [Blank]

Video Number: 2

Presentation: Appropriate for the interview, appeared relaxed and would be required in a suit. The score is 5.

Communication: A little reserved in the i/v, non-verbal head movement.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

- Y2K project
- Analysis of SDBC - been involved in the whole process.

Would you present to your client?

Again, it depends on the role. If there is a lot of client contact required, he probably would not be suitable.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 2

Presentation:
Fine, looks good.

Communication:
Reasonable

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?
Possibly, need to strengthen earlier candidate.

Any other comments:
I would need to see him in a few weeks seeing a client.
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation: Excellent

Body language is quite good, understanding and clear pronunciation.

Communication:

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Very broad at interview.

Would you present to your client?

I would present to my client.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 

Presentation: O.K.

Communication: Fine, O.K. on video

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?

Any other comments:

Nervous eye movements. Relaxed. Body language quite O.K.
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation: Very nervous, but good presentation and seemed serious. Was possible.

Communication: Cultural fit good.
Body language relaxed, yet professional
Hand movement and head movement good, not to over the top.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
- Explained things well
- Seems to understand and know what he is talking about
- Although he talked more about what the project did rather than what he did within the rol

Would you present to your client?

Yes

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name:

Presentation: Needs to straighten up. (posture). Relaxed, comfortable style.

Communication: OK - speech was slow enough, but I find his words vote a little too much.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
He talked more about what he did, which is good. (not the team.)

Would you present to your client?
Yes

Any other comments:
Body language good.
- eye contact
- relaxed
- doesn't wave too much or nod his head
Video Assessment Sheet

Name:  
Video Number:  

Presentation:  

- good
- a bit slow
- well presented
- at times

Communication:  

- ok
- too quick
- gets more nervous
- verbal - quite good: is understandable

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

honest in what he was doing

Would you present to your client?

- yes
- if we confirmed skills

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name:  

Video Number:

Presentation:

Communication:  

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?

Any other comments:

[Signature]
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation: Good.

Communication: Oh, it could be difficult for a client to understand. You have to really listen.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?

Depends who it is. You would really want to explain to the client who the candidate is. Really sell the candidate.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name:

Video Number: 1

Presentation: no fill

Communication: his words really ride into one another can't understand what he is saying. Didn't look him in the eye.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client? No, not professional. But still does depend on the job.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation: 

Communication: 

Needs his speech to slow down

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?

Yes, again depending on who it was and the stuff set that he has.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 2

Presentation: OK.

Communication: His language is still a problem. But he was relaxed and more open, better body language.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

I could here the technical skills by COBOL, IMS but didn't really hear what he did with it.

Would you present to your client?

If he slowed down his speech.

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation: Fine.

Communication:
- Relaxed - good
- Strong personality
- Animated - not shy at all.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:
- Very straightforward
- No

Would you present to your client?
- Yes.

Any other comments:
- Explained role well. Didn't 'tip-toe' around questions. Straightforward was refreshing. If I had a role that was a good tech fit I would present.
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 

Presentation:  
Good  Body language  
relaxed  Eye contact good.

Communication:  
Words very unclear.  
Very honest in terms of his skills. 

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:  
Yes.

Would you present to your client?  
Yes.

Any other comments:  

Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Video Number: 

Presentation:

eager - good body language - eye con

Communication:

Voice a bit strident.
Slower voice pace.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

Would you present to your client?

Yes

Any other comments:
Video Assessment Sheet

Name: 

Presentation:

very good/excellent

Communication:

Good. Spoke slowly, very understandable I thought.

Resumes skills confirmed at interview:

weaker than others

Would you present to your client?

Absolutely.

Any other comments:

Eager, well presented, spoke well. Young. Presents as a good opportunity.