

## **A Qualitative Analysis of Rapport and Alignment in Experimenter-Subject Interaction in Ganzfeld Experiments**

### **Results:**

Building on published and anecdotal accounts which suggested that experimenter-subject relationship was important to the outcome of parapsychology experiments, this project used Conversation Analysis to examine participants' discourse in recordings of mentation review phases of ganzfeld experiments conducted at the KPU in Edinburgh.

The research examined robust verbal practices in which one participant displayed a positive or affiliative stance towards the other. For example, linguistic studies of reported speech in other contexts have found that it is a method by which a current speaker can establish their affiliation to the person whose speech is being reported. In the data it was found that reported speech was used to accomplish various interactional functions: it prompted subjects to provide further information about an item; it marked transitions between different phases of the review; and it was a device through which experimenters could tacitly orchestrate clarification or correction by the subject. The analysis also offered a categorisation of subjects' responsiveness, or reciprocity, and examined experimenters' verbal characteristics associated with the preferred high subject reciprocity.

It was found that experimenter's use of acknowledge token (such as 'mm hm') to receipt subject comments were more likely to facilitate high or expanded reciprocity. Experimenter responses such as 'okay' were associated with verbal practices in which the likelihood of subject expansion was minimised. The project also examined instances in which experimenters departed from their institutional role or task to offer encouraging or affiliative utterances. Analysis of these and other topics continues.

### **Published Work:**

#### **Books, journal papers and book chapters**

Wooffitt, R., and Allistone, S. (2008) 'Participation, procedure and accountability: reported speech markers in a parapsychology experiment' *Discourse Studies* 10: 407-427.

Hutchby, I. and Wooffitt, R. (2008) *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications*. Second edition Oxford: Polity Press, pp.260. ISBN: Hb: 978-0-7456-3865-2

Wooffitt, R. (2007) 'Communication and laboratory experience in parapsychology experiments: demand characteristics and the social organization of interaction.' *British Journal of Social Psychology*. 46(3) 477-498.

Allistone, S. and Wooffitt, R. (2007) 'Negotiating consciousness: parapsychology and the social organisation of reports of mental states' in A. Hepburn and S. Wiggins (eds.) *Discursive Research in Practice: New Approaches to Psychology and Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 70-87.

Wooffitt, R. (2006) *"Doubt marked expansion sequences in ganzfeld mentation reviews"* Proceedings of the 49th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association New York: The Parapsychological Association, 259-269.

Wooffitt, R. (2006) 'The interactional basis of subjects' circumspect stance towards their imagery in mentation review stage of ganzfeld experiments' *Proceedings of the 49th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association* New York: The Parapsychological Association,

Wooffitt, R., and Allistone, S. (2005) *"Towards a discursive parapsychology: language and the laboratory study of anomalous communication"*. *Theory and Psychology* 15:3, 325-355.

Wooffitt, R. (2005) *"Language and the study of parapsychological phenomena"* in M. A. Thalbourne and L. Storm (eds.) *Parapsychology in the 21st Century : Essays on the Future of Psychical Research*. North Carolina and London: McFarland, 305-336.

**I have also discussed this work in the following conference presentations:**

*'The interactional basis of subjects' circumspect stance towards their imagery in mentation review stage of ganzfeld experiments* ' Presented at the Parapsychological Association Convention, Stockholm Sweden, 2006,

*'Conversation Analysis and Experimenter-Subject Interaction in Ganzfeld Experiments'* Presented at the 6th Bial Foundation Symposium, 'Behind and Beyond the Brain, Porto, Portugal, March 2006

*'A Conversation Analysis of Experimenter-Subject Interaction in Ganzfeld Experiments'* Poster presented at the 6th Bial Foundation Symposium, 'Behind and Beyond the Brain, Porto, Portugal, March 2006

'Articulating consciousness: the social organisation of reports of mental states in parapsychology experiments.' Invited panel presentation to the 9th International Pragmatics Association Conference, Riva del Garda, Italy, July 2005.

*'Communication, interaction and anomalous experiences.'* Invited presentation to the conference *Developing Perspectives on Anomalous Experience*, Liverpool Hope University, June 4th, 2005.

*'Analysing experimenter-subject interaction in parapsychology experiments: a conversation analytic perspective'* Invited workshop/seminar for MOVIN, the Danish network for scholars of interaction analysis, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark, 25/26th November 2004.

*'Rapport and alignment in parapsychological experiments.'* Invited panel presentation to the International Conference of Critical Psychology, University of Bath, UK, 2003

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