# VERBAL AND NONVERBAL MODALITIES IN FACE-TO--FACE INTERACTION: HOW THEY FUNCTION AS CONVERSATIONAL SIGNALS

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ABSTRACT: From a multimodal point of view, the functions which have generally been attributed to linguistic elements of discourse (known, as a rule, as discourse markers or connectors within the several discourse analytic theories) can also be fulfilled by prosody and nonverbal units. These types of discourse functions, here called interactive conversational signals, a subgroup of the conversational signals, will be analyzed from a multimodal perspective. Thus, after identifying the different units of analysis – i.e. linguistic, non-linguistic, prosodic and nonverbal – a few minutes of a recorded face-to-face interaction between three Portuguese students will be micro-analysed. The micro-analysis consists in the prosodic transcription of the corpus, in the description of the body movements of the interaction partners, as well as in the identification of the verbal and nonverbal units they produce. Finally, considering the coordination between the segmented multimodal units, their conversational (poly) functions will be identified and their pragmatic meanings explained.

*KEYWORDS:* conversation analysis; verbal and nonverbal communication; face to face interaction; multimodality in communication.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper I will micro-analyse a short passage in a face-to-face interaction between three participantes. In this analysis, verbal and nonverbal units will be identified and classified according to the conversational functions they can assume at different levels of interaction. The fact that certain conversational functions can be assumed by both verbal and nonverbal units, and that some of these units can be polissemic or polifunctional will be pointed out. For a better understanding, the theoretical background and the methodology followed in this study will be first described and then applied in the analysis of an example.

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#### 2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background of this investigation is based on principles and categories from Ethnometodological Conversation Analysis (e.g. Sachs; Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), Contextualization Theory (e.g. Gumperz, 1992), Discourse Analysis (e.g. Sinclair & Couthardt, 1975; Roulet et al., 1985) and German Konversationsanalyse (Henne & Rehbock, 1982). These theories allowed me to consider face to face interaction on one side as an activity that is reciprocally and simultaneously constructed by speaker and hearer; on the other side, as a phenomenon comprising different levels: the level of thematic development, the level of the structural relations between units, the level of emotion and modalization and the level of the interpersonal relations between speaker and hearer regarding their interactional roles. Based on these four levels, I developed in Rodrigues (1998, 2007) one group of functional categories: the **conversational signals**. These were defined as linguistic, non-linguistic or nonverbal conversational units, which can have several functions in different domains of pragmatic relations. This classification will be used as the fundamental framework for the present analysis.

In respect to prosody, the theoretical principles of the Interactional Phonology and Interactional Linguistics (cf. Selting & Couper-Kuhlen, 2000) were followed. According to these perspectives, developed from the Contextualization Theory, the prosodic phenomena are important contextualization cues for the codification and decoding of speech. The categories of analysis within these theories were conceived to accede prosody from a pragmatic point of view, so that they are flexible enough to explain prosodic variations caused by different kinds of spontaneous phenomena in the interactional context.

Regarding nonverbal modalities, the results of investigation of different forms and functions of several body movements made in the context of various disciplinary areas were considered. Neither any of the already existing gesture typologies, nor any other classification for nonverbal communication constitute variables for the present analysis. This is due to the fact that, on one side, I wanted to apply the functional framework of the conversational signals, initially developed for verbal signals only, to body movements that accompany speech; on the other side, since the classifications already developed by other investigators for gestures and movements of other body parts do not give account, in a systematic way, to the four different levels of face-to-face interaction (the structural, the thematic, the modal and the interactional). This does not mean that I did not use any of the most common terminology to refer to different gesture types (for instance the iconic, metaphoric, deictic and beats of McNeill, 1992) and the different parts of gesture units (for instance Kendon's gesture phrases and gesture phases, Kendon, 2004).

#### 3. Methodology

The *corpus* – consisting of video registrations of several face-to-face interactions between three students, who were asked to discuss various themes – was submitted to a prosodic transcription, according to the GAT convention (Selting *et al.*, 1998); This was followed by the annotation of nonverbal movements (Kipp, 2004) together with the micro-analysis of the verbal and nonverbal units with a turn-maintaining function. Whenever possible, coordination between movements of different parts of the body of the speaker and its synchronization with the movements made by his interaction partners were taken in account. In this way, the analysis began with the identification of movement/non-movement units and continued in several steps:

- 1. movement units were correlated to simultaneous speech;
- 2. based on the meaning of verbal elements and on the form of body movements, possible semantic correspondences between speech and movements were detected;
- conversational functions of certain elements of speech were identified;
- 4. the existence of possible correspondences between the identified verbal conversational signals and co-verbal movements was verified;
- 5. based on the correlations found between speech and nonverbal units, and always considering the interactional context, other meanings and functions of nonverbal units were described.

In other words, the analysis considered relationships between a) verbal and nonverbal communication regarding function(s) (conversational functions), meaning (if the nonverbal communication reinforces, contradicts, substitutes or completes the verbal communication) and coordination (if nonverbal communication anticipates, is synchronised or delayed in relation to the part of speech they refer to); b) nonverbal communication of different nonverbal modalities, also regarding functions, meaning and coordination; And c) verbal and nonverbal communication of all participants, regarding functions, meaning and coordination with each other.

#### 4. Categories of analysis

Attending to the heterogeneity of the modalities considered in a holistic analysis of face-to-face interaction, it is useful to describe the categories and analysis units in three groups. The first consisting of the categories that allow the segmentation of speech in: parts of words, words, phrases, sentences, etc.. The second group, for prosodic units, belonging to the suprasegmental level, where every variation of intensity, pitch and quantity marks a kind of discontinuity/contrast between two parts of speech and creates a segmentation point. And to the third group belong the nonverbal units, that is, movements of several body parts; as in the case of prosody, every movement change, for instance in respect to form or direction, is an important segmentation cue.

#### 4.1. Units and categories of speech analysis

Conversation units that allowed the segmentation of speech and, in its turn, represent the basis for the classification of conversational signals are:

The turn-taking system: the way the roles of speaker/listener change from one person to the other (Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson, 1974), corresponds to the "*exchange*" of Discourse Analysis theory (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Roulet, 1980).

Turn: defined by Goffman (1974: 201) as what the speaker says and does when it is his turn<sup>1</sup>, corresponds in some way to the "*intervention*" of the Geneva School. "*Intervention*" comprises at the same time the "*move*" (Goffman, 1976:272). This lack of correspondence is due to the fact that within the Geneva school listener activities were not considered *out-of-turn* activities<sup>2</sup>.

Conversational act: this unit seems to correspond to the "*move*". It is more than Searle's "*speech act*" (Searle,1969), because it comprehends not only the illocutive value (from the point of view of the speaker), but also the in-auditive value (from the point of view of the listener, i.e. the effect of speaker's utterance on the listener) (Henne & Rehbock, 1982: 17).

Conversational signals: as already mentioned, the linguistic and nonlinguistic micro-structural elements which help speaker/listener(s) to achieve their communicative purposes in conversation. They can be polisemic and polifunctional, and are described as follows (cf. Rodrigues, 1998, 2007):

Interactive conversational signals: This category is based on the Geneva concept of interactivity (Roulet *et al.*, 1985), which is defined as "*les rela-tions qu'ils* – the acts – *entretiennent les uns avec les autres*" (Spengler, 1980: 128). This type of relations was attributed to the pragmatic connectors, a group of certain words belonging to the morphological classes of the conjunctions and adverbs. In the present investigation, however, the elements forming this group do not build a closed class, but an open one: the interactive function can be attributed to other elements independently of their form or morphological class. The main functions described by Roulet and Spengler have been synthesised in the following four subgroups:

- argumentative conversational signals: they create argumentative relations between conversation units;
- contra-argumentative conversational signals: they create relations of contradiction and opposition between the conversation units;
- evaluative conversational signals: they mark the new unit as a paraphrase, conclusion, resumé or precision.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cit. in Henne, Rehbock, 1982: 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Out-of-turn" activities are those produced by the participant who does not have the turn (Yngve, 1970: 568).

 geographic conversational signals: they localise additive or alternative arguments in conversation, establishing at the same time a thematic link.

**Topographic conversational signals:** Their main function is to structure the turns; their semantic content is reduced but not completely suppressed. According to their capacity of introducing something new at the beginning of a turn or between turns, or to mark the end of preceding themes/turns, we can consider the following subgroups:

- opening signals: due to their focussing properties, they mark the initiation of the turn or the introduction of a new theme during the turn. Re-opening signals introduce a theme already dealt with;
- closing signals: they close a theme or a turn;
- transition signals: they are able to close a theme and at the same time to conduct the listener's attention to what is going to be said. They have simultaneously cataphoric and anaphoric properties. These signals can realise not only a local but also a global articulation of turns or themes<sup>3</sup>.

Both the interactive and the topographic signals have an important role in maintaining the turn: they occur most of the times at TRPs (transitional relevance place)<sup>4</sup> and are found introducing asides, where they realise a kind of framing (Goffman, 1976: 264-265).

**Modal conversational signals**: Using these signals speaker/listeners are able to express their expectations and suppositions regarding the social relations and common knowledge with the other participants, their attitude in relation to the content of the utterances or their wish to influence others' behaviour. Intonation is an essential factor to consider in the analysis of modality.

**Turn-taking signals:** The turn-taking activities, i.e., the activities regarding speaker and listener roles in conversation (the interactional level of conversation) can be resumed into five main groups, three for the speaker and two for the listener. The speaker is the one who has the floor; he performs in-turn activities: he *takes* the turn (with/without interrupting the previous speaker and with /without pre-selection by the last speaker); he *maintains* the turn (with/without running the risk of losing it); he *gives* the turn (or is obliged to give it). The hearer is the one who does not have the floor; he performs out-of-turn activities: he *feeds-back* the turn agreeing disagreeing with the speaker; he *reclaims* the turn.

As already mentioned, the conversational functions described can be achieved by signals of different modalities: linguistic, non-linguistic, prosodic and nonverbal, like head movements, gaze, facial expressions and gestures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> These properties were already appointed by Roulet *et al.* (1985).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> TRP (transitional relevance place) is the moment of a turn which coincides with the end of a sentence and where therefore there is a greater probability for the occurrence of a turn-taking (Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson, 1974: 702 ff.).

## 4.2. Units and categories of prosody analysis

The units considered were:

**Intonational unit** – generally with a primary accent, often with one or more secondary accents and presenting features that distinguish them from other surrounding units. Most of the times, the intonational unit coincides with the conversational act, but not always. That is the reason why these two terms are differently used: whenever a verbal unit is treated under its prosodic point of view, it is referred to as an intonational unit; when this same unit is treated under the perspective of any other conversational function, the term (conversational) act is used.

**Pitch** or variations of pitch in the last syllable of the intonational unit offer very important cues for functional analysis. Different kinds of pitch variation can be detected: an ascending pitch that reaches a high level (?) or a middle high level (,); a descending pitch that reaches a low level (.) or a middle low level (;); and a stable pitch, that is, the maintenance of the same pitch level (-)<sup>-</sup>

Intensity, the prosodic parameter that determines stress.

Recent prosody analysis in face-to-face interaction also proved that a intonational unit cannot be defined as having only one accent: there are cases of **beat-clatches** (Auer & Couper-Kuhlen, 1994: 86; Uhmann, 1997) where accent falls on several successive syllables. This kind of emphasis conveys the utterance a communicative meaning. Other parameters that characterize **emphatic speech** style are extra long or extra low pitch peaks and the impression of a lower speech rate (Selting, 1995: 249).

The parameter **quantity**<sup>5</sup>, that determines the quantity of syllables articulated in a certain unit of time, is responsible for the impression of a lower or higher speech rate. Sounds produced with quick articulatory movements give the impression of a high speech rate. Nevertheless, the impression of speech rate also depends on intensity: Uhmann (1992; 1997) showed that the criteria giving the impression of a higher or lower speech rate are different ways of combining density I (quantity of syllables produced per time unit) and density II (quantity of accentuated syllables per unit of time).

Linked to the impression of speech rate can be found silent pauses (of variable duration), full pauses and sound prolongations that are typical for hesitant speech (e.g. Uhmann, 1992).

Another category considered is **rhythm**. The rhythmic forms are understood as event repetitions at identical perceived distances. The repetition of three events is needed to build a rhythmic pattern that, once installed, creates a scheme of perspectives regarding the allocation of the next event in time (Auer & Couper-Kuhlen, 1994: 85 segs.). Rhythm still has an important role

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Instead of using the term quantity to refer the auditive parameter whose acoustic correlate is duration, I use expressions that, due to their transparency, are generally preferred to refer to prosodic phenomena linked to this parameter: speech rate and syllable elongations.

in the organization of conversation, establishing cohesive relations inside the turn (Couper-Kuhlen, 1983), and in turn-taking, where rhythmic integration and non-integration between two consecutive turns can be very significant (*ibid.*, 97 ff.).

#### 4.3. Units and categories of nonverbal communication analysis

The analysed categories were the movements of the trunk and head, gaze, facial expressions and gestures. As all these body parts have very different features regarding movement shape and direction, it seems quite difficult to find a movement unit that can be equally used in the analysis of all nonverbal modalities. We can say that the trunk is the body part that makes less complex movements: it can only move forwards, backwards and to both sides, according to two axis. Eye movements are a little more complex, because they involve on one side, direction (where you are looking at), on the other side, the position of the eyes in the ocular globe, eye-lid movements and opening grade. Linked to eye movement is eyebrow-raising, here included in the group of facial expressions. Due to technical constraints, the micro-movements of the face were not considered, only the movements of the mouth and eye region. The body parts that are capable of a great variety of movements.

In all these types of nonverbal communication two aspects should be considered: difference/discontinuity/contrast and identity/continuity/fusion. Discontinuity happens in movements with opposing direction: for instance, to the right and then to the left. Continuity, in movements with the same direction: to the left and then again further to the left; or the beginning of a circular movement and the continuity of it. It is also important to consider repeated sequences of contrasting movements (to the right and to the left, or up and down) and of circular movements in the same direction or in different directions, that build rhythmic patterns. Head and arms/hands are the parts of the body that most easily perform these kinds of movements.

To analyse gesture, not only in the different phases of its trajectory, but also as a movement embedded in a sequence of other movements, I recurred, whenever necessary, to the gesture hierarchy of Kendon (1980: 214). In this way, the main unit is the **gesture unit**, composed of gesture phrases (gestures), that can be divided in different phases: preparation, stroke and retraction.

Actually the categories gesture and gesture phase were conceived for ideal cases, because a gesture/gesture sequence is not always as clear as these categories suggest. During its execution, a gesture is subjected to readjustments or interruptions concerning its trajectory or morphological features. Although these discontinuity phenomena can also be found in movements of other body parts, in the case of gestures they are easier to detect: the articulation of hands and arms conveys a great variety of precise and complex movements, so that any change of trajectory or shape is easily seen. Regarding its structuring and organising function, a gesture phrase can be correlated to movements of other body parts (for instance to a head rotation movement to one side, or to a forward movement of the trunk). In my opinion, the notion of *phrase* can also be applied to such cases, or even to the small head-movements that extend from one (more or less static) position to another. In the case of the head movements, the movement phase with more amplitude in one direction coincides with the final phase of the phraseunit. Independently of its amplitude, these movements last often a few thousandths of seconds from its starting to its ending point, both of them more or less stable positions. In the description of movements of other body parts, the expression *movement phrase* will be used, indicating that this unit is hierarchically equivalent to the *gesture phrase*, although this solution does not seem to me very adequate when referring to a bimensional and uniphasic movement.

Whenever there are stops during the trajectory of one uniform movement, limits are difficult to determine. But if the movements are fluid and often change their shape and direction, the frontiers between units are easier to define. The criteria considered are **amplitude** and **trajectory shape**, as well as **immobility** time, contrasting with the movement phase. Thus, in the case of less defined or more complex movements, movement units are limited by the points of the greatest amplitude (that can be minute) of its trajectory. For instance, one nonverbal communication unit of gaze will extend from the moment where the eyes stop looking at one interaction partner/object and start looking at another interaction partner/object or up/down. That is, it corresponds to the changing phase of gaze direction. Another unit is for instance the quantity (in time) of gaze in a certain direction. In this case, we cannot talk about a movement, but about a movement-freezing, in other words, a static unit called **non-movement**.

The same happens with the movements/non-movements of the head: there can be distinguished dynamic units (of changing of direction) and static units (of immobility). The series of shorter movements along the vertical and horizontal axis, often caused by speech articulation activities, are only considered whenever they express a greater emotion of the speaker/listener. Other movements made along the vertical and horizontal axis are head-nods and head-shakes.

## 5. Corpus and software of analysis

The analysed *corpus* consists of a segment of a face-to-face interaction between three female students, sitting in half-circle, who was asked to discuss on subjects like women's role in society, or adoption of children by homosexual couples.

Prosody was analysed with the program PRAAT (cf. Boersma & Weenink, 1996); nonverbal communication was annotated with ANVIL (cf. Kipp, 2004; Rodrigues, 2006).

## 6. Micro-analysis of an example

The analysed segment corresponds to the transcription and annotation at the end of the article. In order to show the capacity of several almost imperceptible verbal and nonverbal signals of assuming simultaneously different functions at different conversational levels, the explanation will follow in small steps: after the transcription of the utterances, the verbal signals as well as the nonverbal modalities accompanying them will be described. Some pictures will illustrate the more important moments regarding co--verbal body movements.

45 AT: ↑`mAs´pOR `acA´so=`´É::=-uma –palha^çA↓-da ^'I-sso--pOr`que;

mas (but) - turn-taking signal (with the help of this linguistic element, the speaker takes the turn); regarding the articulation of the turns and themes, it is also a topographic opening signal; in respect to argumentation and the logical sequence of the utterances, it contributes with its contra-argumentative meaning, being then a interactive contra-argumentative signal. Speaker looks down, has legs and arms crossed, and maintains this posture/configuration until the end of the utterance (pictures 1 and 2).

por acaso (actually) – this linguistic element can be classified as a modal signal as it conveys some information regarding speakers attitude.

porque (because) - an argumentative interactive signal, at the same tame, as it makes the transition between two utterances/themes, it is also a topographic transition signal; simultaneously the speaker shows that he wants to go on with his speaker role, in this way porque also assumes a turn-maintaining function.



1 - mas



têm

2 - porque

- 46 (0,415)<<all>-não^sei por`que=É-que que^ser::mos^sEm`pre= as mulheres=a `fa-zer-> (-) [^`as ^COI'sas,] VB: [`exacto.] 48
- 49 (0,272)

At this moment, pitch movement is very important. The ascending pitch at (47) functions as a feed-back yielding signal, a subtype of a turn-maintaining signal; as this phenomenon conveys speaker's feelings regarding the content of the utterance, it is simultaneously a modal signal (picture 3). We see that the speaker looks at the hearer LV. The gaze orientation reinforces this feed-back yielding function of prosody. In fact, LV reacts fast simultaneously to speaker's signals with a feed-back signal (48) – an agreement linguistic element, accompanied by a head-nod.



- 50 AT: ^já 'mes`mo'
- 51 <<g> $\downarrow$  prontos.
- 52 <all>^-os meus ´pAIs são se`pa`RA:dos.>>

 $j\acute{a}$  mesmo (50) (and even) – in spite of constituting a false start, these linguistic elements show that the speaker intends to continue her turn: they resume the theme after a feed-back signal of the hearer, they are a turn maintaining signal of resume. Simultaneously, due to their focusing nature, they also function as a topographic opening signal, orienting hearers' activities to what is going to be said next. At this moment, we can see that the speaker raises her eyebrows. This movement reinforces the focalizing function of the verbal elements (picture 4).

*prontos* (well) (51) – pronounced with abruptly descending pitch, this element is first of all a topographic closing signal: it closes the false start, so that the speaker can make a new start. The change in gaze orientation and the beginning (preparation phase) of a gesture show that she wants to continue her turn. While verbal movements support a closing activity, nonverbal movements suggest more the opening, or the beginning of something new (picture 5).

os meus pais são separados (my parents are separated) (52) – these elements, articulated with a higher speech rate, represent an aside: the information the speaker wants to give in order to contextualize what she is going to say next. Perhaps she had first avoided to give this information; this change of intentions explains the reason of the false start, the new start of a sentence belonging to a second plan, as an aside. One of the typical features of asides is the higher speech rate. Her gaze orientation at the end of the utterance shows her insecurity regarding the way people (in this case not the hearers, but the person which is recording the scene) react to such an information (a kind of control gaze). The aside is also accompanied by a gesture. During the stroke of the gesture, she stretches out the index finger pointing at herself, precisely at the moment she says *meus* (my). It is a case of semantic coincidence of a deictic meaning of verbal and gestural modalities (pictures 6 and 7).



6 - meus

7 - separados

- 53 (0,484) ^^-mA::s- (.) ^qUAN-do=`o meu `pAI:.(.)
- 54 <<p> $\uparrow$  -quando nÓs=Inda vivíamos com o  $\downarrow$  meu  $\uparrow$  pai?>
- 55  $\downarrow$  perCE`bes.

*mas* /but) (53) – this element, pronounced with ascending pitch and vowel ellongation, followed by an empty pause, accompanied, nonverbally, by gaze orientation towards VB, a turn-maintaining signal of resume and, simultaneously, a topographic transition signal (picture 8).

*quando o meu pai* (when my father) (53) – the gaze orientation towards the other hearer and the stressed syllables, above all the ascending-descending pitch movement at *quando*, show speaker's involvement; the use of these elements show that the speaker wants to start a narration. They constitute therefore a turn-maintaining signal; furthermore, at the articulation level

between themes, they function as a topographic opening signal. The pitch descending movement at the end of this unit closes what was just beginning to be said. It is the beginning of a repair. Only through this repair (unit 54), the elements that have been pronounced before (unit 53) are contextualized as a false start (picture 9).

*quando nós* (when we) (54) – this new start is the repair. She had crossed her arms, at this moment, she makes a new gesture, with opening features (picture 10). She holds the gesture until the end of the utterance. These two elements and the opening gesture (stroke and post-stroke hold) are together a turn-maintaining signal and a topographic transition signal. Then she turns her head to the front.

*ainda vivíamos* (still lived) (54) – furthermore, the turn-maintaining function is reinforced in the continuation of the utterance: the use of indicative imperfect, as well as of the temporal conjunction *quando* is a way of contextualizing a narrative sequence.

*percebes* (do you understand, you see) (55) – pronounced with a descending pitch, together with posture and gaze are a turn-maintaining reinforcing signal – that is, they contribute to convey speaker's attitude of reinforcing what she has just said (picture 11).







9 - pai



10- ainda



11 - percebes

56 'o meu' -o mEu ^PAI -não deixava-que o-meu-Irmão- fi ZEsse `nAda='em ^CA::`sa; *o meu pai não deixava que o meu irmão fizesse nada em casa* (my father wouldn't let my brother do anything at home) (56) – prosody (globally ascending pitch movement, and some ascending-descending variations), eyebrow-raising, gaze and gesture can be considered a complex modal signal as well as a turn-maintaing signal (feed-back yielding).

(0,691) (57) – the empty pause, the freezing of gesture, posture (head and gaze towards first one hearer, then towards the other) reinforce the feed-back yielding function. Both pause and nonverbal modalities can be considered a rhetorical means of creating expectation and causing a reaction from the hearers.

In fact, this reaction comes:

- 57 LV: <<pp>`hm isso é [um'=estu[pidez>]
- 58 AT: [<<all>-per`CE-bes-]
- 59 <a>´É: `mes´mo`estu´pi `dE::z;>>





12 - deixava

13 - casa

*hm, isso é mesmo estupidez* (that is really stupid) (57) – the speaker is looking at LV (the hearer), who says her opinion regarding the content of speaker's turn; this feed-back comment shows that the hearer agrees with the speaker, gives her reason. In spite of that, it seems that she did not react in the way the speaker desired: for instance, showing more indignation. That may be is the reason why the speaker went on insisting in this evaluation of the facts and showing her own indignation, as we can see in the following acts (picture 14).

*percebes* (do you understand, you see) (58) – fast simultaneously to the feedback comment, the speaker repeats the element *percebes*, in a relatively constant pitch and with a higher speech rate; she looks towards VB and makes an opening gesture, focalizing what is being said. This element is simultaneously a turn-maintaining signal of resume and a topographic transition signal. The gesture also accompanies the next sequence, reinforcing the information given by the hearer and at (58) confirmed and accepted by the speaker (picture 15).



14 - LV: estupidez



15- percebes

*it is really stupid* (é mesmo estupidez) (58) – because it conveys speaker's attitude towards what she says, this sequence, pronounced in a higher voice tone, with a higher speech rate, and with some ascending-descending pitch movements, is a modal signal; as it re-evaluates what has just been said, it is simultaneously an interactive signal of evaluation; the gaze orientation towards the hearers together with this evaluation nature functions also as a information reinforcement turn-maintaining signal (pictures 16 and 17). This is a moment of empathy between speaker and hearers (although LV is looking down, her comments show her opinion and engagement with the speaker). The real context situation of knowing that they are being filmed, may contribute to a certain inhibition regarding emotions display.

# 01 (0,380) <<all>``m `na`quE-lA=

*naquela* (in that attitude = as if, like that) – the new orientation to interaction given by the speaker consists in her own interpretation of the attitude of her father. She takes another posture, crosses her arms again, representing him, in other words, assuming the a character view point (C-VPT) (McNeill, 1992).



16 - mesmo



17 - estupidez



18 - naquela

#### 7. Final remarks

As final remarks we can summary the following points:

- 1. Elements of different modalities can assume the same conversational functions; in other words, to both verbal and nonverbal units can be attributed the functions considered in the group of conversational signals.
- 2. The conversational signals are polifunctional, they can assume different functions at the same time: for instance a turn-maintaining signal can be at the same time a topographic opening signal, and a modal signal.
- 3. Conversational signals can be simple (have just one element/unit of a single modality), or they can be complex, composed by elements of different modalities, simultaneously or fast simultaneously performed. For instance the function of a topographic opening signal can be assumed by a linguistic element, prosody, gesture and gaze orientation.
- 4. Simultaneously performed nonverbal modalities can assume different functions (a gesture can open a theme or focalize what is going to be said next, while a verbal unit can close what has just been said, and a head-nod can reinforce the closing function of gesture, while gaze orientation – for instance upwards or sidewards – can show that the speaker is structuring his speech.
- 5. The same form can have different functions at different moments of interaction: mas (43), (53); *percebes* (55) (58). A head-nod to which we attribute the semantic value of "yes" or "I agree", can also have the value of a intensifier, reinforcing the content or an attitude regarding what has just been said and functioning as a feed-back yielding signal.
- 6. Each element and each modality can only be interpreted when embedded in their context; they are important and specific cues for

the interpretation and for the development of interaction at the following four interaction levels:

- the interactive, or thematic concerning the logical—argumentative development of the themes;
- the interacccional of the social relations between the speaker and the hearers, regarding the roles each of them wants to play and the cooperation which each of them expects from the other;
- the modal, regarding the attitude of the speaker regarding the content of the utterances, the interaction partners, her expectations and the other's expectations;
- the topographic concerning the proactive or retroactive articulation of the utterances / themes.

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