

# KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION IN CYBERSPACE

Discourse Analysis of Professional Web Forums as  
Internet Subgenre

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*Maria, Ioan, Elena and Ștefan, in memoriam*



## ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the Internet, its features have been used to communicate knowledge between researchers in different universities or scientific laboratories, and later, with the increasing growth of the World Wide Web, knowledge became a collective good shared by its users.

The current investigation has three main objectives: a) to describe the professional web forum as a discursive subgenre of the web, b) to illustrate the mechanism of knowledge transmission on the professional web forums, and c) to observe the variation across languages of the professional web forum as a subgenre of the knowledge transmission process.

In the analysis of the linguistic material of the *professional web forum* corpus we used a theoretical framework based on different linguistic trends and theories currently developed in France.

The analysed material consists in a comparable texts corpus, organised, in five sub-corpora, in function of the language the participants in the web forums use to communicate: English, Spanish, French, Romanian, and Catalan.

The analysis of the linguistic material of the professional web forum corpus provides essential information concerning the discursive features of the knowledge transmission process in different languages.



## RESUMEN

El desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías y el uso del Internet como nueva plataforma para la enseñanza crean nuevas modalidades de interacción comunicativa entre los usuarios de Internet con el fin de aprender, comunicar y transmitir conocimiento.

Tres son los objetivos que nos proponemos alcanzar en la presente investigación. El primero se refiere a la descripción de un género discursivo fundamental para la transmisión del conocimiento en Internet: *el foro de discusión profesional*. El segundo objetivo, relacionado con el primero, contempla la construcción del conocimiento a través del discurso dentro del género mencionado. Por último, examinaremos las variaciones en la construcción discursiva del conocimiento en diferentes lenguas.

El marco teórico utilizado está constituido por diferentes corrientes y teorías lingüísticas existentes en Francia en la actualidad: lingüística textual, análisis del discurso y análisis de la conversación.

El material analizado está formado por un corpus de textos comparables que pertenecen a varios foros de discusión y está organizado en función de la lengua de comunicación en cinco subcorpus: inglés, español, francés, rumano y catalán. El análisis del material lingüístico nos proporciona informaciones importantes en lo concerniente a las estrategias discursivas que se usan en la construcción, comunicación y transmisión del conocimiento en varios idiomas.





## REZUMAT

Prezenta lucrare se dorește a fi o incursiune în universul virtual creat odată cu apariția Internetului, univers în care comunicarea iese din tiparele obișnuite și caută forme noi de reprezentare a lumii și cunoașterii. Obiectivele pe care dorim să le atingem în acest periplu virtual sunt legate de modalitățile de comunicare și transmitere a cunoașterii în Internet și de variațiile ce se înregistrează în construirea discursivă a acesteia în diferite limbi europene, totul studiat în cadrul unui gen discursiv concret pe care încercăm să îl definim și să îl descriem în prezenta lucrare: *forumul web profesional*.

Cadrul teoretic în care se dezvoltă cercetarea este constituit din teorii și curente ale lingvisticii textuale, analizei discursului și analizei conversației dezvoltate în ultimele decenii în Franța și care furnizează o bază solidă pentru elaborarea unei metodologii de cercetare adecvate obiectivelor pe care le urmărim. Materialul analizat este constituit dintr-un corpus de texte comparabile, textele cuprinse în acesta fiind organizate, în funcție de limba utilizată în comunicare, în cinci sub-corpusuri diferite: englez, spaniol, francez, român și catalan. Analiza acestui material complex și eterogen furnizează date importante asupra strategiilor discursive utilizate în construirea cunoașterii în diferite limbi, precum și a felului în care aceasta se construiește interactiv prin intermediul conversației online.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Internet, its features have been used to communicate knowledge between researchers in different universities or scientific laboratories, and later, with the increasing growth of the World Wide Web, knowledge became a collective good shared by its users. Long before becoming a place for commerce and entertainment, the Internet was a social virtual place where people around the world shared knowledge and information.

One of the first testimonies about the life of a virtual community is presented by Howard Rheingold in his book *The Virtual Community. Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (1993, 2000). In its introduction, the author affirms that in the virtual community of whom he was member, he found three important collective goods the other members shared with one another and which maintained the virtual community of the WELL united. The three collective goods were: social network capital, knowledge capital, and communion. The author describes his experience in sharing knowledge on the Internet as:

Knowledge capital is what I found in the WELL when I asked questions of the community as an online brain trust representing a highly varied accumulation of expertise (Rheingold, 2000, p.xviii).

Later in his book the author recounts a personal situation when knowledge transmission through cyberspace had been essential to solving a health problem:

In the summer of 1986, my then-two-year-old daughter picked up a tick [...], and we weren't quite sure how to go about getting it off. My wife, Judy, called the pediatrician. It was eleven o'clock in the evening. I logged onto the WELL. I got my answer online within minutes [...] I had removed the tick by the time Judy got the callback from the pediatrician's office. (Rheingold, 2000, p.1)

The author expresses his astonishment concerning the new features of communicating and learning the virtual environment provided to its users. He was surprised to observe that Internet wasn't only about

meeting new people and spending time with them talking about hobbies and general topics. The Internet was a place where one could learn and share knowledge through communicational interaction with the other members of the virtual community. A new way of learning was about to emerge and the author describes its uniqueness as follows:

What amazed me wasn't just the speed with which we obtained precisely the information we needed to know, right when we needed to know it. It was also the immense inner sense of security that comes with discovering that real people – most of them parents, some of them nurses, doctors, and midwives – are available, around the clock, if you need them. (Rheingold, 2000, p.1)

Since the golden days of the beginning of the virtual communities, when the Internet users experimented for the first time how useful virtual communication could be, many other systems of knowledge transmission have been created. Today, learning through Internet is no more surprising, formal and informal learning being habitual activities in the actual life of the virtual communities.

A plethora of neologisms describe now the complexity of the learning phenomenon in the cyberspace: distance learning, e-learning, online learning, v-learning, virtual collaborative learning, computer based training, Internet based training, computer supported collaborative learning, social learning, technology enhanced learning, mobile learning, ubiquitous learning, lifelong learning, and the list continues. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the different methods of learning on the Internet, and sometimes complicated terms turn out to be mere synonyms. Nevertheless, as one can observe learning on the Internet has become a complicated matter. A very rich bibliography describes the new implemented methods of in-classroom e-learning, and today many schools and universities present a diversified offer of online/distance learning curricula in addition to the traditional curricula.

The majority of the terms mentioned above refer to forms of learning developed by educational institutions (formal learning based on curricula), while the genuine form of learning existing on the Internet since its beginnings seems to have been marginalised or even forgotten. Only few works mention the professional web forums and their importance to the transmission of specialised knowledge between its members and the Internet users.

But is e-learning on a professional web forum different from e-learning in school? Do the professional web forum members talk differently when they learn on the professional web forum than when they are in the classroom? If they speak and relate differently on the Internet, how exactly do they speak? In what way is the communicational relation they establish on the Internet different from face-to-face

conversation? What language features precisely do the interlocutors use in order to communicate knowledge?

Since the discourse(s) of the Internet have gained recently growing attention from the discourse analysts and many scholars have already described some interesting features of the Internet communication, we, too, will try to focus on this domain and investigate a particular web genre.

## 1.1 Motivation of the Investigation

The motivation of our choice consists in the fact that professional web forums are a less studied form of computer mediated communication. Considering the main web genres: the email, the chat, and, the web forum, the first two present a richer bibliography of studies than the web forum.

The importance of the web forum consists in being the unique form of interactive knowledge transmission in informal learning situations that can be easily studied<sup>1</sup>. Being public, it can be studied without any issue of copyright infringement, since the participants in the discussion assume that their texts are publicly accessed by anyone in the web. The web forum presents a rich thematic diversity: entertainment, news, shopping, professions, etc. Another advantage would be the fact that it is the most durable and challenging of the web genres. The previously mentioned The WELL, a multiuser system especially known for its forums, began its activity back in 1983 and is still functioning to this day, being regarded as one of the oldest systems of Internet communication. Such durability allows the researcher to access a very rich linguistic content chronologically and thematically organised.

Besides the complexity and the diversity of the linguistic material displayed by the web forums, another aspect that has motivated us in choosing this subject consists in the fact that there are very few descriptions of web forums. All of them are very general and tend to describe the web forums as a homogeneous form of communication. Or, it is obvious that people communicate differently on a forum of opinions, on a forum of rumours and gossip, or on a professional web forum.

So far there has been no reliable classification of the forum types, and the web forum seems to have multiple forms of communication. A description of the web forums must take into account the variety of forms

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge transmission can also be performed by *email* or by *chat*. The problem is that email is a private web genre, since it is meant to communicate information between two or a determined group of persons, which makes it very difficult to study how knowledge is transmitted. *Chat* can be private or public, depending on the choice of the participants in the discussion, but the conversation is meant to disappear when the discussion ends, which is an inconvenient for a systematic study. The *web forum* contains texts produced by a determined group of persons whose reception is public since everyone on the Internet can read them.

of this genre. Since our interest is focused on knowledge transmission in cyberspace, we have decided to describe in the present work the professional web forum as a subgenre of the web forum.

Our choice is also motivated by the fact that one of the most important aspects of the Internet is represented by the interactive transmission and communication of knowledge, the main purpose of the Internet since it was implemented and became public.

## 1.2 Hypotheses

We set off on our investigation with the following hypotheses of research:

*Web forums* are a modality to transmit knowledge that has been used since the first implementations of the interactive systems of communication on the Internet. Like *emails* and *chats*, the *web forums* present a rich variety of themes, one of which is the transmission of knowledge. The web forums dedicated to the transmission of knowledge on the Internet are known as *professional web forums* and it is on this topic we will focus our attention in the present work.

Since the majority of web genres are described as *a hybrid between written and oral discourse*, we assume, based on the bibliography, that the communicational interaction on the *professional web forum* is structured very similarly to a *written conversation*.

Due to the form of written conversation of the professional web forums, the transmission of knowledge is realised interactively through negotiation between two or more parties. Consequently, knowledge is constructed collectively, collaboratively, and interactively.

We assume that within the web forum genre there are different types of web forums, each developing a different type of discourse adapted to the objectives of the communication, the theme and the participants involved in the communication. We also assume that the communication of knowledge on the professional web forums presents special features that distinguish its discourse from that of other types of web forums.

We assume that knowledge communication on the professional web forums is realised through explanation. Since the explanation has turned out to be a complex phenomenon, we assume that different types of explanations and explanatory strategies may be used on the professional web forums. The prevailing presence of the explanation in the text of the web forum determines a specific discursive configuration.

This specific discourse can be observed on the professional web forums in different languages. The discourse of the professional web forum presents similarities and differences across languages.

During our investigation we will procure the evidence to confirm or infirm these hypotheses in order to obtain a relevant description of the professional web forum as a web subgenre.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Investigation

The current investigation has three main objectives: a) to describe the professional web forum as a discursive subgenre of the web forum, b) to illustrate the mechanism of knowledge transmission on the professional web forums, and c) to observe the variation across languages of the professional web forum as a subgenre of the knowledge transmission process.

Different secondary objectives derive from the main objectives. In order to describe the professional forum as a subgenre we shall proceed to:

- a) demonstrate that the professional web forum is a type of electronic discourse (CMC);
- b) illustrate that the professional web forum discussions emerge in the social interactions between the members of a virtual community;
- c) determine what are the conditions of the discursive production of the professional web forum genre;
- d) determine what is the objective of the communication;
- e) determine who communicates;
- f) determine how the interlocutors communicate.

In order to describe the mechanism of knowledge transmission on the professional web forums, we shall:

- a) determine that knowledge transmission is one of the objectives of social interaction in Internet and it is transmitted through genres;
- b) determine that knowledge communication is involved in the creation of meaning;
- c) determine that the main discursive mechanism of knowledge transmission in the cyberspace is the *explanation*;
- d) identify the different types of explanations used on the professional web forum in order to transmit knowledge;
- e) describe the explanatory occurrences on professional web forums;
- f) compare the observed features of the professional web forum explanations with the literature in order to create a specific explanatory profile;
- g) observe the construction of explanation in interaction.

In order to observe the variation across languages of the professional web forum as subgenre of the knowledge transmission process, we shall:

- a) determine the parameters of genre variation across languages;
- b) compare the parameters of variation between languages;
- c) create a specific profile of knowledge communication on professional web forums for each language.

The focus of our analysis is the linguistics insight and we intend to analyse the recurrent discursive patterns of the professional web forum discussion in a comparative corpus. The present investigation will be developed in the theoretical framework created by different text linguistics, conversation and discourse analysis trends developed mostly in France.

## 1.4 Phases of the Investigation

The description of the *professional web forum* as a web subgenre involved in the transmission of knowledge in the social networks entails not only an interdisciplinary approach to the topic but also a strict methodology to be applied in the analysis of the facts. In what concerns the present investigation, our research on this complex phenomenon will follow the following steps:

- a) establish the hypotheses and the objectives of the current investigation;
- b) establish the basic bibliography of the investigation;
- c) creation and implementation of the corpus :
  - a. reference books in corpus creation;
  - b. comparison with different existing corpora;
  - c. list of candidates for *professional web forums*;
  - d. establishing the definitive list of *professional web forums*.
- d) analysis of a corpus sample;
- e) establishing the theoretical framework of the investigation:
  - a. e-discourse and virtual communities;
  - b. knowledge and knowledge transmission;
  - c. Discourse Analysis theoretical framework;
- f) methodology and protocol of analysis;
- g) discursive analysis of the corpus;
- h) conclusions.

## 1.5 Outline of the Investigation

The first chapter represents a justification of the research and contains a general introduction to the context of our investigation, *knowledge transmission in cyberspace*, the motivation of the research, the hypotheses and the objectives to through the research.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter describes the cyberspace as communicational environment and defines the electronic discourse (CMC). The description of the e-discourse is realised from different perspectives: definition, categorisation and evolution. The evolution of the e-discourse is presented as part of the process of the evolution of the Internet. Every device, every online service represents a potentially new form of e-

discourse. In this chapter we pointed out chronologically the emergence of the main e-discourse categories. The second part of this chapter deals with the notion of *virtual community* presenting a definition and different classifications of the *virtual communities* by different criteria.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter distinguishes between *skills*, *know-how* and *expertise*, as types of communicated knowledge on the Internet. The explanation is considered to be the main mechanism of knowledge transmission on the *professional web forums*, and consequently, a substantial portion of the chapter is dedicated to the description and the definition of this category.

Since the explanation represents the main strategy for introducing knowledge on the professional web forums, different studies of the explanatory forms and categories were taken into consideration in order to identify the main forms of the explanation involved in the learning process. The forms we took into consideration were: the definition, the description of actions (procedures), and the prototypical explanation (the regular explanation).

The fourth chapter describes different insights into the problem of the genre description. Our first approach has been the presentation of the study of the web genres following the theory of Biber (the traditional approach to the study of the web genre), after which we changed perspectives focusing on different genre insights such as Charaudeau's, Jean-Michel Adam's, Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni's, Veronique Traverso's. In our study we will follow the model of genres description proposed by Patrick Charaudeau.

The fifth chapter contains the description of the corpus for analysis, general issues in corpus creation, protocol and methodology of implementation, the parameters of the sub-corpora. The essential part of this chapter is represented by the quantitative analysis of the sub-corpora.

The next chapter contains the methodology and the protocol of analysis. The methodology we followed initially describes the professional web forum as a discourse genre taking into account the theoretical framework created by Patrick Charaudeau. The professional web forum is analysed as a *situation of communication* regulated by certain parameters identified for the subgenre: *identities*, *objectives of enunciation*, *theme*, and *discursive device*. The *objectives of enunciation* and the *identities* were analysed within the same theoretical framework established by Charaudeau. An important part of the analysis of the professional web forum consists in the analysis of the explanatory sequence regarded as the main mechanism of knowledge transmission. Knowledge transmission is analysed in two instances: as *explanatory sequence* and *explanatory text (series of explanatory sequences)*, and the *explanation as interaction*. For the first instance, we used the theoretical framework of text linguistics (Jean-Michel Adam). In what concerns the second instance, the *explanation as interaction* was analysed within the

theoretical framework of the conversation analysis (Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Veronique Traverso).

Chapter seven represents the analytic part of the present work. The first part of the chapter is a general description of the professional web forum as a discursive subgenre within the framework described by Patrick Charaudeau. The second part of the chapter represents the analysis of the discursive representations of identities. The focus is on the representations of the self as *novice*, the initiator of the knowledge transmission on the professional web forums. We examined the representations of the self in different languages and specific aspects of each sub-corpus were highlighted. Since the focus on the identities involved in the situation takes into account the novice as active agent, we denominated this part *Discourses of Ignorance* in order to illustrate that dealing with ignorance makes the *novice* an *intentional learner* causing him/her to establish his/her goals in the learning process. The 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the chapter focused on the *Discourses of Experience*, that is, the complementary discourse developed by the *expert* who participates in the situation. As we have already mentioned, we consider the explanatory sequence to be essential for knowledge transmission in the cyberspace. Consequently, this section of the Chapter 7 presents the analysis of the explanatory sequences encountered in each sub-corpus. The last section of the chapter represents the analysis of the explanation as interaction, a discursive construction specific, in our opinion, only to the professional web forum interactions. In this section we observed how knowledge was constructed gradually through the interaction between the *novice* and the *expert(s)*, or sometimes, through the interactions between the *experts* only.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions to the present work, while Chapters 9 and 10 contain the *References* and the *Annexes*. Due to the multidisciplinary of the investigation, we structured the *References* according to the different chapters of our work. Thus, we established three main sections of the bibliography comprising: *books*, *articles*, and *webography*.

The *Annexes* contain a sample of each sub-corpus formed by an illustrative thread in order that one may appreciate the structure and the setting of the e-discourse on the professional web forums. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annexe consists of a list of the participants in the professional web forums communication in the corpus of analysis. The 3<sup>rd</sup> annexe represents a list of the titles of threads of the corpus of analysis.

The present work will be accompanied by a CD-ROM containing 1,000 pages of *Computer Web Forums Corpus*.



## 2. EXPLORING THE DISCURSIVE FIELD OF CYBERSPACE

"In the Beginning, ARPA created the ARPANET.  
And the ARPANET was without form and void.  
And darkness was upon the deep.  
And the spirit of ARPA moved upon the face of the network and ARPA said, 'Let there be a protocol,' and there was a protocol. And ARPA saw that it was good.  
And ARPA said, 'Let there be more protocols,' and it was so. And ARPA saw that it was good.  
And ARPA said, 'Let there be more networks,' and it was so."

Danny Cohen

### 2.1 The Cyberspace: communicational environment

Created by William Gibson in his novel *Neuromancer*, the word *cyberspace* is the metaphor of a virtual space, currently used to describe the amount of information resources available through the computer networks which form the Internet.

Since its materialisation, the cyberspace has created a real revolution in communication. If the first studies of computer mediated communication used to highlight the rupture between the *communication before Internet* and the *communication after Internet*, at present, we are constantly amazed at the way the new technologies and their continuous evolution change the way we communicate.

It is extraordinary to observe how communication has changed and how ways of communication considered revolutionary in the last decade have become outdated. Suffice it to mention the evolution of chat rooms from the early '90s, when communication was limited to text<sup>2</sup>, to the mid

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of the first IRC clients computer mediated communication was literally reduced to text. The members of the forum used to work on a very simple interface formed by a black background where the locutors contributions were written in white. No other interface element was present.

'90s marked by the release of the revolutionary chat program mIRC<sup>3</sup> which produced at the time a user friendly interface, allowing the user to see the other members connected, and it's useless to say that today only the specialists of the field still know what mIRC means. It became part of the history of computer mediated communication alongside different other programs that have contributed to the modelling of electronic discourse, such as ICQ, AIM, ALO Instant Messenger. They provided new features to online communication and contributed to the development of the synchronous electronic communication. While it may seem that electronic discourse has reached its maximum development as chat involving multimodal communication, this is a mere impression. Today for most of us using Skype or Google Talk or YahooMessenger in order to communicate with family, friends, and colleagues has become common practice, yet as the evolution of chat discourse has already demonstrated, humans will find new ways of upgrading this way of communicating in cyberspace.

We consider that every approach to computer mediated communication must take into consideration the extremely rapid changes of the discourse under the influence of the development of the communicational devices, which has an impact on the discursive behaviour of the Internet users. Thus, the investigator must be aware of the fact that every approach to the discursive dimension of the cyberspace is a synchronic study and the results of the investigation will reflect the situation of the moment.

An illustrative argument supporting this idea is represented by the situation of one of the fundamental books about Internet, text, and hypertext. In 1992, George Landow published the book *Hypertext and Multivocality*, which became an important reference for all linguists studying Internet communication. In 1997, only five years after the first edition, the author published a new version<sup>4</sup> of his book, *Hypertext 2.0*:

[...] el motivo era obvio: los últimos desarrollos en hardware y software desde la aparición de la primera versión del libro me llevaron a eliminar la mayor parte de las referencias a Intermedia, reemplazándolas por reflexiones acerca de la World Wide Web y otros sistemas de hipermedia [...]. (Landow, 2009, p.13)

In 2006 the same author had to actualise yet again his research and consequently published the third version of the book: *Hypertext 3.0*<sup>5</sup>. Once again the author justifies the necessity for revising his theory:

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<sup>3</sup> mIRC, an IRC client created by Microsoft for its operating system in 1995, was the most popular chat program at the time.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice that a "new version" means basically that the book further discusses the same topic, actualising the author's observations on the same phenomenon.

<sup>5</sup> For the entire quotation, see the Spanish translation of the book published in 2009, Barcelona, Paidós Ibérica.

“Desde la aparición de Hypertext 2.0 se han producido numerosos avances que exigen una nueva versión” (Landow, 2009, p.13)<sup>6</sup>.

As one can notice, it is impossible to figure out now how the Internet will evolve in the next decade and how its evolution will influence the social and communicational behaviour of its users.

The pairs *communication – electronic communication*, *text – electronic text (e-text)*, *discourse – electronic discourse (e-discourse)* and the differences they entail are part of the more extended phenomenon of the digitalisation of our world. As one can see for oneself, for now, we live in a society divided between the *analogue* and the *digital* whose evolution presents a strong tendency of progress towards the digital dimension. Books, press, radio, phones, and television, all means of expression present now this double aspect (*analogue* and *digital*), adapting their traditional/original format under the pressure of the newly emergent electronic technology.

Actually, every social activity in the real world has a virtual double in the virtual dimension of the Internet. Thus, there is: art and *digital* art, music and *digital* music, radio and *Internet* radio, photo and *digital* photo, shopping and *e-shopping*, learning and *e-learning*, and the list goes on. These continuously emergent ways of life and communication influence the behaviour of the members of the virtual society, because different situations produce different discourses as modelled under the pressure of the finality of the Internet user and the technical features of the communicational device.

Recurrent communicational pattern can be easily recognised on the Internet and the huge amounts of electronic texts promote them rapidly to the status of web genres. Their structure, dynamics and evolution have given rise, lately, to some innovative discourse analysis approaches to the web genres.

## 2.2 Electronic Discourse. General Overview

Since the beginning of the Internet, its users have noticed that the emergent communicational medium influences the language and the behaviour of the participants. The Internet has been offering its users the possibility to talk and interact in various ways never imagined before. In a world where the *letter*, the *telegraph*, and the *telephone* were the usual means to communicate at distance, with the Internet there, suddenly came out a rich variety of communicational devices. The early studies on the Internet and its infinite possibilities of connecting people are impregnated with enthusiasm and utopia. For the first time, the Internet users had the possibility to connect with unknown people and to talk

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<sup>6</sup> In Spain a similar situation is reflected by the book *Ciberpragmática*, written by Francisco Yus, whose first version published in 2001 has been recently updated by an actualised version: *Ciberpragmática 2.0*, published in 2010.

openly with no need to respect conventions as was the case with written or face-to-face conversation. It is this enthusiasm that generated the impressive popularity of the Internet and contributed to the development and diversification of its communicational devices. Likewise, virtual communities appeared as motivated by the incessantly changing new media offering ever new modalities of communication.

A realistic presentation of the atmosphere of the beginnings of the Internet communication and of the virtual communities is the book by Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (1993). The author gives a personal account of how “virtual life” was in the early '90s. However, the subsequent development of the Internet technologies has made the study outdated, especially through the changes in the dynamics of the virtual communities.

In time, the routine of virtual communication has resulted in the creation of various discursive forms and patterns specific to the Internet. This is the moment when researchers from different areas (sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and others) began showing an interest in the study of the new ways of communication.

One of the most relevant early studies about the Internet language is the volume edited by Herring (1996), in which the author presents one of the first definitions of the electronic discourse and identifies the main perspectives for the study of computer mediated communication (CMC): social, political and linguistic. This was followed by a plethora of linguistics studies, from among which we will mention just a few: Boyd and Brewer (1997), Baron (1998), Cherny (1999), Thurlow (2001), Crystal (2001, 2006). All focus on the newly emergent concept of *electronic discourse* (aka *e-discourse*).

### 2.2.1 What is E-Discourse?

It is obvious for every Internet user that, when we are connected to the Internet and we interact with other users, we do it differently than if we would over the phone or in face-to-face conversation. A recurrent topic in the linguistic studies of Internet communication consists in answering the questions: *What is the language of the Internet?* and *How is it different from other types of communication?*

Since the early empiric observations of the linguistic phenomenon on the Internet, one has noticed the constant tendency to set apart the *Internet language* from the other known types of communication: *written* and *oral*.

Different names have been coined for this new form of virtual communication. ‘Computer Mediated Communication’ (Herring, 1996), ‘Netlish’, ‘Weblish’, ‘Internet language’, ‘cyberspeak’, ‘netling’ (Thurlow, 2001), ‘netspeak’ (Thurlow, 2001; Crystal, 2006), ‘electronic

discourse’ (Davis&Brewer, 1997; Panckhurst, 2006), ‘electronic language’ (Collot, 1996), ‘interactive written discourse’ (Werry, 1996), are just some of the terms in use, to which we can add that of ‘cyberlanguage’ (MacFadyen et al, 2004) and ‘virtual language’ (Pop, 2008). By describing communicational interaction in the virtual space, they actually join two concepts: the *medium* (net, web, Internet, cyber-, electronic, virtual) and the *communication* (speak, -lish<sup>7</sup>, language, and discourse). Their degree of specialisation and the field of use may also differ. These denominations reflect the heterogeneous nature of this discourse, considered by many scholars as a hybrid between the *written* and *oral* discourses. Many of them, with the intent of describing/defining the electronic discourse (Baron, 1998, Herring, Chrystal, etc.) start their argumentation presenting literacy and orality as the main general profiles of discourse and then determine the specific profile of the electronic discourse as resulting from the comparison between the *oral-electronic* and *written-electronic* aspects. Other insights (Macfayden et al, 2004, pp. 19-22) study *cyberlanguage* under three different categories: as *digital text*, as *semiotic system*, and as *discourse*.

One of the clearest definitions of the *electronic discourse* comes from Herring. In his opinion *computer mediated communication* (CMC) is: “...communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computer” (1996, p.1). The author distinguishes between different modes of CMC and defines:

[...] text-based CMC, in which participants interact by means of the written word, e.g., by typing a message on the keyboard of one computer which is read by others on their computer screens, either immediately (synchronous CMC) or at a later point in time (asynchronous CMC). (*op. cit.*, p.1)

We consider Herring’s definition to be partial only, since the author takes into consideration mainly the material conditions of its CMC production.

In their study of the electronic discourse, Boyd Davis and Jeutonne Brewer point out that “*electronic discourse* is not a surrogate for language [...] but just a different context of its use” (1997, p.1). Their intention is to observe the characteristics of the electronic discourse in order to individualise and classify it as the genre or register of a language. The authors distinguish between *electronic discourse* and CMC, because they claim that *electronic discourse* “emphasises our focus on language above the sentence – language as utterances, whether written or spoken” (1997, p.2).

The most important insight into the systematic description of CMC is represented by C. Thurlow’s study *The Internet and Language*. The

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<sup>7</sup> Explained in Crystal (2006) as created from the combination of the words ‘net’ and ‘English’. In other words Netlish.

author describes CMC as: “language and communication in different channels (of niches) of the Internet (on net)...” (2001, p.287). He considers CMC in its context of production pointing out five essential aspects: *multilingualism, language change, conversation/discourse, stylistic diffusion, and metalanguage and folkslinguistics*. Thurlow is the first author to suggest that the Internet texts have to be studied from the point of view of genre description. In his study Thurlow states that language and communication on the Internet can be studied under such contextual factors as: *format and type of channel, participants, length and nature of the relationship, topic and purpose, and synchronous and asynchronous* aspects of the communication.

On the other hand, David Crystal prefers instead to use the more general concept of *variety of language* and avoid the difficulties of defining electronic discourse. By defining CMC as a *variety of language*, the author sets it under the linguistic point of view: language as used on the Internet:

In a setting where linguistic differences are likely to loom large, the concept of a language variety will be helpful. A variety of language is a system of linguistic expression whose use is governed by situational factors. (2006, p.6)

*Electronic discourse*<sup>8</sup> has been described by different authors, the most important of which are Baron (1998), Thurlow (2001), and Crystal (2006). All scholars agree that the electronic discourse has special features which individualise it. A general presentation of its most common linguistic patterns would include:

- Orthography: *neography, acronyms, typing errors, misspelling*
- Punctuation: *reduction of punctuation, capitalisation, and hyphenation*
- Lexis: *special lexis, lexical compounds, blends*
- Discourse organisation: *reduction or less use of openings and closures*
- Extra-linguistic marks: *emoticons*

It is important to mention that these linguistic patterns describe the features of *textual electronic discourse*. Electronic discourse is not homogeneous and it displays a rich variety of styles. Since our work focuses on the *written asynchronous electronic discourse* we have decided to point out these characteristics of e-discourse.

Other characteristics of the electronic discourse can be influenced or limited by the electronic devices and, as many scholars have already

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<sup>8</sup> We will use the terms CMC and *electronic discourse* in our investigation for the language on the Internet. We will make an exception when we cite the work of an author who used a different term to refer this concept. In this case the term used by the author in the cited work will be maintained.

mentioned, with a view to the analysis of the electronic discourse it is important to separate the role of the medium and the contribution of its users.

### 2.2.2 E-Discourse Categories

Electronic discourse is heterogeneous, consequently it lends itself to classifications and categorisations. One of the first to remark on the diversity of the electronic discourse is Herring (1996, pp.1-6). The author distinguishes between different electronic discourses based on different criteria such as: *type of interaction* (synchronous – asynchronous), area (local – global), and theme (academic – recreational).

Most scholars – Davis&Brewer (1997), Thurlow (2001), Yus (2001), Crystal (2006), among others – classify the electronic discourse between *synchronous* and *asynchronous*. They also discuss the language features of the different categories of electronic discourse as the result of the hybridisation between two modes<sup>9</sup>: *written* and *oral*.

A more complete panorama of the electronic discourse categories is presented by Chun (in Magnan, 2008, p.17-18). The author takes for her starting point the traditional perspective of the two primary modes of the *electronic discourse*<sup>10</sup> and denominates ACMC (asynchronous computer mediated communication) and SMC (synchronous computer mediated communication). The innovation of her study consists in the fact that the author continues the classification diachronically starting from the text-based *electronic discourse* and mentioning the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations of CMC. She identifies as categories of ACMC text-based emails, bulletin boards, newsgroups, forums, blogs, and wikis. The audio and video modes consist in asynchronous audio and video clips. The SMC modes include: text-based instant messaging, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), multiuser virtual realities (MUDs – Multi User Dungeons and MOOs – MUD Object Oriented)<sup>11</sup>. Chun also mentions as a novelty the possibility to access audio and video-based programs. Since the publishing of the study in 2008, video and audio conferencing have become a common occurrence of CMC and new integrated solutions of CMC are now promoted on the market.

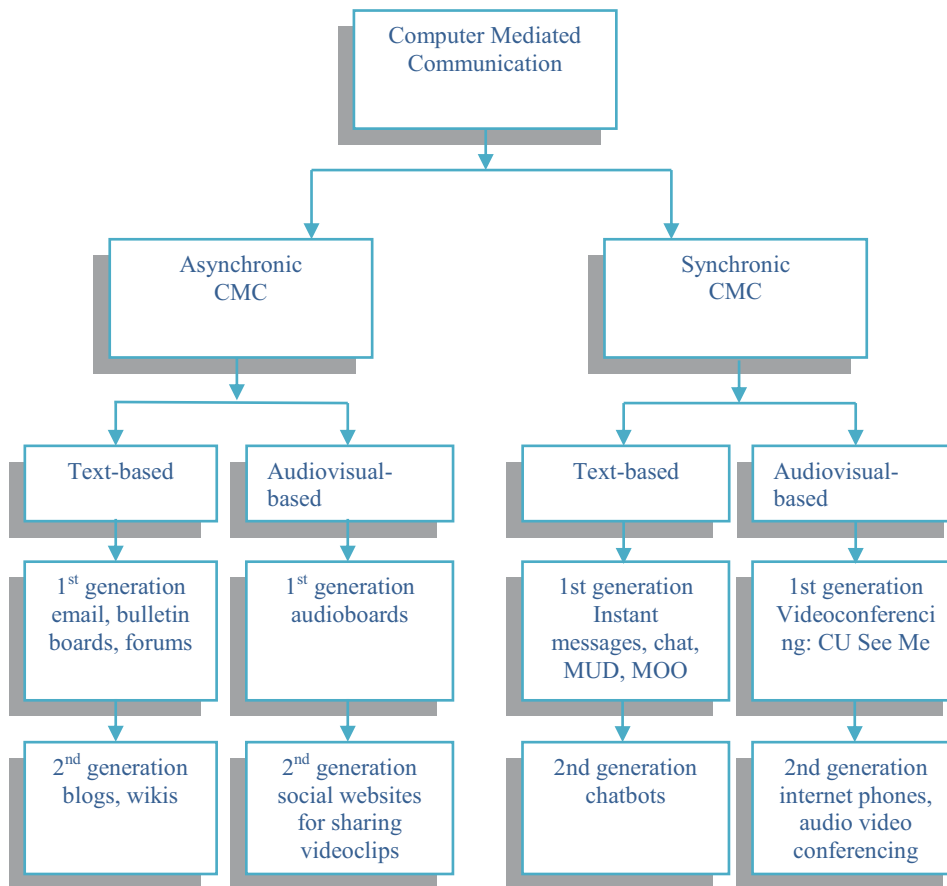
In what follows we will reproduce the scheme of the CMC modes as proposed by Chun (2008, p.18). This will give us a clear image of the variety of CMC modes and will allow us to identify the exact place of the CMC mode we propose to analyse in the present work.

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<sup>9</sup> Some of the authors use the term *style*, after Biber's (1998) terminology.

<sup>10</sup> The author uses the term CMC (computer mediated communication). For more details on the various denominations of the *electronic discourse* see the present work 2.2.1, Chrystal (2001; 2006), or Thurlow (2001).

<sup>11</sup> This classification is based on the one elaborated by Chun (Chun, 2008: 17).



**The modes of Computer Mediated Communication (Chun, 2008, p.18)**

This classification will permit us to follow the diachronic perspective of the emergence and development of the *electronic discourse* in Internet.

### 2.2.3 Emergence and Development

The evolution of the Internet has been closely followed by the commencing and the development of the Web genres. The difficulty in presenting a diachronic insight into the evolution of the various forms of online communication consists in the complexity of the Internet phenomenon:

To write about the possibilities and the problems which the Web poses for any form of research, it is necessary to cope with its chameleon-like nature. From the point of view of the media analyst, the Web is just as complex and enigmatic [...] for it can be regarded as a kind of postal service, or as a town hall meeting, or even an electronic Hyde Park Speaker's Corner. It is at once a newspaper, a bookstore, a library, a museum, a shopping mall and so forth. (Burnett & Marshall, 2003:2)

The continuous change that seems to be the inherent nature of the Internet and its forms of communication makes it fascinating for the



researcher. All the changes and its many features have been baffling the user and the specialist alike. Even if today the Internet is a usual and necessary environment for working and communicating, it still surprises us with new activities, services, and innovative forms of communication.

In what follows, we will try to outline the most important moments in the development of the Internet in order to point out the emergence of the different discursive genres of the web. CMC, as we have already pointed out in the previous section, consists in three main elements: the *Internet* – technical support, *communication* – human activity, and *discourse* – materialisation of *communication* as human activity. It is impossible to separate these three elements, since the evolution of the technical support has modelled the *forms of communication* due to the limitations of the electronic channel, which in turn have influenced the *electronic discourse*. The process evolves in a spiral because keeping together the members of a virtual community is accomplished by providing ever new features and modern ways of communicating and interacting, while each new technical innovation will modify the way we communicate on the web.

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The beginnings of the Internet are uncertain given its military origins. Many scholars comment on this aspect and usually underline how a device initially designed for a military purpose ended by revolutionising the society, communication and the way people relate to each other. Actually, the origins of the Internet are not an issue nowadays and the majority of studies point out the importance of its current applications for the society rather than the initial goal of its creation:

[...] if we look at the history of the Web it developed from very specific but intricate institutional connections. [...] Its original US military origins as a system that would have no centre so that communication could be maintained despite the most apocalyptic nuclear attack on any individual centre allowed for the development of the multiple nodes of CERN and ARPAnet. The network of networks structure of the Internet has built from these origins but advances in its applications as a research **network** that became wedded to university research. (Burnett & Marshall, 2003, p.11)

It is important to observe how the initial military goal of the Internet was for it to be a research communication environment, and this is precisely the point where there begins for us an “*extraordinary human adventure*”<sup>12</sup> (Castells, 2001, p.9). This initial change of the purpose of the Internet from the specifically military designed activities to more liberal and peaceable ones was the first step on its way to popularity:

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<sup>12</sup> Castells observes that the development of the Internet under military auspices has been significant : “For all the vision and all the competence these scientists displayed in their project, they could never have commanded the level of resources that was necessary to build a computer network and to design all the appropriate technologies” (2001, 20)

Informal networks of researchers then used the Internet for these exchanges of information. This kind of university culture with its accessible libraries, its general direction of dissemination of information and knowledge is fundamentally different from the military's desire for control and regulation of the flows of information for usually highly specific and often classified, national security reasons. (Burnett & Marshall, 2003, pp.11-12)

The free development of the Internet in the *Ακαδημία* allowed the new electronic environment to escape from the rules and restrictions of the military perspective and to develop in a new way in a research milieu. Young researchers and students have dedicated their time to investigating and thinking about the development of the new virtual environment. UCLA, NCSA and MIT have been the centres where most of today's legends such as Vinton Cerf, the "father of the Internet", Marc Andreessen or Eric Bina have had the opportunity to study, work with, and develop the new communication technology. At the time the Internet belonged to the specialists. Few researchers worked with this high level technology and the Internet was confined to the campus limits due to the lack of infrastructure and because its complexity made it very difficult for everyone to understand it without high knowledge of mathematics and informatics.

The next step in the early evolution of the Internet was taken when the new technology went beyond the university grounds. This is the beginning of what M. Castells calls the *network society*, when the Internet moved on from a being a mere communication tool to a mass-phenomenon. Gradually it became a heterogeneous socio-cultural space, the result of the different activities performed by its users and the finalities they give it. For Castells (2003), the Internet is the result of the convergence of three main elements: university culture, hacker culture, and commercial culture. Each cultural segment was involved in a specific way in the configuration of what we now know as the Internet. They contributed to the construction of the Internet in terms of *technical development, members* and *activities* as follows:

	<b>Technical development</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>University culture</b>	Creation of the Internet Technical design Infrastructures Hardware Software Virtual communities Communities of practice Online learning communities	<b>Intellectual elites:</b> researchers, professors, students, experts, technicians, etc.	<b>Programming:</b> standards, protocols, programs, routines, etc. <b>Scientific:</b> research, sharing information, e-publishing, e-reviews, e-books <b>Educational:</b> e-learning, e-manuals, e-tutorials,

	Life-long learning communities		e-lessons, global aulas, learning communities, life-long learning etc.
<b>Hacker<sup>13</sup> culture</b>	Virtual communities Communities of practice	computer geeks non-professionals hackers e-delinquents	<b>Programming:</b> Non-commercial Free, Open source, GNU <b>Sharing knowledge:</b> web forums, e-manuals, e-tutorials <b>Hacking:</b> virus, sniffers, Trojan horses, worms, etc.
<b>Commercial culture</b>	Commercial software Commercial electronic environments Web shops DotComs Legal aspects of the Internet transactions Virtual communities	Business men Managers Financial directors etc.	<b>Commercial:</b> e-shopping, e-advertising e-management shopping virtual communities (eBay.com)

A similar structure of the Internet is also described by Vinton Cerf in his *A Brief History of the Internet*<sup>14</sup>. The author distinguishes between the following aspects that have influenced the structure of the Internet today: *technological evolution of the communication devices*<sup>15</sup>, *operation and management of the operational infrastructure*, *social interaction*<sup>16</sup>, and *commercial interaction*. This is what gives the Internet the very complex heterogeneous structure depicted as a “*chameleon-like nature*” (Burnett & Marshall, 2003), mosaic structure, or a world of *coincidencia oppositorum*.

*How did communication develop diachronically on the Internet? and Which are the discursive forms the users employ in e-communication?* are the questions which we will try to answer in what follows.

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<sup>13</sup> The term *hacker* is used with its original meaning: computer specialist.

<sup>14</sup> Even if this resource consists in a short Internet published document, its importance as a documentary source on the evolution of the Internet consists in the fact that the author, Vinton Cerf, is known as “the father of the Internet”, for as a computer expert he substantially contributed to the development of the Internet.

<sup>15</sup> Early research on packet switching and the ARPANET, infrastructure developing, functionality.

<sup>16</sup> Internet community interested in creating and developing technology.

Within the political and social context of its emergence, the Internet was conceived as a “communicating medium that allows, for the first time, the communication of many to many, in chosen time, on a global scale” (Castells, 2003, p.2).

In 1962, the main objective of an innovating project, stated for the first time as a theoretical model by J.C.R. Licklider, was to describe social interactions enabled through computers connected in networks. Licklider’s “Galactic Network” described a communicational environment based on computers connected to each other, which made possible the quick accessing of data and programs everywhere. This revolutionary idea of communication was the initial step towards the creation and the design of the *Internet*.

Its evolution was gradual and it is generally represented as a series of chronologic moments representing important discoveries that contributed to the Internet evolution. These moments marked: *political events that influenced the evolution of the Internet, hardware and software discoveries that changed the face of the Internet, and communicational aspects of the Internet*, especially the appearance of different web genres.

The first decade in the history of the Internet represents a preliminary development period. The early years constituted a research and investigative period. Theoretical models describing the abstract representation of computer networks were developed, and based on these models there began the first attempts at designing and implementing a functional network.

Back then *online communication* was an abstract concept, as was the rest of the Internet project. By the end of the first decade, according to Hobbes’s timeline<sup>17</sup>, all conditions to make possible online communication had been brought together. The basic structure of a network connection (hardware and software components) was established and operational. The first attempt at online communication through the new created network was also recorded:

1969 - First packets sent by Charley Kline at UCLA as he tried logging into SRI. The first attempt resulted in the system crashing as the letter G of LOGIN was entered. (October 29) [Log entry] Univ. of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State Univ. establish X.25-based Merit network for students, faculty, alumni. (Hobbes, 1993-2006)

The second decade in the Internet history is marked by a series of revolutionary discoveries which led to the emergence of computer mediated communication. If in the late ‘60s “communication” was understood in terms of computer-to-computer communication: sending packets of information online and interacting with a remote server, there

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<sup>17</sup> Hobbes' Abridged Internet Timeline *electronic resource at (last accessed on 29.12.2010) <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/mitra/honors/timeline.html>*.

came a time when creating the appropriate software in order to simplify the exchange of online messages could no longer be postponed. This invention allowed users to communicate with other online users and thus marked the beginning of CMC:

1971 - Ray Tomlinson of BBN invents email program to send messages across a distributed network. The original program was derived from two others: an intra-machine email program (SENDMSG) and an experimental file transfer program (CPYNET). (Hobbes, 1993-2006)

The invention of the email client marked the first type of *electronic text* that is still being used: *the email*. The following year, 1972, the same programmer modified the email client and adapted it for use in ARPANET where it becomes a very popular service. Ray Tomlinson chooses the sign @ to be used in *email addresses*. Its meaning is “at”. The email functions are developed by another programmer, Larry Roberts. He writes the first email management program (RD) to list, selectively read, file, forward, and respond to messages. The email client has exchange messages features and file management functions and is similar to nowadays email clients.

After CMC through email, different other types of online communication were developed, such as chat:

1972 First computer-to-computer chat takes place at UCLA, and is repeated during ICCC, as psychotic PARRY (at Stanford) discusses its problems with the Doctor (at BBN). (Hobbes, 1993-2006)

*Chat* introduces a new form of electronic discourse and a new form of communicational interaction between the participants in a situation. Synchronous communication through chat becomes one of the most popular forms of online communication and still is to this day. The new communicative features of the Internet increase its popularity. A 1972 ARPA study about the information traffic in the entire ARPANET shows that 75% of the network traffic is generated by *email* exchange.

The year 1975 marks another landmark in the development of CMC: the new invention by Steve Walker, the *mailing list*. This consists in a list of e-mail addresses identified by a single name, such as mail-list@yahoo.com. If an e-mail message is sent to the mailing list, it is automatically forwarded to all email addresses assigned to the list, which is an easy way to create a *discussion group*. It was named *MsgGroup* and, according to Hobbe’s timeline, the first Internet moderator was Einar Stefferud.

The diversity of CMC (*email, chat, newsgroups, and mailing lists*) and its increasing popularity influenced the linguistic profile of online communication. In 1979, Kevin MacKenzie, an internet user, suggested

the adding of some conventional marks to indicate *emotions, extra-linguistic, semiotic, and/or supra-segmental* information in the electronic discourse. This suggestion resulted in the creation of the *emoticons*, considered today a distinctive characteristic of CMC.

The '80s represent the period of the Internet's geographical expansion. Its popularity motivates more and more countries to create their own national networks and interconnect them. This is the decade when Internet becomes a connected set of networks: *The network of networks*. In what concerns CMC, the *newsgroups* are in expansion. They become widely popular when introduced on USENET. In 1988, Jarkko Oikarinen creates the *Internet Relay Chat (IRC)*, or chat as we know it today. This invention marks the beginning of *synchronous online communication* and the beginning of the development of one of the most popular forms of online communication of all times.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the evolution of the Internet there begins the so called *DotCom age*. Suddenly, beginning with 1990, the corporations start showing an interest in developing *e-business* and investing in digital technology. This is the moment when Internet goes commercial and becomes a business.

The first companies providing Internet connection as public service, similar to the phone, go on the market<sup>18</sup>. Besides online communication, one of the most important activities on the Web was information search and recovery. The systems that permit the finding and classification of information on servers, like Gopher (1991) or Veronica (1992) are released. During the same year, the revolutionary World-Wide Web (WWW) developed by Tim Berners-Lee becomes functional and imposes a new form of online communication, best described by the term "surfing the Internet"<sup>19</sup>. The use of the new opportunity to get informed by surfing the net and browsing its web pages becomes widely popular within a very short time. *Mosaic*, one of the first popular Web browsers facilitated the spreading and use of knowledge across the world. Other browsers, like *Erwise, ViolaWWW, Midas, and Cello*, were in use too. The creation of WWW is the beginning of a new age for the new media: online journalism, online radio and television. The first cyber station is created and broadcasts during this period<sup>20</sup> due to the RealAudio streaming technology that permits near real-time data transmission. The emergence of all these brand new technologies resulted in new *discursive forms of CMC* such as: web pages and e-news<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Hobbe's Internet timeline, "*world.std.com* is the first commercial provider of Internet dial-up access".

<sup>19</sup> The term is coined by Jean Armour Polly. A similar term was used by Brendan Kehoe – "net-surfing" – in a USENET post in 1991.

<sup>20</sup> First cyberstation, RT-FM, broadcasts from Interop in Las Vegas.

<sup>21</sup> In this period of the Internet evolution online-radio and online-television were simply new technologies used for transmitting the same content. Multimodal communication comes later in the evolution of CMC.

The commercial aspect seems to have been essential for the development of the Internet in this decade. Internet is a business and business can be done through Internet. This perception of the Internet determined shopping malls in 1994 to announce their presence on the Web. The services offered to the clients go online and since then it has been possible to order pizza, buy clothes, and book holiday trips through the Internet. All these commercial activities resulted in the emergence of a new web genre: *junk mail*. The widely spread phenomenon known as *spam* is now documented for the first time. Another aspect of the growth of commercial activities is the use of *commercial banners* (another CMC genre) on the web pages. The first *banner ads* appear online on the site *hotwired.com* in 1994<sup>22</sup>. WWW becomes the most popular online service accessed by the net users during this decade. The competition between browser owners becomes very strong. One of the incidents, designated as the “browser war”, put together two browsers: Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer and led to their respective software development at a tremendous pace. New functions are added to the basic configuration of this software, such as: html editor, multimedia browsing capabilities, browsing of the interactive web pages, a dynamic object management and others. This event caused important changes to the multimodal construction of the web pages.

The last decade we will talk about begins with 2000 and is marked by innovative multimedia technologies, commercial development of the Internet, growth of multilingual and usability support for web pages, increased interest for legal issues in Internet and multimodal interaction between net users.

The technical aspect of the net in this period is marked by the creation of sharing files programs and by the reaction of multimedia producers (music, films, etc.) considering this phenomenon a copyright law infringement. The first popular program in this area, Napster, starts the new practice of sharing multimedia files (this practice can be considered the beginning of multimodal CMC). Web pages containing

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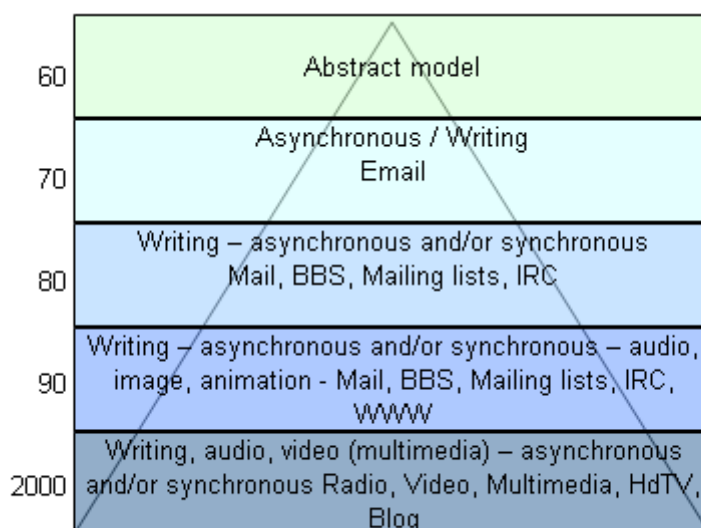
<sup>22</sup> The banners were advertising Zima (a beverage) and AT&T.

huge collections of short movies and providing free access to this material became hugely popular. Anyone can create today multimedia material with a minimum of technological support. All television sites display records of their programs and there are televisions emitting online. On the other hand, watching TV through an Internet connection and using as device a computer is a common practice today.

Important issues on CMC are the newly emerging electronic discourse forms: *the blog*, *the wiki*, and *the social networks*, alongside which *e-learning* as an innovative method of obtaining, transmitting, and acquiring knowledge can be considered the most complex concept in online educational communication.

The process of the evolution of the Internet seems to be unstoppable. New technologies, such as *e-tablets (iPad)*, *netbooks*, *smart phones (iPhone)*, *ebooks*, *game machines*, and *GPS devices* challenge the user to develop new discursive forms. Social networking allows people to interact in many different ways: *Facebook*, *Twitter*, or *YouTube* represent only the beginning of a novel kind of *multimodal CMC*.

For a better understanding of the periods of CMC development, we present a diachronic view of its evolution:



Decade	Web type	Type of communication	Discourse modalities
60	-	Project	Non existent
70	<b>Web 1.0</b>	Mail	Written text –



			asynchronous
80		Mail, BBS, Mailing lists, IRC	Written text – asynchronous and/or synchronous
90		Mail, BBS, Mailing lists, IRC, WWW	Written text – asynchronous and/or synchronous – audio, image, animation
2000	<b>Web 2.0</b>	Radio, Video, Multimedia, HdTV, Blog, Press, Wiki, Social Networks, e-learning, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	Written text, oral text, multimodal text asynchronous / synchronous
<b>2010</b>	<b>Web 3.0</b>	<b>Still in construction</b>	<b>The Semantic Web</b>

## 2.3 The Virtual Communities

"Home is where the hard drive is."  
(David Holtzman, CSO, 2003, 2004)

As we have noted from the evolution of the Internet and the *electronic discourse*, the most popular and attention-grabbing aspect of the Internet concerns its interactive features. Accessing virtual places (web pages, social network pages, channels, etc.), interacting with people, or sharing ideas and information has become a routine for most of us. Modern life is shared between the real and the virtual space, one can have a social life with friends to meet, events to participate in, or activities to carry out (professional working, e-business, e-learning, artistic creation) in either of them. The “global village”, the utopia of the ‘60s (McLuhan, 1962, 1964) has become a reality and today it is used as an Internet metaphor.

A more precise image of the virtual communities and their role in the social organisation of the Internet was portrayed by J.C.R. Licklider, one of the Internet pioneers. The virtual communities were considered a logical development of the “Galactic Network” described by Licklider.

### 2.3.1 What is a Virtual Community?

*Virtual community, e-community or online community* is difficult to explain. The first description of *virtual community, e-community or online community* was realised from the ‘inside’ was realised by Howard Rheingold<sup>23</sup> (1993) with an enthusiastic insight into the life and activities

<sup>23</sup> Rheingold (1993) represents the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the book. For this work we consulted the following editions: 1993, 2000, and the electronic version at

of the e-communities. The first important reference about the *daily life of a virtual community*, the book by Rheingold, testifies to the friendship, empathy, and newness shared, back in 1985, by the members of one of the most ancient virtual communities, the WELL<sup>24</sup> and to how problems from real life found a solution through collaboration and information sharing in the virtual world. Written with wit and charm, the book portrays the beginning of the virtual society and has some of the fascination of *the age of innocence*. Here's the author's definition of the *virtual communities*: “*Virtual communities* are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold, 2000, p.xx).

Rheingold's definition of a virtual community focuses on two key concepts: *public discussions* and *human feeling*, which explain the author's experience of how communities emerge and dwell in cyberspace. The virtual community the author describes is defined in terms of *space* (virtual space), *time* (the span of time the members are logged in), and *communication* (topics of interest). From the coincidence of these factors there emerge the feeling of common shared values and the friendship of its members. The virtual community has also to do with the newness of the interactive communication in Internet. It was demonstrated that the Internet became more popular after the development of the social networks services than ever before, when the user of the web had only the traditional Internet services consisting in *searching for information*, *email*, and *discussion lists*, a set of activities that involved little human interaction.

Depending on the insight one has into the phenomenon (social, humanities, technology, commerce, entertaining, etc.), the *virtual community* can be understood in a number of ways. The term can refer to:

- 1) a group of people who associate themselves over time with a computer-mediated environment, with emphasis on the social behaviour of the group;
- 2) the phenomenon of online group formation, typically in light of the historical and theoretical implications of the terms 'virtual' and 'community';
- 3) the technological environment – e.g., listserv, chat room, web-based environment – that facilitates and potentially shapes the formation and activity of online groups (Herring, 2008, p.920).

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<http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/> (last accessed on 29.12.2010). All editions were cited in the bibliography.

<sup>24</sup> According to the *Wikipedia*: “*The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link*, normally shortened to *The WELL*, is one of the oldest virtual communities in continuous operation. It currently has about 4,000 members. It is best known for its Internet forums, but also provides email, shell accounts, and web pages. The discussion and topics on the WELL range from the deeply serious to the generally silly, depending on the nature and interests of the participants.” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WELL\\_\(virtual\\_community\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WELL_(virtual_community))) – last accessed on 29.12.2010).

The study of the Internet from a social and communicational perspective commenced after the publication, in 1978, of the book of Hiltz&Turoff: *The Network Nation*. The early studies of the virtual communities focused mainly on how the new media was about to change the social and communicational relations and how the virtual communities were constructed. The bases for the social studies of the Internet were created during this period by the works of Jones (1995, 1998), Ludlow (1996), Oldenburg (1989), Wellman (1999), Wellman&Gulia (1999), Turkle (1996), Smith (1992).

Jones (1995 and 1998) considers the emergent forms of interactive CMC (*newsgroups* and *bulletin boards*) to be the basis of the virtual communities. The author notes that the virtual community structure is very different from the traditional definition of the term 'community' in the social sciences and tries to apply Effrat's<sup>25</sup> (1974) model of a traditional community to the new virtual communities. The author considers that all these features have appeared in CMC, and consequently, they are characteristic of the virtual communities. Jones introduces the term of *spatiality*, a social constructed space of CMC, different from the physical space<sup>26</sup>. As for Rheingold and Oldenburg, the virtual communities in Jones's conception are communities of individuals that share the same interests and goals.

Another approach to the virtual communities is developed by Ludlow (1996, pp.xiii-xvi) who highlights the fact that computer technology caused the disappearance of the traditional community and tries to analyse if it is possible to reconstruct a new concept adapted to the new realities, where the community may not be bound to the idea of space and geography. The author critically analyses the idea of "communities of interest" and that of "virtual community" contrasting them with the traditional "geographic communities". The author tries to understand how the new "virtual communities" fit in our society and what would be the reaction of the social system (political and legal). The insight of the author is critical and he doubts whether the virtual communities deserve in truth to be considered so.

The analysis of virtual communities is re-examined in Turkle (1996) starting with a comparison with Oldenburg's (1989) perspective. Two virtual communities (MUD) are contrasted and severely criticised. The virtual community is assimilated with an alienating activity that can confound its members and make them asocial in the real society. The author's arguments consist basically in two study cases of MUD members that seem to prefer virtual life to real life. The aspects the author is concerned about are the loss of reality (the digital model of the world is not reality), the isolation, the emergence of a new type of

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<sup>25</sup> Effrat (1974) describes the traditional community as a three main elements structure formed by: solidarity institutions; primary interaction; institutional groups.

<sup>26</sup> Space and its conceptualisation seems to be an issue in the social definition of the virtual communities, at least in the early studies.

violence in the virtual communities, and the escape from the real life problems and responsibilities.

Wellman (1999) criticises what he qualifies as “apocalyptic speculation” in the debate on the WWW and the Internet implications in the modern society. He considers that the Internet phenomenon is not isolated and can’t be studied out of the general context of people’s lives. Instead of the naive enthusiasm or of the pessimist insights, he recommends an analytic perspective of the *network community* in the more general context of the online interactions in the “global village”. This desiderate for a contextual analysis is reiterated later (Wellman, Mok, Carrasco, 2009<sup>27</sup>). The conclusions of the study demonstrate that the importance accorded by the social science researcher to “distance” as the definitory factor for the existence of a community in the ’90s, is only the result of an interpretation of the data out of their context. Further works of the same author on the description of the structure and the evolution of the *virtual communities* are Wellman&Gulia (1999) and Wellman (2004).

A social study that points out the communicational impact of the CMC represents the first observations on the Internet language (Smith, 1992). The author identifies essential aspects that impact the communicational interactions in the virtual communities. The author creates a profile of the *virtual interaction*, which in his conception is *aspatial* (the distance doesn’t influence the interaction), *asynchronous* (the interactions are different than face-to-face conversation), *textual* (the interactions are very similar to written conversations), the participants aren’t co-present during the interaction, the quantity of information is limited by the capacity of the technical devices that intermediate the communication, and *anonymous* (complete or partial).

In the present work we will adopt the sociological point of view and consider the virtual community as a group of people that share values, beliefs and activities and that interact constantly with one another through CMC. Based on human interaction, the virtual communities made it possible through CMC for the emergence of new forms of knowledge and information sharing and facilitated new forms of democratic participation in society (Flew, 2005, p.62). Their diversification is based on a combination of three factors: *technologies* (formats and modes of communication), *activities* (purpose), and *theme*. These factors determine the typology of virtual communities and consequently their specific type of discourse and form a basis for the study of the web genres.

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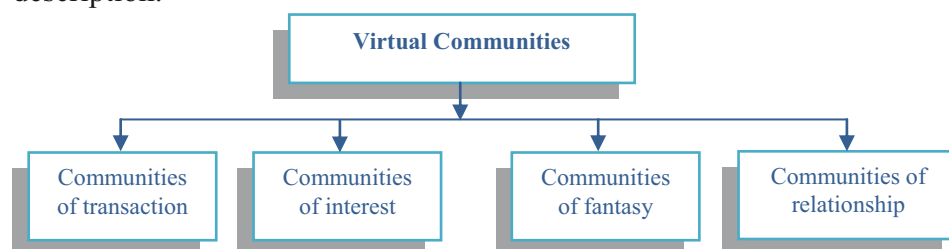
<sup>27</sup> Wellman, Barry, Mok, Diana, Carrasco, Juan-Antonio - the forthcoming article can be accessed on Wellman's publication's web page at: [http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/has\\_distance\\_died/Distance.htm](http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/has_distance_died/Distance.htm) (last access 29.12.2010).

### 2.3.2 Categories of Virtual Communities

As one can notice from the previous section of the current work, an important part of the users' activities on the Internet consist in the participation in social networks and in virtual communities. The rich variety of forms the social interaction adopts in the *virtual life* is difficult to describe and categorise. Even if the categorisation of the virtual communities would be a very useful tool in the study of the field, there are not many studies regulating this complicated aspect of the virtual life. The existing classifications of virtual communities are somewhat problematic. Some are out of date, partial or not descriptive enough. In this section we propose to survey some of the existing classifications of the virtual communities and the criteria used to organise them. The finality of such presentation is to establish the place occupied by the virtual communities formed on the professional web forums in the panorama of Internet virtual communities, their general features and categorisation in order to proceed in the next chapters of this work to a further analysis of this type of community.

The virtual communities are generally classified on the basis of their content or on the revenue they produce. Since our focus is on knowledge transmission in cyberspace through professional web forums, in what follows we will limit our discussion on the classification of the virtual communities to the *content-based classifications* and we will present some of the most important models.

One of the first approaches to the classification of the virtual communities belongs to Armstrong and Hagel (1996). They distinguish between four categories: *communities of transaction*, *communities of interest*, *communities of fantasy*, and *communities of relationship*, and they concentrate in more detail on the *transaction communities* in their description.



Lazar et al. (1998) propose a schema of classification following four main features of the virtual communities, presenting a *technical*, *psychological*, and *sociological* insight into this topic. The four features are: *attributes*, *supporting software*, *relationship to physical communities*, and *boundedness*<sup>28</sup>. Following this model of classification, the authors identified the following categories of virtual communities:

<sup>28</sup> *Boundedness* is a sociological concept, which relates to how many social relationships remain within the defined population of a group or community. In a tightly bounded community, a majority of the social relationships, and therefore the

*Attributes:*

- The reason of being of a virtual community (goals, common values and beliefs, interests, etc);
- Shared activities and resources;
- Strong interactions and emotional ties;
- Support between community members.

*Supporting software:*

- newsgroup, bulletin board, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), or Multi-User Dungeon (MUD).

*Relationship to physical communities:*

- Based on physical communities;
- Somewhat based on physical communities;
- Not related to any physical community

*Boundedness:*

- Work communities;
- Intranet;
- Specific geographic area;
- Specific segment of population.

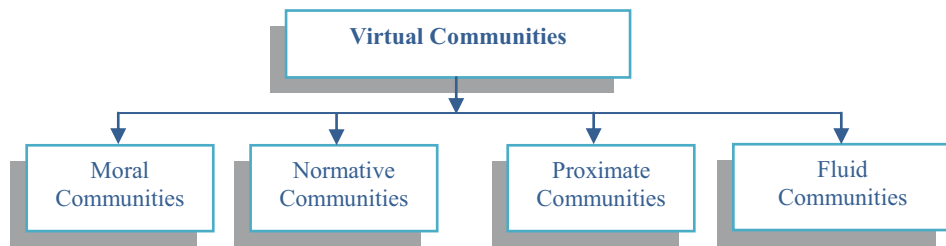
**Scheme of classification of the virtual communities, Lazar et al. (1998)**

Nevertheless, the criteria of classification are, in some cases, too general and can't constitute an effective means of distinguishing between different classes of virtual communities. This work is important because it discussed the need of criteria to help the specialist recognise and categorise the different types of virtual communities. The final goal of the study was to apply these criteria in the design and implementation of new virtual communities.

A different model of classification of the virtual communities was proposed by Komito (1998). The author takes into account a more subjective point of view on the virtual communities. He describes four types of communities based on the way the members of a community interact: if they are supportive and friendly, if there is a community feeling (in the sense mentioned by Rheingold 2000, p.5) existing between persons that never see each other in real life. A scheme of the Komito classification could have the following structure:

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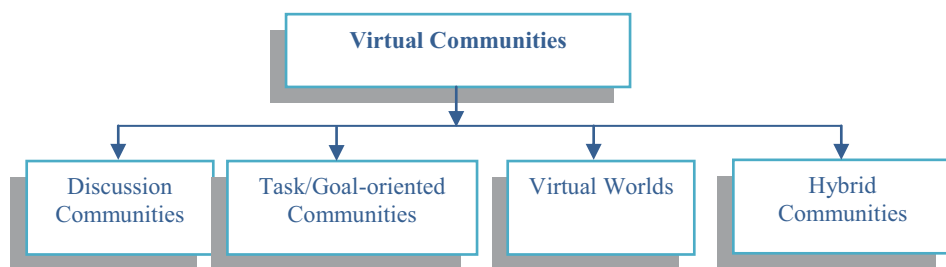
communication, take place among the members of that community. In a loosely bounded community, community members have more social ties with people who are outside of the defined community (Wellman, 1997).



**Scheme of classification of the virtual communities, Komito (1998)**

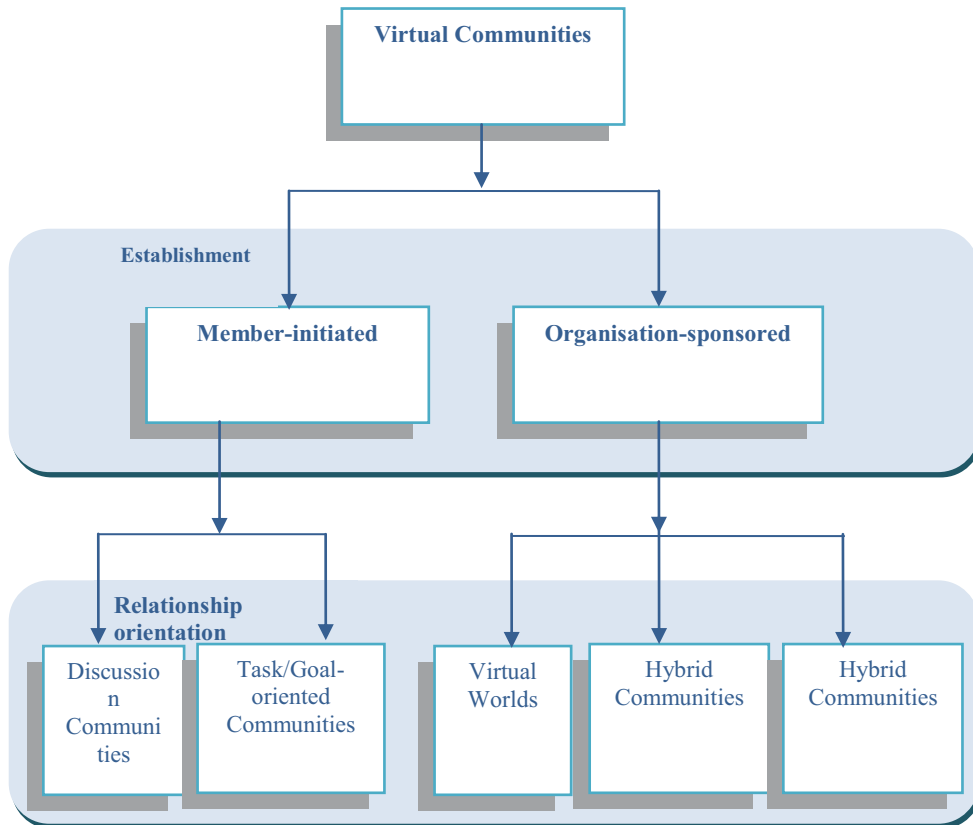
The author considers as *moral communities* the communities where the members share the same moral and social values, a united community with a strong feeling of solidarity. We will associate this description with the description of the virtual communities in the beginning of the electronic era. The *normative communities* group people that share the same experiences or frameworks of understandings. In this category the author introduces the *communities of practice* and the *communities of interests*, the essential element of this community being the topic of the discussion which makes its participants participate in interactions and share the virtual space. The *proximate communities* are communities that involve the idea of space. In *virtual communities* like MUD and MOOs, the interactions take place in virtual spaces (public or private). The author seems to consider the conceptualisation of the space as the distinctive category of the *proximate communities*. The *fluid communities* are generally described through a metaphor that refers to the life in the ancient societies and represents a very subjective point of view on their description.

One of the most comprehensible classifications of the virtual communities was presented in Stanoevska-Slabeva&Schmid (2001) and in Stanoevska-Slabeva (2002):



**Scheme of classification of the virtual communities, Stanoevska-Slabeva&Schmid (2001)**

As noted by Porter (2004), the classification operated by Stanoevska-Slabeva (2002) takes into consideration only one variable in the organisation of the virtual communities. The categorisation proposed by Porter is much more complex and in the following section we will use it especially in order to identify the category of the *professional web forum* (see 2.4). Porter (2004) establishes a two level model of the virtual communities (*establishment* and *relationship orientation*):



**Scheme of classification of the virtual communities, Porter (2004)**

This two level typology is completed with a characterisation of the virtual communities consisting in five attributes, named by the author ‘the five Ps’: *purpose (content of interaction)*, *place (extent of technology mediation of interaction)*, *platform (design of interaction)*, *population interaction structure (pattern of interaction)*, and *profit model (revenue-generation)*.

Other authors that one can take into account in what concerns the categorisation of the virtual communities are Jones&Rafaeli (2000), Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002), or Wu Song (2010).

## 2.4 Professional Web Forum: a Virtual Community

As a conclusion to this presentation chapter we consider that, after the general overview of the e-discourse (CMC) and virtual communities we can answer a series of essential questions concerning the object of our analysis in the present work: the professional web forum.

These questions are meant to describe the professional web forum from a scientific and objective point of view. We consider that it is important to relate the object of our analysis to different essential CMC concepts, for the different insights we have already found in literature are *partial*, too *descriptive*, or focus on other domains.



The first aspect we want to clarify is: *are the professional web forum interactions a form of e-discourse (CMC)?* If we take into account, as we have already commented on (see 2.2.1), the definition of Herring (1996, p.1), one can observe that the professional web forum is a form of e-discourse: a) it is the result of “text-based CMC”; b) the text that forms the interactions is written “... using a keyboard of one computer”; c) the collocutors receive and “... read the message on their computer screens...”.

The next step in the definition of CMC on the professional web forum consists in determining *what category of e-discourse (CMC) professional web forum interactions belong to?* In order to answer this question we must refer to the e-discourse categories (see 2.2.2). According to the scheme of the CMC modes (Chun, 2008, p.18) the *communication on professional web forums* belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of asynchronous, text-based CMC. Here, if we take into account the tradition established by Biber’s studies, we can state that the *professional web forum* is a hybridised discursive mode that has the aspect of a *written conversation*. If we point out the nature of the *professional web forum* under thematic aspect (Herring, 1996, pp.1-6), we may also observe that the *CMC on professional web forums* concerns specialised topics.

Another aspect of the description of the CMC on professional web forums concerns the moment of its creation: *when did CMC appear on the Internet professional web forums?* Based on the information presented in 2.2.3, the emergence of primitive forms of *web forums* (*newsgroups* and *mailinglists*) was recorded in the late ’70s. According to Rheingold (1993; 2000) the WELL was very active in 1985. The WELL is one of the most durable virtual communities and was best known for its *web forums*.

Since it seems that a form of CMC has been produced as a result of communicational interactions on professional web forums, the next question we have to answer is: *can professional web forums be defined as a virtual community?*

The answer to this question is affirmative. The *professional web forum* is a virtual community since its members form “a group of people who associate themselves over time with a computer-mediated environment” (Herring, 2008, see 2.3.1)

The answer to the last question will further clarify our assertion : *what category of community is the professional web forum?* Based on Porter’s (2004) typology the professional web forum is a *member-initiated virtual community* (in terms of establishment) and a *task-oriented community* (in terms of relationship orientation). Supplementary descriptions of the professional web forum can be obtained from the five descriptive attributes of the virtual communities typology. Based on these attributes, the *professional web forum* has: a *specialised purpose* (eg. computer problems assistance); a sense of the *virtual space* where the participants share values, beliefs, and information; the platform of the

professional web forum is represented by the asynchronic design of interaction, and there is no profit model since the participants in the web forum don't generate income.

As a conclusion to this chapter, we think that we have already demonstrated that we can talk about the *professional web forums interactions* as a particular form of e-discourse (CMC), as resulting from the communicational activity of the members of a professional web forum.

### 3. KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION ON THE INTERNET

*We can know more than we can tell.*  
(M. Polanyi: *The Tacit Dimension*)

As we have illustrated in the previous chapter, a *professional web forum* represents a virtual community that transmits specialised content through *computer mediated communication*. In this chapter we will try to demonstrate that the specialised content communicated between the members of a professional web forum represents *knowledge*.

*Knowledge* and *knowledge transmission* may cause surprise and confusion at the beginning. The first term is the main concept used by multiple disciplines; the second is a fairly recent term related to the theory of communication in general, and the theory of technological communication in particular. Both terms are complex to outline, each for different reasons. *Knowledge* as a concept has many interpretations in different domains, disciplines and theories from Antiquity to the present, whereas *knowledge transmission* represents a relatively new notion with a rich yet rather vague terminology.

For example, some of the terms describing *knowledge transmission* are: *knowledge communication*, *knowledge sharing*, *knowledge transfer*, *knowledge dialogue*, *knowledge intermediation*, and so on. Basically, each describes the same process of *knowledge transmission* and all may be used interchangeably as synonyms. Their use is not accurate in general, as one can observe in the *Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management* (Schwartz, 2006, p.493)<sup>29</sup>.

On the other hand, *knowledge* is, too, a complex term because of its interdisciplinarity. The term is central to different disciplines such as: *Philosophy*, *Logic*, *Epistemology*, *Cognitive Sciences*, *Didactics*, *Pedagogy*, *Psychology*, *Sociology*, and, more recently, to the *Theory of Communication*, *Artificial Intelligence*, *Knowledge Management*, and *E-*

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<sup>29</sup> An illustrative example of the imprecision of these terms can be observed in the definition of *knowledge sharing* and *knowledge transfer*.

*Learning*. Depending on the insight, *knowledge* is the object of different descriptions and classifications.

In this chapter, we will illustrate different knowledge and knowledge transmission/communication/learning theories in order to answer the following questions: *What is knowledge? How is knowledge organised? How is knowledge expressed? How is knowledge transmitted? What explanatory forms are used in knowledge transmission?*

### 3.1 What Is Knowledge?

Since *knowledge transmission* is the main focus of professional web forums communication, it is important to establish what this notion means. The problem in defining *knowledge* consists in the fact that it has represented the object of one of the main debates in philosophy during the last two millennia and that the discussion is still open.

The early approaches to *knowledge* have a rationalist basis and come from Plato (*Meno*) and Aristotle (*Organon*), each having a different insight into this topic. Both philosophers tried to define knowledge as universals and intended to provide a complete cognitive system. Furthermore, Aristotle considered that the metaphor is a powerful cognitive mechanism that facilitates the understanding and the codification of new cognitive content. The discussion about the nature of *knowledge* evolved in two main directions: *rationalism*<sup>30</sup>, as espoused by St. Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, René Descartes, G.W. Leibniz, and *empiricism*, John Locke, David Hume, and Bertrand Russell. With each new contribution, the discussion about the nature of knowledge would change. In 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, the impossibility of a universal definition of knowledge seems to have been generally accepted. Partial or domain-oriented definitions of *knowledge*, created to be operational within very specific domains, are the current approach, as noted by Pears (1972), Alavi & Leidner (2001), Stenmark (2002). This has led to the emergence of various definitions of knowledge in multiple domains. Today, *knowledge* represents an extremely heterogeneous notion (Zagzebski, 2004, pp.92-116).

Due to the heterogeneity of the studies on *knowledge*, in the current work we will rely on one of the several existing *theories of knowledge* and we will try to describe *knowledge*, its diversity, and its structure in the *professional web forum* by using its conceptual structure. Consequently, we have chosen the theory of Michael Polanyi, now a classical 20<sup>th</sup> century study about *knowledge* which constitutes the theoretical basis for a novel discipline known as *Knowledge Management*.

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<sup>30</sup> For more details on empiricism and rationalism, see Solomon & Higgins (2010).

### a) Polanyi and knowledge theory:

Discovered relatively late by the modern philosophers, the works of M. Polanyi had an important contribution to the development of Khun's (1962) subsequent theory. Later, both were quoted in Nonaka (1994) and Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) with a slight difference of interpretation<sup>31</sup>. The influence played by Polanyi's theory of knowledge on the early studies of *Knowledge Management* led to the acknowledgement of his works as an essential part of the framework of this discipline.

In what concerns our study, the decision to adopt Polanyi's perspective on the *nature of knowledge* is motivated by important reasons. First of all, Polanyi's works are under the strong influence of classic *rationalism*, the author continuing coherently a long tradition in the study of cognition and knowledge, to which we subscribe too<sup>32</sup>. The Aristotelian insights of his works concern essential some aspects such as the relation *knowledge – verbal communication* and *knowledge – language – metaphor* (Polanyi, 1975), which are important for the conceptual framework of our present investigation. Another argument pro Polanyi's perspective consists in the compatibility of his theory with *cognitivism*, which may allow us to relate concepts and terms from knowledge theory to other domains such as: learning, e-learning and to the communication theories. Polanyi's theory is also compatible with *discourse analysis*, especially in what concerns his view on knowledge as a social act, as he established the existence of an essential relation between *knowledge* and speech (implicitly, discourse).

Finally, the last of our arguments points to the relation between Polanyi's theory with the domain of *Knowledge Management (KM)*, which is essential for the description of knowledge communication between individuals, groups, and companies using CMC and IT innovations. This will allow us to observe and adapt one of the communicational models in the description of *knowledge transmission* in the professional web forum communication.

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### b) Polanyi and the tacit dimension:

The definition given by Polanyi to *knowledge* describes three of its essential aspects: a) true discovery cannot be explained through rules and/or algorithms, b) knowledge is public and at the same time personal, as it involves emotions and “passion”, and c) all knowledge is tacit.

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<sup>31</sup> Basically, the difference consists in the use of Polanyi's terminology in a way that some scholars seem to regard as a misinterpretation (see Stenmark, 2002, p.5).

<sup>32</sup> For example, concepts like “personal knowledge” and “tacit knowledge”, central to Polanyi's research on *knowledge* and *cognition*, are coherent with Ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle's.

By assuming this definition, the author distinguishes between two complementary types of knowledge: *focal knowledge* and *tacit knowledge*. *Focal knowledge* represents the knowledge about an object/concept/event/phenomenon one centres his attention on, and *tacit knowledge* represents the knowledge used to manage *focal knowledge*. For example, when someone plays a videogame, pressing the keys so that an action on the screen may be accomplished represents the *tacit knowledge*. The player's attention focused on the goal of the game (to perform different actions depending on the videogame) represents the *focal knowledge*.

The most important of the two is *tacit knowledge*. It has a changing nature, as it varies depending on the situation.

In Polanyi's opinion, knowledge is static and dynamic and man uses it permanently. Every moment of someone's life consists in a continuous switching between *tacit* and *focal knowledge*. The assimilation of new knowledge is explained by man's basic ability to blend known concepts with new ones.

#### c) Knowledge and expression:

According to Polanyi's ideas, man has the capacity to express *tacit knowledge*. The tacit knowledge expressed through speech is called *explicit knowledge*.

The author affirms that man learns the meaning of words by basic experience and practice (similarly to how animals come to know things) from other people that have used them before and which designate a specific experience. The function of knowledge articulation in language is to materialise tacit knowledge in order to examine it (analyse, categorise, and criticise). In other words, it is a way of increasing cognition.

Since not all tacit knowledge can be articulated (see Polanyi's example about knowledge involved in bike riding – Polanyi, 1975, p.41; Collins, 2010, p.99), it results that *tacit knowledge* is more extended than *explicit knowledge*. In other words, it seems that we know more than we can express by words. The author affirms that the articulation of knowledge is not sufficient to make knowledge explicit, that knowledge exists in one's mind because it was constructed there through words. Thus, the use of language (e.g. specialised terminology) is not mandatory once the knowledge has been acquired. For instance, in the computer field, one can install an operative system even if he/she has forgotten the use of computer terminology.

#### d) Functional aspect of knowledge:

The functions of knowledge, according to Polanyi, consist in supporting actions/decisions and acquiring new knowledge. The author

makes no distinction between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge. He claims that craftsmen use, acquire, and transmit knowledge in the same way that scientists and researchers do. He states there is a unique process-of-knowing.

e) An active conception of knowing:

Polanyi figures the act-of-knowing as an action. For the author *to know* means *to do* as in the case of a geek, for example, whose skills are an *act of doing* as well as an *act of knowing*. Depending on the type of action they are involved in, *physical* or *intellectual*, the author distinguishes different types of: *tools*, *rules*, and *agents*.

The intellectual tools are distinct from the physical tools, because they are used in a social context. One must know a certain social context in order to use intellectual tools. Scientists and researchers use intellectual tools and rules in a similar fashion. The intellectual tools and rules are involved in information processing. The author also mentions the distinctive characteristics of the intellectual and physical tools by remarking that while craftsmen can easily detach from their tools and activities, scientists can't.

The author abolishes the difference between people that "do" things and people that "think" things. Both activities, in his opinion, are different forms of *doing*, different materialisations of the process of knowing. Consequently, he proposes the terms of *intellective doing* and *agentive doing*.

In conclusion, Polanyi's theory of *knowledge* defines this concept as static (*knowledge*) and dynamic (*process-of-knowing*). Knowledge can be *tacit* and *focal*, both of which are considered by the author as dimensions of *knowledge* rather than two categories of the same concept. Some of the tacit knowledge can be articulated, therefore transmitted.

## 3.2 Knowledge Structures

As we have already seen in 3.1, *knowledge* is not an amorphous and indefinite notion but a heterogeneous one. In other words, even if, apparently it seems chaotic, it can be categorised and ordered. In this section we will illustrate and comment on some of the categorisations of knowledge with the intent to establish which would be most appropriate to operate with in the analysis of the structure of knowledge on the professional web forums. The insights we have taken into account come from *epistemology* and *knowledge management*.

A general accepted and basic classification of knowledge comes from philosophy and states the existence of three categories of

knowledge: *personal knowledge*<sup>33</sup>, *procedural knowledge*, and *propositional knowledge*. The first category, also known as *knowledge by acquaintance*, represents the knowledge of an *object*, *phenomenon*, or *concept*<sup>34</sup>. *Procedural knowledge* represents the ability/capability of doing something (e.g. install an operating system, create a web page, drive a car, fix a hard drive, etc.). Lastly, *propositional knowledge*, the main cognitive aspect epistemology is interested in, represents the knowledge one “believes or knows (propositionally) that he knows personally”<sup>35</sup>. *Personal* and *propositional knowledge* are involved in science, each in a different way. Personal knowledge represents knowledge acquired through personal experience (what classic Greek philosophers and cognitivists understand by “sensorial perception”). Propositional experience is a *deduction*, *interpretation*, *justified belief* that one obtains on the basis of one’s personal experience. *Propositional knowledge* represents an evaluation and a rationalisation of a primary personal experience.

An epistemological point of view on the classification of knowledge is proposed by Pollock & Cruz (1999, pp.15-22). The authors don’t categorise directly knowledge but areas of knowledge. They distinguish the following six areas: *perceptual knowledge*, *a priori knowledge*, *moral knowledge*, *knowledge of other minds*, *memory*, and *induction*. This classification is very general and slightly heterogeneous. I would say that this is a list of general themes of discussions about knowledge rather than a classification of knowledge. Due to the various criteria it is based on, this classification is not operational for our purpose.

Another epistemological paradigm of knowledge hierarchy, based on various authors<sup>36</sup>, is presented by Sveiby (1999, p.24). The author proposes a three-level hierarchy of knowledge consisting in: *skill*, *know-how*, and *competence/expertise*. The criterion for this classification is the manner of following rules. Consequently, *skill* represents a primary level of knowledge, where knowledge is the action that takes place in a context controlled by the self (basically, actions of the self with no interaction with the social environment). Skills are represented by practical abilities such as using the keyboard and the mouse when writing an email or searching for a web page. One is able to appreciate if the result of the action is positive or not.

*Know-how* represents a superior level that includes the *skill*. It is a category of knowledge that acts in social contexts or, sometimes, involves problem solving capabilities. It is the result of the performance that is important (Ryle, 1949). Polanyi does not include *know-how* in his

<sup>33</sup> This concept has nothing to do with the definition of *personal knowledge* in Polanyi’s knowledge theory.

<sup>34</sup> It can also signify that one knows the existence of an *object*, *phenomenon*, or *concept*.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on this classification of the types of knowledge, please consult Villoro (1998: 224-291).

<sup>36</sup> Especially Polanyi, but not only.



classification, probably, as Sveiby (1999) appreciates, because his arguments go against Ryle's.

Sveiby considers *expertise/competence* (Polanyi, 1958) as the most important category of knowledge. It incorporates *know-how* and consists in the ability to submit to, to influence, and modify the rules by reflection. The rules can pertain to a specialised field or can be determined by tradition. The *expertise* is formalised as the relation between individuals and a social system of rules (Polanyi, 1958). The expert's action in a specialised context where his/her expertise is needed is guided by reason and he/she will do what he/she knows/believes he has to do in that context and not by impulsivity or subjectivity.

Somehow outside of the classification of knowledge, Sveiby also considers the situation of the absence of knowledge, of *incompetence*, a category discussed by Polanyi (1958). The latter distinguishes between *scientific guesses* (mistaken guesses) and unscientific guesses (*false and incompetent guesses*). The quality of *incompetent* in the perspective of Polanyi is socially determined by a context and a role a person assumes. Due to the fact that Sveiby describes a paradigm where knowledge is classified by levels of competences and that he also takes into consideration the phenomenon of *incompetence*, we consider this classification as the most accurate for the description of knowledge transmitted through Internet.

Another interesting point of view in the classification of knowledge is variably presented in a number of widely read books. Knowledge is articulated as a hierarchy of elements known as "knowledge hierarchy", "information hierarchy", "DIKW hierarchy", and "knowledge pyramid" (Rowley, 2007). Some of the most important scholars that have developed hierarchic structures of knowledge are: Cleveland (1982), Ackoff (1988), Bellinger (1997), and Tuomi (1999). According to these authors, *knowledge* is just a level in a hierarchic structure that commences with *data* and finishes with *wisdom*. The DIKW hierarchy presents different structures from several authors, where the definitions of their components and the relation between them are differently described<sup>37</sup>. The components of the hierarchy are usually defined in terms of other elements of the same hierarchy (e.g. *information* is defined in terms of *data*; *knowledge* is defined in terms of *information*, and so on). The hierarchies proposed are the following:

- Cleveland (1982): facts/ideas, information, knowledge, wisdom
- Ackoff (1988): data, information, knowledge, understanding, wisdom
- Tuomi (1999): data, information, knowledge

The hierarchisation of knowledge has its origins in the work of one of the exponents of American philosophy, Mortimer Adler, and marks the transition to the new discipline known as *knowledge management*

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<sup>37</sup> For complete information on the DIKW please see (Rowley, 2007).

(KM), where some of these hierarchies were implemented. Nevertheless, KM has provided a different insight into knowledge classification, as Stenmark (2002, p.4) observes. Some of the examples of the classification of knowledge in KM structure knowledge as follows:

- Nonaka (1994): tacit and explicit knowledge;
- Boisot (1995): proprietary, public, personal, and commonsense knowledge;
- Choo (2000): tacit, explicit, and cultural knowledge;
- Spender (1998): explicit, implicit, individual, and collective knowledge;
- Polanyi (1966/1997): tacit, focal<sup>38</sup> knowledge.

Other classifications of knowledge can also be contemplated in *pedagogy*, *e-learning*, or artificial intelligence. As one can observe, every domain/discipline has developed knowledge classifications and hierarchies appropriate to their activities and goals. In what concerns knowledge transmission on *professional web forums*, we take the classification proposed by Sveiby to be the most convenient, especially because it also comprises *incompetence* as an aspect related to *knowledge*, and thus it is more attuned to the structure of the professional web forum discussion, which involves both aspects: *knowledge* and *ignorance*.

### 3.3 Discursive Forms of Knowledge

The answer to the question *how knowledge is expressed* entails a double perspective: philosophical and linguistic. The philosophical point of view describes the relation knowledge – articulation of knowledge in speech, and the linguistic point of view describes the textual organisation of the discourses encoding knowledge. In this section we will illustrate, firstly, the philosophical point of view in order to identify the logic relation between *knowledge – speech – text*.

The first mention of a direct relation between *knowledge* and *text* comes from Plato (*Theaetetus*<sup>39</sup>):

**Socrates:** And there might be given other proofs of this belief, if I'm not mistaken. But do not let us in looking for them lose sight of the question before us, *which is the meaning of the statement, that right opinion with rational definition or explanation is the most perfect form of knowledge.* (Plato, *Theaetetus*, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71th/theaetetus.html>)

<sup>38</sup> All the information above is cited from Stenmark (2002: 4).

<sup>39</sup> Plato's dialogue that presents opinions on the *nature of knowledge*. The main character Socrates and his collocutor Theaetetus analyse three insights about knowledge: *knowledge as perception*, *knowledge as true belief*, and *knowledge as true belief supported by account*.

As we can observe in the fragment above, Plato considers that knowledge <sup>40</sup> as “the right opinion” supported by a “definition” or an “explanation” is the way to express knowledge. We lay emphasis on the words “definition” and “explanation” as *the* two ways of constructing knowledge, because we consider this statement as essential for our analysis of the transmission of knowledge on the professional web forums.

Other early mentions of explanations in philosophy describe the *functional or teleological explanation* (Aristotle, *Physics*, 350BC): a type of explanation which provides the function or the goal of an event. Since then, different philosophical theories of explanations were developed and they were classified into different categories, such as the *causal explanation* (David Lewis, 1986; Ruben, 1993) – a type of explanation which gives information about the chronological evolution of an event, and the *probabilistic explanation*, considered to be a key element in the philosophy of science.

Important contributions to the description of the explanatory mechanism are those of Carl Hempel (1965 p. 336)<sup>41</sup> according to whom the explanation is an *argument*. The author distinguishes between two types of explanations, both having the same structure: DN (deductive-nomological explanation) and IS (inductive-statistical explanation). According to Hempel’s model, an explanation contains different *premises* and a *conclusion*. The author considers that there are two types of premises: *statements*, describing the *initial conditions* which lead to the production of the explanation and *generalisations*, rules/laws on which the explanation is based. The *conclusion* of the explanation is the event to be explained.

The DN explanation is considered to be a *universal generalisation*, while the IS is more of a *statistical generalisation*. For example, a DN explanation is:

Premises:	Initial conditions (C):	Mary is a girl that has the same biological parents as I.
	Generalisations (L):	All girls that have the same biological parents as I are my sisters.
Conclusion (E):		Mary is my sister.

An example of IS explanation is:

Premises:	Initial conditions (C):	A man is under water for more than 5 minutes.
	Generalisations (L):	Almost anyone who stays under

<sup>40</sup> Conceptualised here as “true belief”.

<sup>41</sup> C. G. Hempel was one of the most important logical empiricist philosophers. His work on *explanation theory* is significant in current thought.

	water more than 5 minutes drowns.
Conclusion (E):	The man has drowned.

Even if Hempel's theory was the first in providing a solid theoretical basis in the description and understanding of the mechanism of the explanation, this model has its limitations as highlighted by posterior critics of this theory<sup>42</sup>.

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It is generally accepted that the modern explanation theory is modelled by five traditional directions (Mayes, 2005), as follows: *Causal Realism* (Scriven, 1959; Salmon, 1984, 1990), *Constructive Empiricism* (Fraassen, 1980), *Ordinary Language Philosophy*, mainly the illocutionary theory of explanation (Achinstein, 1983), *Cognitive Science* (Holland et al., 1986), and *Naturalism and Scientific Realism* (Sellars, 1962; Harman, Lehrer, Thagad, Kitcher, 1986). We will not insist any further on this, because our intention is only to underline the fact that some of the models proposed by the philosophical explanation theory have been developed later rather as language oriented theories, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

We consider the *Pragmatic theory of the explanation* elaborated by Fraassen to be a very important aspect in the study of explanation in discourse. The author defines the explanation as "...an answer to a why-question", and consequently, "... a theory of the explanation must be a why-question theory". (Fraassen, 1980, p. 138)

Fraassen oversteps the philosophical point of view and tries to describe the explanation at a textual level from a pragmatic point of view. In order to observe the pragmatic dimension of the explanation, he first evaluates the explanation in its communicational context, and only then goes on to a definition and classification of the *questions* as the element which triggers an explanation. On this basis he, then, articulates the theory of the why-questions, and concludes with the evaluation of the answers to *why-questions* (the *explanation*) and their relevance.

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Fraassen points out that the explanation can be realised only through communication and underlines that all communication is context-dependent, and so is the explanation. The context is described in terms of

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<sup>42</sup> For a concise presentation of the criticism of Hempel's theory of explanation see *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/explanat/#H1>). For more details see Wesley Salmon (1984) on the problem of relevance and Sylvain Bromberger (1966) on the problem of asymmetry.

time (now), space (here), “speaker” (as referent of “I”), addressee (as referent of “you”), and person discussed (as referent for “he/she”). The entire context is perceived in the conception of Fraassen (1980, p. 138) as an “idealization” of the real/physical context.

*The Questions:* An important component of Fraassen’s theory of the explanation is the *question*, defined by the author in the following terms:

A **question** is an abstract entity; it is expressed by an **interrogative** (a piece of language) in the same sense that a proposition is expressed by a declarative sentence. (Fraassen, 1980, p. 140)

The author states that the mechanism of a question involves the existence of a response, but he underlines that not every response can be regarded as an *answer*. This statement is used as the basis to the classification of answers depending on their degree of relevance. Taking as example a simple question, Fraassen (1980, p. 140) analyses the answers and creates a basic typology of its possible answers: *direct answer*<sup>43</sup>, *code*<sup>44</sup>, and two types of *partial answers*<sup>45</sup>. He also (Fraassen 1980, p. 142) observes that the classification of the answers has to be open because they are context-dependent and they must differ in structure depending on the situation of communication.

*The Formal Pragmatics of Why-Questions:* The author considers that a theory of explanation is essentially a theory of why-questions, and in order to provide a functional model of the explanation he describes the mechanism of why-questions as a first step, followed by the evaluation of the answers, implicitly explanations.

The *Why-Questions* describe a reality and ask for the reason for the existence of the phenomena observed in the described reality. According to Fraassen<sup>46</sup>, the why-questions present the following structure:

1. **Topic:** A proposition describing the reality and asking for the reason of it. For example: *Why did the chicken cross the road?*<sup>47</sup>
2. **Contrast Class:** A collection of propositions together with the topic of the question representing a set of alternatives in opposition with the why-question. For example:
  - a. *Why did the chicken cross the road?* – Possible alternatives to “the chicken” could be every element

<sup>43</sup> A complete answer which gives complete information to the question asked without any supplementary details.

<sup>44</sup> An elliptic *Yes/No* answer, which must be interpreted in the communicational context in order to be correctly understood.

<sup>45</sup> The main type of *partial answer* is that which gives more information than the information requested in the question. The second type of *partial answer* gives less information.

<sup>46</sup> Fraassen uses the terminology of Henry Leonard

<sup>47</sup> *Why did the chicken cross the road?* is one of the most famous English riddles. For some examples of this riddle consult: <http://jrocas.com.ph/archives/why-did-the-chicken-cross-the-street/> or

which enters in opposition with the subject of the proposition such as: *the duck, the hen, the eagle*, and so on.

- b. *Why did the chicken cross the road?* – Possible alternatives to “cross” as it appears in some of the versions of this riddle: *Why the chicken **didn't** cross the road?*
- c. *Why did the chicken cross the road?* – Possible alternatives to “the road” could be every element which enters in opposition with it: *the bridge, the street, the alley*.

3. **Relevance Relation:** refers to the reason for asking the why-question. In the case of the why-question: *Why did the chicken cross the road?* the humour of this riddle resides in the lack of relevance between the why-question and the explanatory answer. For example: *Whether the chicken crossed the street or the street moved beneath the chicken depends on your mark of reference*.

Fraassen also proposes a formal model of the explanation where if the why-question can be formalised as  $Q = \langle P_k, X, R \rangle$ <sup>48</sup>, then *the answer/the explanation* has the following form: (\*)  $P_k$  in contrast to (the rest of)  $X$ , because  $A$  (Fraassen, 1980, p. 144).

This formalism expresses a proposition. Its contents depend on the context of the  $Q$  (*why-question*). As well, the explanation mechanism claims that  $P_k$  is true and the alternatives of the  $X$  class are not true, the  $A$  preceded by *because* claims that  $A$  is true and is basically the reason for the *why-question*.

This model of the explanation is criticised by Salmon and Kitcher (1987), who argue that Van Fraassen's theory of explanation is too general and does not impose enough constraints on the relevance relation.

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The *explanation theory* presents different insights and different points of view in *linguistics*. Here the *explanation* represents a key concept in the *functionalist* and in the *generative* (Chomskian) *linguistics* approach, with special focus on the syntax. The main focus is on the internal structural principles of language regarded as explanatory constructs independent of meaning (Newmeyer 1998, pp.476-477). An important aspect of the perspective on the explanation and the language universals is the typology of explanation which is operational at the textual/discursive level too. Thus, the four types of explanation described by the functionalist grammar can make us understand that explanations can be structured in different manners, which is a good approach to the study of the explanatory sequence at a discursive level. Consequently, the

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<sup>48</sup>  $Q$  stands for the why-question,  $P_k$  stands for the topic of the why-question,  $X$  for the contrast-class, and  $R$  for the relevance relation.

functionalist distinction between the *teleological explanation*<sup>49</sup>, the *generalizing explanation*<sup>50</sup>, the *historical explanation*<sup>51</sup>, and the *generalizing-historical explanation*<sup>52</sup> can help us with the classification of the explanatory sequences at the discursive level.

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Other linguistic perspectives on the explanatory discourse as *informative and explanatory communication* describe the *explanation* within the theoretical frame of the studies presented by such scholars as Austin, Grice, or Searle.

In his book *A Theory of Discourse. The Aims of Discourse* (1971), Kinneavy develops his *discourse theory* based on the classic rhetorical, poetic, and linguistic tradition<sup>53</sup>. The author synthesises several theories and perspectives, from the classical Greek tradition to the modern theories of rhetoric, into a theory oriented to the *aims of the communication*. His is considered to be the most important contribution to the development of the domain of *informative and explanatory communication*.

In the last four chapters of his book, the author classifies *communication* based on the locutor's aims. These aims are deeply rooted in the approaches of the Ancient philosophers and rhetoricians, such as Isocrates, Aristotle or Cicero<sup>54</sup>. He distinguishes, defines and describes four discourses with four different aims: *referential discourse*, *persuasive discourse*, *literary discourse*, and *expressive discourse*. This distinction represents a modern perspective on the uses of the modes of discourse (description, narration, definition/classification, and evaluation). In Kinneavy's theory of communication the modes of discourse are subordinated to the aims of the discourse<sup>55</sup>. Even if his theory was criticised from different perspectives (Fulkerson, 1984), it is still considered an important reference in didactics, especially in the

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<sup>49</sup> It refers to the *motivation of an action*. E.g. Q: *Why did you shut down the TV?* A: *So he could do his homework.*

<sup>50</sup> It refers to a phenomenon regarded as an instantiation of a more general phenomenon. e.g. Q: *Why do we have no classes today?* R: *Today is San Jordi. (a holiday in Catalunya).*

<sup>51</sup> It refers to phenomena which chronologically lead to a certain situation. : E.g. Q: *Why don't we need a visa to travel to EU?* A: *Because Romania was admitted to the EU in 2006.*

<sup>52</sup> It refers to phenomena that are the result of generally historical constraints. E.g. Q: *Why the bats haven't eyes?* A: *Because they have developed a different orientation system based on ultrasound which is better adapted to their environment than the visual orientation.*

<sup>53</sup> The communication theory of James Kinneavy is especially based on Aristotle's communication triangle and on the re-discussion of the Platonic concept of *kairos*.

<sup>54</sup> Actually, just three of the four aims are rooted in Ancient philosophy and rhetoric: reference, persuasive and literary. The expressive aim is rooted in the 17th century approaches.

<sup>55</sup> Kinneavy distinguishes the aims of communication starting from Alexander Bain's forms and modes of discourse: narration, description, exposition, argumentation, persuasion, and poetry.

composition textbooks pointing out the essence of Kinneavy's theory, the purposes for writing (assimilated with the *aims*) and the modes (ways to construct/develop the *aims*).

Even if Kinneavy's theory is not fundamental for the description of the explanatory sequence, it represents the starting point of the American *theory of the informative and explanatory communication* (Rowan, 2008, pp. 403-438). After an estimation of the main problems of the informative and explanatory communication and after presenting a few examples on how the lack of good informative and explanatory communication can affect the reception of the message one is transmitting at a certain moment, the author takes into consideration different aim-oriented communication theories. She begins with the ancient Greek tradition and, after an overview of the "beliefs" on readability, she shifts her focus onto informative communication and visits the 20th century theories from the perspective of the language use and goals, the most important scholars being, in the author's opinion, Austin, Grice, and Searle. She also points out that from among the different researches done in this domain, the most effective is Kinneavy's theory.

Based on this theory she creates a schema from which, on account of the different aims of communication, there result different categories of *informational and explanatory discourse*. Rowan (2008, p. 409) starts with the *discursive aims* and distinguishes in her classification different *elements* and *goals*. Rooted into these elements and goals, she distinguishes between the following types of reference: *self-expressive*, *persuasive*, *reference*, and *literary*. From these types only the *reference* presents a rich variety of discourses: *exploratory*, *informative*, *scientific*, and *representative* (Rowan, 2008, p. 410). The informative discourse is considered to be a representation of reality and it shares characteristics with the *scientific discourse* and *exploratory discourse*<sup>56</sup>. Rowan quoting Kinneavy distinguishes two different categories of *informative discourse*: *explanatory* and *informatory discourse*. In what follows, we will reproduce Rowan's classification of texts:

<b>EXPLANATORY DISCOURSE</b> (efforts to deepen understanding)	<b>INFORMATORY DISCOURSE</b> (efforts to create awareness)
Textbooks	Instructions
Briefings	Recipes
Lectures	Online help
Glossaries	Indexes
Dictionary definitions of "stock"	Stock quotes
Encyclopaedia entry on "baseball"	Baseball scores

<sup>56</sup> For more details on the description of discourses, please see Rowan (2008: 409-414).



Explanatory news features	Brief news stories
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As one can observe, the explanation can represent an entire discourse, as in *glossary*, *dictionary*, and *encyclopaedia entries*, or it can represent features of another discourse, like in *explanatory news features*.

We consider that, in what concerns the professional web forum, the explanation represents a major feature of a communicational interaction (professional web forums), a discourse designed to represent reality and determined by the goal to make specialised knowledge more accessible to the lay people.

In what follows, we will distinguish between the *explanation* as a *type of text* presenting a specific discursive organisation and being oriented to a specific goal (*explain, specify, point out something*), and the *explanatory strategies*, different types of texts, used in a discourse with the intention to *explain, specify, point out something*.

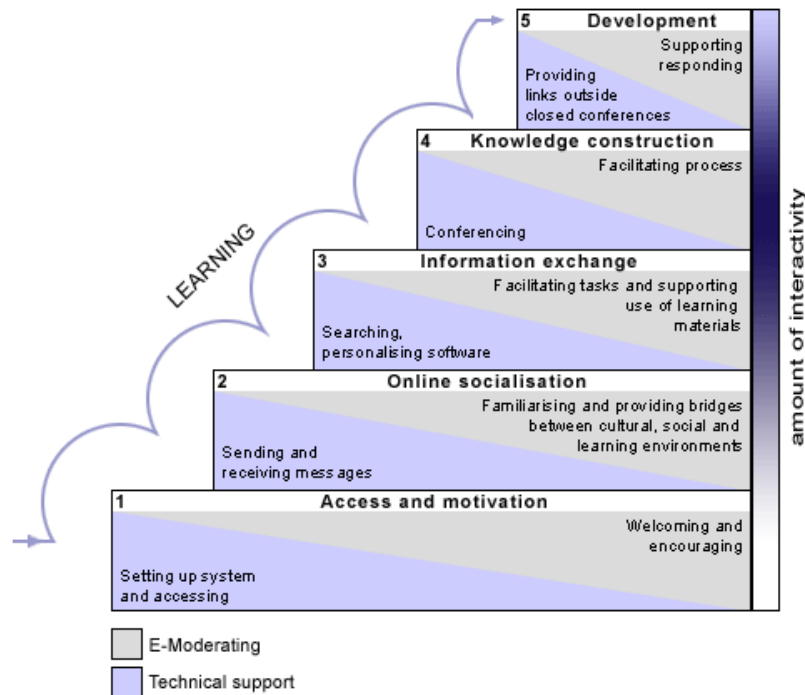
### 3.4 Transmission of Knowledge

If questions like nature, type, and scope of knowledge belong to the domain of epistemological research, the question about *how knowledge is transmitted* represents a different focus on the problem<sup>57</sup> and belongs to a different area of study. Different disciplines present their particular insights into the process. They are mostly educational disciplines such as: e-learning, v-learning, life-long learning, mLearning<sup>58</sup>, knowledge management, and so on. They describe different approaches to the knowledge communication process. The way the process is viewed varies with every discipline. We, thus, distinguish two main perceptions of the knowledge communication process: *knowledge communication as learning process* (e-learning, v-learning, life-long learning, mLearning, and all other forms of institutional learning existing on the Internet) and *knowledge communication as sharing process between individuals* (online informal learning and knowledge management). Each of these insights has its specific approaches to the process of knowledge transmission and its specific models that illustrate how different the process of knowledge transmission is in either case. In what follows, we will comment on two important models representing both orientations in order to highlight the specifics of knowledge transfer on the professional web forums.

<sup>57</sup> Knowledge transmission focuses on the process, methods, and on the participants involved in the transmission of knowledge. *Knowledge* is not the main element of the problem.

<sup>58</sup> *mLearning* is a form of e-learning that uses mobile technology for the transfer of knowledge. For more details see Metcalf (2006: 2).

The first model represents *knowledge communication as learning process* and describes the e-learning process as a series of levels the *e-student* has to go through in order to achieve a specific educational goal.



#### Five stage formal model of E-tivities – Gilly Salmon (2002, p. 11)

As one can observe, the process is cumulative and gradual. Three types of interactions can be identified: *e-student – technical support*, *e-student – e-moderator*, and *e-student – e-student(s)*. The transmission of knowledge is realised through controlled/assisted activities and the amount of interactivity grows with every stage. It is important to observe that the motivation didn't exist before entering the system, so the student must be motivated to socialise, communicate and construct knowledge. One main aspect of the e-learning process as described by Gilly Salmon (2002) is that the motivation seems not to exist outside the learning process. It is created during the five stages of e-learning and is oriented towards “engagement and mobilisation of learning”<sup>59</sup> and represents an essential aspect of the knowledge transmission process especially because the motivation depends on the level of the active involvement of the e-student in the process of e-learning.

The knowledge transmission process is conceived as a social act, where the e-student interacts with other e-students. One of the first levels of knowledge transmission is conceptualised as *information exchange* and is the result of the performance of specific tasks and the assimilation of knowledge from learning materials. *Knowledge construction* is the superior level of knowledge transmission and supposes the existence of a

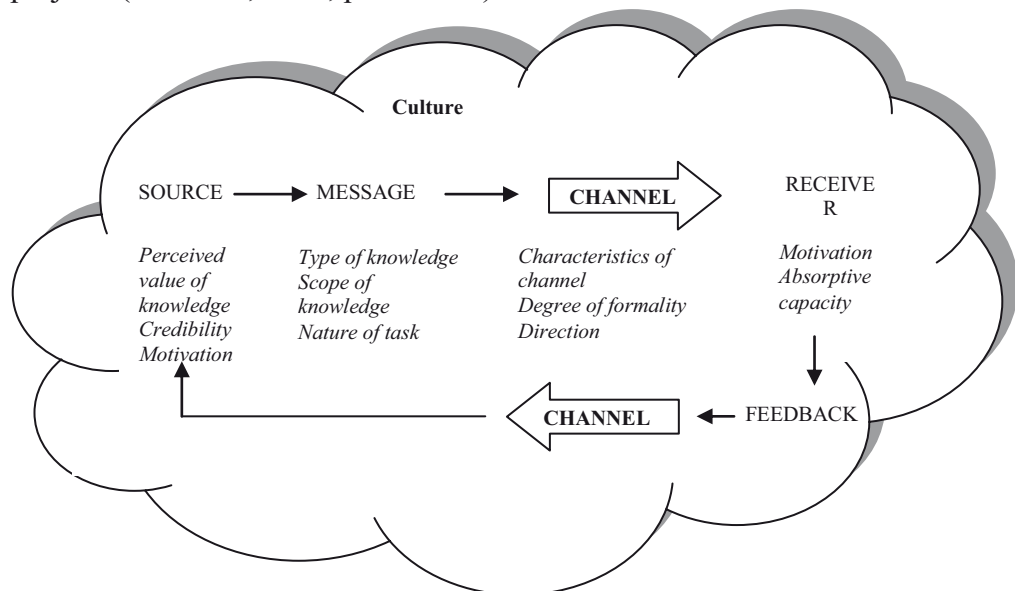
<sup>59</sup> See the comments of Gilly Salmon on the Five stage model, section *Access and Motivation* at: <http://www.atimod.com/e-tivities/5stage.shtml> (last accessed on 29.12.2010).

united group of e-students that have their own group dynamics. The knowledge is constructed dynamically through online interaction, each e-student assuming different roles in the process.

The last stage of the process shows an independent e-student that can evaluate, criticise, and appreciate the information and cognitive contents he needs and has all the necessary skills, technical and social. Gilly Salmon describes practically an *independent e-learner* that has no more need of assistance and mediation in order to acquire new knowledge.

It is important to observe that the description of the skills acquired after the entire process described in the *E-tivities*, the e-student is able to assume the condition of *independent e-learner*, the same condition a *novice* assumes when he/she opens a thread on a professional web forum. From this perspective, the *professional web forum user* has, at the beginning of the *knowledge transmission process*, the same skills as an e-student after he/she has passed through the entire *e-tivities* process. Thus, we consider that the e-learning model is not compatible with the knowledge transmission process, since the e-student is not considered an *independent learner* during his/her training, and consequently, the activities he/she develops are different from the activities that a professional web forum user performs in order to acquire knowledge.

The second model of *knowledge transmission* comes from knowledge management (KM) and describes *knowledge sharing between individuals*. It is based on the *mathematical model of communication* developed by Shannon & Weaver (1949), later developed by Berlo (1960), and is largely applied in the description of specialised knowledge transmission through CMC in companies, corporations, and research projects (Jacobson, 2006, p. 508-514):



As one can observe, the model is composed of: *source*, *message*, *channel*, *receiver* and *feedback*. Knowledge transmission is conceived as a communicative process that takes place in a social context, between individuals, groups, or companies. The *source* is an individual whose

function is to transmit the knowledge he/she possesses, intentionally or unintentionally<sup>60</sup>. It is important to observe that this model insists on the necessity to motivate the individuals in a company to share their knowledge, whereas the receiver *is* self-motivated to learn. The *message* is the component where the knowledge is encoded. The author mentions that the model she discusses is based on the knowledge structure proposed by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) following the classification proposed by Polanyi (1958), who describe knowledge as a continuum between tacit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge represents the part of tacit knowledge that can be articulated in formal language and transmitted through CMC as files. Tacit knowledge can't be articulated through language and is more difficult to transmit. The knowledge that is transmitted between individuals in a company can be tacit and/or explicit. The message also encodes the goal and the nature of the tasks to be carried out.

The *receiver* of the knowledge is characterised by *motivation* and *absorptive capacity* (Jacobson, 2006, p. 510). The receiver is self-motivated, and his/her motivation can be affected by different factors such as the competition between employees in a company or the competition between companies. This usually affects the degree of acceptance of the knowledge that comes from a person or a company perceived as competitors. The absorptive capacity of the *receiver* has to do with his/her ability to evaluate and recognise the value of the knowledge transmitted, his/her capacity to assimilate and apply it.

The *communication channel* by means of which knowledge is transmitted is multimodal (it involves video, audio and text) in the case of CMC on the professional web forums. In a company the channels are formal or/and informal and present different hierarchic degrees.

The last component, the *feedback*, represents the reaction of the receiver of the message. From this reaction one can check if the message was received, understood and if the result of the knowledge transmission is as expected. The feedback on a professional web forum discussion can be a verbal confirmation or information. The response of the receiver affects the flux of knowledge communication. Depending on the type of response, positive or negative, the source of the knowledge can better select and organise the cognitive content to be transmitted.

This model of knowledge communication is similar to the way the users transmit knowledge on the professional web forums. Actually, knowledge management models of communication originated in the early Internet communication forms (email, BBS, forum, and chat). While assuming this similarity, we have, nevertheless, to observe some slight differences in the way knowledge is transmitted on professional web forums. These differences are present at different levels and concern all

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<sup>60</sup> Unintentional knowledge transmission is realised when, for example, one can learn to perform a series of instructions by imitation, that is, watching how another person does it.

the components of the communicational model (*source, message, channel, receiver, and feedback*). In what concerns the *source*, the difference between corporatist and informal knowledge communication consists in the self-motivation of the *source* and in the fact that no reward is involved in the process of sharing knowledge. In what concerns the *message*, in the informal knowledge transmission the *scope of the knowledge* is personal (and not collective as in the case of corporatist CMC), for every individual asks for information for himself/herself and is not money-oriented as in the corporatist CMC.

In the case of the professional forum discussions, the *receiver* is self-motivated and his/her goals are personal. The motivation of the receiver is not influenced by competition with other individuals. Contrary to what one may think, the receiver uses his/her social skills in order to communicate with the other members of the forum in order to obtain their collaboration/assistance in the knowledge transmission process. In addition, the *channel*<sup>61</sup> is differently configured: it is *informal*. And last, the *feedback* is not mandatory in the professional web forum communication. Generally, a positive feedback marks that the receiver has acquired the knowledge transmitted by the source and closes the channel of communication because the goal of the communication has been fulfilled. A continuation of the discussion means a negative feedback. As one can observe, there are two main models of knowledge transmission that involve CMC: *e-learning* and *corporatist CMC*. As we have already noted, the first model is completely different from knowledge communication on professional web forums, even if, apparently, they do share some characteristics. Knowledge transmission on professional web forums is realised in the same way as in corporatist CMC, since it is the same process of knowledge sharing between individuals. Even if the models are identical, communication in either case has specific features, as we will detail at the end of this chapter.

### 3.5 Explanatory Strategies Used in Knowledge Transmission

If we contemplate Plato's dialogue Theaetetus, we will observe that the most appreciated form of knowledge consists in two elements: the one is the right opinion (see the previous sections on the epistemological point of view on knowledge as true belief), and the other is a definition or an explanation as supporting element:

**Socrates:** And there might be given other proofs of this belief, if I'm not mistaken. But do not let us in looking for them lose sight

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<sup>61</sup> We refer here to the *channel* as a component of the knowledge communication scheme.

of the question before us, *which is the meaning of the statement, that right opinion with rational definition or explanation is the most perfect form of knowledge.* (Plato, *Theaetetus*, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71th/theaetetus.html>)

We will begin our discussion about *explanations* and *explanatory strategies* with this quotation where one can clearly observe that Plato mentions two explanatory strategies materialised as different textual forms: *definition* and *explanation*. We will take into account, for now, these texts as granted explanatory strategies (*Plato dixit*) and we will observe that both encode a specific cognitive content. The *definition* encodes an object/concept-oriented knowledge (*know-what*), while the *explanation* encodes a reason-oriented (*know-why*) cognitive content. In order to cover all the cognitive aspects of the explanation we will also take into account the procedural texts (instructions) that encode action-oriented knowledge (*know-how*). In what follows, we will elaborate a general presentation of these three types of texts in the literature.

### 3.5.1 Definition

One of the most complete insights into definition descriptions is represented by Robinson's manual *Definition* (1954). In this book, the author presents a monograph of *definition* and its considerations in philosophy beginning with Greek Antiquity until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Robinson's study on definition begins as a contrastive study of the responses the most important philosophers gave to questions such as: *What is definition? Should a definition be brief? Is definition a useful procedure or not? What are the species of Definition?* and so on.

The contrastive presentation of the definitions of 'definition' represents a panoramic view of the state of art of the study and of the main topics on this subject. The divergences one can observe between the opinions of so many philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Milton, Spinoza, Locke, Kant, J.S. Mill, Whitehead, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Carnap) are illustrative for the rich variety of insights on definition. Nevertheless, this contrastive display of definitions ends with:

Definition is indefinable (This may be defended on the ground that 'you cannot define anything until you already understand defining'). (Robinson, 1954, p. 2)

This last insight can also be considered a sort of conclusion suggesting the fact that the discussion on *what definition is?* is far from being closed.

In what concerns our perspective on definition, we will take into account only the Platonic definitions of 'definition' (Plato, *Theaetetus*). Then we will observe the basic rules of the construction of definitions

and, we will end by contemplating the types of definitions, especially those mentioned in Robinson (1954).

f) Definition:

As one can observe from the list of definitions contrasted by Richard Robinson, those of classical philosophy seem to be the most representative, especially the Platonic point of view (three definitions):

- (a) Revealing one's thoughts by means of speech.
- (b) When someone asks you what a thing is, being able to answer him by means of the elements of the thing.
- (c) Being able to give some mark by which the thing asked about differs from all things.

Our choice of the classical point of view on definition is motivated by the fact that Plato's three definitions illustrate the way the definition as explanatory strategy is perceived in professional web forum communication. In (a), for example, the philosopher makes clear the connection between *thoughts* (tacit knowledge, cognitive content) and *speech* (explicit knowledge). In (b), (a) is completed because the author adds the interactive component (*when someone asks you... answer him*), which makes it coherent with the contemporary theories of explanation (see 3.4) as the answer to a certain kind of question. And finally, (c) refers to the capacity of analysis of the features of the definiendum. As one can observe, the other definitions of 'definition' are less complex. Only Locke, Mill, Wittgenstein, and Carnap suggest there is a relation between knowledge and speech (words, discourse, language) in the case of definitions.

g) Definition rules:

As pointed out by Copi & Cohen (1994), there are five important rules that structure a definition as follows:

- **Focus on essential features:** not all the distinctive properties of a *definiendum* indicate its true nature. One has to focus on essential attributes.
- **Avoid circular definitions:** the *definiendum* cannot be used in the *definiens*. It is supposed that a definition brings new information on the *definiendum* which is not the case in circular definitions. They are useless exactly because they don't bring any new information.
- **Keep the extension of definitions:** The definition must not add or eliminate features of the *definiendum*. A definition ideally must say only what the object is no more, no less.

- **Avoid figurative or vague language:** Since the definition explains what an object/concept/event is, it has to be simple, concise and clear.
- **Avoid definition by negation as possible:** Since the nature of definition is “explain what an object/concept/event is” it is pointless to define “what an object/concept/event is not”. First of all, under a logical perspective the definition by negation is ineffective. An object/concept/event can be defined once by its essential features or defined many times in an imprecise manner by negation. An object/concept/event can "not to be" an infinity of things.

#### h) Types of definitions:

As we have already observed (Robinson, 2003, p. 7) there are many types of definitions: real definition (general classification), nominal definition (general classification), extensive definition (Keynes), ostensive definition (W.E. Johnson), analytic definition (W.E. Johnson), equational definition (S.C. Pepper), descriptive definition (S.C. Pepper), operational definition (Bridgman), genetic definition (J.E. Creighton), definition in use (Whitehead, Russell), denotative definition (Levi, Frye), connotative definition (Levi, Frye), implicit definition (Gergonne), co-ordinating definition (Reichenbach), persuasive definition (Stevenson), successive definition (Lenzen), definition by description (Lewis). All these definitions are meant to illustrate the diversity of the classifications and the lack of systematicity and order in the classification of definitions.

A general accepted classification of definitions distinguishes between two main classes of definitions: *real* and *nominal definitions*<sup>62</sup>. The *nominal definitions* (specify the meaning of the *definiendum*) can be realised through *synonymy* (sameness of meaning) or through *etymology* (meaning explained by the original word – *etymon*).

The *real definitions* (specify the nature of the *definiendum*) include the following types of definitions:

- *essential definition*: definition realised through *genus proximus* and *differentiae*
- *descriptive / lexical definition*: distinctive characteristic unique for an object's class
- *enumerative definition*: highlights the meaning of an object/concept/event by mentioning some non essential attributes.
- *genetic definition*: explains the process of creation of an object
- *causal definition*: mentions the causes that have as result the creation of the *definiendum*

<sup>62</sup> It seems that Robinson (2003) has a different opinion in what concerns this classification. He only comments on the nominal definition and criticises the real definition.



- *operational definition*: portrays the procedures of manipulating the *definiendum*
- *recursive (inductive) definition*: the *definiendum* is in a certain relation with a class of elements in an ordered string (x comes from y)

Many other topics related with the definition are discussed in the literature but, in what concerns the observation of the texts that transmit knowledge on the professional web forums the general outline of the definition forms and varieties we have presented above may be sufficient.

### 3.5.2 Procedures/Instructions

As essential elements in the professional web forum communication, the procedures and instructions present a special situation in what concerns their classification. Rowan (2008) introduces them in the category of *informatory texts* (see 3.4), while Werlich, Longacre, Vigner, and even Adam in his early writings, regarde them as “des représentants probables d’un type de sequentialité spécifique” (Adam, 1992, p. 95). The last author on our list changes his opinion and, in *Les textes: types et prototypes* (1992), criticises the “séquentialité spécifique” of Werlich, Longacre and Vigner but also criticises the description of the procedural texts as “variantes du récit” offered by Greimas (1983) and Bouchard (1991). Adam introduces the procedural texts in the general category of *descriptive texts*, which he tries to illustrate with the analysis of a recipe (Adam, 1992, p. 94-97).

The topic is discussed again in Adam & Revaz (1996) and Adam & Lorda (1999) where the authors point out the presence in narrative texts of procedural sequences they designate as “description d’actions” or “relation d’actions”.

*Description of an action* represents a type of sequence whose goal is to describe a global action. This global action is described by a chronological series of *micro-actions* (Adam, 1996, p. 40). The *narration of actions* represents a description of an event through a series of actions.

In the professional web forums communication the procedural texts, especially the communication of instructions, represent an important aspect. Of the two categories proposed by Adam, the first one, *description of actions*, is better represented in the online forums discussions.

We distinguish within the category of *description of actions* the following subcategories that can be frequently observed in the professional communication of knowledge on the Internet: *list of actions* and *enumeration of actions*. We consider the first a sub-category of the *description of actions* that consists in a series of actions expressed by verbs or verbal constructions that are inserted on a list, each element on a

different line, and that all together explain the sequential order of a procedure. We will call it *list* because the arrangement of the text as *list* is the only element of textual cohesion, since discursive markers are not used.

In the same sub-category of description of an action we will also distinguish the *enumeration of actions*, whose structure is similar with that of a *list of actions*, the only difference being that the verbs and the verbal expression that describe the global action form an *enumeration*.

Without entering the debate about the nature of the procedural texts, that is, whether they are informative (Rowan, 2008), a special category of sequences (Werlich, Longacre, Vigner), or parts of a narration/description (Greimas, Bouchard, Adam & Revaz, and Adam & Lorda), we will use the description of actions as *explanatory strategies* involved in the transmission of specialised knowledge on the professional web forums.

### 3.5.3 Prototypical Explanation

One of the descriptions of the explanatory sequence comes from Jean-Michel Adam, who in his work *Les textes: types et prototypes. Récit, description, argumentation, explication et dialogue* (1992) presents five prototypical texts.

In what concerns the *explanatory sequence*, the author commences his exposition with a contemplation of the previous works on genres and texts typology. He observes that the explanation was studied mainly from the semiologic and didactic perspectives. He also observes that the majority of the studies on *explanation* examine this communicational aspect as discourse and not as text, which is Adam's (1992) own perspective.

Adam describes the *explanation* as a textual prototype sequence with a specific structure and texture. He grounds his observations on explanation on a previous study by J.B. Grize (1991) with whom and in whom, while having a different insight into the issue, the author shares opinions and finds confirmations of his own hypothesis (Adam, 1992, p. 132).

Adam uses Grize's work (1990) on logic as a starting point for creating his own model of the explanatory sequence. He borrows from Grize the general *structure of the explanatory sequence* (1990, p. 107), the concept of *operator* (*pourquoi* and *comment*) that modulate the complex organisation of the text in sequences. These sequences correspond to different stages of a cognitive-mental process, according to the author quoting the work of Coltier (1986), respectively: *phase de questionnement*, *phase résolutive*, and *phase conclusive*.

The prototype of the explanatory sequence in Adam's view has the following structure:

0		Macro-proposition explicative 0:	schématisation initiale
1	Pourquoi X? (Comment X?)	Macro-proposition explicative 1:	Problème (question)
2	Parce que	Macro-proposition explicative 2:	Explication (réponse)
3		Macro-proposition explicative 3:	Conclusion-évaluation

J-M. Adam (1992: 132). Prototype of the explanatory sequence

As one can observe, the sequence consists in four macro-propositions, where *macro-proposition 0* represents an introduction that describes the general context of *macro-proposition 1*. *Macro-proposition 1* represents the *problematization* stage and is followed by *macro-proposition 2*, which we consider the essential aspect of the entire sequence. The conclusion-evaluation stage makes reference to the initial stage, since the explanation is evaluated in the general context previously presented in *macro-proposition 0*.

It is also important to observe that explanatory sequences vary in form and complexity. Especially in face-to-face conversation and in CMC, the structure of an explanatory sequence can easily change. We consider that the most stable element in the structure described by Jean-Michel Adam that encodes the distinctive characteristic of the prototype is *macro-proposition 2*. As we will see in the analytical part of the present work, an explanation can consist only in one explicit macro-proposition (*macro-proposition 2*), the others being implicitly encoded in the situation. This reduced form of the explanatory sequence will be considered as the *minimal unit of analysis* in what concerns the analysis of the prototypical explanation in this work.

### 3.6 Knowledge Transmission on the Professional Web Forums

As one can observe, the description of the knowledge transmission process is complex and interdisciplinary. In conclusion of this chapter we can present the profile of the knowledge transmission process on the *professional web forums* as it results from the presentation above.

The *professional web forum knowledge transmission* is a *cognitive continuum* formed by *focal* and *tacit knowledge* switching incessantly depending on the knowledge transmitted. This is *personal knowledge* articulated as *text* and published on the web forum's web page. It is mostly *practical knowledge* or, if theoretical, the knowledge is intended to explain the theoretical aspect of a practical procedure or an application. All knowledge (practical or theoretical) on the professional web forum is transmitted with the intention that it should be *applied* to a specific context.

The types of knowledge one asks for on a professional web forum are skill, know-how, and expertise/competence. The type of knowledge communicated determines the level of specialisation of the discourse. It also differentiates the degrees of expertise of the forum members where hierarchy is constructed only on a cognitive basis. It is also important to observe that the lack of expertise is a recurrent topic on the professional web forums. In fact, the reason for the existence of the professional web forums is the lack of skills, know-how, or expertise of some members of the virtual community.

On a professional web forum knowledge is transmitted from a source (*expert(s)*) to a receiver (*novice(s)*) by an *informal communicational channel*. The message transmitted by the *source* encodes *explicit knowledge* (articulated as *text*) and *tacit* knowledge (multimodal content – audio, video, image) transmitted voluntarily. The participants involved in the process of knowledge transmission on the professional web forum are self-motivated (both *source* and *receiver*) and regard knowledge transmission as a social act perceived as *dialogue*, *collaboration*, *assistance*. The internal rules of communication on professional web forums don't encourage competition among the participants. The only competition there may be has to do with the process of knowledge transfer, where the most proficient is considered the best. The knowledge communication is regulated by the interaction of the *source* and the *receiver* of the knowledge, the feedback having a very important role in maintaining open the communicational channel until the needed knowledge is transmitted and the wanted result obtained. The feedback is also a manner of evaluating the effectiveness and proficiency of the *source*.

On the professional web forum knowledge is expressed basically through *explanatory strategies* materialised as *definitions*, *descriptions of actions*, and *prototypical explanations*.

## 4. APPROACHES IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

*Communiquer c'est procéder à une "mise en scène"*  
(Patrick Charaudeau, 1992, p. 635)

In this chapter we will establish the theoretical framework necessary to describe the genre professional web forum. We will propose to begin with a general overview of discourse and discourse analysis, and then we will focus on three main insights into discourse analysis, all belonging to the école française. These insights will provide us with the necessary tools to describe the professional web forum, highlighting aspects such as enunciation, discursive strategies, and communicational interactions.

### 4.1 The Complex notion of Discourse

The heterogeneous theories of discourse have for their main object of study the linguistic and communicative aspects of *the utterance* (*énoncé*), *the text*, and *the discourse*, starting from their conditions of production. Many studies on discourse analysis (DA) point out the complexity of views on, definitions, and interpretations of these concepts and the relations between them. Referring to the diversity of opinions in defining *discourse*, J. Renkema (2004, p. 54), states that "... there are so many definitions as there are textbooks".

One of the first definitions that influenced the modern approaches to discourse analysis states that a study of the discourse takes into consideration the: "mise en fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individuel d'énonciation" (Benveniste, 1974, p. 80). The author underlined in his works the necessity for a discourse linguistics whose object is not the utterance but the strategies of enunciation. The author places at the center of all linguistic concerns the discourse. A continuation of Benveniste's theoretical framework from the perspective of the enunciation and its strategies is realised by Culioli, who takes a step forward and affirms that each locutor is implicitly a receiver and each receiver is a virtual locutor. His perspective on the enunciation is that of an interactive process, and consequently, he refers to it as co-enunciation (Culioli, 1973, p. 83). The co-enunciators as participants in a

dialogue modulate their discourse: “l'énoncé n'a pas de sens sans une double intention de signification chez les énonciateurs respectifs.” (Culioli, 1973, p. 86).

Another step forward in the development of the modern perception of discourse is represented by the contribution of Bakhtin and Ducrot, who introduced in the theory of discourse the idea that the locutor can't be conceived as one entity. The polyphony in language is expressed as follows:

Dans le parler courant de tout homme vivant en société, la moitié au moins des paroles qu'il prononce sont celles d'autrui (reconnues comme telles), transmises à tout les degrés possibles d'exactitude ... (Bakhtin, 1978, p. 158)

Bakhtin's contribution is fundamental to the further development of modern discourse analysis, and for "l'école française" in particular the subjectivity of language opens new ways of research in discourse analysis. In Bakhtin's conception discourse has a double dimension: *individual* and *social*, and is essentially polyphonic. The author establishes polyphony as the main aspect of discourse. This has led him to proclaim the “dialogic” character of the discourse, which will form a solid theoretical framework for its typology (genres and styles).

Ducrot considers that polyphony is implicit in language and that it is a constitutive element of the enunciation. His position is more theoretical in what concerns polyphony. The polyphonic conception of language is continued by the works of Anscombe and Ducrot (1976, pp. 14-15), who present the utterance as a polyphonic unit invested with “force argumentative”:

Signifier, pour un énoncé, c'est orienter. de sorte que la langue, dans la mesure où elle contribue en premier lieu à déterminer le sens des énoncés, est un des lieux privilégiés où s'élabore l'argumentation. (Anscombe&Ducrot, 1976, pp. 14-15)

In the same line of studies, that is, developing the conception of an utterance in possession of an *argumentative force*, Moeschler (1985) introduces the pragmatic analysis of the argumentative discourse insisting that any analysis should be based on a corpus of reliable texts used in real situations of communication. The author considers that: “L'analyse du discours conversationnel aura donc pour objectif de mettre à jour les coactions et argumentations qui interviennent dans les interactions verbales” Moeschler (1985, p. 18).

Beginning with the '70s, the interest in discourse analysis has been growing constantly. The main focus is no longer the enunciation but the discourse. More complex theories are proposed on the basis of the previous theoretical frameworks that have defined the *utterance*, the *enunciation* and the *discourse*. Many different approaches focusing on

discourse are proposed, such as: *conversation analysis*, *text pragmatics*, *text linguistics*, *discourse analysis*. We will present a brief survey of these approaches in the next section.

As one can notice, the definition of discourse is a complex matter. In what concerns the present investigation, we will take into account the definition of discourse as *language in use* and we will completely assume Bakhtin's perspective on the subjectivity of the speech acts.

## 4.2 Approaches to Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis as a discipline displays a multifaceted structure and very different trends. Much intellectual effort was put into making clear the heterogeneity of the approaches to discourse analysis. One of the important works in this domain is represented by Deborah Schiffrin's *Approaches to Discourse*. At the beginning of her book the author states that:

My aim is not to reduce the vastness of discourse analysis: I believe that at relatively early stages of an endeavour, reduction just for the sake of simplification can too drastically limit the range of interesting questions that can and should be asked. (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 5)

Schiffrin underlines the fact that one of the main difficulties one encounters when approaching discourse studies is the complexity and the heterogeneity of perspectives and directions. Facing this reality of the domain, the author states that there is no point in simplifying the discourse analysis problems, but a clarification and ordering of the multitude of approaches would be in order. The complexity and the vastness of the domain is exactly what make it interesting and challenging. Trying to clarify the aims of discourse analysis, Schiffrin identifies six main approaches to discourse analysis she considers essential. They are: the theory of the *speech acts* (John Austin, 1962; and John Searle, 1969), *interactional sociolinguistics* (John Gumperz, 1982, and Erving Goffman 1974, 1979), *the ethnography of communication* (Dell Hymes, 1974), *the pragmatic approach* (H.P. Grice, 1957, 1968), *the conversation analysis* (Harold Garfinkel, 1967, 1974; Harvey Sacks, 1974; Emmanuel Schegloff, 1972, 1979; and Gail Jefferson, 1987), and last, the *variationist approach* (William Labov, 1972). The author presents discourse analysis as a complex discipline that allows transitions from one approach to the other and which tries to assimilate everything the approaches mentioned above can offer for the analysis of utterances.

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A different perspective on how the concept of *discourse analysis* can be understood is presented by Juan Herrero Cecilia (2006, pp.145-150), who pinpoints five different ways the word *discourse* is perceived. The

author matches the different perceptions of *discourse* with different approaches to discourse analysis as follows:

**Discourse1:** equivalent to what Saussure denominates *parole*, discourse represents the most general meaning of the word and integrates all types of discourse (written, oral).

**Discourse2:** the second meaning is understood as *the way the utterance is structured*. The author attributes this meaning to the theory of Benveniste and the complementary concepts of *plan énonciatif du discours* and *plan énonciatif de l'histoire*, where the former is considered to be an element that organises the meaning of the utterance in relation to the “I – You – Here – Now” deixis (*embrayage énonciatif*), while the latter (*débrayage énonciatif*) organises the meaning of the utterance by separation from the context of enunciation.

**Discourse3:** corresponds to the concept of *text* perceived as a verbal message (written or oral) produced by a locutor in a communicational act. This notion of *discourse* is equivalent to the text linguistic perspective. The text=discourse is perceived as a series of propositions that form a global semantic unit (thematic macrostructure). This thematic macrostructure is organised following a determined sequential organisation pattern and forms a *type of text*. The structure of a *type of text* is determined by the genre's *compositional scheme*.

**Discourse4:** illustrates the concept of the term in Anglo-Saxon linguistics, where the author points out some conceptual differences of meaning. He highlights that *discourse* is a term designating the interactive dimension of the conversational interactions. Thus, the proper meaning of *discourse analysis* in this context may be *conversation analysis*.

**Discourse5:** the last conception of *discourse* corresponds to the definition of discourse given by *l'école française*. Here the author identifies two different approaches: *the analytic tendency* (M. Pêcheux, 1969, Authier-Revuz, 1995) and *the integrative tendency* (F. Rastier, 1989).

The author's intention to bring order to such a complex domain has been fruitful, since he has been able to highlight, like Schiffrin, the main tendencies in discourse analysis starting from the way the different trends approached the concept of *discourse*. The limits of the presentation dwell in the fact that the author doesn't go into detail. He designates the general trends without evaluating the commentaries or its historical evolution.

\*

A different effort to establish order in the discourse analysis approaches has been carried out by Angermüller (2007, p. 9). The author limits the area of his investigation to Europe and proposes a diachronic overview of the emergence and evolution of different discourse analysis trends. The author affirms that in the beginning, discourse analysis was developed in different countries in quite a uniform manner and he identifies three major trends: French, Anglo-Saxon, and German. The



development and diversification of discourse analysis makes it impossible to identify today these initial trends. They continue to exist as “clusters”, identified by the author as: *l'école française*, the post-structuralist discourse theory, the critical discourse analysis, and the interpretative discourse analysis. Apparently, the *trends* seem to be the initial moment in the emergence of discourse analysis in the '60s, while the *clusters* represent the current discourse analysis trends.

Each trend is briefly described. For example, the *French formalism*, a heterogeneous trend based on linguistics (Saussure), psychoanalysis (Lacan) and ideology (Althusser), was subsequently abandoned when the French linguistics focused on *enunciation*.

The *Anglo-Saxon pragmatism* combines American pragmatism with analytic philosophy, and is especially known for the speech act theory (Austin, Searle) and for creating the theoretical foundation for the actual conversation analysis by analysing the rules that organise interactions (Brown & Yule).

*German hermeneutics* is based on the works of Jürgen Habermas and emerged under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. The main area of application for this theory was the social sciences and political discourse. The author observes that the German trend in discourse analysis was not quite developed as a domain of investigation and was abandoned in the '90s, the *discourse* becoming the object of study of another discipline: the *sociology of knowledge*. Angermueller (2007) mentions cursorily the Russian semiotic trend (Bakhtin and Lotman).

The *discourse analysis trends* correspond to an early stage of the development of discourse analysis in Europe and none of the initial perspectives has lasted to the present. Actually, in the '70s *discourse analysis* was developed by different researchers in different countries. The common basis is not the territory but the theoretical framework of the varied studies.

The author identifies the following clusters: *l'école française* of discourse analysis, the poststructuralist discourse theory, the critical discourse analysis (CDA), and the interpretative discourse analysis. It seems that the most cohesive discourse analysis core is represented by *l'école française*, which still constitutes a national tradition in this domain.

Different other intents to regulate, simplify, sort, arrange, or only present the vast and multifaceted field of discourse analysis were carried out by scholars such as: Phillips & Hardy (2002), Georgakopoulou & Goutsos (2004), Paltridge (2006), Jørgensen & Phillips (2004), Johnstone (2002), Calsamiglia & Tusón (2007), or Bhatia (2006).

In what concerns the present investigation, this overview of the discourse analysis trends helps us to situate our theoretical framework. Thus, to begin with, we will ground our investigation on the perception of discourse as *language in use*. We place our investigation within the framework defined by “*l'école française*” of *discourse analysis*, and

within this trend we will use the theoretical approaches provided by three theories we will apply to the different aspects of the corpus analysis (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.1). These theories are: the communicative and semiodiscursive conception of discourse (Charaudeau), the text linguistics theory (Adam), and the conversational model (Orecchioni, Traverso).

In what follows, we will proceed to a brief presentation of each of these theories insisting on the aspects we have deemed important for our investigation.

### 4.3 A Social-Communicational Model of Discourse

Patrick Charaudeau<sup>63</sup> contemplates *discourse* in the general context of communication:

Il faut se représenter l'acte de communication comme un dispositif au cœur duquel se trouve le sujet parlant (le locuteur, qu'il parle ou écrive), en relation avec un autre partenaire (l'interlocuteur). (1992, p. 634)

The author identifies the following essential components of discourse: a) *la situation de communication*, b) *les modes d'organisation du discours*, c) *la langue*, and d) *le texte*. These components are defined as follows:

- a) *The situation of communication* represents a psycho-social dimension and represents the setting of the *contract of communication* that the participants establish during the communicational interaction. The setting also depends on the constraints of each situation.
- b) *The modes of discursive organisation*: represent the way the locutor chooses to organise his/her discourse depending on the finality of the communication.
- c) *The language*: represents the semiotic system the locutor uses in order to construct his/her discourse.
- d) *The text*: is the final result of the speech act. It is a heterogeneous construct formed by the semiotic system (language) organised in a specific manner by the *discursive modes*. The author marks the difference between *text* and *discourse*. The text represents a category that depends on the "projet de parole" of the locutor and on the *contract of communication*. The *text* is also a subordinate category of the discourse, since texts emerge from discourses.

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<sup>63</sup> The evolution of the model created by Patrick Charaudeau and presented in this chapter was observed in the author's publications from 1984 to 2007. All the titles can be consulted in the chapter *References*.

The *situation of communication* represents the central concept of Charaudeau's theory and when defining it, the author underlines that it must not be understood as '*context*' of communication or '*domaine de la pratique sociale*'. The *situation of communication* represents a general setting where the participants (two or more persons) interact by means of communication and come to establish a certain degree of inter-comprehension. The meaning they create through communicational interaction results, in part, from the general conditions in which communication takes place.

The author states that the description of what the situation of communication is can simply result from the answer to four questions, as follows: Which is the aim of the communication?, Who communicates with whom?, What is the topic of communication?, and Which are the circumstances of communication?

The answers to these questions determine the discursive finality of the speech acts, the identities involved in the communication, the theme of the verbal interaction, and the physical settings of the communication that the author denominates *dispositif énonciatif*. One can notice that, in time, Charaudeau's theory became more complex and the things that in the early stages of the elaboration were subject to interpretation became clearly defined. Beginning with his varied early works (1984, 1991, 1993, 1994) and up to the last titles (2005, 2006, 2007), the author gradually developed the concept of *contract of communication* established between the participants in a situation as determined by two main factors: *contraintes situationelles* and *contraintes discursives*. The author establishes a relation between the *contraintes situationelles* and the *situation of communication* as the external space of the discourse, and another relation between the *contraintes discursives* and the *contract of communication* perceived as the internal space of the discourse. Both are related, for the first type of *contraintes* determines the discursive production of the locutor by means of the second type of *contraintes*.

In short, *communication* is represented as a doubly articulated space:

[...] Un espacio externo, lugar de la construcción de las identidades psicosociales de los sujetos, de su finalidad de influencia y de las circunstancias materiales de la comunicación; un espacio interno, lugar de la construcción de las identidades discursivas de los sujetos y de la finalidad enunciativa a través de la puesta en escena lingüística, que resulta, por una parte de las instrucciones dadas por la situación de comunicación y por la otra, de los proyectos de habla específicos de los sujetos interlocutores. (Charaudeau, 2006, p. 43)

Discourse is the result of this set of constraints and is manifested by the discursive strategies used by the interlocutors. These strategies constitute the object of our study.

The genre, in this theoretical approach, is determined by three parameters: *the discursive identities*, *the objectives of the verbal exchange*, and *the enunciative device*. These elements are closely related to the social communication rituals, and consequently, to the discursive genres:

La communication est un phénomène général de la société humaine qui englobe divers types et genres de discours, toujours dans une intentionnalité d'intercompréhension et d'influence. (Charaudeau, 2007, p. 5)

In what follows, we propose to take a close look at these three parameters which will allow us, firstly, to study in more detail the discursive device of the professional web forum subgenre, and secondly, to establish our methodology of analysis (see chapter 6).

### 4.3.1 Discursive Identities

In the interior space of communication determined by the contract, the locutor constructs his/her own identity. Patrick Charaudeau insists that the identities constructed within the contract of communication are not personal, social, or cultural but *discursive identities*. In other words:

[...] on parle (ou écrit) en organisant son discours en fonction de sa propre identité, de l'image que l'on a de son interlocuteur, et de ce qui a été déjà dit. (Charaudeau, 1992, p. 643)

The locutor constructs a discursive identity corresponding to the *self*, an image that the locutor assumes for a concrete situation of communication and that can change if the communicational parameters change. Other identities are also constructed linguistically by the locutor and these identities are *the addressee* and the *audience*. Independently of the psycho-social identity of the *addressee*, when the locutor tries to establish a communicational relation, he also assigns to the *addressee* a discursive identity defining the type of communicational relation the locutor intends to establish.

The author observes the existence of different types of relations that can be established between locutors. They are relations of association, relations of authority, relations of inclusion or exclusion, relations of indulgence or relations of objection. These relations establish which of the two identities is stronger and the role each participant in the contract of communication assumes.

In other words, if someone asks for *help*, for *assistance*, or for *collaboration* the identities involved in the different contracts of communication these verbs determine are different. In the first case, the verb *help* involves two discursive identities, the one of a person in need

for help, the other of a *helper*. The identity of the *helper* is discursively constructed as a person that *knows how to help*, *wants to help*, and *can help* somebody; the complementary identity, the *helped*, is the person who *asks for help*, *wants to be helped*, and *accepts to be helped*. Between the two identities involved in the relation imposed by the verb *to help* one can notice a difference of positioning, with the *helper* placed in a position of authority as compared with the *helped*.

In Charaudeau's model (1992, p. 644) the identities are denominated *les protagonistes* of the utterance and the author mentions that they are defined only by their discursive behaviour. He distinguishes between the identities involved in the discourse *locuteur-énonciateur* – the identity who expresses the discursive intentions of the locutor –, and *l'interlocuteur-déstinataire*, who has been assigned a particular place by the locutor in his/her discourse.

In the present work we will use the terms Locutor and Addressee to designate the *locuteur-énonciateur* and *l'interlocuteur-déstinataire* respectively.

### 4.3.2 Objectives of the Verbal Exchange

Every enunciation emerges in a context and has a motivation. Without motivation the communication doesn't exist. When we establish a communicational relation with somebody it is because we have an objective that we assume and that makes us enter in contact with the others through communication.

In this stage of the communication the locutor has to perform to justify his/her right to speak. The intentionality of the message has to fit in the situation if the locutor wants it to be recognised by the addressee, and consequently, establish a verbal interaction with the other. The validity of the message consists in the fact that the speech act corresponds to the finality of the communicator, which allows the collocutor to interpret and understand it. For that, the participants in a situation of communication may have the proficiency to *know* not only what they want to tell but also *how* they may articulate and adapt a message in order that it should be recognised as the locutor intended it to.

In order to make it clearer, we will give the example of a Latin-American locutor who, looking for directions in Barcelona, asked a Spaniard: "Señor, ¿me puede ayudar, por favor?" The utterance based on the *proficiency (savoir)* of the locutor is one of the current introductory expressions by which a person formulates a polite request for information (a question in our case) in order to establish a communicational relation with an unknown person he/she meets on the street. The utterance of the locutor, however, was differently interpreted by the addressee who possessed a different *savoir*. The reaction of the *addressee* was that, instead of waiting for the other to ask him a question, he took a coin from

his pocket and gave it to him. This resulted in a series of intention clarifying verbal interaction between both participants in the situation in order to establish the communicational relationship the locutor originally intended.

### 4.3.3 Discursive Device

The *discursive device* represents the material manifestation of the discursive production of the participants in a situation of communication. There are different parameters that regulate the discursive production in a situation of communication. It is important, for example, if the participants in a situation are present and see each other, or not, at the moment of the exchange. Another important parameter is represented by the channel of communication and the mode of communication through this channel. Generally, we talk about written and oral communication, but most recently, with the development of the new technologies, more and more authors talk about multimodal communication. Another important aspect of the communicational device is represented by whether the exchange between participants is allowed (*permis*) or not.

In his model of discursive analysis, Charaudeau states that different combinations of the parameters mentioned above will determine a different discursive production:

[...] telle ou telle combinaison sur le comportement langagier des interlocuteurs, et donc sur l'organisation de la configuration verbale. (Charaudeau, 1992, p. 639)

In order to better explain his point, Charaudeau distinguishes between two main types of situations: *interlocutive* and *monolocutive*, and gives some examples demonstrating how the situation of communication determines the configuration of the discourse.

In what concerns the limitations imposed by the situation of communication to the professional web forum discussion, one can observe the following regulator parameters: the professional web forum is a *monolocutive situation*, since the participants involved in the exchange are not co-present in a certain location. The channel of communication is, basically, written. Depending on the situation and on the locutor's intentions or the technical implementation of the channel, it can also display some extended features in order to permit multimodal communication (text, text-image, or even text-video). The locutor can't perceive the reactions of the interlocutor. On the professional web forums, as in all computer mediated communication, the channel allows the participants to express their feelings by the use of *emoticons*. The problem of their interpretation is culturally related, consequently, we agree with Charaudeau that in the case of the monolocutive situation the

locutor can only imagine the reactions of his/her discussion partner. Sometimes the partners have to explain to one another the significance of the *emoticons* they use in order to express gestures, feelings, and mimics. Since the locutor is not conditioned by the immediate reactions of his/her partner, s/he can organise his/her discourse in a logical and progressive manner.

In the following chapters of the present work we will analyse the verbal configuration of the professional web forum grounding our analysis on this configuration of the discursive device.

#### 4.4 Text Linguistics and Discourse Analysis

As one can notice in sub-chapter 4.2, the socio-communicational model presented studies discourse starting from the situation of communication and the conditions of production. Within this frame the social aspects are highlighted.

The socio-communicational model, however, doesn't go into more details in what concerns the detailed organisation of produced texts, therefore we need a complementary point of view in order to reach the objective of the thesis, which is the description of the professional web forum as an Internet sub-genre.

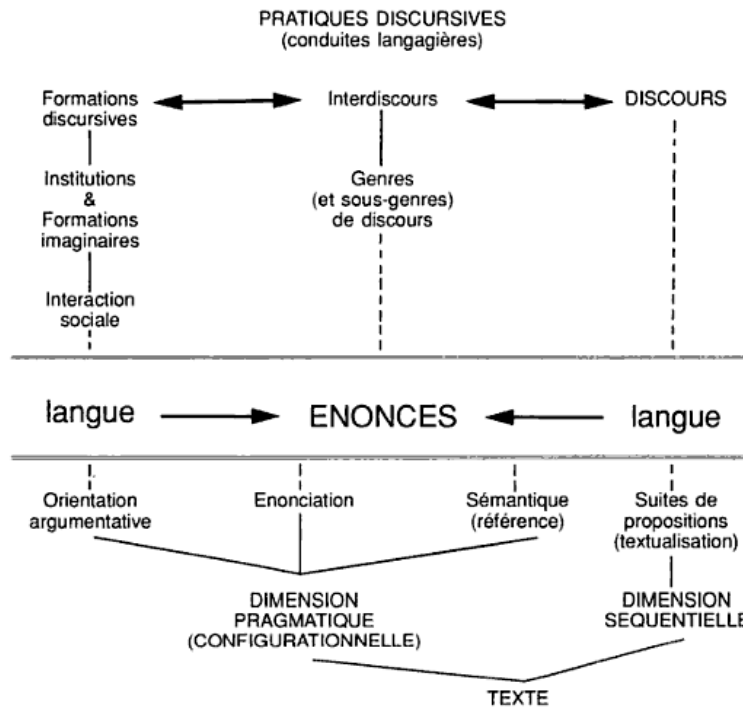
A more detailed point of view on discursive organisations is provided by text linguistics, a textual pragmatic discipline. This discipline focuses mainly on the contemplation of the internal structure of an utterance produced in a specific situation of communication by means of a specific study of the sequences organisation.

Jean-Michel Adam, whose theoretical framework<sup>64</sup> will be used in order to carry out this investigation, also presents his perspective on the relations that exist between texts, genres and discourses<sup>65</sup>. The author distinguishes between *text linguistics* and *discourse analysis* as complementary disciplines that study texts, genres, and discourse(s) from different perspectives. In *Linguistique textuelle. Des genres de discours aux textes* (1999, p.35) the author defines *text linguistics* and *discourse analysis* complementarily. He distinguishes between the *principes ascendants* and the *principes descendants* that rule the *text*. Adam states that text linguistics has as objective the identification and description of the ascendant principles that order complex propositions in a unit he designates as TEXT. *Discourse analysis* has as object of study the description of the descendant principles that the situations of communication, the language, or the genres impose to the TEXT.

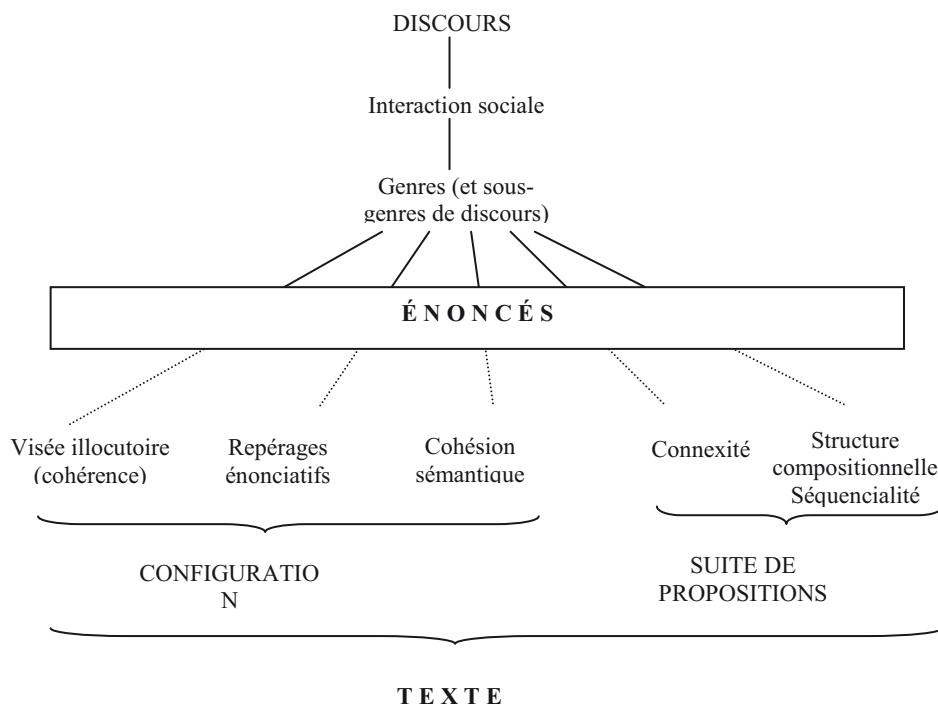
<sup>64</sup> We ground our presentation of the explanatory sequence on the different studies J.-M. Adam published between 1990 and 2007.

<sup>65</sup> The author affirms that the use of the term *discourses* is more fitting than *discourse* since it corresponds better to the linguistic reality.

Jean-Michel Adam (1990, p.21) constructs a system that relates *text linguistics* to *discourse analysis*:



In Adam (1992, p.17) the system is modified in order to better express the ascendant and descendant principles that rule the TEXT and are responsible for its variation. The views of the text, especially regarding the aspects concerning the *ascendant principles*, are centralised and focus on the genre. The terminology, too, is more precise, as one can notice from the figure below:





The author details the levels of the textual organisation in the following terms:

Pour la linguistique textuelle que je développe depuis une dizaine d'années, un texte est formé par la combinaison-composition d'unités élémentaires et il s'agit de décrire et de théoriser une compositionnalité qui doit être approchée par niveaux d'organisation et de complexité [...]. Une compositionnalité de bas niveau assure la mise en paquets des compositions. Nous nommerons ces paquets : périodes et séquences. (Adam , 1999 , p. 18)

The internal structure of the TEXT is specified in Adam (1992, p. 30), where the author intends to present a unified insight into the sequential structure of the texts. It results that the text is a hierarchic structure formed by *propositions*, *macro-propositions*, and *sequences*, where the propositions are the constituents of a macro-proposition and the macro-proposition is a constituent of the sequence:

<b>[# T # [Séquence(s) [macro-propositions [proposition(s)]]]]</b>
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On this basis, the author establishes the theoretical framework of the sequential prototypes:

Mon hypothèse est la suivante : les « types relativement stable d'énoncés » et les régularités compositionnelles dont parle Bakhtin sont à la base, en fait, des régularités séquentielles. Les séquences élémentaires semblent se réduire à quelques types élémentaires d'articulation des propositions. Dans l'état actuel de la réflexion, il me paraît nécessaire de retenir les séquences prototypiques suivantes : *narrative*, *descriptive*, *argumentative*, *explicative*, et *dialogale*. (Adam , 1992 , p. 30)

As one can notice, the heterogeneity of the discourse is reduced to some prototypical sequences that regulate its construction. In what concerns the present investigation, as already shown in section 3.5, the dominant sequence that seems to rule the discursive organisation of the professional web forum is the *explanatory sequence*.

In what follows we will focus on the description of this prototypical construction in order to contemplate it in detail for further use in the methodology of analysis of the present work (see Chapter 6).

#### **4.4.1 Explanatory, expository, and informative texts**

According to J.-M. Adam, every approach to the explanatory sequence should be preceded by a clarification of the concept

*explanatory*. Similar to other scholars<sup>66</sup>, Adam (1992, p. 127) underlines the multiple interpretations the term *explanation* has undergone in the literature. He also observes that the term has to be contrasted with the other interpretations in use, and discusses the notion of *explanatory text* in contrast with that of *expository text* and *informative text*. On the other hand, the author also discusses the opposition *explanatory vs. argumentative*.

Both approaches are sustainable because all texts are to some degree informative:

Le type de texte qui nous intéresse ici doit maintenir un délicat équilibre entre ce qui est supposé être plus ou moins connu du lecteur, le stock de connaissances préalables à la réception, et l'apport de renseignements qui constitue la fonction même du texte informatif. Le 'dosage' est réalisé dans tous les types de texte, mais se trouve au centre même de la problématique du texte informatif: c'est toute la question de la 'cible' et de sa délimitation correcte. (Combettes&Tomassone, 1988, p. 9)

Moreover, many explanatory texts are also expository (E. Werlich, 1975) and display definition-like structures. It seems that in the literature, due to the contributions of Combettes & Tomassone (1988), the distinction *expository-explanatory-informative* is generally accepted. The term 'informative' is considered too general and, since it can determine all types of texts, it is not operational. Consequently, the authors seem to prefer the term *expository* as more specialised. Another distinction that the authors operate is that between the *informative-expository* and the *argumentative* types. The authors affirm that the argumentative discourse aims to produce a transformation in the receiver. This modification affects the beliefs and the representations (cognitive or not) of the receiver. They claim that the argumentative sequence is not knowledge transmission-oriented but is intended to modify opinions, impressions; it is intended to convince that a fact is real.

J.-M. Adam establishes the following difference between *expository* and *explanatory*: "la distinction à opérer entre exposition et explication passé par la différence entre POURQUOI? et COMMENT? La plupart des séquences en COMMENT en sont pas explicatives" (1992, p. 129). The author considers that the latter sequences don't fall in the category of prototypical explanatory sequences.

The author argues that as linguistic activity the explanation improves, augments, specifies a certain cognitive content for the addressee. It involves a logical progression and it is based on objectivity and distance.

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<sup>66</sup> See E. Werlich (1975), Combettes & Tomassone (1988), Moirand (1999), Herrero Cecilia (2006).

Another distinction the author introduces is *explanation-justification*. Quoting J.-B. Grize (1981), Adam affirms that the explanation is constructed as an answer that clarifies things/facts/events (Adam, 1992, p. 130), while the *justification* is oriented to the clarification of words.

The explanation is a very vast phenomenon and can be encountered in all domains of life. It also appears in a very rich variety of texts organised in *genres* and *subgenres*. The specificity of these genres is that they are generally related to situations or activities in which the main aspect consists in the transmission or improvement of knowledge.

#### 4.4.2 Parameters of the Explanation

In the same line of studies with the publications of Adam, Herrero Cecilia (2006, p. 131) states that the explanatory texts present specific aspects and he distinguishes the following: *enunciative*, *discursive*, and *lexico-semantic*.

It is important to observe that the description of these characteristics refers to the prototypical explanatory sequence described by Adam and may slightly differ from other types of explanations<sup>67</sup>.

Following the description of Herrero Cecilia (2006), the *enunciation* in the explanatory texts is characterised by the use of the *present tense*, the presence of the deixis with *endoforic* function, the constant use of impersonal expressions. The locutor is frequently referred to by “we”, and Herrero also mentions the temporal and spatial discursive marks that refer to a text.

The explanatory text is also characterised by different text modalities that indicate the attitude of the locutor concerning the topic of discussion. The specific modalities one can notice in an explanatory text are: *logic modalities* and *epistemic modalities*. They are used as verbal forms or adverbial forms in order to express *possibility*, *probability*, *impossibility* (logic modality) or certainty, uncertainty, opinion, recommendation (epistemic modality). The author underlines the fact that, due to the nature of the prototypical explanatory sequence, the affective modalities and subjectivity marks are not compatible with this genre.

The *lexico-semantic* aspect of the explanatory texts is represented mostly by terminology and the use of adjectives with descriptive and evaluative functions. In what concerns the *terminology*, it consists of *specialised vocabulary*, *professional jargon*, *neology*, and *loanwords*. It is also characterised by the use of *nominalisation* and *apposition* with explanatory aims.

The author also distinguishes between the following discursive strategies that a locutor uses in order to construct an explanatory

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<sup>67</sup> We refer here to the web genres where the explanatory sequence can be encountered but has different structures and is realised through different discursive strategies (see section 7.2.6).

discourse: *definition, classification, rephrasing, exemplification, analogy, and quotation*. It is also important to mention that this inventory of discursive strategies is not complete; other explanatory strategies can also be observed, especially in the genres less studied, such as the genres of the Internet.

The author mentions the function of each of the strategies used in the explanatory genres. The *definition*, for example, is considered a discursive strategy used for focusing on a topic to clarify it. The *classification* represents a way of distinguishing and organising by certain criteria an apparently chaotic class of objects/concepts in order to observe and know them better. The *reformulation* is a good strategy used as an alternative to an initial statement. In specialised communication it is frequently used when the collocutor doesn't understand the terminology of a specialised field. It has the function to make things simpler and clearer. The *analogy* is a discursive strategy that creates a relation between a complex and abstract concept and a more familiar one. Finally, the *quotation* represents a reference to a third person's opinion in order to gain support and authority for a cognitive content.

These strategies correspond to the prototypical explanatory sequence. In the case of other explanatory genres, several other discursive strategies can also be encountered.

## 4.5 Conversation and Verbal Interactions

In sub-chapter 3.5.3 we have presented the structure of the prototypical explanation according the descriptions of text linguistics (Grice, Adam). One of the aspects all the scholars seem to agree with consists in the fact that the explanation is constructed as an answer to a question. The question can be one of the following types: *What?*, *Why?* and *How?*, and depending on the question the explanation answers, the answer may be a *definition*, a *prototypical explanation*, or a *description of actions*. The questions can be implicit or explicit, and can be organised discursively as monological or dialogical. In professional web forums discussions, the discursive organisation is dialogical. Thus, the explanatory sequence is developed by the communicational interaction of at least two persons. This means that the explanatory sequence can be contemplated at an interactive-conversational level<sup>68</sup> too.

In order to analyse the interactive construction of the explanation, we need to adopt a different theoretical framework that will allow us to operate with the proper instruments of discourse analysis in the social interactional context.

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<sup>68</sup> In sections 4.2 and 4.3 we developed the theoretical framework necessary to analyse the explanation as text and as discursive strategy.

The first question the investigator may ask is what interactional theory would be adequate to operate with in the context of the analysis of the explanation in the professional web forums discussions. The answer resides in the investigation we have already carried out in sub-chapters 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, where we explained that the theoretical approaches to e-discourse concord with the fact that it represents a hybrid discursive structure that displays oral and written features. In 2.2.2 we mentioned that the web forum is generally considered as having the features of a written conversation. Consequently, we appreciate that the theoretical framework of conversation analysis may be adequate for the analysis of this type of e-discourse, especially because it is written conversation and many of the oral features that make face-to-face conversation so difficult to analyse are absent in the professional web forums interactions.

Conversation analysis is a theoretical framework that has its origins in the ethnomethodologist approach to oral interactions. It was developed by the group of researchers known as *École de Genève*. Their theory of conversation is based on different studies of pragmatics (Bakhtin, Searle, Austin, Goffman, Labov, Ducrot, and others) and proposes a hierarchic model of conversation. This model was developed in France in the '90s by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, who adds to the Geneva School model some operative concepts from the ethnomethodologist model. This model was later developed by Veronique Traverso (2004).

Kerbrat-Orecchioni states that there are two levels, one superficial and the other more profound, of the organisation of conversations. The first level contains the turn taking aspect of the face-to-face conversations, while the other consists in a conversational grammar consisting in the principles of internal coherence that determine the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic construction of conversation. According to the author, the conversation can be hierarchically structured in monological and dialogical units, each category displaying distinct subcategories. The participants in the conversation can establish different relations, identified by Kerbrat-Orecchioni as horizontal and/or vertical, and finally, the author considers politeness “un phénomène linguistiquement pertinent” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1996, p. 50), a very important dimension of conversation:

La notion de « politesse » est ici entendue au sens large, comme recouvrant tous les aspects du discours qui sont régis par des règles, et dont la fonction est de préserver le caractère harmonieux de la relation interpersonnelle. (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1996, p. 50-51)

Here the author distinguishes the concept of *linguistic politeness* perceived as “art de la conversation” in opposition with other aspects of politeness, such as good manners and social behaviour, or the way one adapts his/her outfit to a situation.

This theory was developed by a former student of Kerbrat-Orecchioni's, Veronique Traverso, who establishes the following structures of conversation analysis: *the construction of the interaction*, *the organisation of the actions within an interaction* and *the thematic construction of an interaction*. In the present work we will take into consideration the model developed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni and Traverso as conversational framework.

### 4.5.1 The Construction of Interactions

Kerbrat-Orecchioni and Traverso agree that the lack of organisation in conversations is just a superficial impression, for interactions *are* organised structures. The two authors distinguish between *a local organisation* and *a global organisation of the interactions*.

The local organisation comports turn taking (*tours de parole*), the rules of alternation of turns (*allocation des tours*), the speech turn composition (*composition des tours de parole*), and the regulation of turns (*la regulation*). Following local organisation, the conversation is structured by the alternation of the locutors, who obey certain rules: one person speaks at a time (sequentially organised), the others wait for their turn, and the locutor can select explicitly/implicitly the addressee. If the locutor doesn't select an addressee, each participant in the conversation will negotiate his/her turn and his/her positioning. If nobody participates in the interaction, the initial locutor has to continue to develop different discursive strategies in order to obtain attention from the audience. The turns of speech consist in the turn and the transition points which mark the end of a turn and the beginning of another. The transition points are not mandatory, but they are usually present in the conversation. A transition point can be realised discursively or by the means of the channel, as in the case of CMC where the communicational channel presents video and audio transition points<sup>69</sup>. In the case of the professional web forums one can observe only "full turns" (*tours pleins*), for the channel of communication is not designed to allow interruptions.

The *global organisation* of conversation establishes that each conversation consists of three important moments: *the opening*, *the body*, and *the closing*<sup>70</sup>. The *opening* represents the initial part of the conversation where the locutor opens the channel and establishes contact with the addressee; it is the moment where linguistic politeness and communicational routines are noticeable in conversation. *The body* of the

<sup>69</sup> An example of a video transition point can be observed on the web forums where the intervention of each participant in the situation is inserted in a table cell which graphically delimitates the extension of a turn. In Internet chats, chat programs such as *YahooMessenger* or *Skype* emit a sound every time a participant in the conversation introduces his/her intervention in order to indicate to the user that a new intervention to the conversation was added.

<sup>70</sup> Here we use the terminology of Traverso (2004).

conversation contains the sequences<sup>71</sup> that organise the internal structure of the conversation. *The closing* represents the end of the conversation, when the locutor closes the channel and performs the discursive routines/rituals of closure.

It is important to notice that the main part of the conversation is represented by the *body* and that the *openings* and *closings* depend on the situation, locutor, and other factors that regulate the discursive production.

### 4.5.2 The Organisation of Actions within Interactions

The organisation of the actions within interactions represents the hierarchical model of the organisation of conversations proposed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1996). The author distinguishes between *monological* and *dialogical units*. The monological units comport: the speech act (the minimal unit of a conversation) and the intervention (consisting in one or more speech acts). The monological units interact in a conversation and consequently they form the *dialogical units* of conversational discursive organisation. They are: *the exchange*, *the sequence* and *the interaction*.

The *exchanges* are interrelated series of interventions. They can form groups of one intervention, when the locutor initiates a conversation but no other participant assumes the role of the addressee, groups of two interventions consisting of the *initiative intervention* and the *reactive intervention*. There are also groups formed by three interventions consisting of an *initiative intervention*, followed by a *reactive intervention*, and closed by an *evaluative intervention*. The exchanges counting more than three interventions are considered *extended exchanges*. The *sequence* consists of several exchanges thematically/pragmatically related. The most complex structure is the *interaction* that consists in a conversational act, such as: *shopping*, *asking for directions*, or a *phone call*.

### 4.5.3 Thematic Progression

Veronique Traverso (2004) considers that their thematic construction is an important aspect of interactions. In the present work this aspect is essential, since the interactive construction of knowledge is realised thematically, so that one whole section of the present investigation (see 7.3) has been devoted to this aspect in particular. Furthermore, a model

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<sup>71</sup> Here we use the terminology of Kerbrat-Orecchioni and Traverso, which is different from the terminology of Adam.

of knowledge construction based on the thematic analysis has been elaborated for each sub-corpus.

The thematic dimension of communication is generally constructed through *semantic cohesion*, *anaphora*, and *cataphora*. In what concerns the thematic construction, two main aspects are important: the *thematic continuity* and the *thematic discontinuity*. The thematic discontinuity can adopt forms such as: closure of theme (implicit/explicit), thematic rupture, and proposal of a theme (implicit/explicit). They represent moments in the conversation when the interlocutors operate a certain change in the topic of their conversation. The ruptures can be related with the beginning, the end of the conversation, a digression, or an interruption.

The thematic continuity is the aspect that contributes most to the thematic progression and has an important role in the interactive construction of knowledge. It consists in two main elements: the *ratification of the theme* (implicit/explicit) and *the elaboration of the theme*, depending on the different modes of thematic elaboration.

The ratification of the theme consists in the response of the addressee to a previous *proposal of a theme*. The locutor opens the channel of communication and when establishing the communicational relation he also defines thematically the interchange. The addressee, when accepting to enter in the communicational relation with the previous speaker, not only assumes the identity the locutor assigns to him/her but also *ratifies the theme*. In other words, in order to establish a communicational relation, from the thematic point of view the addressee has to agree to talk about the theme proposed by the locutor. After the *ratification of the theme*, there follows the *elaboration of the theme* which means that the conversation enters in a phase of thematic progression. Different modes are involved in the thematic elaboration, such as: descriptive-commentative, explanatory, narrative, argumentative, and *échanges à batôns rompus* (Traverso, 2004, p. 44).

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As one can notice, in the presentation of these three discourse analysis theories we have mentioned the possibility of operating transmissions from a theoretical framework to another, exactly as Schiffrin stated in her book (see 4.2). In the current investigation we will use the different theoretical approaches presented, in order to observe the main characteristics of the professional web forum, describe this subgenre and compare the discourses in the five languages studied. With this purpose in mind, we will first describe the communicational device in Chapter 6, exploring the conditions of the production of web forums, and presenting our corpus.

Our discursive analysis (Chapter 7) will focus on the main aspects that characterise the web forum, as we have explained in Chapter 6. These aspects are the identities and the explanatory sequence in the web forums. Next, we will consider these *explanatory texts* as *interventions*,



in other words we will consider them as part of a conversation. At this level we will observe how the explanation is constructed interactively and how knowledge is structured discursively through semantic cohesion, anaphoric/cataphoric relations, and different modes of theme elaboration. To this purpose, we will use the conversationalist approaches presented above. The concrete model of analysis we will apply in this investigation in order to describe the Internet subgenre we have denominated *professional web forum* will be detailed in Chapter 6.

## 5. COMPUTER WEB FORUMS CORPUS DESCRIPTION

The creation of a corpus, the design criteria, and its structure represent essential aspects in a descriptive study such as the present work. In this chapter, we will first outline some important theoretical approaches on corpus design and implementation. Then we will move on to the presentation of the methodology applied in the building of the corpus, and we will end with a basic quantitative evaluation of the linguistic content of the corpus and of its sub-corpora. The importance of this analysis consists in the fact that it will provide the first evaluation of the linguistic profile of knowledge communication discourse on web forums. Our hypothesis is that the quantitative observations provided by the statistics of the sub-corpora are coherent with the analysis of the discourse we will operate within the analytic part of this thesis.

### 5.1 Introduction

The *Computer Web Forums Corpus*, as we decided to call it, consists of authentic electronic texts extracted from different computer based web forums. It is a *multilingual* corpus which comprises texts in *English, Spanish, French, Romanian, and Catalan*. The corpus is *monotextual*, since it contains texts all belonging to one genre of the electronic discourse: *web forum interaction*. It is also partly *multimodal*, for the discussions on the web forums involve textual and visual communication.

The *Computer Web Forums Corpus* was created as part of the present investigation beginning with 2007 and it represents an essential source of information for the present work, which aims at describing specific discursive mechanisms of knowledge communication on the specialised web forums.

## 5.2 Issues in Corpus Creation

A corpus is more than a simple “collection of texts”, and it represents more than an indefinite data source for linguistic research or a huge amount of discursive production that can’t be easily processed. As Sinclair observes:

A corpus is a collection of pieces of language text in electronic form, selected according to external criteria to represent, as far as possible, a language or language variety as a source of data for linguistic research. (Sinclair, 2005)<sup>72</sup>

Depending on the finality of the linguistic research on the corpora, the *external criteria* applied to build them may differ. In *corpus linguistics* there are two essential descriptions of corpus design principles that will be discussed in what follows and that will be taken into consideration in the building of the *Computer Web Forums Corpus*<sup>73</sup>.

An essential set of criteria systematically structured, explaining the main aspects in the construction of a corpus, is presented by John Sinclair. The author develops and discusses his model on different occasions (Sinclair, 1991<sup>74</sup>, 1996, 2004, and 2005). Taking as point of reference some documented corpora such as those created by Renouf (1984), Kucera&Francis (1967), and Johansson (1980), John Sinclair describes the basic principles of corpus building as an extrapolation of the principles used in the creation of the *Brown Corpus*, which were considered for a long time *the* standard to follow. These principles describe the basic structure of a corpus, and represent the essential design protocol recommended to follow in any research involving corpus exploration. They allow the researcher to optimally adapt the corpus to the finality of the study. According to Sinclair<sup>75</sup> (1996), a general corpus may be implemented by taking into account the following principles:

- 1) Corpus’ dimensions: as large as possible;
- 2) Representativeness: a corpus must be representative for the aspect of language studied;
- 3) Organisation/classification: Inside a general corpus the different texts should be classified;
- 4) Sampling: sample sizes should be even;
- 5) Authority: The texts in the corpus should be documented.

<sup>72</sup> A previous definition of the corpus can be found in Sinclair (1996): “A collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language”.

<sup>73</sup> For a complete Corpus linguistics’ state of art, see Baker Paul (2010): *Sociolinguistics and Corpus Linguistics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (pp. 5 – 15).

<sup>74</sup> John Sinclair (1991): *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: University Press, pp. 13-27.

<sup>75</sup> In the same work the author defines also the default values of a corpus: quantity, quality, simplicity and documented.

A slightly different focus concerning the design of the corpora is presented by Biber and al. (1998), who recommend the following principles in building corpora: *representativeness*, *sampling*, *diversity*, *size*, and *copyright*. From the perspective of Biber and al. (1998), the most important aspect of the corpora design seems to be the *representativeness*, since this criterion is directly related with the finality of the research. On the one hand, the authors underline that the main point the researcher has to take into account when he/she creates a corpus is that the corpus has to represent a language, a variety of a language, or a language phenomenon. On the other hand, they observe that representing a language through a collection of texts is a very complicated mission. Thus, they state that the perfect corpus under the aspect of representativeness doesn't exist, but only more representative or less representative corpora.

The *size* of the corpus represents another important concern for the authors. Unlike Sinclair, who doesn't go into details on the *size* aspect of the corpora, Biber (1990) proposed a *minimum reference size* corpus consisting of 1000 words for a text and 10 texts for each category that composes the corpus. The author appreciates that a more reduced corpus may not correspond to a reliable source of information and can't be representative for a linguistic phenomenon.

Depending on the finality of the corpus, the researcher has to decide what kind of texts may be selected for the corpus (*sampling*). Since the speakers are characterised by different patterns of language use (dialects and registers), which they control in terms of the finality of the communication, *diversity* should also count as a significant parameter in the construction of corpora. The aspects concerning the *copyright* are collateral. Thus, since the majority of the web genres are considered to be public communication, the copyright doesn't represent a decisive factor and has no impact on corpus implementation.

A variety of other works considered essential to corpora design have provided the theoretical framework for the creation of the *Computer Web Forums Corpus*, such as: McEnery&Wilson (1996), Kennedy (1998), Biber (1998, 2008), and Kilgarriff (2008).

The fundamental corpus linguistics theory has been completed with recent web corpora studies such as: Fletcher (2010), Hundt et al. (2007), Ferraresi (2009), Baroni&Kilgarriff (2006), Marcoccia (2004), and Mourlhon-Dallies (2004).

#### a) Corpora typology:

Based on typological linguistic criteria, the corpora may fall into different categories (Sinclair, 1996). The author distinguishes between

internal and external criteria<sup>76</sup>. These criteria contribute to the creation of a corpora typology consisting of: spoken corpora<sup>77</sup>, samples corpora<sup>78</sup>, special corpora<sup>79</sup>, reference corpora, monitor corpora, parallel corpora, and comparable corpora.

According to this classification, the Computer Web Forums Corpus falls in the category of comparable corpora. The structure of a comparable corpus (Sinclair, 1996) presents heterogeneous content consisting of similar texts presenting common features as the basis for comparison, in different languages or varieties of a language. The texts in the corpus should be produced in similar circumstances of communication without being translated from another language (a translation involves an interpretation/adaptation process). In this context, the author observes that there is a clear difference between comparable corpora, parallel corpora and multilingual corpora.

#### b) Corpora, sub-corpora, and components:

The corpora, as huge amounts of texts, may present a specific internal structure, which allows the researcher to analyse them systematically:

A corpus can be divided into *subcorpora*. A *subcorpus* has all the properties of a corpus but happens to be part of a larger corpus. Corpora and subcorpora are divided into *components*. A *component* is not necessarily an adequate sample of a language and in that way it is distinct from a corpus and a subcorpus. It is a collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to a set of linguistic criteria that serve to characterise its linguistic homogeneity. (Sinclair, 1996)

The description of the internal structure of a corpus and the distinctions the author operates between its components plays an essential role in the analysis of the corpus.

#### c) Building a corpus:

The building of a corpus is generally described as a two stage process involving *design* and *implementation* (Sinclair, 2005). The *design process* represents the first stage of the corpus building, in which

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<sup>76</sup> The *external criteria* refer to the social setting of the situation of communication (participants, occasion, communicative goals, etc.). The *internal criteria* refer to language patterns.

<sup>77</sup> The author distinguishes between speech corpus and spoken corpus (transcription of oral speech). For more details see Sinclair (1996)  
<http://www.ilc.cnr.it/EAGLES96/corpus/typ/node15.html#SECTION00050000000000000000>

<sup>78</sup> The author distinguishes between *text corpora/whole text corpora* and *samples corpora* (Sinclair: 1996).

<sup>79</sup> They contain *sublanguage* material.

the researcher makes decisions about how to build the corpus in view of the finalities of his/her research. The design stage is followed by the *implementation stage* consisting of five *steps* as follows:

1. Back-up copy of the original collections of texts;
2. Save the text in.txt format (even if the format isn't ASCII it is essential not to mix formats);
3. The texts must be identified (assignation of a unique id number);
4. Pre-processing of the texts, if required;
5. Copy the corpus on a CD-ROM, verify from time to time the corpus – possible file crash.

In the case of web corpora, Sinclair observes that hypertext documents are very different from the recommended.txt format of the corpora. As a result, they are more difficult to explore and quantify, for they are not linear and the communication is multimodal.

A corpus expects documents (including transcripts) to be discrete, text to be linear and separable from non-text, and it expects documents to fall into recognisable sizings, similar to hard-copy documents. A normal corpus has no provision for hypertext, far less flashing text and animations. (Sinclair, 2005)

The second observation on the web corpora made by Sinclair concerns the preservation of the Internet texts. Sinclair observes that the creation of a web corpus supposes the extraction of the web texts from their “natural” environment and that it is very difficult to preserve a complete web document:

[...] is relevant here; the documents in their original format should be carefully preserved; it is up to the corpus managers how far hypertext links are preserved as well in a "family" of documents, but, like all the other texts in a corpus, the Web document is ultimately removed from the environment of its natural occurrence.” (Sinclair, 2005)

As one can observe, the design of the *Computer Web Forums Corpus* consists basically in the unification of the classic principles of corpus creation with principles imposed by the new directions of web corpus design. As it will be illustrated in the following sections of this chapter, we have tried to use the advantages offered by both directions in order to design and implement an optimal corpus for our research.

### 5.3 Design and Implementation

In this section, following the theoretical framework established by Sinclair (see 4.2.) we will describe the protocol, the methodology and the parameters of the *comparable corpus* representing the material analysed in the present work.

### 5.3.1 Protocol

The *Computer Web Forums* corpus consists in five sub-corpora, each in a different language<sup>80</sup>, and each sub-corpus containing texts from a single specialised web forum: English (<http://www.softwaretipsandtricks.com>), Spanish ([www.foroz.org](http://www.foroz.org)), French (<http://www.pcpardis.fr>), Romanian (<http://www.softpedia.ro>), and Catalan (<http://www.softcatala.cat>).

The sub-corpora have comparable dimensions estimated at 200 A4 pages. The corpus is formed by complete texts (web forum threads), consequently, when necessary, we allowed more than 200 pages in a corpus to include the end of an interaction (see 4.3.3). Because of the technical differences in the implementation of the web forums, which lend variability and imprecision to the evaluation of the dimensions of the texts belonging to different web forums, we have established as reference measure the “standard page” used by professional publishers to evaluate manuscripts with different formats. This value is established at 250 words per page<sup>81</sup>. In 4.3.3 the description of the sub-corpora counts as a standard page evaluation.

The forums have been selected following very strict criteria, such as: *durability*, *popularity*, *dimensions*, *authority*, *type*, and *topic*. By *durability* we mean the period of continuous activity on the web forum. In the case of the web forums selected for the *Computer Web Forums Corpus* the minimal duration has been of four years of continuous activity, and eight years for the maximal duration. The criterion of *popularity* of the forum consists in the number of the members authenticated and active on the forum. The quota was set for 200 participants. The *activity* criterion stipulates that the forums must be currently active and must have daily posts. The *type* of web forums selected is knowledge communication/technical support web forums, focusing on a specific *topic*. The *topic* represents the essential basis for comparison between the sub-corpora. We have established as general topic *the computer* and *the Internet*, specified as *software* and *operating systems*, and within the *operating system* category we focused on the theme *Windows*. In some cases, for example with the Catalan corpus, a supplementary criterion was taken into consideration: the *authority* of the web forum. The web forum selected for the analysis of knowledge communication is the *Softcatala*, which represents an authority in the Catalan discussions about software.

Our final observation regarding the selection of the texts that constitute the corpus is that on the forums in the two languages less used on the Internet, Romanian and Catalan respectively, the diversity of

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<sup>80</sup> The languages of the sub-corpora: English, Spanish, French, Romanian, and Catalan.

<sup>81</sup> Estrada, Rita Clay, Gallagher, Rita (1999): *You Can Write a Romance*, Writer's Digest Books, Ohio, p. 41.

topics discussed is not as rich as in English or Spanish, for example. We have had difficulties in finding 200 A4 discussions on *Windows*. The solution we applied in this case was to introduce texts that had for their topic *software* and *Windows*, which means a thematic extension of the topic to other programs working under *Windows* as well.

The texts were copied from their original location, from the Internet and saved in different MsWord files (format.doc). Each file including a sub-corpus comports an initial page of *Contents*. The original location (URL) of the web forum is also referred to on this first page.

Since the *Computer Web Forums* corpus consists in texts obtained from the Internet, as written by their authors, there was no need for transcription. The texts retain a form close to the original in what concerns their textual and visual structures. In order to preserve the multimodal structure of the texts, we have decided to save the texts in word format.

### 5.3.2 Methodology

The implementation of the corpus has observed the following parameters:

- the genre (web forum interactions)
- type of texts (definitions, instructions, explanations)
- the language of the production of the texts (English, Spanish, French, Romanian, Catalan)
- the topic (Computer > Software > Operating System > Windows)

A series of steps were followed in order to build the *Computer Web Forums* corpus, following the protocol based on the theoretical framework described by Sinclair (see 4.2):

- a. *Identification of the texts on the Internet*: The texts were identified with the web search engine Google. After the evaluation of the criteria mentioned above, a series of five forums were selected. Every forum was browsed and different searches were performed in order to identify the threads corresponding to the topic of the corpus. From among the candidate threads we selected the most complex structures (the *threads* consisting in a high number of *posts* or the *threads* consisting in large amounts of text).
- b. *Creation of the sub-corpora*: Once identified, the texts were copied in a word file (one file for each language) named: *english\_corpus.doc*, *spanish\_corpus.doc*, *french\_corpus.doc*, *romanian\_corpus.doc*, and *catalan\_corpus.doc*. In this first version (which we consider the original version of the corpus) the entire content of the web forum texts was preserved as copied from the Internet, without any intervention by the



researcher. The visual content of the original version was also preserved.

- c. *Back-up copy of the original text*: This version of the corpus can be consulted on the CD-ROM attached to the present work.
- d. *Text processing*: After creating a back-up copy of the genuine linguistic material, we processed the text in order to restore its aspect to the original web page. For this purpose we had to reduce the font size of the corpus to 7pt (we recommend its visualisation anywhere from 130% to 210%). Every *thread* was isolated by hard page breaks and the titles of the threads were marked in order to be included in the *Contents* page. The lines of the corpus were numbered automatically in order to identify the different sequences analysed in the present work. Different elements of the web page navigation structure (buttons and arrows), double spaces and different graphic elements (horizontal lines, publicity, etc.), irrelevant for the discursive content of the web forum were also eliminated, wherever possible. The double paragraph marks remained only in the sub-corpora, where they represented the separator of the posts. In the formatted corpus we have preserved the original font colour, the use of capitals, the use of bold or italics. We have also preserved such marks (orthography, punctuation, and orality) as were specific to the authors of the posts : typing errors, Internet orthography, suprasegmental marks. All references in our analysis consider the final edited version. The edited copy of the corpus can also be consulted on the CD-ROM attached to this work.
- e. *Id assignation*: A simple alphabetical code was assigned to each sub-corpus: En (English), Es (Spanish), Fr (French), Ro (Romanian), Cat (Catalan). The exact position of the examples analysed in the corpus can be identified in the corpus by the code that precedes them, which consists in square brackets, the alphabetical Id of the sub-corpus followed by the number of the line of the sequence. For sequences larger than one line, we marked the interval of lines where the sequence can be encountered (for example, [En: 33-37]. The order of each sub-corpus in the multilingual corpus reflects the ranking of the language representativeness on the Internet<sup>82</sup>. The same order was observed in the data analysis.
- f. *Corpus sample*: corpus samples can be consulted in the *Annexes* chapter (9.1), with each sub-corpus containing a 10 page sample.

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<sup>82</sup> The information on language use on Internet is updated and was obtained from the Internet World Statistics web page: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm> (last consulted at 20.11.2010), <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t25/p450/a2010/&file=pcaxis> (last consulted at 20.11.2010) and <http://www.renovat.org/internet/noticies/us-dinternet-entre-els-catalans>. See also <http://www.localret.cat/noticias/el-67-dels-catalans-es-usuari-d2019internet>.

With this method we have obtained a *comparable corpus* formed by five sub-corpora and comprising 1,000 A4 pages grouped in 1,728 posts that form 124 threads. The final dimension of the corpus is of 168,561 words.

### 5.3.3 Parameters of the Sub-corpora

In this sub-section we intend to present a complete description of the sub-corpora that form the *Computer Web Forums* corpus. When the data weren't quantifiable, if we had evidence of their presence in the corpus, we marked this fact by the word "Yes".

#### 5.3.3.1 English Sub-corpus

<b>General information:</b>	
Forum name	<b>SoftwareTipsandTricks Forum</b>
Forum location (URL)	<a href="http://www.softwaretipsandtricks.com">http://www.softwaretipsandtricks.com</a>
Forum duration	2002-2010
Sub-corpus period	2006-2008
Last accessed on	20.11.2010
<b>Textual content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	42,176
Number of threads	13
Number of posts	273
Number of lines	6,047
Number of pages (initial text)	210
Number of standard pages	168.7
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	175
Number of participants	146
<b>Visual Content:</b>	
Total number of images	417
ID avatar	Yes
Signature image	0
Emoticons	Yes
Screen Captures	1
Attached images	0
<b>Other:</b> Use of avatars – very low. Very low image content. Not very visual.	

### 5.3.3.2 Spanish Sub-corpus

<b>Forum characteristics:</b>	
Forum name	Foro Informática
Forum location (URL)	www.foroz.org
Forum duration	2004-2010
Sub-corpus period	2008-2009
Last accessed on	20.11.2010
<b>Textual Content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	29,122
Number of threads	21
Number of posts	328
Number of lines	5,150
Number of pages (initial text)	206
Number of standard pages	116.48
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	145
Number of participants	62
<b>Visual Content:</b>	
Total number of images	1,094
ID avatar	Yes
Signature	Yes
Emoticons	Yes
Screen Captures	0
Attached images	0
<b>Other:</b> The web forum is very visual. The avatars are animated and so are some of the signatures. The dimension of the images in the signatures is surprisingly big. Some of the signatures comprise two or even three huge images. The emoticons are rare. We found one emoticon used in an entire thread. Not everyone has an avatar.	

### 5.3.3.3 French Sub-corpus

<b>Forum characteristics:</b>	
Forum name	PC Paradise
Forum location (URL)	www.pcparadise.fr
Forum duration	2006-2010
Sub-corpus period	2007-2008
Last accessed on	20.11.2010
<b>Textual Content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	26,895
Number of threads	21
Number of posts	333
Number of lines	5,790
Number of pages (initial text)	201
Number of standard pages	106.28
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	154
Number of participants	37
<b>Visual content:</b>	
Total number of images	2,016
ID avatar (nr of participants)	36
Signatures	Yes
Emoticons	Yes
Screen Captures	14
Attached images	0
<b>Other:</b> on the screen capture is written text with the mouse. The forum is very visual (icons, screen captures, signatures, and avatars). The most visual forum (in just one message we identified 8 emoticons). The dimensions of the images are reduced.	

### 5.3.3.4 Romanian Sub-corpus

<b>Forum characteristics:</b>	
Forum's name	Forum Softpedia
Forum's location (URL)	<a href="http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showtopic=528559">http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showtopic=528559</a>
Forum's duration	2002-2010
Sub-corpus period	2006-2009
Last accessed on	20.11.2010
<b>Textual Content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	27,592
Number of threads	24
Number of posts	410
Number of lines	7,060
Number of pages (initial text)	202
Number of standard pages	110.36
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	139
Number of participants	137
<b>Visual content:</b>	
Total number of images	143
ID avatar	Yes
Signature	0
Emoticons	28
Screen Captures	0
Attached images	36
<b>Other:</b> There are many attached images. The number of emoticons is countable. There are no signatures.	

### 5.3.3.5 Catalan Sub-corpus

<b>Forum characteristics:</b>	
Forum's name	Softcatala
Forum's location (URL)	<a href="http://www.softcatala.org/forum/">http://www.softcatala.org/forum/</a>
Forum's duration	2006-2010
Sub-corpus period	January 2008-October 2008
Last accessed on	20.11.2010
<b>Textual Content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	43,100
Number of threads	47
Number of posts	385
Number of lines	5,490
Number of pages (initial text)	202
Number of standard pages	172.4
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	102
Number of participants	102
<b>Visual content:</b>	
Total number of images	800
ID avatar	0
Signature	Yes
Emoticons	Yes
Screen Captures	4
Attached images	0
<b>Other:</b> The forum is not visual and the emoticons are seldom used.	

### 5.3.3.6 Computer Web Forums Corpus

<b>Computer Web Forums Parameters:</b>	
<b>Textual Content:</b>	
Corpus dimension (words/tokens)	168,561
Number of threads	124
Number of posts	1,727
Number of lines	29,484
Number of pages (initial text)	1,021
Number of standard pages	674.22
Number of edited pages (final corpus)	713
Number of participants	483
<b>Visual content:</b>	
Total number of images	4,470
ID avatar	uncountable
Signature	uncountable
Emoticons	uncountable
Screen Captures	19
Attached images	36

## 5.4 Web Forum Communication Profile

The parameters of the Computer Web Forums corpus can form the basis for some general observations concerning communication on the web forums as accounted for by the statistical data. These observations, if correct, may concord with the qualitative analysis of the textual sequences. This statistics can also be used as a solid basis for comparisons between the different ways knowledge is communicated in the languages of the corpus.

The main parameters of a statistic analysis should be: the text as the discursive product, the locutor as text producer and the modalities of the discourse (textual and visual).

To begin with, we will make some simple statements on the amount of text in each language in order to deduce the actual textual production on the web forums for each language of the corpus. These data can be observed only through statistics, which will give us important information about the *text density* on a web forum.

Secondly, we will focus on the locutor as the producer of the text. The number of the participants in the web forum interactions will represent a serious basis for the evaluation of the *interaction density*. At the same time, the number of *posts* on a web forum can illustrate the *discursive extension* of the web forum communication in a language. The quantitative analysis of the visual communication on the web forums completes the analysis. Different communicative profiles can be realised for each language of the corpus starting from these parameters.

In the following sections of this chapter we will consider the textual, interactive, extensional and visual aspects of the discourse of the web forums and we will try to trace the specific profile of each of these types of communication in each language. In order to do this we will propose a protocol of analysis in which we will distinguish between *textual communication*, *interactive communication*, *extended communication* and *visual communication*. We assume that every web forum communication can be characterised by these parameters in different degrees. In order to evaluate these degrees we have established three values for every parameter:

<b>Textual communication</b>	<b>Interactive communication</b>	<b>Extended communication</b>	<b>Visual communication</b>
High textual	High Interactive	High extended	High visual
Textual	Interactive	Extended	Visual
Low textual	Low interactive	Low extended	Low visual

The different values a parameter can take are assigned by comparison between the sub-corpora. The maximum value and the



minimum value in the corpus will represent the high or the low degree of the profile evaluation.

In order to make the data more comprehensible we introduced them into charts, which will thus provide their visual representation too.

## 5.5 Statistics of Web Forums Communication

As one can notice, the communication has similar values in the cases of Sp, Fr and Ro, while it reaches maximum values in En and Cat. This means that in two of the sub-corpora the *textual communication* is prevalingly multimodal. This doesn't mean that a strong textual presence will eliminate completely the visual component of the communication. It only probably means that the visual aspect of the communication is less represented in these sub-corpora.

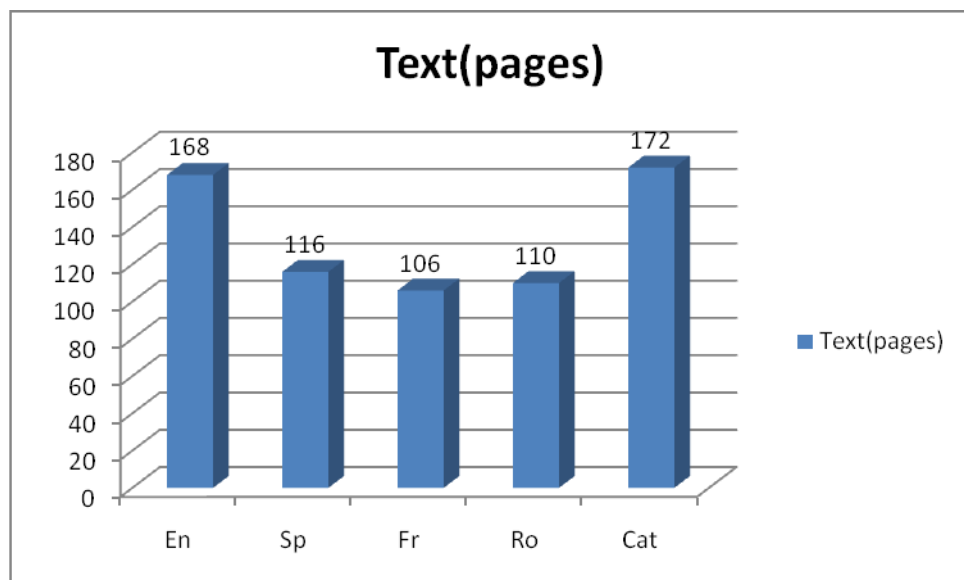
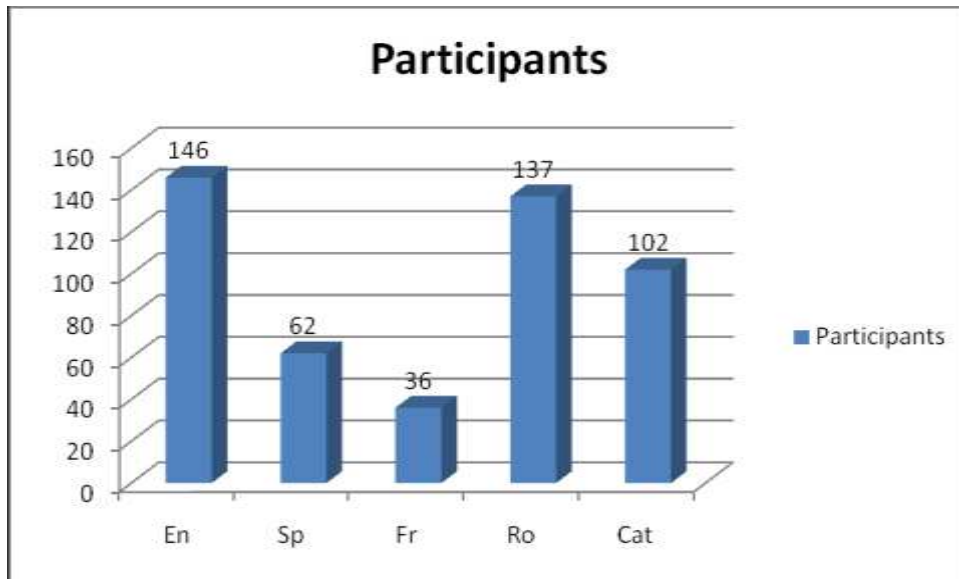


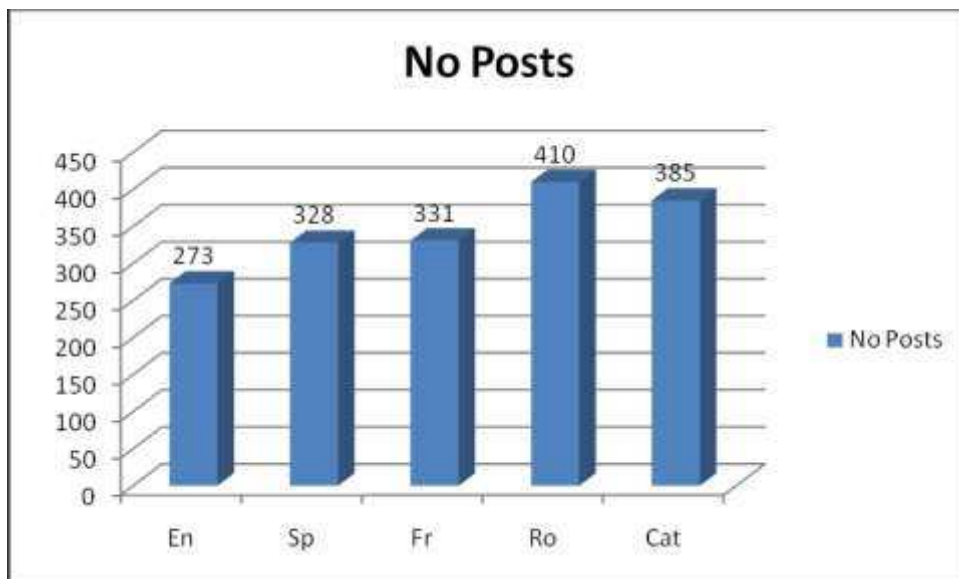
Illustration 1 - number of standard pages of sub-corpora

The discursive contribution to the web forum communication can be measured by the number of the locutors discursively active on the forum. A large number of participants in the web forum communication can lead to the interpretation of the forum as high interactive.. As one can notice in the following chart, the number of participants is quite heterogeneous in the sub-corpora. We regard as high interactive the En, Ro and Cat sub-corpora. The interactive corpora is the Spanish sub-corpus, while the French sub-corpus is a low-interactive corpus.



**Illustration 2 - number of participants in interactions**

The extension of the discursive production in the web forum discussions can be evaluated by the number of posts existent in a sub-corpus. As one can notice, the most extended discursive productions are in En, with an intermediary level in Sp and Fr. The shortest interventions in the web forum communication are notably in Ro and Cat.



**Illustration 3 - number of posts in sub-corpora**

As one can notice in the following chart, the visual component is present in the sub-corpora at different levels. A high visual forum communication can be observed in Fr, and in Sp; Cat is visual while En and Ro are low visual sub-corpora.

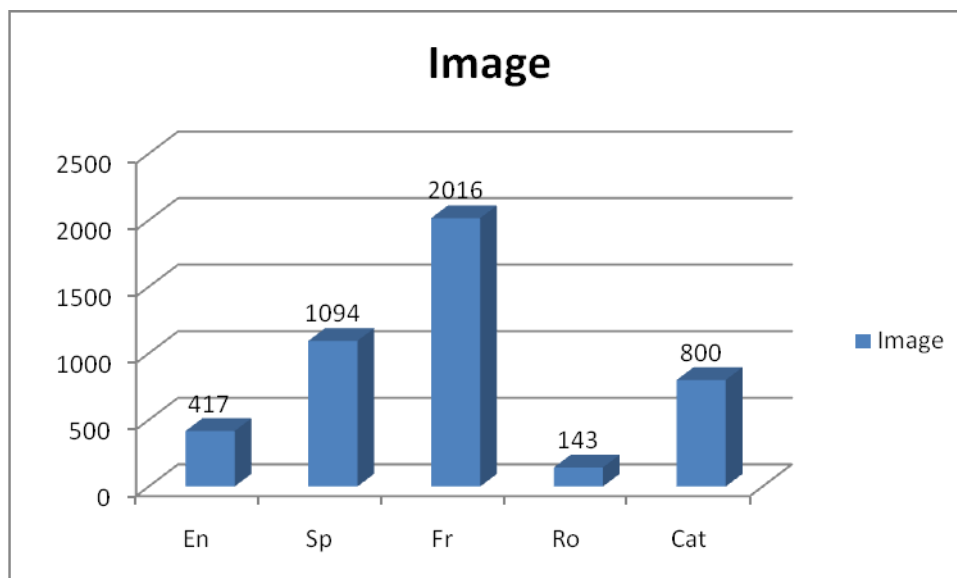


Illustration 4 - number of images in each sub-corpus

In conclusion, we may state that we have identified the following profiles for the web forum communication in English, Spanish, French, Romanian and Catalan:

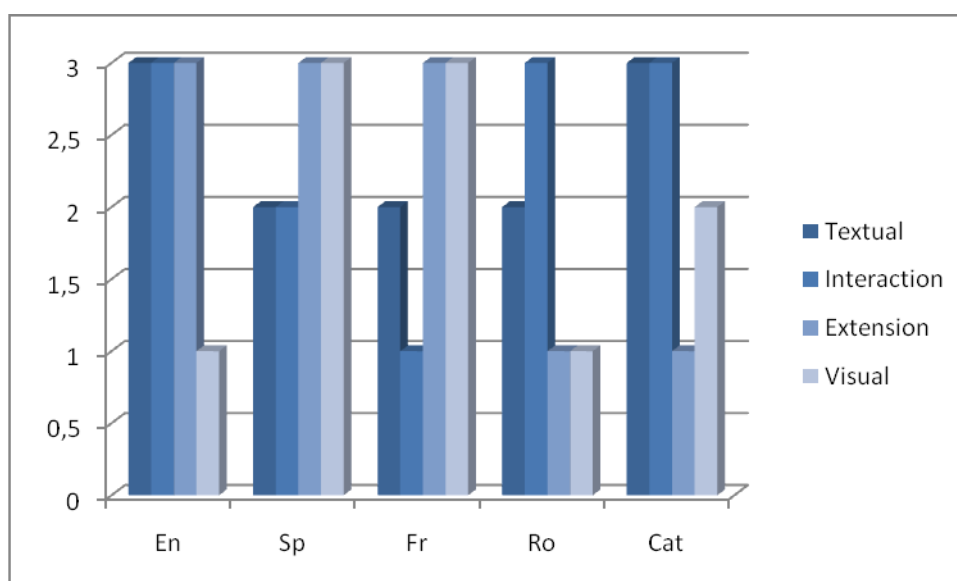
*The English sub-corpus* is: high textual, high interactive, high extended and low visual.

*The Spanish sub-corpus* is: textual, interactive, high extended and high visual.

*The French sub-corpus* is: textual, low interactive, high extended and high visual.

*The Romanian sub-corpus* is: textual, high interactive, low extended and low visual.

*The Catalan sub-corpus* is: high textual, high interactive, low extended and visual.



## 5.6 Conclusions on Corpus Structure

We can present partial conclusions to the profile of each sub-corpus of the Computer Web Forums corpus. These conclusions will help us to better understand the discursive organisation of each sub-corpus.

It is important to observe that among the 5 profiles we have presented there is no identical profile. Some sub-corpora share two features at the most that makes them similar: Sp and Fr (high extended and high visual), Cat and Ro (high interactive and low extended), or En and Cat (high textual and high interactive).

These mutual features can signify that the researcher can expect to encounter large texts and numerous images in Sp/Fr, short texts and numerous active interlocutors in Cat/Ro, and text prevalence and numerous active interlocutors in En/Cat.

As one can observe, from the very beginning, the statistics have demonstrated that each sub-corpus has its own peculiarities, different from that of the other languages. This has led to our contention that in the analysis of the discursive patterns similar phenomena will be observed in knowledge communication.

## 6. METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

In what follows we will present the model of analysis which will be applied in order to describe the professional web forum as genre. In this section we distinguish between *conceptual aspects* of the methodology (theoretical approaches, concept and terminology) and *phases of analysis*, where the order of actions and the manners of working with the corpus will be described.

### 6.1 Conceptual Aspects

In order to describe the genre *professional web forum*, we will take into consideration three discourse analysis approaches presented in sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4. These approaches are: the communicational model of discourse analysis (Charaudeau), textual linguistics (Adam), and conversation analysis (Orecchioni, Traverso). We consider that these three approaches may offer the effective conceptual tools necessary for the discursive analysis of our corpora.

Each of the three approaches can provide effective support in the study of the different discursive aspects of this genre, and together they can facilitate a complete description of the enunciative mechanism and discursive organisation of the professional web forum. Consequently, we have distinguished three essential levels of the genre description: the enunciative level, the sequential level, and the interactional level. Since a different approach to discourse analysis can provide the theoretical support for our research, we have elaborated a three level model of analysis in order to observe the features of the genre we are investigating.

The 1<sup>st</sup> level of analysis, the most general, is the *discourse level*. Here we will use the communicational model of Patrick Charaudeau and the theoretical concepts he proposes: *contract of communication*, *discursive project*, and *discursive strategies*. In the theoretical framework outlined by the concept *contract of communication* we will also use the main elements that determine and constrain the genre in a specific situation of social communication: *the objectives of the enunciation*, *the*

*discursive identities*, and *the discursive device* or *discursive “mise en scène”*.

We consider that the features of the professional web forum as genre consist in a specific way of representation of identities and in a complex construction of the interactive device. Both aspects will be analysed, described, and commented on in the present work.

In what concerns the representation of identities, we will take into account the discursive identities and we will focus especially on *deixis* and *positioning* as the essential strategies that organise the verbal production of each participant in a situation of communication. We regard *deixis* as important explicit evidence of how the locutor represents himself/herself and how he/she represents the other(s), the *addressee* and the *audience* respectively. *Positioning* is also considered an essential clue in establishing a communicative contract between the enunciative “I” and the addressee “You”. The *objectives of enunciation* also emerge from the first contact between participants, and we have established that these represent a unique theme, *the knowledge communication* which, too, determines the contract of communication.

At this first level the *discursive device* is very complex, so that we have decided to probe deeper into the subject and introduce the *2<sup>nd</sup> level of analysis*. At this level we will use the concepts and terminology of textual linguistics (see section 4.2) and we will assume that the text of each locutor’s intervention is formed by a series of sequences. We will also assume that these sequences are explanatory (see Chapter 3, especially section 3.5). As pointed out by different authors (see section 4.2), the explanatory sequences are expressed through different *discursive strategies*, respectively *explanatory discursive strategies*. For the moment we will assume three main explanatory strategies: *definition*, *description of actions*, and *prototypical explanation*, with their subcategories (see 6.3 protocol of analysis). If different categories of discursive strategies will be encountered during the analysis, they will be highlighted in the analysis and in the partial conclusions of the corresponding chapter.

In line with textual linguistics theory, besides the sequences we will take into account the *textual* dimension of the communication and we will point out how the *explanatory text* is constructed through a series of explanatory sequences on the professional web forum. We consider that this double perspective on the explanatory construction of the discourse on the professional web forum as *sequence* and as *text* will provide a complete panorama of the discursive phenomena involved in knowledge transmission on the Internet.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> level of our analysis will focus on the interactional dimension of the explanation. In order to analyse this aspect we will use the conversationalist hierarchic model of interactions. We will align our investigation with the studies defined by Orecchioni and Traverso (see section 4.3). At this level of the analysis we will consider the

professional web forum as communicational interaction. This idea is supported by the fact that e-discourse and CMC are generally considered hybrids between the written and oral discourses (see Chapter 2, especially sections 2.1, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2), which structures the professional web forum into an asynchronous written dialogue, making it fit into the theory of communicational interactions.

In line with this theory we will consider that the professional web forum discussions display the following hierarchic structure: *monological units* and *dialogical units*. We will use in this work the term *intervention* for the *monological* units and *exchanges* for the *dialogical* units. We have also taken into account the different dialogical pairs (see 6.3 protocol of analysis). A *series of exchanges* was considered, a *sequence*, and at this level the *sequence* will be conceived of in conversationalist terms, which will distinguish it from the sequence in textual linguistics analysis. We used the term sequence firstly in line with J.M Adam's theory, and subsequently in line with the conversationalist theory, because the two treat different conceptual levels of the discourse, and therefore, will appear in distinct sections of the analysis.

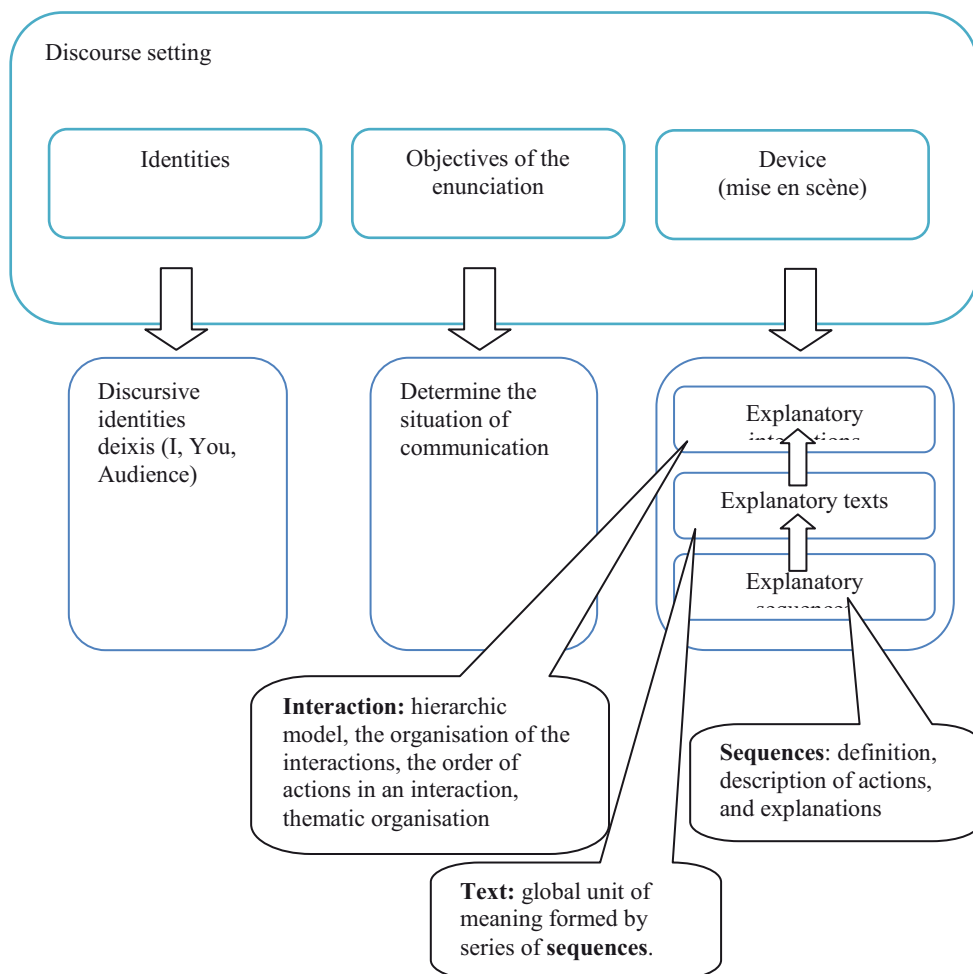
This 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the analysis is intended to demonstrate the complex discursive articulation of the explanation, firstly as sequence, then as explanatory text, and finally as explanatory interaction. In this part of the analysis we will take into account how the participants in the interaction establish communicational relations. Basically, we examine three main aspects of the professional web forum interactions: *the construction of interaction*, *the structuring of actions within interaction*, and *the thematic progression in interaction*.

Each main aspect is considered in detail and adapted to the features of CMC when necessary<sup>83</sup>. Thus, the description of the professional web forums interactions features a description of the *local* and *global discursive organisation* of the interactions, a *ranks analysis* and a *thematic progression analysis* for an optimal view of the way the explanation is constructive collaboratively on the Internet.

In what follows we will display a conceptual scheme of the professional web forum as genre.

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<sup>83</sup> For example, turn taking is different in computer mediated communication than in face-to-face conversation.



## 6.2 Phases of the analysis

In what follows we will describe the main phases of the analysis, which consists in the following main parts: a) discursive representation of identities<sup>84</sup>, b) explanatory sequences and explanatory texts, and c) interactive construction of knowledge as negotiation between ignorance and experience.

a) *Discursive representation of identities:* represents the analysis of the identities involved in the transmission of knowledge. Two identities are involved in this situation: *the novice* and *the expert*. Since *the novice* seems to be the active agent as initiator and supporter of the discussion, in this first section of the analysis we focus on his/her discourse. The most important part concerning knowledge transmission in *the novice's* discourse is the *asking for information* sequence. The *asking for information* sequence consists generally in an interrogation and its immediate context. It represents a discursive strategy through which the locutor determines the contract of communication. He/she expresses

<sup>84</sup> Objectives of enunciation: result from the social interaction between the participants in the situation (knowledge communication, knowledge transmission, collaborative knowledge construction).



his/her ignorance, positions the participants in the discussion and establishes the contract of communication. Certain discursive patterns are recurrent. Since the recurrence is an indication of systematicity, all the recurrent patterns will be registered and analysed. Each sub-corpus will be analysed separately. We will focus on the elocutionary, allocutionary and delocutionary acts of speech as discursive representations of the identities of the self and the other. After the analysis of all sub-corpora, we will present the partial conclusions to the construction of identity on the *professional web forum* and we will highlight its specifics in each of the languages scrutinised.

b) *Explanatory sequences and explanatory texts*: in the *expert* portion of the professional web forum discourse the most interesting part consists in the rich variety of explanatory sequences. Thus, we will focus our attention on knowledge transmission through explanation. We will distinguish between two main categories of explanations: simple explanations and complex explanations. The first category consists in different types of explanations. We distinguish between object/concept-oriented explanations, procedures/instructions, and prototypical explanations. These categories will be identified and described in each sub-corpus. The partial conclusions to the section will portray the way users 'explain' on a *professional web forum* and how they construct their discourse. Specific features of each language will also be highlighted.

c) *Interactive construction of knowledge*: the transmission of knowledge as negotiation between two entities lends itself to an interactionist model of analysis adapted to the specifics of *computer mediated communication*. We highlight that a longitudinal analysis of the professional web forums interactions would constitute an advantage, because it will emphasise the contextual functions of the speech acts.

Since examining each interaction in the Computer Web Forums Corpus would exceed the scope of our work, we will choose from each sub-corpus a unique and representative interaction which we will analyse in order to observe how knowledge is constructed, transmitted, and validated through communicational interaction.

The observations that will result from the analysis will form the basis of the description of the mechanism of knowledge construction and transmission. At the end of each analysis we will provide a model of the interactive construction of cognition.

d) *Multilingual approach to discourse analysis*: the analysis will be applied to a multilingual corpus (see chapter 5) consisting in professional web forum texts in five different languages in order to highlight the same discursive construction of knowledge. The contrastive analysis of the comparable corpora will allow us to observe repetitive discursive patterns in different languages and will give more support to our hypothesis of investigation. The multilingual approach will reveal discursive patterns specific for each language.

## 6.3 Protocol of Analysis

The following protocol of analysis will be used in order to describe the *professional web forum*. This protocol represents a general model that can be applied to any particular form of *professional web forum*:

### 1. Professional Web Forum: Situation of communication

#### a. Finality/Goal:

- i. **Expert finalities** (present, explain, define, illustrate, exemplify, comment, advise, recommend, suggest, help, guide, warn):
  1. teach (“faire savoir”, “faire savoir-faire”)
  2. assist (“faire savoir-faire”)
  3. ask for feedback (“faire savoir”)
- ii. **Novice finalities** (persuade, describe, ask questions):
  1. ask for information
  2. learn
  3. give feedback

#### b. Identities: formal construction and psycho-social construction

##### i. Novice (requests knowledge):

##### 1. Discourse of ignorance:

##### a. Complete ignorance (request for information):

- i. Positioning – inferiority in relation to the addressee/audience

##### b. Partial ignorance (request for information):

- i. Positioning – inferiority in relation to the addressee/audience
- ii. Positioning – equality in relation to the addressee/audience

##### ii. Expert (provides knowledge):

##### 1. Discourse of experience:

##### a. Explanatory sequence:

##### i. Definition (*what-question*):

1. *Genus and differentia*
2. Metaphorical definition
3. Essential definition
4. Definition by similarity
5. Nominal definition

- 6. Descriptive definition:
    - a. Distinctive definition
      - i. Reparatory definition
    - b. Genetic definition
    - c. Causal definition
  - 7. Ostensive definition
  - ii. Procedures/Instructions** (*how-question*):
    - 1. List of actions
    - 2. Description of actions
  - iii. Prototypical explanation** (*why-question*)
- c. **Theme/Topic:** Knowledge communication / Knowledge construction in interaction / Collaborative knowledge / Knowledge co-construction
- d. **Circumstances/Device:**
- i. **Scenic device:**
    - 1. Communication Channel:**
      - a. Computer
      - b. Web browser
      - c. URL
      - d. Web page
    - 2. Organisation of the communication:**
      - a. web forum main title
      - b. web forum domains
      - c. thread titles
      - d. thread content
        - i. Web forum domains:**
          - 1. domain title
          - 2. date of the last post
          - 3. number of threads
          - 4. number of posts
        - ii. Thread titles:**
          - 1. id number
          - 2. pg number
          - 3. number of posts
          - 4. number of views
          - 5. date of last post
        - iii. Thread content:**
          - 1. Types of posts:**
            - a. Opening post (mandatory)

- b. Thread body (optional)
- c. Closing post (optional)

**ii. Discursive device:**

**1. Construction of interactions:**

**a. Local organisation:**

**i. *Turn taking*:** the participants write their interventions and the server where the professional web forum is hosted arranges the turns of speech chronologically

**ii. *Rules of alternance*:**

1. the web forum interactions are sequentially organised
2. in the *initial post*, the initiator of the thread can select the addressee: implicitly, explicitly (audience, indefinite addressee)
3. the initiator selects nobody (only enunciates)
4. the other participants volunteer to participate in the interaction
5. nobody volunteers (the thread ends)
6. if nobody volunteers to participate in the cognitive interaction, the initiator continues and tries to get the audience's attention

**iii. *Speech turn composition*:**

1. The turn: word, simple clause, complex clause
2. Transition point:
  - a. positioned at the end of the turn

- b. sometimes discursively anticipated
          - c. graphically marked by the device (every intervention appears in a cell of a table that forms the thread)
          - iv. *Turns regulation*: unique form of turns: “full turns” (tours pleins)
        - b. Global organisation:
          - i. Opening:
            1. Opens the channel;
            2. Establishes contact;
            3. Defines situation;
            4. Rituals of beginning (cordiality, politeness)
          - ii. Body:
            1. Sequentially organised
          - iii. Closing:
            1. Organises the end of the conversation;
            2. Ritual
- 2. The Organisation of Actions in Interaction
  - a. Monological units:
    - i. the speech act (the minimal unit)
    - ii. the intervention (one/more speech act(s))
  - b. Dialogical/Polilogical Units:
    - i. the exchange:
      1. one intervention: truncation
      2. two interventions: initiative / reactive
      3. three interventions: initiative / reactive / evaluative
      4. extended exchanges
    - ii. The sequence (one/more exchanges thematically/pragmatically related)
    - iii. The interaction (the thread)
- 3. Thematic Construction in the Interaction
  - a. Theme (semantic cohesion, anaphora, cataphora):
    - i. Thematic discontinuity
      1. closing of the theme:
        - a. explicit closing (sometimes pre-closing)
        - b. implicit closing (last message of the thread)
      2. Thematic rupture: related with the context
      3. The proposal of a theme:

- a. explicit: in the initial post
  - b. implicit: in the title of the threads
- ii. Thematic continuity:
  1. Theme ratification: implicit only (by answering the post)
  2. The elaboration:
    - a. Modes of thematic elaboration:
      - i. *Descriptive-commentative*
      - ii. Explanatory
      - iii. Narrative
      - iv. Argumentative
      - v. *Échanges à batôns rompus*

## 7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION ON THE PROFESSIONAL WEB FORUMS

### 7.1 Discourses of Ignorance. Identity on Web Forums

We shall begin by sketching the general situation that determines the interactions in all the five corpora we will analyse. The locutor, the *user* in Internet terminology, registers in and becomes a member of a specialised web forum (on computer hardware and software) because her/his knowledge is limited in this field and s/he is aware that s/he needs information on how to deal with technical problems of varied complexities. The forum, a virtual place dedicated to collaborative work, counts as an active community. In order to obtain the knowledge s/he needs, the locutor has to establish contact with the community of users in order to describe her/his problem and ask for help. From this brief introduction one can note that the locutor's discourse is already shaped. There are, no doubt, variations of this general scheme, which are the elements that individualise the discourse and identity in every corpus. We consider that the different parameters causing these variations can be identified from this general model: *language variation* (which will permit us to draw a general scheme for every corpus and to focus on identity), *individual variation* (every post is different because it has a different locutor), *thematic variation* (every variation in the topic of the discussion may modify the discourse), and *chronological variation* (different time, different discourse). In our analysis we deal with *language variation* and *individual variation*. Our goal is to observe the way different individuals perform their identities as *learners/students* in different languages through the same discursive genre and the same topic of discussion.

In what follows, we will analyse the construction of identity through *person markers* in the *requesting information* interventions on a computer software web forum. In this analysis we will try to highlight such essential aspects of the construction of identity as:

- a. the strategies the locutor uses to achieve her/his aim (*learning, obtaining information*)
- b. the way the locutor relates to the collocutor (*positioning*)

- c. the way the locutor refers to the topic of discussion

We will try to scrutinise the construction of identity by focussing on the deictic expressions and their determinants in the locutor's interventions *ask requesting information*.

## 7.1.1 The Construction of Identity on the English Corpus

The locutor involved in CMC interactions on English web forums has to decide the best way to express his/her ignorance in the forum in order to obtain help, assistance, or information. These decisions are essential for the organisation of discourse and create recurrent patterns. When involved in a communicational interaction, besides the messages he/she transmits, the locutor creates, through enunciation, discursive representations of the identities of the participants in the situation. The way the locutor represents discursively the *self*, the *other*, and the *audience* will be analysed in what follows.

### 7.1.1.1 The Sincere Locutor

In the English corpus we have identified 1240 occurrences of **I** - first person reference. It is important to mention that, as a general rule, normative orthography is not followed in Internet communication. In conclusion, alongside the normative forms **I** and **I'**, different orthographical forms may occur, such as: *i (235 occurrences)*, *Ive (1 occurrence)*, *Im (9 occurrences)*<sup>85</sup>. The alteration of orthography is considered an essential characteristic of Internet literacy<sup>86</sup>.

Nonetheless, within the discourse these forms are as relevant as the correct grammatical forms, and consequently, we will take them into consideration in our analysis.

We will begin our analysis with the claim that, in the English corpus, the locutor (**I**) deals with her/his cognitive limits by developing a *discourse of ignorance*, declaring that s/he is not capable to solve the problem s/he faces. Likewise, by modalizing, s/he is stating that "*he is not sure about what the solution is to the problem he presents*". As a consequence of this attitude there will be further different expressions through which the locutor manifests her/his motivation to learn. We will identify such expressions as the *asking for assistance discourse*, a discourse where the locutor assumes the role of a 'student' and acts in

<sup>85</sup> The complete list of the orthographic forms for the 1<sup>st</sup> person deixis in the English corpus is: I (873 forms) i (235) I'm (53), I'am (1), I've (36) I'll (21) im (15) Im (9) IM(1) I'd (8), i'd (2), i'll (1), i'm (5), i've (2), ive (13), Ive (1).

<sup>86</sup> The Internet literacy and specific orthography are current in all the forms of Computer Mediated Communication as well as in the telecommunication forms using mobile devices (iPhone, PDA, mobile phone, etc.).



consequence. Within the *asking for assistance discourse*, “**I**” not only requests information. S/He also encodes in her/his intervention information about her/his attitude to and view on the topic, the way s/he wants to relate to the collocutor, her/his emotional participation, as well as communicating her/his *aspiration/desire* to acquire new information and knowledge.

In our corpus, one of the first interventions is atypical for English speakers. The locutor is discursively represented by *omission*. This is a characteristic of American English: of the colloquial/familiar register. Even if not mentioned, the presence of the locutor is reinforced by the use of the superlative form of an adjective describing a frame of mind (*very frustrated*), followed by the typical exclamation of a person that needs assistance, which marks the intervention as personal and emotional.

[E:1:15] **Very frustrated**, Please help

Another example of the *representation by omission* of the locutor is the situation where the locutor chooses not to express her/his ignorance, but to present it as *indecision*. *Indecision* can be considered to be a degree of *ignorance*<sup>87</sup>. The presence of the locutor is actualised in the text through different *person determinants*: the adjective **sure** and the verb **to do**.

[E1: 554] Not **sure** what **to do**

The strongest discursive representation of the locutor through deixis is the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronominal form “**I**”. Since it is self-referential, its use in the discourse places the locutor as the main figure of the communicative activity. Through self-reference, within a *discourse of ignorance* the locutor chooses to talk about her/himself in different ways. Generally, he tries to call the attention to the other members of the forum in order to obtain the information s/he needs. There are many discursive strategies s/he uses in order to achieve her/his aim. Taking the weaker position in a dialogue, presenting the “problem” as very difficult to her/him, disclosing emotions, and introducing data on the situational context, are some of them.

In the English corpus different degrees of strength in the expression of ignorance may be observed, such as: zero degree<sup>88</sup>, need for information, need for assistance and/or collaboration, need for help, expression of incapacity and/or indecision, expression of the insecurity of actions and claiming personal ignorance.

Interrogation is the most widespread way of obtaining information on a subject. There are many modalities the locutor can choose from

<sup>87</sup> It is a case of ‘when someone doesn’t know what to choose/decide between many possibilities’.

<sup>88</sup> The subject chooses not to mention her/his cognitive limits.

when asking for information. On web forums the locutor can choose to either avoid or not the *expression of ignorance*. Likewise, the use of one or more interrogations, or integrating the interrogation in a fragment more discursively complex, is significant.

In what concerns the way the enunciator organises her/his discourse in order to obtain information, we highlight the use of the simple question, where the locutor can choose to express *zero degree of ignorance*, like in [E3:1529] and [E11:5645]:

[E3:1529] How do **I** get my sound to work again?

[E11:5645] now how can I fix that :S ?

or *ignorance*, like in [E3:1578], where the locutor presents it as *insecurity about her/his actions*:

[E3:1578] Am **I** doing something wrong?

Even in the case of *zero degree ignorance*, it is obvious that the “**I**” locutor requires information because s/he has a fissure in her/his knowledge system in the field. Claiming *ignorance* is implicit in the text, thus motivating the question.

It is evident that [E3:1529] and [E11:5645] are aim-oriented questions, while [E3:1578] is action-oriented. The two first questions create the image of a determined locutor, sure of what s/he wants to know. [E3:1578] the image of the locutor is that of a person actively involved in the situation s/he presents. Actually, the locutor asks for guidance and council because s/he assumes s/he is doing something wrong.

An even more complex discourse organisation of *requesting information* is the progression of interrogatives. In our corpus, we have noted progressions formed by three or four interrogatives:

[E10:4066] What should **I** do? anyone is familiar with this problem? Help!!

The locutor not only asks for the information s/he needs, but at the same time encodes in her/his discourse *emotional* and *situational* information in order to elicit *captatio benevolentiae*. In [E12:5790] the illocutive intensity grows gradually and ends with an exclamation creating a rather dramatic effect of helplessness.

[E12:5790] **I** was also wondering, what was the problem with sp3 on my computer? Was it a bug or something? Should **I** run an AV scan, resolve any problems that may arise then reinstall sp3? Or should **I** wait until sp3 is re-released, or will it even be re-released? Sorry for all the questions.

In [E12:5790] the progression of questions indicates the insecurity of the locutor by means of a permanent switch between “**I**” and other pronominal forms (**it / any**).

In [E5:2387] the *elocutive intensity* is induced by the repetition of “**I**”, meant to focus the discourse on the locutor. The locutor’s intervention is formed by the progression of three interrogatives, each playing the role of an intensifier. If the first question is merely an *information request*, the second question introduces the first degree of intensity showing an *insecure* locutor, while the last part of the intervention: “*I have no clue what I’m looking for*” reaches in intensity the climax of the *discourse of ignorance*. Through the image of a complete ignorant, the locutor places her/himself in a very weak position as a strategy to obtain help. It is also very noticeable that the verbs **to do**, **to get**, **to look for** indicate the involvement of the locutor as an active participant in the search for a solution.

[E5:2387] What should **I** do? Is there another place on the support site to get this same file? **I** have no clue what **I**’m looking for.

[E6:2705] is formed only by a question followed by a *request for advice*. The noun “*advice*” used in this context suggests that the locutor awaits passively the knowledge of information and instructions coming from the other participants in the forum. The noun “*advice*” places the locutor on a weak position regarding the collocutor. It also determines the general terms of the *self-other* relation as instituted by the locutor. As s/he suggests through the use of *advice*, the locutor doesn’t accept to be tutored by the collocutor, even if s/he will accept that s/he needs the collocutor’s extended knowledge in the field. S/He reserves the right to decide for her/himself what the best solution is.

[E6:2705] How do **I** fix this? Any advise on this would be great help. Thanx.

In the following examples we have to deal with a different *expression of ignorance*. If in the interventions above the locutor acknowledged her/his *complete ignorance*, the following examples are the expression of *partial ignorance*. The locutor possesses a certain level of knowledge in the field, which, however, is not sufficient. One of the expressions of *partial ignorance* is the *expression of the incapacity* to encounter a solution due to limited and insufficient knowledge. In [E10:4432], the locutor admits: *I’m out of ideas really*. The intensity marker *really*, creates a stronger image of an actively involved locutor who has tried all the possibilities and failed. The use of the verbs **suppose**, **try** and **doubt** is illustrative for the incertitude of the locutor. Her/His request “*Anyone has any more ideas?*” is a proposition for collaborative working from equivalent positions.

[E10:4432] I'm out of ideas really...I suppose I'll try waiting for SP2, but doubt it'll solve it. Anyone has any more ideas?

*Acknowledging ignorance* is the strongest expression of the locutor's request for information. **Please help me as well** lends the *request for information/assistance* the aspect of pleading and a strong emotional charge. The locutor uses the adverbs **really** and **honestly** as intensity markers in order to underline that s/he has no informational resources to solve the problem s/he describes. The use of the verbs **want** and **know** in their negative forms intensifies the idea that the locutor is completely helpless, as well as underlining that the forum is her/his ultimate solution.

[E1:535] Please help me as well, as I really don't want to reformat. i honestly don't know how anyways...

The image of the "self" is completed in the English corpus with the *discourse of motivation*, in which the locutor insists on the motivation why s/he has to obtain an answer to her/his computer problem.

In the first example we analyse, the locutor constructs the image of the "self" as a person bothered by a problem. He expresses the *wish* to solve a bothering problem he faces by modalising his request: e.g. **I would like** and, at the same time, he relates emotionally to the situation by using the colloquial expression **to get rid of**. This expression gives us an idea about how the locutor feels and relates to the problem.

[E1:733] But I would like to get rid of it

The same motivation is also expressed by means of the verb **to hope**, used in two different manners. Even if both locutors are using the same verb to construct their *request for information*, the way the latter are constructed is different, suggesting different attitudes on the part of either locutor.

Thus, if in the first [E1:973] example, the **hope** the locutor expresses appears alongside the indefinite pronouns **someone** (reference to the collocutor) and **something** (reference to the solution):

[E1:973] I am hoping someone can come up with something there is really too much on this HD for me to want to reformat it

The next example reveals another relation between the participants in the interaction. The sentence is formed by two verbs and three deictic items. The 1<sup>st</sup> verb, **to hope**, modalises the locutor's intervention, while the second describes how the locutor embodies the relation to the collocutor. The verb **to cooperate** describes the interaction between the locutor and the collocutor as a relation of equality. The interaction between the participants in the discussion is illustrated by the person deictics: **I**, **you** and **me**. The locutor has the initiative in expressing

her/his request in the form of an invitation, but the discourse is addressee-oriented.

[E8:3820] **I** hope you cooperate with me.

Another form of asking for information is to express it as a *request for assistance*. In this situation the request for assistance appears under two forms: as the *need for help* expressed through either *exclamatory* or *imperative* structures.

In these structures the identity of the locutor is not that of an ignorant person. The locutor chooses to depict the general context and the way the situation affects him. In this case the intention is to involve the collocutor affectively by means of an emotional intervention. The locutor presents an image of the self in a very bad situation that can only be solved by the collocutor's contribution. The locutor uses intensifiers in order to describe how terrible the situation he faces is. In the following examples the quantitative adjectives **great** and **more** play the role of intensity markers. Both of them determine the noun **help**. It is also noteworthy for the context of communication that these enunciations are accompanied by expressions of gratitude and excuse such as: **sorry, greatly appreciated, thank you**.

[E4:1862] sorry for the long post but **i** am in need of great help. any help would be greatly appreciated

[E11:4986] Thank you for your replies, **I** hope **I** can fix this problem. **I** still do need more help. **I**'ve also got a project to finish soon, and this is killing me.

In the exclamatory and imperative structures which exemplify the *request for assistance* it is possible to observe different degrees of politeness. If in [E4:1862] one can notice different expressions of gratitude, while in [E11:4986] there is no such expression. The locutor uses verbs like **to need, to fix, to try, to start, to look, to ask**, and the entire enunciation centres on the verbal constructions. The repetition of the verb **to help** (5 times in 13 lines) as an imperative is also important for the way the locutor tries to relate to the other members of the forum.

We can also note that the locutor may use the imperative and exclamatory structures as a call-attention strategy without any explanations:

[E5:2406] Someone please help me, **I** need to fix this!

A more developed strategy for *requesting assistance* is the use of repetitive exclamatory structures like **please help (plz help** respectively), to which the locutor adds an explanation. In this case, the explanation contains an intensifier (**worse**) in order to emphasise the seriousness of the problem the locutor faces.

[E11:5258] Please help...I am having very similiar problem but worse!!!Plz help

We can assert that the *request for assistance* structures are the most developed forms of information request on the Internet forums. They present a complex structure, where the image of the locutor is more complex, entailing descriptive and argumentative fragments together with markers of emotional involvement. The fragments observe the general exclamatory/imperative structure, the locutor describes the situation using numerous verbs, as well as including detailed explanations. Similarly, the change of the register during the locutor's intervention marks an emotional participation. The presence of the argotic lexical elements underlines the precise disposition of the locutor. The locutor changes his mind switching from politeness "please help" to modalisation "maybe a little insight into what the problem could be...":

[E11:5283] Please help any suggestions or maybe alittle insight into what the problem could be so I can try on it again with something that can maybe direct me in some way where to start rather than just jumping into a problem I have no clue about possibly fucking with things tha relate to the problem in no way and leaving me going psycho & throwing an expensive piece of machinerary out the fucking window!!!Please help me it would be greatly appreciated

Or s/he does it more indirectly, using a rhetorical construction that points also to an argotic reference, as in the example "*as helpful as a piece of used toilet paper*", which is not a lexical element of the argot but a rhetorical construction.

[E13:5957], ive tried services.msc and looked for windows audio and all is well, ive even tried phoning the makers of of m audio to ask there opinion but were as helpful as a piece of used toilet paper, could some one please help me as i am loosing the will to live.

Another representation of the locutor on the Internet forums is the form **me**<sup>89</sup>, of which we have identified a total of 173 occurrences. When the locutor refers to her/himself through the pronominal form **me**, s/he is dealing with two situations. The first consists in verbal constructions, with the most used on the Internet forum being the construction **help me**, where the locutor accepts a weaker position in the dialogical exchange with the collocutor:

[E3:1771] can anyone help **me**

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<sup>89</sup> In the English corpus we have identified the following orthographies of **me** (169), **Me** (1), **ME** (3).

[E4:2293] can anyone help **me** pls?

[E5:2406] Someone please help **me**, I need to fix this!

[E5:2552] Can no one help **me**?

[E13:6200] Can anybody help **me** with this anoying problem?

In the examples above the locutor is the passive subject of the communication, who accepts a type of inferior position suggesting a weakness at the level of knowledge. The collocutor is the figure who must intervene actively.

There are several other verbal constructions (**to tell, to let know**) that suggest interactivity or continuation of the communicational exchange, as in the following examples:

[E2:1388] please, tell **me** what part is not clear...

[E11:5090] Please let **me** know if this works for you. It may help me somehow.

Here, the locutor is not in a weak dialogical position, but *the* factor that maintains the communication. Both verbs suggest that the participants in the enunciation act keep the contact and that, in this case, the active factor is the locutor.

An even more locutor-focussed construction is the pronominal form **me** in a non-verbal context, normally preceded by the preposition **for**, as in our examples. In this case, the locutor emphasises his position in the enunciation. The significance may be, like in the first example, to emphasise how important it is for the user to solve the situation and to receive assistance.

[E1:973] I am hoping someone can come up with something there is really too much on this HD for **me** to want to reformat it

On the other hand, in example [E9:3864] the locutor tries to call the attention of the collocutor using the metaphoric expression **shed some light**. The locutor is trying through this rhetoric construction to put the collocutor in her/his place, soliciting his understanding and disposition to cooperate and help.

[E9:3864] Can anybody try and shed some light on this situation for **me**?

An indirect representation of the locutor is the deictic form **my**<sup>90</sup>. Its use illustrates how the locutor approaches himself and the universe around him, which he considers to be his personal one. The possessive adjective has a great impact on the discourse. It defines the space and the time of the locutor and creates an opposition between locutor and collocutor in the enunciation.

In the Internet forums communication the adjectival form **my** is usually the determinant of a common noun. In our case, since the Internet forum is dealing with hardware and software problems, the lexical field of the nouns we encounter in combination with **my** is that of computers. Using this adjectival form the locutor personalises the communication and organises her/his universe and the objects within. Although s/he mentions **disk errors, problem, computer** or **data**, it becomes more significant if s/he attributes to those “objects” the additional meaning of *objects owned by me*. In this situation the lost **data** or the **computer** are not just impersonal but personalised objects and, on receiving the message, the collocutor accepts that any modification of the integrity of those elements will affect the locutor. The sentences where the adjectival form **my** is used are very subjective, and usually they are interrogative or exclamatory locutor-oriented sentences. The role of the **my** form is to reinforce the presence of the locutor in a non repetitive manner and it can be used in the company of nouns that denominate objects (**computer**) or abstract elements (**data, disk errors, problem**), as in the following examples:

[E1:45] Is there a way to make chkdsk /f run or another program available that can fix **my** disk errors?

[E1:998] Any progress by anyone on how to fix? Does **my** problem seem the same as others?

[E12:5664] Does anyone know why my computer is acting so weird? Hopefully **my** computer isn't infected?

[E12:5789] I was also wondering, what was the problem with sp3 on **my** computer? Was it a bug or something?

[E11:5399] I would very much rather not lose all **my** data.

The pronominal form **mine** has 8 occurrences in our corpus, yet we choose not to talk about this form of representation of the locutor, because it doesn't appear in the context of *requesting information* on the Internet forum discourse.

The last form of self-reference we want to present is the representation of the locutor through the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronominal

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<sup>90</sup> In the English corpus we identified the following orthographies for the deictic form **my** (267) **My** (37) **MY** (5) **myself** (5).



form **we**. In English there are very specific situations where the locutor uses this pronominal form, and he has established that this deictic is ambiguously inclusive or exclusive of the addressee.

In our specific case, the English corpus contains 20 occurrences of the pronominal form **we**<sup>91</sup>, but only one of them is used as self-reference in *requesting information*. In this case the use of the pronoun **we** is very clearly an inclusive deictic: of both the *addressee* and the *audience*. Structured as a suggestion, the message is addressed to the users of the internet forum as a community and a working team. The interrogative phrase that follows is coherent with this perspective of the locutor, who identifies her/himself as a member of the group/community and who wants to know if any of the members of the group has the necessary knowledge in order to solve the problem:

[E1:1042] Maybe **we** should be looking into rootkit detectors. Does anyone have experience with any?

The pronominal form **us**, with 5 occurrences in the English corpus is, in the following case, exclusively *addressee*-oriented. The locutor addresses his message to a possible *addressee* and to a possible *audience*, using the indefinite pronoun **anybody** and embodies her/himself as a member of a specific group.

[E11:4477] If anybody actually manages to fix it with these utilites, let **us** know. Still finding an answer to this one, phew...

### 7.1.1.2 The Addressee as Adviser

The presence on Internet forums of various references to the collocutor, in the allocutive modality, represents the manner in which the producer of an utterance relates with the other and the position that the participants assume during the communicational interchange.

The direct or indirect references to the locutor will permit the illustration of the manner in which the producer of the message embodies the collocutor discursively and the type of contract of communication s/he may assume in the general context of the communication of knowledge.

It is obvious that the use of the pronominal form **you** as deictic of the addressee supposes some level of ambiguity because of the homography existent in English between the pronominal forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural. Only the context of communication can disambiguate it, as we will see in this section.

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<sup>91</sup> In the English corpus we identified the following orthographies for the pronoun **we** (9), **We** (8), **we'll** (1), **We'll** (1), **we're** (1).

The pronominal form **you**<sup>92</sup> has been identified in the English corpus in 561 occurrences, which indicates not only that the discursive structure of the Internet forum discussions is dialogic but also emphasises the role of the *addressee* as an active factor in the process of knowledge transmission and information exchange.

A reduced number of occurrences in what concerns the second person deixis are present in the *information request* part of the self discourse: only 9 occurrences. We will focus on these occurrences in order to observe the relation between the participants in the communicational interchange as they result from the allocutionary discourse.

The addressee is conceived in the allocutionary discourse in terms of *sharing information* as a possible *source of knowledge*, as in this example:

[E2:1677] I have the something happening, did **you** figure out what was going on with your computer?

We have here an unusual case where the *addressee* is directly interpellated by the locutor. The exchange of information requested by the locutor through a direct interrogation is motivated in the explanatory part of the enunciation *I have the same thing happening*. The locutor creates an **I-You** identification situation where s/he assumes that the addressee faces the same problem as s/he does and that motivates him to contact directly a certain addressee as a possible source for a solution.

Such situations of communication as mentioned above occur when the participants in the enunciation are *sharing information*. The locutor expresses indecision through modalisation, and by the use of the adverb **somehow**, a *weak* element, the addressee too is perceived as an unreliable source of information.

[E11:5090] Please let me know if this works for **you**. It may help me somehow.

Another situation mentioned above is that of the embodiment of the *requesting information* situation as a discourse of ignorance. If in the 1<sup>st</sup> section we have focussed on the examples displaying the deixis of the locutor, we should note that there are also utterances that focus on the addressee, as in the following example:

[E12:5834] What is that? I tried googling it but I could not find anything in regards to it. Do **you** have any idea what it is for?

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<sup>92</sup> In the English corpus we have identified the following orthographies for the pronoun you (488) You (35) YOU (14) Y' (1), you'd (1), you'll (2), You'll (5), you're (8), you've (7).

[E13:6069] do **you** have any other suggestions please

As mentioned above, through the direct question, the locutor recognizes his deficiency of knowledge and his incapacity to deal with the situation. He uses the interrogation as a strategy to obtain information.

The *addressee* is also present in enunciations, where through modalisation the locutor tries to elicit a response:

[E3:1754] would be great if **you** could help out!

In this case, one can note the ambiguity of the addressee deixis, which is not elucidated by the context of communication. It is impossible to decide whether the message is addressing the *audience* or the individual *collocutor*.

Another embodiment of the addressee is that of the person to whom the locutor expresses his thanks in the allocutionary discourse, as in:

[E11:4986] Thank **you** for your replies, I hope I can fix this problem. I still do need more help. I've also got a project to finish soon, and this is killing me.

The addressee is also figured up in the locutor's discourse as a counsellor, a person who can guide the locutor to the solution. The framing of the collocutor as counsellor is made up by nouns like **advice**, modalisation like *would be very helpful*, and opinion expressions like *if you think its best to...*, where the locutor assumes the role of the addressee making an indirect suggestion:

[E11:5517] Any advice **you** would have would be very helpful. If **you** think its best to just bring it in somewhere I can resort to that but my warranty has run out.

The use of the plural form of the personal pronoun **you** appears in an disambiguated context. The disambiguator in this case is the noun **guys**, which accompanies and determines the pronoun **you**. "You guys" is an US English appellative which embodies the *audience* in the Internet forum discussions:

[E5:2369] Do **you** guys know what might be causing this?

[E5:2449] Nope, it didn't work. Do **you** guys have any other suggestions?

In this case the pronominal form **you** is an interpelation that concerns the entire audience on the forum.

The second form used for the reference of the addressee in the communicational interchanges on the forums is **your**<sup>93</sup>. With 188 occurrences in the entire English corpus, we have only one occurrence in the *requesting information* section. It has an adjectival value and is used to relate the collocutor to different elements that appear in the conversation. The role of the pronominal adjective **your** is to focus on the addressee through the intermediary of objects/actions considered to be her/his own.

[E5:4986] Thank you for **your** replies, I hope I can fix this problem. I still do need more help. I've also got a project to finish soon, and this is killing me.

### 7.1.1.3 The Stranger behind the Lines. The Appeal to the Audience

The non-person is not really a participant in the exchange, but it is referred to in the communication between the locutor and collocutor. There are many ways to involve in a discourse a person who is not a participant in the discussion; some of the most common ones are using *the name, the title, the profession, or by deixis*.

In the English corpus we have identified the following deictics that refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: **others (11), they (35), their (7), them (35), anyone (22), someone (23), and anybody (2)**. Only two of them have been identified in the *requesting information* fragment: the indefinite pronouns **anyone** and **someone**.

The semantics of the indefinite pronouns is that they don't point to a particular person, object, a moment in time, or a place. In the case of **someone**, the English grammar states that **someone** implies "finite possibilities", while **anyone** implies infinite possibilities of choice. Basically, when the locutor refers to **someone**, he perceives the forum as a communicational stage with finite possibilities to choose from and an addressee to refer to, while the use of **anyone** means that the locutor constructs discursively the *mise en scène* as a space with infinite possibilities with regard to the addressee.

While taking into account the fact that the participants in the communication are the locutor and the collocutor, it is also important to mention that there is a third component of virtual communication: the *audience*.

The *audience* is identified with the virtual community of the users of a forum. Since all the users have the same rights, everyone can read the messages of everyone and respond to them. The fact that a user of a

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<sup>93</sup> In the English corpus we have identified the following orthographies for the adjective **your** (178) **Your** (10).

forum answers to a message converts her/him in the collocutor of a dialogic form of communication, specific to forum discussions. Until the locutor receives a response to her/his request, the communication is merely a written message. It becomes a thread, a dialogical form of communication on an Internet forum only after someone of the forum has assumed the role of the collocutor by responding to the initial message.

When the locutor addresses the message s/he uses the pronoun **you** in the plural or the indefinite pronouns **anyone** or **someone**. The *locutor* is aware of the existence of the *audience* and s/he addresses her/his message to a *latent addressee*. If the collocutor is concretized and s/he manifests her/himself actively in the communicational interchange, the locutor will change the way of reference from the indefinite to a personal pronoun: most typically **you**.

We consider the occurrences of **anyone** and **someone** as 3<sup>rd</sup> person deixis because they don't represent a participant in the communicational act.

From the start one can note a difference in use between **anyone** and **someone**. If the former is used in interrogative sentences, the latter is used in assertive and exclamatory sentences.

The locutor uses different strategies to elicit a response from the *audience*, to which he refers as **anyone**. **Anyone** is conceived discursively as a *source of information*, and it occurs accompanying verbs like **to have**, **to try**, or **to find**, and such nouns as **suggestions**, **ideas**, **links**, **solutions**, or **answer**. Formally, they appear in different types of linguistic structures. The simplest is the direct question, as in the following cases:

[E1:369] **Anyone** else have any ideas?

This is just a basic strategy for obtaining information. A more developed discursive strategy is that of including in the question the reference to a description of the problem the user faces. The semantics of the recurrent *anyone else* also indicates that the solution presented by the previous collocutors was not satisfactory and that the problem persists.

Some examples are using modalisation, as in the case of the following utterance:

[E1:915] **Anyone** else still getting permanent errors when running CHKDSK from a command prompt?

quantifiers like **more** and qualifiers like **promising**:

[E1:1022] If **anyone** has any more suggestions or links to promising solutions, please post the information here...

or sentences that begin with a negative construction stating clearly that the result of the discursive interchange is not positive.

[E5:2514] Nope, none of those fixes worked. Does **anyone** have any suggestions?

A more developed strategy is that of the indirect question that also involves a complete description of the type of knowledge the locutor wants to acquire. The locutor assumes here a weaker dialogical position using the verb **to tip**, which suggests that the locutor is a passive participant in the knowledge communication process. The *audience* is placed by the locutor in the stronger position, which is a strategy to elicit a response from other users.

[E8:3835] Anyone to tip me that how a particular user's account can be restrict from not connecting to internet using dialup connection in windows xp pro sp2.

This second example follows the strategy illustrated above, with the only difference that, formally, it is conceived as a direct question.

[E10:4364] Has anyone come up with a definitive answer and or reason why this error occurs?

One can also note the use of **else** as an intensity marker. If the first utterance of the locutor is simply addressed to **anyone**, in the case of an unsatisfying solution and if the problem the locutor faces persists, the interpellation will be repeated to the members of the forum addressed as **anyone else**, as in the examples below:

[E2:1772] can **anyone** help me

[E4:2151] Has anyone found another solution to this problem?

[E1:369] **Anyone** else have any ideas?

[E2:1450] **anyone** else?

The use of the indefinite pronoun **someone** is part of the previously discussed *need for assistance* discourse. The different structures where **anyone** is used grow gradually from the simplest exclamation / imperative expression of the *need for assistance*, through verbs like **to help** and **to need** in the Imperative or Indicative modes:

[E5:2406] **Someone** please help me, I need to fix this!

to developed modalised forms which include subjectivity marks:

[E1:973] I am hoping **someone** can come up with something there is really too much on this HD for me to want to reformat it

The most complex strategy is the narrative progression, where the locutor demonstrates how concerned s/he is about the problem. The personal involvement reaches here existential dimensions as in: “*as I am loosing the will to live*”, a metaphoric manner to influence and to touch the *audience*.

[E13:5957], ive tried services.msc and looked for windows audio and all is well, ive even tried phoning the makers of of m audio to ask there opinion but were as helpful as a piece of used toilet paper, could **some one** please help me as i am loosing the will to live.

*Anybody* is just a variant of *anyone* and is used in the same way as the latter:

[E10:4784] **Anybody** tried these?

[E9:3864] Can **anybody** try and shed some light on this situation for me?

### 7.1.2 Construction of Identity in the Spanish Sub-corpus

The Spanish locutor faces his/her ignorance and decides how to best express it on the forum. These decisions are essential for the discourse organisation and determine repetitive patterns, which will be analysed in what follows.

An important aspect to mention before the beginning of the analysis consists in the fact that in web forum communication and on the Internet in general, the geographical barrier is eliminated because the forum is a virtual space where everybody can participate. Many varieties of Spanish can be identified here, such as Latin-American Spanish (i.e. as spoken in Peru, Chile, Columbia, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, etc.) in addition to standard Spanish. The analysis will not take into consideration the different varieties of Spanish, since it is almost impossible and it is not our intention to identify them.

In what follows, we will analyse the way the locutor constructs his/her identity through *deixis* and the discourse he/she produces in order to obtain *information* on a specialised topic.

### 7.1.2.1 The Emotional Locutor

The discursive representations of the locutor in Spanish may be realized through personal deixis, or through the morphological context when the personal pronoun is omitted, which is a current practice not only in Spanish but also in other Romance languages<sup>94</sup>. In Spanish, the reference to the locutor is realised through different morphemes such as: verbal terminations, nouns and/or determinants (adj./adv.). This makes the deixis process a much more complex phenomenon than in other languages.

The present analysis intends to point out the representations of the locutor in relation to the *other* and to the *topic* of discussion in his/her intention to fulfil cognitive needs in the field of informatics.

In this analysis we have to take into account that the pronominal form *yo* is not the only pronominal form that can refer to the locutor in Spanish and that it can be represented through other pronominal forms as well. This aspect will be discussed later in this section.

For the moment, we can state that the Spanish corpus contains 193 occurrences of the pronominal form *yo*<sup>95</sup>. However, let us note again that in most of the cases, the representation of the locutor is not realised through a pronominal form.

The Spanish locutor on the web forums is a very emotionally involved presence. There is a high incidence of markers of emotion in the locutor's interventions when *asking for information* action. In fact, different degrees of emotional involvement can be observed. They present different levels of intensity. The first degree of intensity describes the locutor as 'a person who has a little problem':

[Es:4940] Hola, tengo un pequeño problemilla ...

In example [Es:4940], the locutor, uses the diminutive form of the noun *problema*, which suggests that the situation affects the *locutor* to a small degree and even while the *collocutor/audience* is informed that the solution is not difficult to find. Despite the low degree of intensity, some emotional involvement can still be perceived. The locutor assumes the role of a person under pressure even if he/she tries to diminish its importance: "pequeño problemilla". As one can notice, the locutor doesn't mention directly his/her ignorance or impossibility to solve the problem. Rather, these are implicit in his/her discourse.

A different situation can be observed in [Es3:581], where the locutor, after presenting the general context of the situation, tries to legitimate through self-evaluation the questions she asks on the web forum. She performs her femininity and qualifies herself as a *novice* in

<sup>94</sup> It is the case of Catalan, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian.

<sup>95</sup> In the Spanish corpus we identified the following orthographies for this pronoun: *yo* (54), *Yo* (139).



computer science. She chooses to deal indirectly with her ignorance through a euphemism: “yo muy perdida en esto de la informática”. The locutor assumes her role of novice and invests the addressee with authority in the communicational relation she establishes through her statement. In the same enunciation she also establishes her relation to the topic of the web forum.

[Es3:581] **Yo** muy perdida en ésto de la informática.  
 (1)¿Cómo se comprueba si es compatible?  
 mmm (2)¿qué micro? xd  
 ah y yo tengo una duda: (3)¿Cuál es mejor, la ATI 3650 o la ATI HD3650?  
 y (4)¿Cuánta memoria RAM es la mejor de cada tarjeta?

In example [Es3:581] the presence of the emphatic **yo** positions the locutor at the center of the communication. The marker of intensity in “muy perdida” determines the personal pronoun. The general impression of imprecision is concretised by the reference to the topic as “en esto de la informática”. The position assumed by the locutor allows her to develop a wholly interrogative discourse intended to point out the main aspects of the topic she is ignorant of.

One can notice that the series of interrogations in the locutor’s intervention are regulated by different markers. After the first question (1), another question is introduced (2): “¿qué micro?”. (2) is introduced by a mark of hesitation (“mmm”) that illustrates that the locutor isn’t familiar with the topic. The end of (2) is marked by an emoticon: “xd”<sup>96</sup> expressing non-linguistic information.

The discourse is interrupted by another oral mark, ‘ah’, which brings a touch of spontaneity to the discourse. The last interrogations are introduced by: “y yo tengo una duda:”, yet another expression of ignorance. The conjunction “y” associates the last question (4) with (3). One can notice how the locutor describes step by step the entire information she needs.

A different performance of identity when *asking for information* can be observed in example [Es5:1137]. Here the locutor structures his/her discourse by expressing strong emotional involvement in the situation. The first statement: “Ya **me** desesperé” expressing his/her feelings is followed by an explanation for his/her behaviour. The state of desperation s/he is in drives him/her to ask for help:

[Es5:1137] Ya **me** desesperé. Por eso pido ayuda para saber como recuperar XP si aun sige ahi instalado o sin querer lo sobreescribí y se borro, o ya de menos, poder volver a formatear mi disco duro.  
 Ayuda porfavor!!!!!!!!!!!! 😊

<sup>96</sup> “xd” or “xD” is the standard emoticon used on yahoo messenger, google talk, and skype for a smiling face (smiley).

The polyphonic construction “por eso **pido ayuda** para saber como recuperar XP” is the essential element that establishes the relation between the locutor and the collocutor. The use of the verb **pedir** and of the noun **ayuda** describes explicitly how the locutor intends to relate to the collocutor. “Pido ayuda” together with “Ayuda por favor!!!!” establishes the communicational relation as defined by the locutor through his/her discourse. The terms of the contract are clearly established by the locutor, who by the identity he/she performs positions the other (*vosotros* in the example, what example?) in a position of authority.

The fragments mentioning the information the locutor needs, “recuperar XP si aun sige ahi instalado o sin querer lo sobreescribí y se borro, o ya de menos, poder volver a formatear mi disco duro”, take on the feature of an incoherent text as justified by the emotional state of the locutor. The emotional involvement is also graphically and orthographically emphasised by the presence of an emoticon and by the repetitive exclamation mark. This emotional discourse allows the locutor to avoid assuming his/her ignorance openly, which is implicit in the situation, as well as warranting the locutor to pressure the other participant in order to obtain the information he/she needs.

Another form of despair is expressed in [Es7:1738]

[Es7:1738] ya desesperado quisiera saber si existes algun metodo para instalarlo o si solo se puede formatear windows para ver si asi puedo instalarlo de nuevo

This form is presented as a sort of conclusion to the locutor’s intervention. The locutor evaluates himself as “ya desesperado” before asking for assistance and information. He expresses his desire to learn “...quisiera saber si existe ...” as well as his desire to actively take part in finding the solution to the problem “... para ver si asi puedo instalarlo de nuevo”. Even if s/he is desperate, the locutor negotiates an equal position and shows his/her decision to participate actively in reaching a solution to the problem he/she faces.

As one can notice from the examples already analysed, the Spanish corpus reveals a completely different approach to the strategies the locutor uses in order to obtain help/assistance/information. The essential point is that even if he admits that he is desperate, the Spanish locutor doesn’t mention/recognise his ignorance openly. Of course, this message is encoded in his/her requests but, for the moment, nobody says openly: ‘I don’t know’.

A different emotional involvement of the locutor in the Spanish corpus is resentment. In [Es10:2390] the emotional involvement of the locutor reaches high levels of intensity marked by the use of a familiar/argotic register:

[Es10:2390] Estoy hasta los huevos de bill gates y de su sistema operativo de mierda, que aun siendo mierda es el que mejor pinta inicial tiene y soporte y por ello lo uso... Estoy 1/3 de mi tiempo material resolviendo problemas en relación al sistema, voy a a acabar neurótico perdido.

Bueno, dejo de hablar tanto y voy al tema. Dejo el sp3. Es culpa mia por que soy un cazurro ignorante de mierda o la culpa es del sp3? Dejo instalado o desinstalo?

The locutor begins with an estimation of his personal feelings and focuses all of his anger on a public personality (Bill Gates, the author of the computer program which is giving him trouble) and on the program itself: “Estoy hasta los huevos de bill gates y de su sistema operativo de mierda”. After this initial statement he gives the reason why he uses the program which has infuriated him: “que aun siendo mierda es el que mejor pinta inicial tiene y soporte y por ello lo uso...”. Here the locutor suggests that the initial estimation, repeated in the second statement, “de mierda” is just a conjectural appreciation motivated by his frustration. The second part contradicts the initial statement: “...es el que mejor pinta inicial tiene y soporte y por ello lo uso...” and explains why the locutor *is* using the program. The following sequence, “Estoy 1/3 de mi tiempo material resolviendo problemas en relación al sistema, voy a a acabar neurótico perdido.” portrays the general context of the message and gives the reason for the locutor’s frustration. The discourse is interrupted when the locutor realises that he is complaining too much and that he should focus on the goal of the communication which is *asking for information*. The locutor changes the focus of communication through a self-referential comment: “Bueno, dejo de hablar tanto y voy al tema.”

The locutor opens a dialogue with the audience requesting them to voice their own opinions. In what follows the focus alternates between “the program” (sp3) and the locutor:

[Es10:2393] ...Dejo el **sp3**. Es culpa **mia** por que soy un cazurro ignorante de mierda o la culpa es del **sp3**? **Dejo** instalado o **desinstalo**?

The locutor projects his discourse as a guilty-not guilty debate. He wants the others to help him choose between the two solutions he mentions. The information he wants is an answer to the question “who is wrong?”: he or the program. His impetuous intervention doesn’t change in tone even when the locutor makes self-references. He portrays himself in argotic terms: “por que soy un cazurro ignorante de mierda”. This vehemence contributes to the locutor’s strategy for obtaining information.

The identity of the locutor is also constructed self-referentially and is marked by expressions like: “estoy hasta los huevos”, “voy a acabar

neurótico perdido”, “soy un cazurro ignorante de mierda”. An essential observation is that the locutor insists on his emotional involvement more than on the actual description of the technical problem he faces.

Another representation of the locutor is given by the way s/he presents and denominates the main topic of the discussion. Generally referred to as an ‘error’, a ‘problem’ or a ‘question’ the main topic is the starting point for presenting the locutor as a ‘person who has a problem’ or a ‘person who wants to know the answer to a question’. In either case the way the locutor organises his discourse and relates to the other (the collocutor) is different.

The *asking for information* intervention is a problem of ‘dealing with ignorance’ for the Spanish locutor too. The Spanish locutor chooses either to use euphemisms in order to express *ignorance* or to avoid mentioning it altogether. The expression of ignorance is implicit in the Spanish corpus, so that we can identify expressions of *complete ignorance* and *partial ignorance*.

In both cases the locutor uses the strategy of direct interrogation. Here is an example:

[Es2:253] y pregunto saben porque me tira ese **error**???

In [Es2:253] the polyphonic construction introduced by the verb **preguntar** is the expression of *complete ignorance*. The locutor emphasises his/her presence in order to negotiate an equal position with the collocutor. The difference between “saben porque me tira ese error” and “y pregunto saben porque me tira ese error” has the role to build a stronger position for the locutor in his relation to the collocutor. The reference to an **error** is also an attempt at a neutral presentation of the problem the locutor faces. The way s/he expresses his/her need for information, it’s as if the locutor only needed the collocutor to explain to him/her the significance of a text (the error). It is not a request for assistance or help. It results that while he may be completely *ignorant* in what concerns the problem he faces, the locutor *will* start the dialogue from an equal position with the other.

A different strategy to request information is to ask a direct question, which represents an implicit expression of *complete ignorance* of the mentioned topic. As one can notice in examples [Es6:1523]- [Es16:3790] the locutor asks for punctual specialised information. He uses specialised vocabulary (“formatear”, “pinxar el disco duro”, “abrir los puertos”) and the emotional involvement is low. The main focus of the enunciation is the information required. As one can observe in examples [Es6:1523], [Es14:3490], and [Es17:3862] the identity the locutor performs is that of the active agent (the presence of *verbs of action*), while the identity of the collocutor is that of the source of information: “como”, “y como hago eso...”, “que debo hacer para...”:

[Es6:1523] como lo **formateo**?

[Es14:3490] ¿¿ y como hago eso de **pinxar mi disco duro con otro**¿¿

[Es17:3862] que debo hacer para **abrir los puertos**?

[Es16:3790] tengo una particion en el disco c con el sistema operativo y d almacen.....**si me cargo c d kedará intacta**???????

Another way the locutor chooses to express his need for information through direct questions is to focus on the solution. This is another implicit expression of *complete ignorance*:

[Es12:2924] como lo puedo **resolver**???

[Es20:4708] Que puedo **hacer**??

[Es13:2659] Mi *problema* es simplemente ese, que me pide validar Windows por que "no es original", ¿como se *solucionaba* eso?

The locutor expresses his active involvement in the situation through the verbs **resolver**, **hacer**, and **solucionar**. At the same time, he assumes the weaker position in the dialogue because he chooses to perform the identity of a ‘person who has a problem to solve’ and who hopes for the others to advise him on how it is better to act.

Expressing *partial ignorance* refers to different degrees of ignorance as conveyed through a range of expressions of *indecision* and *lack of confidence*. It is even better expressed through strings of questions.

The interrogations are locutor-oriented and the use of specialised terminology suggests that the user is not a complete novice in the field. The suite of interrogations intensifies from the general “qe aho??” to very specific questions mentioning the model of the computer video board or/and the compatibility between the computer components. Every question the locutor asks is based on the previous question. Their content gradually becomes more and more specialised. The emotional involvement is expressed by the illocutionary intensity in every question and it is graphically marked by a series of interrogative marks:

[Es3:429] qe ago??  
cambio la grafica a una nvidia de serie 8??? y seria compatible con mi procesador???  
lo q kiero es jugar a buenos juegos sin q s cuelgue

The locutor’s last assertion has the function to determine clearly the locutor’s goal and consequently, to elicit the information he/she needs.

A different way of communicating finality is that of employing a more emotional turn of phrase as in [Es3:622], where the locutor uses the idiomatic expression “que todo vaya a las mil maravillas”.

[Es3:622] Si me pillo la 3650 ¿qué procesador tendría que comprar para que todo vaya a las mil maravillas?

Still another way of *dealing with ignorance* is expressing one's motivation to learn/know. Through agent-oriented modalities, the locutor expresses his/her wish to know more: “queria saber”, “quisiera saber”, “otra duda que tengo”:

[Es19:4202] Ola yo **keria saber** como instalar un sistema operativo xp o cualquier otro en un disco duro externo y como indicarle al ordenador k lo inicie.

[Es8:1914] **Quisiera saber** si podría instalar vista en mi portátil, ahí van las características sacadas del Everest

[Es21:5110] **Otra duda que tengo**,¿los antivirus y antyspyware hay que pasarlos en modo normal o en modo seguro ya que en este ultimo no se si funcionan?

As we can observe, these expressions position the locutor in an equal position with the collocutor.

In [Es11:2575] the locutor uses *captatio benevolentiae* as his/her strategy for obtaining information: “estoy seguro que la voy a resolver con la valiosa ayuda ...” and he/she refers to the audience as “mis cuates”, which is most persuasive. The locutor places the audience in a position of authority but also tries to create an affective link between him/herself and the audience:

[Es11:2575] tengo nueva bronca que estoy seguro que la voy a resolver con la valiosa ayuda de mis cuates.

[...]

Pregunta:

hay manera de componer esta bronca con un software que me ayude a resolver el error de lectura?

The persuasive discourse is structured around three important elements: judgement modality “estoy seguro”, evaluation “la valiosa ayuda”, and an appeal to the audience “mis cuates”. All these means are intended to create a communicational contract based on personal involvement and emotion.

Different epistemic modalities can also represent a way of *dealing with ignorance*. For example, in [Es15:3663] the locutor enunciates an opinion (judgement modality) before asking for information:

[Es15:3663] creo que el problema esta en el disco duro.  
¿que podría hacer para solucionarlo?

In [Es16:3728], the locutor states dramatically: “extraño verdad!”, and then he introduces his/her opinion (judgement modality). The expression of personal evaluation of the situation the locutor faces is followed by the positioning of the members of the audience as authorities on the issue. The locutor highlights the difference between him/herself, a *novice* trying to learn, and the other members of the professional web forum, textually regarded as *experts*:

[Es16:3728] **Extraño verdad! yo** pienso que es como un virus. pero *uds* son los *expertos*.

Judgement modalisations, see [Es18:4176], have a different discursive function. They represent a locutor disappointed at the apathy of the forum members. These enunciations are introduced as new comments by a comment marker: “bueno” followed by the judgement modality that introduces an opinion: “ya veo que...”. The conclusion to these assertions: e.g. “ya me buscare la vida”, is an implicit judgment of the forum in general as enforced by the reiteration mark “como siempre”. The emotional involvement here is the result of the locutor’s experience on the forum. It has an evaluation function.

[Es18:4176] bueno, ya veo q no encuentro solucion a mi problema en este foro, ya me buscaré la vida, como siempre..

In [Es8:2071] the locutor’s enunciation begins with greetings followed by another judgement modalisation: “he pensado”. The negation that follows this expression of an opinion illustrates that the locutor has changed his/her mind and has thought of a different solution, perhaps better than the first. The locutor explains why he/she made this decision and *asks for information*:

[Es8:2071] hola de nuevo, he pensado no formatear mi portatil por la cantidad de informacion que tengo de la carrera y por otros motivos, como puedo instalar windows vista???

otra duda antes de ponerme, si actualizo de Xp a Vista, luego podré hacer el camino contrario: de Vista a Xp sin tener que formatear???

ok, gracias y ya ultima pregunta me recomendais que me quede con Xp o que me actualice a Vista?

The discourse consists of three distinct paragraphs, each expressing the main idea accompanied by questions related to the topic. Every

paragraph is introduced by discourse planning markers that place every fragment in the logic of the discourse, as in: “otra duda antes de ponerme...” which not only introduces a new topic but also marks a new phase of the process of installation. The last paragraph is duly marked: “y ya la última pregunta...” as the end of communication.

Another representation of the self in the Spanish sub-corpus is that of the *hurried novice*. In some cases, without supplementary explanation, the locutor highlights the emergency of the information he asks for. These modalities are reinforced by suprasegmental information such as volume and intonation, as in the example below:

[Es15:3527] ESPERO SU AYUDA!! ES URGENTEEEEEE  
!!!

In the web forum conversations the representation mentioned above is graphically marked by the use of capital letters or by the repetition of the exclamative mark. In [Es15:3527], the use of the verb *esperar* accompanied by the nouns *ayuda* and the adjective *urgente* suggests a cry for help. The repetition of the last vowel of the adjective *urgente* supports graphically this impression.

The following examples fall in the same category :

[Es5:1508] Como el arreglo es muy caro, que me den uno nuevo (ESTo sería servicio tecnico ACER.)ALGUNA ALTERNATIVA MEJOR? GRACIAS POR VUESTRA ATENCION Y ESPERO CONTESTACION PRONTO!

[Es20:4849] espero que me *respondais* lo mas *rapido* posible para *solucionarlo cuanto antes* 😊

where the impression of emergency is created through a specific vocabulary belonging to the semantic field of “help”: *esperar, responder, solucionar contestacion, pronto, rapido, cuanto antes*.

A less powerful representation of the self in the Spanish sub-corpus is realised through deixis, using the pronominal form *me*. We have identified 263 such occurrences, which marks its high incidence in interrogatives:

[Es11:2604] Me pueden echar la mano please

[Es12:2714] ME PODEIS AYUDAR??

or in exclamatives:

[Es11:2632] Ayudenme y diganme que es lo que tengo que hacer. ... Me quiero volver loco por favor ayudaaaaaaaaa

[Es14:3393] Por favor decirme que tiene solución! y como.



As one can notice, the pronominal form *me* positions the self as a subordinate in the discourse, thus turning the addressee into the most visible figure of the interaction. The use of the pronominal form *me* pointing to the locutor suggests passivity. This impression is supported by the representation of an emotional locutor as a strategy for obtaining information. The emotion is also supported by neography: “ME PODEIS AYUDAR”, “ayudaaaaaaaaaaaa”, “Me quiero volver loco”, and “Por favor decidme que tiene solución”, turning the request for information discourse into an emotional *crescendo*. In [Es11:2632] *me* is recurrent, (3 occurrences), which creates a locutor-oriented message.

Sometimes, the persons with extended knowledge in a specialised field also have to deal with *ignorance*. These members of the forum are not *novices* per se but, for some reason, they have to act as *novices* since they are facing a problem they can't solve. They deal with ignorance in different manners. First of all, the locutor knows exactly what he wants and asks for a very precise piece of information using the adequate terminology:

[Es4:653] Tengo que instalar XP Embedded ... En otras palabras, cuales son los requerimientos mínimos para que XP Embedded trabaje en un equipo dual core aprovechando al máximo su capacidad.


The discourse developed by the locutor in [Es4:653] presents no emotional involvement. He simply enunciates the question and its general context, briefly but very accurately. His discourse is assertive and extremely rich in technical information. He knows what he wants, he asks the right questions and he is waiting for the ‘right answers. Like all the other Spanish locutors he won't admit his ignorance openly, and the hierarchy in the relation of communication is one of equality of positions between locutor and collocutor.

In example [Es4:875] the locutor gradually presents different aspects he/she is ignorant of in the technical field alternating them with a series of assertive and interrogative phrases:


[Es4:875] ¿Puedo hacer la imagen con el TargetDesigner en el sistema de un nucleo e instalarlo en el otro? Si es asi, ¿como le digo al sistema que el otro tiene dos cores? Tambien he oido que instalandolo normal y reiniciandolo, el mismo reconoce los dos nucleos, ¿es esto asi? Despues de instalarlo, ¿hay alguna herramienta para ver el trabajo que esta haciendo cada nucleo?

It is as if the locutor wanted to check every moment that he is theoretically in control of every step of the technical procedure he wants to apply. His discourse is formed by three interrogatives and three assertions structured in pairs and every assertion is the starting point for the next question:


[assertion] Si es asi,  
 [question] ¿como le digo al sistema que el otro tiene dos cores?



[assertion] Tambien he oido que instalandolo normal y reiniciandolo, el mismo reconoce los dos nucleos,  
 [question] ¿es esto asi?



[assertion] Despues de instalarlo  
 [question] ¿hay alguna herramienta para ver el trabajo que esta haciendo cada nucleo?



The possessive forms of the deixis of the first person is represented in Spanish by forms like *mi*, *mio*, *mia* and they generally refer to objects associated with the user, as in “**mi** disco duro”, “**mi** procesador”, “**mi** portátil”. Sometimes, not very often in the case of *asking for information*, the Spanish locutor admits that he has a problem and he talks about “**mi** problema” (2 occurrences) or about “**mi** tiempo material”.

### 7.1.2.2 The Valuable Addressee

The representations of the addressee depend on how the enunciator organises his/her discourse. The representations of the addressee reflect directly the idea the locutor has about the collocutor, the position the two participants occupy in the situation, and how the locutor conceives his communicational relation with the latter.

The locutor can address the other on a web forum as an individual or as a multitude. In both cases, the message is addressee-oriented. As a general practice, the locutor, in the initial post of a thread refers to the addressee as a group of persons. Then, depending on the context, the addressee can be referred to by different pronominal forms, one of which can be the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular as one can observe in the following examples:

[Es6:1699] pregunta... ¿¿¿ no le sacarás más prtido con un Linux que volviendo al windozes????

In example [Es6:1699], the addressee receives the treatment of a friend, a person with whom the locutor shares opinions. This solution represents a suggestion organised as an interrogation. It is addressee-oriented and its form suggests that the locutor is not trying to make the addressee take action. The addressee has to decide for himself/herself if the suggestion is effective or not.

Another representation of the addressee is that of the *adviser*, a person who is qualified to counsel the others and whom the locutor asks for supervision:

[Es8:1975] cual recomendarias??

The addressee can be referred to by the use of the verbal forms in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural. In the following examples, the locutor *asks for information* an addressee represented as a group of persons, a community:

[Es1:15] ¿**teneis** una solución que no sea formatear?

[Es8:2212] buenas **sabeis** alguno si se pueden quitar las ventanitas que salen cada vez que quiero iniciar un programa en Vista???

[Es12:2794] **TENEIS** ALGUNA SOLUCION PARA HACERLO MAS RAPIDO SIN INCREMENTAR MUCHO LOS COSTES??

The explicit use of the Spanish pronominal form “vosotros” is unusual and emphatic. In the following example, [Es5:1389], the locutor not only emphasises the addressee but also valorises him by the use of the qualification “genios”:

[Es5:1389] ¿¿no existe ninguna forma de darme a elegir el S.O a entrar??  
 porque si no para que me sirve mantener el vista original si nunca podre entrar!!  
 espero que **vosotros** como **genios** sepais ayudarme.

The other(s) is/are also represented as the *assistant*, the person who helps, as in the example below:

[Es5:954] Muchas gracias por vuestra **ayuda**.

While specific to the Latin American varieties of Spanish, the use of the polite form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural “Ustedes” also occurs on the Spanish forums and has the same uses as the pronominal form “vosotros” in Iberic Spanish. In our examples they are expressed through the verbal forms “saber” y “poder”.

[Es2:295] No *saben* si ay algun xp que meresca la pena instalar ?

[Es5:953] ¿Me *pueden* dar una pista?

### 7.1.2.3 The Passive Audience

Some of the strategies the locutors uses in order to obtain information involve an implicit addressee as the *destinataire* of the message. The communication is topic-oriented and constructed with impersonal structures such as:

[Es9:2290]¿Alguna otra idea?

[Es14:3444] no hay nada de nada??? juuuuu xfavoor ayudaaa

The impersonal expressions “es eso possible”, “es preferible”, “se puede” or “existe” involve an indefinite addressee whit whom the locutor develops a discourse of distance:

[Es18:4053] **Es eso posible? Es preferible** q instale el Xp en el D?Y si es así, como lo hago?Como elimino el Xp q esta ahora instalado y no me funciona?

[Es21:4945].¿**Existe** otra manera de poder acceder?(¿iniciando a modo prueba de fallos p.ej?).

...

¿**se puede** hacer a traves del menu de arranque del sistema?

Sometimes, the locutor’s message is explicitly audience-oriented and mentioned through the use of the indefinite pronoun “alguien” or “quien”. Thus, in example [Es9:2248] the locutor asks an indefinite multitude for information: “alguien”. In the next sentence this reference is developed through an expression of gratitude and evaluation: “los sabios”:

[Es9:2248] ¿**Alguien** tiene alguna sugerencia?  
Agradezco sugerencias de **los sabios**.

[Es21:5011].¿**Alguien** sabe como eliminar el perfil de usuario en el registro por si vuelve a fallar?

In example [Es18:4050], the locutor organises his/her request through a formula that is employed in Spanish to introduce formal/administrative petitions:

[Es18:4050] **Aquien** pueda ayudarme.

The persistence of the locutor who continuously asks for information and the use of the indefinite pronouns suggesting that nobody has volunteered any hint at the presence of a passive audience on the Spanish web forum, which further justifies the frequent use of the interrogation as an effective strategy for obtaining information.

### 7.1.3 Construction of Identity in the French Sub-corpus

In what follows we will analyse the way locutors perform their identities on French web forums. Our intention is to point out the different discursive strategies and the discourse organisation used by the locutors to perform their identities in order to reach a specific goal.

Before beginning the communicational interaction, the French locutor has to manage his/her ignorance. Dealing with ignorance is a complex process which consists not only in recognising (or not) one's ignorance, but also in expressing it publicly by entering a communicational relation with the other and negotiating knowledge by asking for help/assistance/information.

We will be looking for the repetitive patterns in the way the French locutor organises his/her discourse of ignorance. This will allow us to observe and classify the identities the French locutor adopts in cyberspace. In the French corpus we will observe the construction of identity through deixis in the immediate context of *asking for information*.

#### 7.1.3.1 The Challenging Locutor

In the French corpus the deixis can be controlled with much more precision because of the mandatory use of pronominal forms every time a verbal form is employed. There are few exceptions to this rule, such as the impersonal expressions and defective verbs. The representations of the self in the *asking for information* sequence are realised in French explicitly through the pronominal forms: *je, j', me, m', moi* and the possessives *mon* et *mien*. Their use reveals different aspects of the identity of the self, especially concerning the *positioning*, the different degrees of *personal involvement* and the *orientation* of the message.

The major deictic form of self-reference in French is the first person pronominal form *je*. We have identified in the French corpus 445 occurrences as well as 272 occurrences of the elidated form *j'*. In what follows we will observe how the French locutor assumes his/her ignorance and in what form he/she decides to transmit this information to the other members of the web forum.

A first example is [Fr21:5749]:

[Fr21:5749]... (1) mais probleme... je le désinstalle, j'efface le fichier mozilla firefox dans program files je nettoie le registre... pourtant lorsque je le réinstalle il me ressort tout(donc les problemes, etc) (2) le bougre!!!... (3) alors où se planque-t-il ce boulet...

Here the locutor constructs a very dynamic discourse focused on him/herself, describing the actions s/he performed in a situation previously described. We have identified three moments of the recounting: (1) description of actions, (2) personal involvement, and (3) objective of communication (asking for information).

The locutor sets up a stage in order to motivate his/her cognitive needs. Fragment (1) describes dynamically a sequential process consisting of a series of actions: *désinstaller*, *effacer*, *nettoyer*, *réinstaller*. The role of (1) is to demonstrate that the locutor is an active and skilled person. The description of actions is precise and technical. The technical objectivity, however, is interrupted by an atypical error that can't be explained. Confronted with an illogical process and with receiving no explanation the locutor manifests his/her frustration in (2): “le bougre!!!”.

The entire discourse is explicitly locutor-oriented. The structures are simple: they are formed by the first person pronoun and specialised verbs. The locutor is the main agent of the communication and he/she, assigns to the collocutor only an implicit presence in the communication. Not even in the *asking for information* sequence, which is supposed to be *the* element that establishes the contact between the participants in the communicational interchange, is the collocutor referred to explicitly. In [Fr21:5749] the question the locutor asks is impersonal: “alors où se planque-t-il ce boulet...”. Apparently, it focuses on the situation rather than on the participants in the interaction.

A special attention seems to be received by the computer, which is personified : “le bougre”. This familiar reference to the computer is coherent with another reference to the same object: “alors où se planque-t-il ce *boulet*...” (the locutor refers to a program element s/he can't locate).

The image of the French locutor in [Fr21:5749] is that of an active and rational user whose main interest is the cognitive content of the communication and who orients his/her messages to the topic of the discussion. The personal involvement is punctual and motivated. The locutor relates to the collocutor from an equal position although he/she should assume the weaker one. As one can notice, in [Fr21:5749] the French locutor is a person in control of the situation who asks the other forum members for their opinions as if his/her problem were a riddle: “alors où se planque-t-il ce boulet...”.

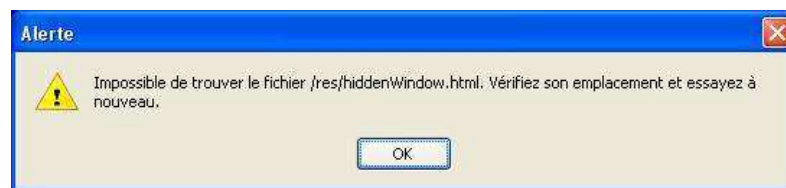
\*

It seems that, generally, in the French corpus the *asking for information* fragments focus on the technical situation and the related operations/activities. The French corpus is also a most visual one. The locutor provides even the graphical context for the problem he faces by including screen captures like in [Fr21:5763], where the very short message is compensated by a most illustrative image.

The text which accompanies the image is not a question per se. The *asking for information* sequence is implicit in this case. The locutor describes objectively the situation mentioning the program which gives the error: “firefox”, and the number of the version, the moment when the error occurs: “a la fin de l’instalation”, and the result of the error: “impossible d’ouvrir google”. Personal involvement is, once again, diminished. The locutor chooses to formulate the problem s/he faces as a “petit souci”. The use of the noun “souci” reduces the importance of the topic. A “souci” is not a “problem”. It supposes personal involvement but it doesn’t necessarily need a “solution”. The determinant “petit” diminishes even more the importance of the topic.

The locutor uses no strategy to contact the other in order to obtain information. He affirms his presence and he describes the situation he faces. He doesn’t recognise his ignorance explicitly and he doesn’t relate to the other:

[Fr21:5763] j'ai un petit souci avec firefox, a la fin de l'installation de la version 1.0.5, il me dit ceci:  
impossible d'ouvrir google.



As one can notice, the two examples we have commented on in the French sub-corpus draw on a similar strategy of *asking for information*. The user constructs the identity of a practical and efficient person with low emotional involvement. The emotion he expresses is focused on the general context of the discussion rather than on the locutor or the collocutor. The locutor is actually an active agent, very analytic when describing the problems he faces. He assumes action in his discourse and doesn’t admit his incapacity of solving a technical problem because of his lack of knowledge in the field. For him dealing with his ignorance means providing an accurate description of the situation and asking the right questions. The way the locutor asks questions represents a particularity of the French forum. It seems that, generally, users on the French forums prefer to formulate questions employing impersonal forms. This approach ensures the locutor’s equality with the collocutor in the communication and reduces personal interaction to a minimum.

In [Fr21:5775], for example, the first part of the intervention expresses what the locutor’s problem is. The locutor presents a subjective point of view on the display of a program on the screen and he wants to know if it can be deactivated. The form *moi* highlights the locutor, which is further underlined by the presence of the first person form of the personal pronoun *j’*. What the locutor faces is not really a technical

problem rather than a display preference on the screen. The locutor insists on this aspect shifting the focus onto himself and underlining that he is not talking about something wrong with his computer but with something ‘he doesn’t like’: “moi ce que j’aime pas...”. The question is short, clear and impersonal.

[Fr21:5775] moi ce que j'aime pas c'est lorsque j'ai des onglets.....*pas moyen de désactivé ce truc?*

The next example, [Fr1:13], consists in a series of actions performed and then described by the locutor followed by a question that points out the objective of the communication. The discourse is impersonal. The language is more formal than in other examples and the information in the message is organised in logical sequences through discourse markers: “à la suite de”, “afin de”. As in [Fr1:13], the impersonal description is interrupted by a moment of personal involvement. This is structured as a “coup de théâtre” as after the impersonal description of facts, the locutor announces: “j’ai déclenché une catastrophe”. The word “catastrophe” has a dramatic effect and illustrates the locutor’s personal point of view on the situation he/she faces and how the situation has affected him/her. The moment of personal involvement is brief and after expressing his/her personal view, the locutor continues his/her formal and impersonal discourse. As in other examples we have already commented on, the objective of the communication is enunciated at the end of the message and consists in an impersonal structure:

[Fr1:13] A la suite d'une fausse manip dans les propriétés d'affichage, afin de régler la définition de l'écran, j'ai déclenché une catastrophe. [...] *Exite t il des raccourcis clavier ou des touches de fonction qui permettent de revenir à un affichage normal.*

In [Fr3:215] the locutor expresses his/her ignorance by means of a series of interrogatives. Once again, the locutor’s discourse ranges from impersonal (the questions) to emotional (greetings and politeness). The locutor enunciates two objectives of the communication, each concerning two kinds of different knowledge. Firstly, he/she wants to know what the problem is (the reason of the facts) which involves theoretical knowledge. Then, he/she asks for a solution, which involves practical knowledge. The fact that the locutor asks for complete information suggests that as a *novice* he is in a situation of *complete ignorance*. It is also important to observe that the locutor’s degree of ignorance is implicitly encoded in his/her message rather than mentioned directly:

[Fr3:215] Quel est le problème???et biensur quelle est la solution??  
Merci d'avance et dsl si j'ai posté au mauvais endroit!



In [Fr17:4622] the locutor expresses a more personal involvement through a very dynamic discourse formed by alternating exclamations and interrogations. The emotional involvement is intense. The locutor is directly affected by the situation and he expresses his frustration orthographically through the repetition of the exclamation marks, graphically through the presence of an emoticon, and linguistically through evaluative constructions such as: “c’est du vole”, “ça me fait chi..”. The question he/she asks, incorrectly marked as an exclamative is, like all the other questions, impersonal:

[Fr17:4622] Cela veut dire que j'ai payé une fortune pour  
seulement pouvoir l'utiliser 1x, c'est du vole!!!! 🤔  
Ca me fait chi.. de repayer un Vista, il y a t'il un autre  
moyen, honnete!

Sometimes, the locutor assumes the identity of a *novice* that needs to learn in order to face a “problem”, as in [Fr9:1219]. The locutor constructs a three-part discourse consisting of: “bon voila” (introductory formula), followed by the descriptive part of his/her intervention introduced by “ça fait longtemps que” (discourse marker), while the *asking for information* sequence is introduced at the end of the message by a conclusive “alors” and represents the logic continuation of what the locutor said before. The last fragment expresses the locutor’s need to know/learn<sup>97</sup> in a modalised form *je voulais savoir comment faire pour y résoudre*.

[Fr9:1219] Bon voila, ça fait longtemps que j'ai ce problème  
avec Ccleaner, alors **je voulais savoir comment faire pour  
y résoudre**.

An explicit performance of the locutor's identity as a *novice* can be observed in [Fr10:1619]: “je ne sais plus comment faire pour l’instant”. This strategy for asking for information consists firstly in the admission of a cognitive gap “je ne sais plus”, followed by the specification of the context of cognition “comment faire”, which suggests that the locutor needs practical knowledge.

One should note how the locutor assumes the situation. He/she doesn’t affirm that “he doesn’t know” nor does he passively wait for a solution. The expression “je ne sais **plus**” suggests that the locutor has tried to solve the problem described but has run out of solutions and the problem persists. He also mentions that the situation is only temporary: “pour l’instant”.

Apparently, in the French interactions many implicit meanings are encoded in the message. The locutor’s statement “je ne sais plus comment faire pour l’instant” is an implicit *request for information*,

<sup>97</sup> It is an implicit recognition of the fact that he is ignorant of the problem and of how to solve it.

which can also be interpreted as a strategy for establishing contact with the other by putting him/her in a position of authority:

[Fr10:1619] je ne sais plus comment faire pour l'instant

A similar strategy is illustrated in [Fr20:5489]. The locutor doesn't admit his ignorance. He projects discursively his ignorance as an 'impossibility to do something': "je n'arrive pas a faire fonctionner...". The identity the locutor constructs is that of an active and skilled user at the same time calm and objective. He is not emotionally involved. The *asking for information* sequence is the implicit objective of the communication:

[Fr20:5489] je n'arrive pas a faire fonctionner magic radio sur le biniou portable de ma femme.

In example [Fr20:5492] the locutor assumes the most intense expression of ignorance we have found in the entire French sub-corpus and consists in the self-referential expression of an evaluation: "je patoge". The locutor evaluates himself/herself and assumes the condition of a *novice* as the logical result of this evaluation. This confers the addressee a position of authority vis-à-vis the locutor. As in other examples we have already commented on, the objective of the communication (asking for information) is implicit in the message:

[Fr20:5492] enfin pour résumer je patoge

A different manner of assuming ignorance through self-referential evaluation is represented by the statement that opens example [Fr15:3841]: *je ne suis pas expert en informatique*. In this case the locutor is trying to negotiate his/her identity as that of an expert. Even if he/she doesn't admit to being a *novice* we can't state that the locutor admits implicitly his/her cognitive limitations:

[Fr15:3841] je ne suis pas expert en informatique mais je voudrais formater mon pc ... est se que je dois utiliser mes cd d'installation que j'ai graver que debut j'avais mon ordi?

In [Fr 10:2284] the locutor constructs his/her discourse as a topic-oriented interrogation. Fragment (1) is completed by fragment (2) where the locutor suggests that the information is urgent. The locutor plays down the urgency in his tone in (2) by using an attenuator: "*quand même*" and the icon :) (a smiley) with the role of mitigating such a direct statement. The PS in the message has the role of keeping open the channel of communication for the locutor:

[Fr 10:2284] ... (1) Ce CD pourrait-il remplacer mon CD d'origine lors de la réparation de windows après mes

modifications si je rentre la clé d'activation de mon XP?

(2) J'attends vos réponses car c'est quand même vraiment urgent :)

Merci d'avance,

PS : Si mon message manque de clarté, n'hésitez pas à me le dire ;)

Another strategy the locutor uses as a *novice* in order to contact the other members of the forum is to disguise his lack of knowledge as “une petite question”, as in [Fr11:2585]. The *svp* in the end of the message represents a neography, the web equivalent for “*s'il vous plaît*”. One can notice that the *novice* in this example asks for technical information in a very specialised field using the expression he/she does when asking for directions in an unknown place:

[Fr11:2585] j'ai une petite question à vous posez, svp !

The representations of identity on the French forum can also be realised by a special mark for the locutor, different from but equivalent to deixis: *the signature*. Even if the standard layout of the forum mentions every detail of the locutor such as name, date of membership, number of messages posted, age, location, etc., some of the locutors after writing a post, sign the message as they would an ordinary letter:

[Fr10:2288] Arto

[Fr10:2552] Under

We can consider the signature as a strong reference to the locutor even if, at a discursive level, it is just a marker that can be explained culturally.

\*

The deictic form *me* of the 1<sup>st</sup> person also has a high incidence in the French corpus (95 occurrences). This form diminishes the importance of the locutor in the communication and shifts the focus on the addressee, for if the form *je* evidentiates the locutor as the main agent of the enunciation, the form *me* indicates a passive locutor. The main agent of the enunciation becomes the addressee/audience, like in [Fr21:5781]. Here the identity of the locutor is that of a *novice* who is guided by the expert in order to solve a situation:

[Fr21:5781] Merci de **me** guider un peu plus loin.

The same opposition passive locutor-active addressee can be observed in example [Fr1:95]:

[Fr1:95] Mais peut être y a t il quelque chose de particulier à faire à partir du mode sans échec ? Merci donc de **me** consacrer encore un peu de temps, même si j'ai un peu peur d'en abuser.

\*

The pronominal form *moi* (59 occurrences) in the French sub-corpus is used only once for *asking for information*. In [Fr21:5788-5790], the identity is negotiated through positioning. The locutor asks for “un tit tuyau” and identifies the *audience* as “docteurs” placing the other in a position of authority and assuming for him/herself the position of the *novice*. The pronominal form *moi* suggests a locutor-oriented communication where the active agent is the addressee and the locutor is a passive presence:

[Fr21:5788-5790] un tit tuyau pr moi docteurs???

\*

The last aspect of the representation of the self in the French corpus is the 1<sup>st</sup> person form of the possessive adjective (118 occurrences). As possessive adjectives indicate a certain relation between the locutor and an object/person/situation, they represent an accessory that can determine the identity of the locutor. For example, on the French web forum the identity of the locutor referred to by the possessive adjective *mon/ma* is associated with different nouns such as *problem*, *question* and *solution*. This contributes to the construction of the locutor's identity as a ‘person who has a *problem/ question*’ or a ‘person who is searching for a *solution*’ as in the examples below:

[Fr2:304] Donc ma question maintenant est comment récupérer ces fonctionnalité????  
Merci a ceux qui me trouveront la solution!

[Fr2:316] Personne pour **mon probleme??**

[Fr3:364] Voila j'explique **mon problème**,

The French locutor on the web forums for informatics is very polite, very calm and, compared with the users of other forums, a little aloof.

### 7.1.3.2 The Minimised Addressee

The collocutor in the French corpus is referred to by *vous*, the plural form of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person personal pronoun. This means that the collocutor is perceived as a community or a group. The addressee, as results from the *locutor-novice's* discourse, is identified as a *source of information*,

like in example [Fr5:736]. Here the locutor expresses his/her request as the wish to recuperate a photo from a damaged USB drive. The strategy used by the locutor in order to communicate with the “sources of information” is to create a personal-emotional context for the technical problem he/she faces:

[Fr5:736] Si **vous** auriez une astuce pour la récupérer, c'est la seule photo que j'ai avec de ma grand mère et moi le jour de mon mariage...

Most often the addressee is identified as ‘a person who can help’, as in the examples below:

[Fr10:3179] pouvez **vous** m'aider svp

[Fr12:3614] Pouvez **vous** m'aider:

[Fr14:4117] Pouvez **vous** m'aider?

[Fr16:4845] Pourriez **vous** m'aider ? Je ne sais pas d'où cela peut provenir.

Another deictic used to identify the addressee is the pronominal form *votre*. It appears in expressions like “*de votre part*” in the context of thanks addressed to the collocutor. Here the identity of the collocutor is associated with “super gentil”:

[Fr9:2598]...ça serait super gentil de **votre** part

From the reduced number of occurrences of the deixis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person we can appreciate that the French *novice locutor* includes very little of the *expert* in his discourse. The presence of the collocutor is almost imperceptible. We can conclude that the discourse on the French forum is predominantly locutor- and topic-oriented.

### 7.1.3.3 The Impersonal Audience

The 3<sup>rd</sup> person deixis is actually the representation of the non-person, since it is mainly impersonal. It is represented by different interrogative constructions introduced by impersonal expressions like: *existe-t-il*, *c'est*, *peût-être*, *comment*, *y-a-t-il* or *est-il*.

[Fr1:18] *Exite t il* des raccourcis clavier ou des touches de fonction qui permettent de revenir à un affichage normal.

[Fr2:263] *c'est peut être* windows qui supporte mal la carte graphique après la réinstallation de windows????

[Fr3:555] Une petite suggestion :

[Fr4:592] J ai des point à chaque fois que j appuis sur la barre espace,*comment* les enlever.merci

[Fr11:3394] Vista *est-il* plus stable? *Y a-t-il* vraiment un problème avec des logiciels?

These impersonal constructions is evidence that the locutor focuses his/her message predominantly on the topic and sees the participants in the situation as less significant.

Constructing the identity of the audience in the French locutor's discourse is realised through the indefinite pronoun *quelqu'un*, which indicates that the locutor perceives the addressee as a vague multitude of persons. The identity attributed to the audience is that of people who have the competence to explain and give solutions' [Fr6:1047] and [Fr9:2588]:

[Fr6:1047] *Quelqu'un* peut-il me donner une explication et surtout la marche à suivre. Merci BYE

[Fr9:2588] *quelqu'un* sait pourquoi ça fait ça ? et comment faire pour arranger ça svp ?

The same situation can be observed in the case of the relative *ceux*. Here, the identity of the audience is conceived as a 'multitude of persons who have helped to find the solution':

[Fr1:173] Merci à *ceux* qui m'ont mis sur la voie

As one can notice, the identity profile of the audience in the French professional web forums may be constructed either implicitly (impersonal constructions) or explicitly as a vague and indefinite group of persons assuming the role of experts in a specialised field and whose function in the dynamics of knowledge communication on the web forum is to *guide*, *assist*, and *help*.

### 7.1.4 Constructions of Identity in the Romanian Sub-corpus

The analysis of the Romanian sub-corpus reveals varied discursive practices that the participants in the communication on Internet forums use for recounting, communicating and referring to himself/herself or to the other. Romanian has developed similar patterns of communicative interaction on the Internet as the other Romance languages, such as French, Spanish and Catalan. However, while it displays similarities with the languages already analysed, it also displays some specific features.

As a general observation, the use of different varieties of Romanian is not relevant for the forum discussion unlike the case of English or Spanish, where the differences are significant and can be important in terms of the locutor's identity.

From the very beginning the locutor assumes that in Internet communication in Romanian important rules of politeness may be broken, whereas the same are essential in everyday communication and in specific situations such as *meeting someone, introducing oneself, being introduced to someone*. This makes the communication more direct and effective from the point of view of the communicating the locutor's aims, but also more disturbing, especially from the addressee's point of view, who is under no obligation to help the other members of the community with his/her knowledge and expects to be treated with consideration by the locutor.

### 7.1.4.1 The Impenetrable Locutor

The discursive representations of the locutor in Romanian can be realised explicitly, either through person deixis or morphologically through verbal endings when the personal pronoun is omitted, which is a characteristic of most Romance languages<sup>98</sup>. In this case, the presence of the locutor can be suggested by different morphemes.

As the focus of our analysis is the way the identities of the participants in a communicational interaction are revealed during the *asking for information* sequence, we will evaluate the manner the locutor sees, refers to/evaluates himself or herself. We will also take into account the way the locutor relates to the topic of the discussion and his opinion on it, as well as the rapport established between the locutor, the addressee and the audience.

It is not unusual that the 1<sup>st</sup> person deictic forms are poorly represented in the Romanian sub-corpus: *eu*<sup>99</sup> (78), *Eu* (11), *io* (1)<sup>100</sup>, since deixis in Romanian is mostly realised through morphemes while the pronoun is not mandatory.

A survey of the Romanian sub-corpus has led to the conclusion that it has a set of general characteristics, which we will discuss in detail in the next pages. For example, the locutor is very concise and usually eliminates what he may consider superfluous elements in the ritual of communication.. From this point of view, forum communication in Romanian reveals a quite new form of interaction that breaks all the rules

<sup>98</sup> It is the case of Spanish Catalan, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian.

<sup>99</sup> Different forms of "I" in Romanian.

<sup>100</sup> As usually, we applied the same principle in the case of the corpora text and we have preserved everything as written by the participants in the forum, even when the occurrences do not conform to the normative grammar of Romanian. We consider this to be very important, for alongside orthography it individualises the electronic discourse.

generally applied in conversation. For example, a very important aspect of the communicational interaction in Romanian is the greeting, usually followed by an introductory formula. In the forum communication the locutor not only avoids completely the introductory formula but he doesn't greet the others either. Moreover, often enough he doesn't use any discursive mark to establish contact with the collocutor.

We can contend then that we are dealing with an *impenetrable locutor* who is not particularly interested in socialising in the virtual space or in offering his/her opinion on the topic of the communication. Generally, the locutor develops a neutral discourse and tries to reduce as much as possible any subjective involvement and his positioning in what concerns the *addressee*. More than once in the corpus analysed the *asking for information* is drastically reduced to just one question, which we consider to be the most neutral discursive structure possible in Romanian.

As with the other corpora, the most powerful deictic form is the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, the nominative<sup>101</sup> *eu*. This form is not commonly used in every day communication, since the verbal morphemes already contain this information. When used, it is emphatic.. However, we should note that while the deixis for the locutor is not important in Romanian, the deixis for the addressee and for the audience is very important and it is usually explicit in the discourse.

The *asking for information* sequence usually represents the entire opening post on Romanian forums and can be formed by an initial part, where the locutor expresses the *difficulty* s/he faces (an IT problem in our case), and a second part, which contains the information he or she requests. In both parts of the message we can observe performances of identity by the locutor.

In the initial part of the message, where the locutor explains the difficulty s/he faces, he/she assumes either partial or total ignorance. We can observe how ignorance is expressed and how the locutor deals with it in a communicational situation. In the second part of the *asking for information* fragment we can observe the strategies the locutor uses in order to obtain the answer to the problem s/he faces.

As for the difficulty the locutor faces, it can be expressed in many different ways. One can note the different degrees of intensity in the way the locutor chooses to refer to the technical difficulty s/he is confronted with. This depends on the the locutor's preoccupation with solving the problem, on his/her the degree of insecurity in dealing with this knowledge field, and also on the complexity of the IT problem.

In the following, we shall survey the cases we have found in the Romanian sub-corpus and identify the way the locutor performs his/her identity in dealing with ignorance.

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<sup>101</sup> The noun in Romanian has cases.



The first example is represented by the locutor who refuses to assume his/her cognitive limits in IT and envisages the communication as a simple request for information, as in [Ro1:15], [Ro2:371], and [Ro16:3821]. In these examples, the word “întrebare” (**question**) is used as an introductory formula by the locutor before enunciating his/her request. These formulas organise the discourse. For example, in [Ro1:15] it represents an opening: “am și eu o întrebare” (**I have a question**), followed by an interrogative. The emphasis on the 1<sup>st</sup> person deictic “eu” (**I**) and the word “întrebare” (**question**) represent the locutor as a *novice* that needs to upgrade his/her IT knowledge. The locutor’s discourse is topic-oriented, impersonal and objective:

[Ro1:15] Salutare, am si eu o **întrebare**, am downloadat un film, si pentru a ma uita la el mi se cere un anume player Luna player, dar nu il gasesc nicaieri free, se poate sa il vizualizez si altfel sau stie cineva de unde pot sa il iau full? (**I have a question, I downloaded a movie, and in order to play it I am asked for a certain Luna player which I can’t find anywhere for free, can I view it some other way or does anybody know where I can take it full?**)

As one can notice, in [Ro1:15] the locutor is the active agent of the communication. His/her discourse is formed by an impressive series of actions as follows: “a avea” (**to have**), “a se uita” (**to look**), “a downloada” (**to download**), “a i se cere” (**to be asked for**), “a găsi” (**to find**), “a putea” (**to can**), “a vizualiza” (**to view**), “a ști” (**to know**) and “a lua” (**to take**). All these verbs form the body of a three-line message. Obviously, the locutor organises his/her message focussing on a serie of actions s/he regards as important. The representation of the locutor, as it results from [Ro1:15], is that of a determined person, impersonal, and unemotional.

In [Ro16:3821] we observe the introductory formula “I have two questions...” ( **Am si eu doua intrebari**), followed by the focus of the communication: the program “Word”. In this case too the locutor is very precise. S/He mentions the number of questions s/he has on the topic. S/He avoids to assume ignorance or cognitive limits. As in the case of [Ro1:15], no other considerations on the topic indicate the locutor’s attitude or personal involvement in the problem he/she faces:

[Ro16:3821] Am si eu **doua intrebari** despre programul Word...

**(I have two questions about the program Word...)**

[Ro2:371] presents a similar structure where, however, we can observe the use of the form *io* of the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun (oral and regional variant of *eu*), a peculiar occurrence since it is generally not recommended. The utterance is introduced by “am si io o întrebare” (**I**

**have a question...**) followed by the enunciation of the topic. The utterance ends with “mă gândeam că poate mă puteți ajuta voi” (**I was thinking that maybe you can help me**), an epistemic judgement modality. In [Ro2:371] the message is locutor-oriented and his/her identity is constructed as that of a person that needs help. The fact that the locutor establishes the relation with the other as “help” puts the addressee in a position of authority and makes him/her the active agent of the situation:

[Ro2:371] am si io o **intrebare** legata de wireless si nu vreau sa deschid un topic nou... ma gandeam poate ma puteti ajuta voi.

**(I too have a question concerning the wireless and I don't want to open another thread ... I was thinking that maybe you can help me)**

The recurrence of the introductory formula “I have a question” in Romanian indicates it as a discursive strategy used in order to call the attention of the addressee/audience. Likewise, the fact that the locutor chooses to name it a “question” rather than a “problem” demonstrates that the latter doesn't consider it an issue.

A different representation of the locutor on the web forums is that of a person facing a problem. This involves a different kind of image and also a distinct relation between the participants in the communicational interaction, especially as regards *positioning*.

As we have observed in the examples above, the Romanian locutor uses the same formula to introduce “the problem” he/she faces. Since “a problem” is more serious than “a question”, in the Romanian sub-corpus the locutor shows more personal involvement. His/her attitude towards the situation s/he faces is illustrated by the use of different *intensifiers*.

For example, an attenuated expression of the lexical item “problemă” (**problem**) is the diminutive “problemuță” (**little problem**). The locutor's choice to of a diminutive suggests his/her attitude towards the situation he/she faces. The locutor also performs a feminine identity: “cunoscătoare” (expert) is a feminine form in Romanian. In her discourse she, the locutor, places the audience (someone) in a position of authority:

[Ro16:3645] am si eu o **problemuta**. ... am intrebat pe unul care credeam ca stie dar nu a stiut sa ma ajute. in plus, eu nu sunt o cunoscatoare. ma poate ajuta cineva?

**(I too have a little problem ... I asked someone whom I thought he knows but he couldn't help me. In addition I'm not an expert. Can anybody help me?)**

The use of the noun *problemă* (**problem**) involves a different perspective of the rapport between the locutor and the addressee. A

problem represents a serious fact which affects the locutor. In the Romanian sub-corpus it is generally associated with more complex IT problems that need extended explanations or a more complex set of information in order to be solved, as it results from the general context of the messages posted on the forum. As in the case of “question”, the locutor feels it necessary to introduce the issue through a special formula which permits the avoidance of all references to the addressee, thus making the discourse quite impersonal. Apparently, for the Romanian locutor there is nothing else to talk about on the forum but the problem he presents and he has no other goal but to solve it. The Romanian locutor could very well be described “*a man with a mission*”.

The following examples, [Ro16:3902], [Ro16:4657], are typically introductory formulas (**I have a problem...**) and represent the locutor’s impersonal enunciations. The discourse is locutor-oriented and any references to the addressee/audience are generally avoided:

[Ro16:3902] **Am o problema** in WORD 2003.

**(I have a problem in WORD 2003)**

[Ro16:4657] **Am o problema** in office 2003 ...

**(I have a problem in office 2003)**

An emphatic *eu* can be noticed in the introductory formula “am si eu o problema” (**I too have a problem...**) as in [Ro15:3256], [Ro16:3937], [Ro16:4063], and [Ro17:4851]. This emphasis underlines the importance of the problem for the locutor as well as marking his personal involvement. We can also observe that the first two examples are simply introductory formulas. The addressee is usually considered the authority in the situation:

[Ro15:3256] **am si eu o problema** imi apare aceasta imagine de multe ori chiar si cind nu fac nimic. please help

**(I too have a problem this image shows up frequently even if I do nothing. Please help.)**

[Ro16:3937] **Am si eu o problema:** incerca sa fac "insert symbol" pentru diacritice si mi se lateste pe toata pagina. Ma poate ajuta cineva?

**(I too have a problem: I try to do “insert symbol” for the special characters and it widens on the entire page. Someone can help me?)**

Examples [Ro16:4063] and [Ro17:4851] are more focused, for they introduce the topic of the problem (the name of the program the locutor has problems with):

[Ro16:4063] **Am si eu o problema** in Microsoft Word...

**(I too have a problem with Microsoft Word)**

[Ro17:4851] **Am si eu o problema** cu Outlook.

**(I too have a problem with Outlook)**

[Ro10:1888] demonstrates that these introductory formulas regulate the discourse in Romanian. The example with “o altă problemă ar mai fi” (**another problem would be...**) marks a resumption. After the presentation of the problem, the locutor introduces his need for more information as he proceeds with another question related to the topic:

[Ro10:1888] **O alta problema ar mai fi:**

Cum pot colora un rand 1 sau coloana A daca A1 contine "reziliat"?

**(Another problem would be: How can I colour one line 1 or the column A if A1 contains “rescind”)**

More personal involvement can be observed in the few cases where the locutor decides to use intensifiers that present the locutor’s perspective of the problem. One good example is the introductory formula in [Ro16:3586] where the locutor states *ex abrupto*: “I have a big problem”:

[Ro16:3586] Am si o **mare problema**.....

**(I have a big problem too)**

This example represents one of the few situations where the locutor admits his/her ignorance. The locutor highlights the seriousness of the situation he/she faces as a discursive strategy to elicit an answer from the audience. The opening shows the emotional involvement of the locutor. The identity he/she performs is that of a person overwhelmed by the situation he/she faces.

An even more personal implication can be observed in example [Ro20:5849], where the locutor expresses his utter despair. The locutor plays dramatically the role of the victim as we can observe from the use of the neography in “Heellp”, followed by the exclamative: “fac o criza de nervi!” (**I’ll have a nervous breakdown!**). The discourse creates an image of an anxious locutor who has lost control of the situation:

[Ro20:5849] Am si eu aceiasi **problema** cu acelasi tip de laptop. ... **Heellp fac o criza de nervi !**

**(I have the same problema with the same type of laptop ... Hellp I’ll have a nervous breakdown!)**

We have already noted that the main characteristics of the Romanian locutor are *focusing on the problem, no self-involvement, and distance from the other*. This illustrates a kind of defensive or undisclosed locutor who wishes to reveal the least possible of his/her real existence.

Another specific discursive construction often used in Romanian as a strategy of the defensive locutor is the use of implicits in order to limit the communication even more. An illustration of this phenomenon is the preference of some of the participants when faced with a problem similar to another already displayed to use the anaphora and reuse the information already presented. Subsequently, they use introductory formulas such as those we have already described, clearly mentioning that “the problem” is “the same” or “similar” to another problem already presented on the forum.

[Ro15:3456] Am si eu o problema asemanatoare.. ma poate ajuta cineva?

**(I have a similar problem.. can anybody help me?)**

[Ro18:5174] Am si eu aceiasi problema, faza e ca eu am reusit sa intru pe id.

**(I too have the same problem, the thing is that I managed to enter the id)**

Other representations of the locutor on the Romanian forum show even more personal involvement, which sometimes may take the form of a desperate cry for help, as we can find in [Ro4:611]. Here, after a very warm greeting, the opening continues with an unusual formula. The locutor chooses an elliptic expression with no connectors: “rog ajutor” (**please help**), in a telegraphic style. On the other hand the rhyme created by the nouns “ajutor” (**help**) and “începător” (**beginner**) creates a funny effect. All of this means that the locutor not only needs help but also has poor IT skills, which is equivalent to recognising one’s ignorance. The way the locutor chooses to express his ignorance is also peculiar. He/she doesn’t state directly “I don’t know” but presents his ignorance as a temporary situation. ‘A beginner’ entails the idea of evolution and of transformation:

[Ro4:611] Salutare si la mai bine!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Rog ajutor, ca sunt incepator

**(<greetings> !!!!! Please help because I’m a beginner)**

One should also note how rich the Romanian vocabulary is and the many possibilities it offers for requesting help and assistance. In [Ro7:1081] the locutor asks directly for a *solution*, yet the locutor he/she

constructs in his/her discourse is a person who is in control of the situation.

The modalities used in [Ro7:1081] are intended to mitigate the imperative: “as dori daca stie cineva cum pot rezolva...” (literally: **I’d like to know, if somebody does, how I can resolve ...**). It consists in the polite form “as dori” (**I’d like to**), an agent-oriented modality expressing a wish, followed by another modalisation (epistemic) suggesting possibility: “daca stie cineva” (**if somebody knows**). They are intended to make the request more acceptable. The message is locutor-oriented. The *positioning* of the participants in the discussion shows they are equal. The locutor is the active agent of the situation and stays in control in order to solve the problem he faces:

[Ro7:1081] Cum elimin un program,deja dezinstalat, din lista Add or Remove Programs? ... Nu este grav,dar nu inteleg de ce mai apare si as dori daca stie cineva,cum pot **rezolva**,astfel incat sa nu mai apara in lista de programe.

**(How do I eliminate a program, already installed, from the Add of Remove Programs list? ... It isn’t a serious problem but I don’t understand why it still appears and I’d like to know, if somebody does, how I can resolve it, so that it won’t show up on the program list)**

Another instance of the locutors’ representations is that of a person who asks for *advice and suggestions*:

[Ro11:1989-1995] Caut un program care sa imi permita sa blochez accesul la diferite aplicatii de pe pc in anumite intervale de timp definite de mine. Cum gama de pe softpedia este foarte larga si ar dura ani pana sa le incerc pe toate sa gasesc unul care sa faca ce am nevoie, apelez la sfaturile voastre. Astept **sugestii** de un astfel de soft. Fara ironii si glume stupide va rog, daca nu aveti nimic constructiv de spus, mai bine nu comentati.

**(I’m looking for a program which could allow me to block the access to different applications on my pc during certain periods of time defined by me. Since the range of programs on softpedia is very wide, it would take me years to try all of them and find one which would do what I want, I resort to your advice. I expect suggestions for such a software. No irony or stupid jokes, please, if you have nothing constructive to say you’d better make no comments.)**

An important aspect of the Romanian locutor revealed in [Ro11:1989-1995] is the way he conceives the discursive space. When

the locutor states that he is waiting for suggestions and advice he automatically positions the addressee in a weak position. The addressee is the person who provides the information necessary to solve the IT problem but his status is that of a person whose advice is the object of the locutor's evaluation. Likewise, it depends on the locutor whether the advice will be followed or not. The last part of the message in [Ro11:1989-1995] highlights the control the Romanian locutor exerts over his/her discursive space. The locutor warns in a quite discourteous manner the members of the forum: "Fara ironii si glume stupide va rog, daca nu aveti nimic constructiv de spus, mai bine nu comentati." (**No irony or stupid jokes, please, if you have nothing constructive to say you'd better make no comments**). This draws up a representation of the locutor as a person who can even choose his/her partners of discussion. This is not of a matter of the addressee choosing whether to answer a message but of the locutor stating that not everybody is welcome to contribute his/her knowledge to the thread he opened.

Other representations of the locutor are that of a person who is not sure whether the operations he/she performed in an IT context are correct or not. In this case, the locutor is a person who asks for *clarification*, like in [Ro15:3136]. This example is not singular, with the locutor modalising his question in order to make it impersonal (**maybe someone will clarify it for me...**) and acknowledging his ignorance (**if I did well what I did...**). He just wants to check if he is right or not in his/her actions as resulting from the situation he/she describes:

[Ro15:3136] Poate ma **lamureste** si pe mine cineva daca am facut bine ce am facut, adica ca pe siteul aratat de mine mai sus.... vad ca eroare nu mai apare...

**(maybe someone will clarify it for me... if I did well what I did, as on the site I showed above... I see that the error doesn't show anymore).**

A way to modalise the representations of the ignorant user is to *ask for a clue*, which is a partial recognition of one's ignorance, a person who in the context of the communication has no idea of what he/she must do (**Does anyone have any idea what I did to it and what I have to do to it in order to fix it?**):

[Ro17:4680] Are cineva idee ce i-am facut si ce pot sa ii fac sa il repar?

**(Does anyone have any idea what I did to it and what I have to do to it in order to fix it?)**

Similarly, the locutor can choose through agent-oriented modalisation to express politely the wish to know more about an IT problem, which involves implicitly the idea of ignorance. In this case

“I’d like to know if there is any method...” is a formal manner of asking for information as enforced by the final interrogative: “is it possible?”:

[Ro23:6675] As vrea sa stiu daca este vreo metoda sa ascund un program care ruleaza.... Se poate?

**(I’d like to know if there is any method to hide a program when it is working... Is it possible?)**

### 7.1.4.2 The Discourse of Action

As we have already observed in the Romanian forum, the locutor does not merely ask for information passively. He is always in control of his/her discursive space, and expresses his/her wish to learn and to acquire knowledge and information. This creates different structures if compared to the other corpora. For example, in the Romanian sub-corpus we can find numerous verbal structures which allow the locutor to organise his discourse and to orient it towards the practical aspects of its domain of application, as we will see in the following examples. Usually, in the Romanian discourse there is an important group of verbal forms depending on one main verbal expression which is generally the verb in the main question.

As for example [Ro1:16-17] where we can find a suite of nine verbs, all depending on the main verbal structure represented by “a lua” (literally: “to take”; meaning: “to download”):

[Ro1:16-17] Salutare, am si eu o intrebare, am downloadat un film, si pentru a ma uita la el mi se cere un anume player Luna player, dar nu il gasesc nicaieri free, se poate sa il vizualizez si altfel sau stie cineva de unde pot sa il iau full?

**(I too have a question, I downloaded a movie, and in order to play it I am asked for a certain Luna player which I can’t find anywhere for free, can I view it some other way or does anybody know where I can take it full?)**

In [Ro6:922] and [Ro10:1737] we have a similar representation of the locutor as an active and determined person who expresses the will to learn as the main motivation of his/her post in the forum. The general situation is described in [Ro6:922] in terms of activities/operations/actions through a string of six verbs, the main structure being the initial part of the communication “vreau sa stiu daca...” (**I want to know if...**) where the locutor, keeping the distance and avoiding every explicit mentioning of the addressee, deals in a different manner with his ignorance:



[Ro6:922] *Vreau sa stiu* daca este un program care sa arhiveze diverse fisiere si in momentul cand cineva acceseaza arhiva el sa dea doar install

**(I would like to know if there is any program which could archive different files and if the moment when somebody accesses the archive he can do just install)**

[Ro10:1737] As dori sa stiu cum pot selecta doar acele randuri corespunzatoare persoanelor nascute intr-o anumita luna

E ceva pe la advanced filters dar nu ma descurc (vreo formula ceva ?)..

**(I would like to know how can I select only the lines corresponding to the persons born in a certain month**

**There is something on advanced filters but I don't manage (any formula something?)**

The same situation can be observed in [Ro8:1285] but with a different verbal construction: “a face” (**to do**). The judgement modality “am crezut” (I thought) through which is introduced the message represents an explanatory introduction of the *information request*:

[Ro8:1285] am crezut ca scap de acea avertizare, dar nu am scapat. Ce mai pot face ca sa scape de aia?

**(I thought that I could get rid of the warning, but I didn't. What else can I do to get rid of it ?)**

In [Ro21:5950-5955] the locutor initiates a series of interrogatives in order to describe the information he/she needs:

[Ro21:5950-5955] deci?

ce program sa folosesc??

Care dintre toate este mai bun???

Sporeste persormantele calculatorului? sau sunt vrajeli sa ne ia banii?

(so?

**What program should I use?**

**Which one is the best?**

**Does it augment the computer's specification? or is it just empty talk for a rip off?)**

As we can see, the representations of the Romanian locutor are those of a defensive person who avoids to take his personal life to the screen and who uses the forum only to discuss specialised IT topics. He avoids socialisation on the web forums and is not interested in providing opinions on and insights into the topics he discusses. His discourse is topic oriented, specialised, and he generally makes good use of terminology. In dealing with aspects of his ignorance, he tries to be impersonal and to make contact with the others as little as possible. He also tries to avoid positioning in relation to the addressee.

### 7.1.4.3 The Supporting Addressee

It is generally impolite for the Romanians to address someone by the 2nd person singular pronominal form “tu”. This linguistic reality is illustrated by its low incidence in the Romanian sub-corpus: tu (22), voi (7), Voi (1), va (37), Va (12). Actually the unique deictic mark of the addressee referred to as “tu” is realised indirectly by a verbal morpheme, as in example [Ro14:2896]: “ai reusit sa instalezi...” (did you succeed to install ...) and it marks an informal communication between the two participants in the dialogue:

[Ro14:2896] eu am aceasi problema, ai reusit sa instalezi cs3?... vreo solutie?

**(I have the same problem, did you succeed to install cs3? ... any solution?)**

The deixis in the Romanian sub-corpus demonstrates that the addressee is perceived by the locutor as a community, a group of people supporting each other. The addressee is referred to as *voi* (**you**) in direct constructions and is particularly mentioned when the locutor focuses on the addressee.

The relation established between the participants in the dialogue places the addressee in the strongest position as the “superior instance” possessing technical knowledge and skills and ready to share them with the other members of the virtual community. Accordingly, the representation of the addressee in the locutor’s discourse is as the *source of information*. In turn, this source of information can be represented as a person whom you ask for help, as in the following occurrences:

#### **Ajutor (Help):**

[Ro2:371]... ma gandeam poate ma puteti ajuta **voi**.

**(I thought that maybe you can help me)**

[Ro3:477]...ma **puteti** ajuta?... **(Can you help me?)**

[Ro16:3505] **Va** rog frumos daca ma puteti ajuta. **(Please, if you can help me)**

[Ro18:4890] **va** rog ajutati`ma si pe mine. **(please help me too)**

And even ‘**help**’ (code-switching):

[Ro14:2632] **Va** rog **help** ca chiar vreau programul ala.

**(Please help because I really want that program)**

The positions of the locutor and the addressee are not too asymmetrical in [Ro11:2075] and [Ro21:5955]. The addressee is only allowed to provide suggestions/opinions, which makes the position of the locutor stronger since it is s/he who decides if what the addressee says is effective or not. Nonetheless, even in this situation the addressee can influence the actions of the locutor, so he/she is still represented as the expert:

**Sugestii (Sugestions):**

[Ro11:2075] Daca **aveti** si alte **sugestii** de programe asemanatoare **va** rog sa le precizati. **(If you have any other suggestions of similar programs please specify them)**

[Ro21:5955] Spuneti si **voi** ce **credeti** ca este mai bun:: **(Do say which one you think is better)**

In both cases the addressee is represented as an authority and can influence the acts and the decisions of the locutor.

#### 7.1.4.4 The Friendly Audience

In the Romanian sub-corpus the audience is referred to as a community, a group of persons whose role is to offer assistance in a specialised field as the members of a professional virtual community. Since the audience is represented by an indefinite multitude of persons, the locutor can address its members using impersonal expressions as in [Ro16:4004-4006]:

[Ro16:4004-4006] **Se poate** sa aranjez paragrafele din Word in ordine alfabetica (dupa cuvintele cu care ele incep)?

**Exista** o alta aplicatie in care sa copiez tot textul si care sa faca treaba asta?

**(Is it possible for me to arrange the paragraphs in Word alphabetically (based on the initial words)? Is**

**there another application in which I can copy all the text and do this job?)**

If explicitly mentioned, the audience is represented in Romanian through indefinite pronouns such as: *cineva* (**somebody**), *nimeni* (**nobody**), and *ceva* (**any**):

**Cineva (Somebody):**

[Ro2:248] Stie cineva cum pot face asta si pentru xp ?

**(Does somebody know how I can do this for the xp?)**

[Ro15:2999] Stie cineva ce e cu ea ?

**(Does somebody know what is happening with her?)**

[Ro16:5596] stie cineva care e faza si ma poate ajuta?

**(Does somebody know what's the matter and can they help me?)**

**Nimeni (Nobody):**

[Ro11:2010] Nu stie nimeni? Macar un indiciu, un sfat, ceva. Multumesc.

**(Nobody knows? Not even a clue, some advice, something. Thanks.)**

[Ro15:3184] Nimeni nu se incumeta sa imi zica si mie daca e bine ca am umblat la registrii sa scap de eroare sau nu....  
?/ ??

**(Nobody dares tell me whether I did well to work on the registers in order to get rid of the error?/??)**

**Ceva (Any):**

[Ro17:4736] Ceva Idei? (**Any idea?**)

Another possibility of audience representation on the Romanian forums consists in interrogative pronouns such as: *cine?* (**who?**), *ce?* (**what?**), and *care?* (**which?**):

**Cine (Who):**

[Ro9:1565] Cine stie cum pot sa sterg licenta de la un program instalat in computer?... Deci, cum as putea s-o sterg?

**(Who can tell me how I can delete the licence of an program installed in the computer? ... So, how can I delete it?)**

**Ce (What?)**

[Ro22:6451] de ce am nevoie ca sa-mi pot recupera datele?

**(What do I need to recover my data?)**

[Ro13:2462] Am dezinstalat si reinstalat de mi-a venit rau, ce sa aibe?

**(I uninstalled and reinstalled till I got sick of it, what could be the problem?)**

**Care (Which):**

[Ro16:4128] Am nevoie de acest pliant facut pe maine deci va rog care stiti sa ma ajutati cu el cat mai repede.

**(I need this leaflet ready for tomorrow so please whichever of you knows how to, help me with it as soon as possible)**

The communicational relation established between the locutor and the addressee during the process of knowledge transmission can be described as friendly and familiar. These aspects of the communication can be observed in the way the locutor constructs his/her discourse and addresses the audience. Our main argument for our statement is represented by the lack of an opening for the questions the locutor asks. The use of direct questions on the Romanian forum suggests that there is a certain degree of familiarity between the participants. Another indication of the familiarity is the lack of modalisation. In Romanian modalisation is a current strategy when the locutor addresses an unknown person, asks for information, or shows emotion (exclamation). Finally, the use of familiar expressions such as: “care e faza” (**what’s the matter**), “se incumeta sa imi zica” (**dare tell me**), “am umblat” (**I worked on**), “de mi-a venit rau, ce sa aibe?” (**till I got sick of it, what could be the problem?**)

It is obvious from the communicational behaviour of the locutor that he/she represents the audience as a group of friends with whom he/she can talk openly without the degree of formalism he/she would use in a face-to-face situation.

## 7.1.5 Construction of Identity in the Catalan Sub-corpus

Our analysis of the Catalan corpus points out the discursive practices the participants choose in order to perform their identity when they communicate on the Internet forums. On the Catalan forums we have identified communication patterns similar to the other Romance languages as well as some communicational peculiarities.

As a general observation, the use of distinct varieties of Catalan is not an issue for our study. We consider that any locutor using a variant of Catalan (Valencian or Catalan of Andorra) in the sub-corpus can maintain a conversation with the other participants in the forum and can accomplish the transmission of knowledge. Any such exchange is a valid thread of the forum. Multilingualism occurs when a locutor uses a completely different language (e.g. Spanish in the Catalan corpus).

An important characteristic of the Catalan forum is the lack of socialisation. Apparently, the users consider the forum a virtual space with a very specific purpose: the communication of information. Communication on the Catalan forum is topic-oriented and there is a strong tendency to ignore any other issue.

A very specific aspect of the communication is the constant presence of the signature of the user as a mark of his/her identity. In addition to the electronic signature inserted automatically when the user writes a forum message, the Catalan user will also contribute his/her real name, which is different from the nickname chosen to designate his/her virtual identity. This brings more authenticity to the communication. The presence of the real name of the user is also functional since in Catalan the interpellation of a person using his/her name is a common occurrence.

### 7.1.5.1 The Powerful Locutor

As one can notice, in the Catalan forum there are many deictic structures similar to the Spanish deixis. In Catalan, as in other Romance languages, the use of the pronoun is optional and some of the representations of the self and of the other are not realised by pronominal forms but through verbal morphemes. Even so, there is an explicit presence of the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronominal form: 130 occurrences in the Catalan corpus.

We shall consider the issue of identity as constructed in the *asking for information* sequence based on the criteria set at the beginning of this chapter:

- d. the way the locutor refers to the topic of discussion
- e. the way the locutor relates to the collocutor (*positioning*)

- f. the strategies the locutor uses to achieve his aim (*learn, obtain information*)

At the linguistic level, the representations of the self in Catalan can be defined through three concepts: *action, decision* and *power*. This means that discursively the most important component of the communication is the verb, with the performance of identity in Catalan alternating between these values, primarily expressed by the presence of the modal verbs *fer, poder* and *voler*.

The positioning of the Catalan locutor is very strong and the addressee occupies a minor place in his/her discourse. His/her presence is implicit and the deictics are few. Since the locutor leaves so little space for the addressee we consider that it is he who holds the stronger position.

The main strategy used by the Catalan locutor is the direct question in a simple form, with very little personal involvement and nothing else but the description of the general context and the *request for information*. This is why we tend to consider the Catalan locutor as a strong character. When he/she is *asking for information*, the locutor organises the discursive space as an action/decision space. It's his decision to ask, his decision to learn and to communicate with the others. All this process has a clearly defined goal: *learn/acquire information* in order to fulfil specific cognitive needs in a specialised field. Ignorance is implicit in the Catalan forum. The locutor assumes his/her ignorance but never expresses it explicitly and the questions s/he asks are usually very punctual and very precise.

The most used strategy in order to obtain information seems to be the direct question focusing on the topic of discussion, as in the following example:

[Cat1:8] Que hi puc fer?

Here the locutor modalises using the verb *poder* followed by verbs like: *ficar, crear, solucionar, trobar* or *llegir*. As one can notice, the locutor is not personally involved, he uses no strategies to draw attention to the others and doesn't mention the addressee whose presence is implicit.

Other similar instances which present the same pattern are:

[Cat1:194] Què faig?

[Cat5:590] Com puc solucionar això?

Some more developed discursive structures include the descriptive technical part of the message embedded in the interrogative sequence:

[Cat2:95] Com puc ficar el corrector de faltes al word (versió 2003) de català i anglès?

In [Cat3:221] an example is inserted in the interrogation:

[Cat3:221] com puc crear una web que per exemple es digui www.jaumepep.com o simplement un nom qualsevol sense ficar www.blogspot.com/jaumpep...

It is obvious that the locutor is a very effective in communicator. Stylistically speaking his discourse is strictly oriented to the description of the problem and to the finality he gives to the utterance.

The organisation of the discursive space gives absolute control to the locutor while the other actors in the discursive *mise en scène* are poorly represented. In the Catalan corpus we have no evidence that the *self* considers s/he has a *problem*. There are no appreciations of the technical problem on which the locutor needs information. It is as if the locutor didn't consider this aspect as important so he ignores it completely. Instead, he expresses his aim to do something and as he doesn't know the potential result and the effects of his/her actions, s/he looks to the forum users for answers. The following examples are illustrative:

[Cat21:2729] ¿Si executo la instal·lació de Firefox 3, em conserva els favorits, les contrasenyes desades, i qualsevol altre dada personal que tinc/tenia amb Firefox 2.x.x.x?

For example, in [Cat21:2729] we can see that the locutor says “si executo...” without asking if it is OK to install the program. This is his/her own decision and what he wants to know is if his/her actions will yield the expected results. Apparently, the strategy of dealing with ignorance in this case is not to mention it at all. Indeed, ignorance is *the* problem and the locutor's aim is to solve it by *asking for information*:

[Cat27:3397] Amb el windows media em grava tele amb aquest format. Com ho puc fer per passar d'aquest format a avi mpeg?

In few cases, such as [Cat22:2881], after expressing his/her intention “Em vull formatejar l'ordinador” the locutor becomes hesitant... *és el pas correcte...*”. In this case, the locutor who is permanently in control of the situation and of his/her actions chooses to express a little lack of confidence because of his ignorance implicit in the discourse. This is yet another representation of a powerful and decisive locutor. He/she affirms his/her aim, decides what has to be done in the situation he/she faces and, just in case, asks if *és el pas correcte per formatejar-lo...*:

[Cat22:2881] Em vull formatejar l'ordinador. Si ho faig clicant amb el botó dret a "Formatejar" i fico "Iniciar" és el pas correcte per formatejar-lo o fent això puc destrossar l'ordinador?



A different discursive structure, even more concentrated than the one we have exemplified with [Cat1:8] and [Cat1:194], concentrates the entire opening post in one indirect question, as [Cat31:3772]. The structure is quite complex with the first word functioning as the *opening* of the communication continued by the *expression of the objective* and a *problematization*. All this is realised through agent-oriented modalisation (wish, will): “m’agradaria saber” and “voldria desinstalar”. The locutor produces a complex discursive structure in which he has managed to concentrate a *greeting*, his *objectives*, and his *intentions*:

[Cat31:3772] Hola, m'agrada saber si instalo el openoffice sem desinstalara el que tinc de Microsoft office Word, es que aquell no el voldria desinstalar per si acás aquest no m'agrada.

Both instances, [Cat16:2037] and [Cat31:3772], use modalisation in order to produce an interrogative effect. The locutor doesn't ask a question but expresses his goal to *know*: “m’agradaria saber si...”:

[Cat16:2037] M'agradaria saber si hi ha algun altre programa equivalent per a ser usat amb el "FireFox"

Another strategy for asking for information is to reformulate the question in a conclusive form. The locutor begins by thanking for the information he has been provided (*Moltes gracies*) and he/she rephrases the information received through the conclusive marker “o sigui que” intended to make sure he/she understood what is to be done. The confirmative question “oi que es això?” emphasizes the previous declarative part:

[Cat28:3509] Moltes gracies per a la informació, ho sigui que tinc que posar la lletra del disc que vull passar, oi que es això?

Another form of *asking for information* in the Catalan corpus is to use pairs of interrogatives. Thus, different interrogative structures can be observed in the Catalan forums. The presence of a series of question marks may be interpreted as an emotional indication through which the locutor expresses his/her subjectivity (*insecurity*, *preoccupation* or simply *haste* or *impatience*):

[Cat18:2208] Llavors, doncs, com ho puc fer?. Algú em pot ajudar?

[Cat26:3304] On em cal cercar-lo?. Algú em pot donar un cop de mà?

Examples [Cat3:400], [Cat23:3032], and [Cat24:3131] display the same pattern: the first question is always focused on the general context

of the topic. These questions are introduced by such discursive markers as the conditional *si* or indefinite phrase structures like “hi ha alguna manera” or “algú sap...”. The second question shifts the focus on the topic and elaborates on the content of the first question. Actually, the role of the second question is to establish his relation to the addressee by asking for instructions:

[Cat3:400] si tinc una connexio adsl, tinc un domini gratis?  
**Que he de fer per aconseguir-lo?**

A different strategy to establish the communicational relation to the addressee is to ask for an opinion:

[Cat23:3032] Hi ha alguna manera de posar-lo en català?  
**Val la pena fer-ho, ja que utilitzo el firefox?**

or for a specification of alternatives:

[Cat24:3131] Algú sab on puc trobar aquest programa Lotus Organizer EN CATALÀ ?. **O algun de similar?**

An even more complex discursive structure is represented by a descriptive sequence followed by two interrogatives. As in example [Cat21:2793], the first question is general: “què deu ser?”. The second question is addressee-oriented (“creieu”). It is obvious that the locutor and the addressee occupy equal positions in the communicational relation:

[Cat21:2793] quan faig "comprova si hi ha actualitzacions" em diu que no n'hi ha. què deu ser? creieu que solucionaré el problema instal·lant la 3.0?

There are only few examples where the locutor admits different degrees of impossibility /incapacity/ignorance.

In [Cat31:3703] the locutor expresses impossibility: “*no puc llegir characters japonesos al firefox*”, but he/she doesn’t perform the identity of a person waiting passively for the aid of the others, as it results from the second part of the interrogative sequence. The positioning between “I” and “you” in the communication is identical:

[Cat31:3703] No puc llegir characters japonesos al firefox, ja ho he provat amb alguns programmes, que puc fer?

A more intense expression of ignorance is example [Cat27:3440], where the locutor affirms that he doesn’t understand the functioning of a program.

[Cat27:3440] *No entenc com funciona aquest programa.*  
Encara que tingui actiu el programa, em graba en format dvr. Em podeu dir com fer-lo anar?

Even if the Catalan locutor is not eager to face and express his ignorance, we have found occurrences where he recognises openly that he has no idea what he has to do and he is grateful for any help he may receive.

[Cat8:954] El tema és que **no tinc ni fava** de com fer-ho. Agrairé qualsevol suggeriment al respecte.

[Cat41:4809] Algú em pot ajudar? Li hauria de canviar tot el paquet Office? O només cal instal·lar un corrector? **Estic força verda en informàtica.**

While it is not a frequent occurrence in the Catalan corpus, sometimes the locutor chooses to represent himself as a person that needs help. His choice of this discursive strategy illustrates how important it is for him/her to find the solution to the problem. Interestingly enough, the locutor even explains why the solution is so important for him. For example, in [Cat30:3578] the *asking for information* sequence is more developed than usual on the Catalan forums. Initially, the locutor expresses his/her '*need for help*' (necessito ajuda), then he/she presents the technical problem, and finally introduces a greeting element (us l'ho agrairia molt). He also introduces an explicative element for manifesting his gratitude (ja que es per a les meves filles):

[Cat30:3578] **Necessito ajuda** amb el corrector de català per al word, com puc fer per baixar-ho al meu ordinador, es que no el trovo per en lloc, si algú em pot ajudar us l'ho agrairia molt, ja que es per a les meves filles.

[Cat41:4809] **Algú em pot ajudar?** Li hauria de canviar tot el paquet Office? O només cal instal·lar un corrector? Estic força verda en informàtica.

The pronominal form *em* or *m'* presents a different perspective on the representations of the locutor. The locutor is not the central figure of the discourse and the representations of the addressee have a more powerful presence than usually. The form *em* is not as powerful as the 1<sup>st</sup> person form *jo*. In this situation the locutor is the passive participant in the situation of communication. It is also important to observe that usually the strongest position in the communication is held by the first deictic element in the sentence, as in the following examples:

[Cat18:2269] Algú **em** pot donar un cop de mà siusplau.

[Cat37:4302] Algú pot explicar-**me** el procés o donar-**me** alguna altra solució?

In other cases, like [Cat17:2125], the strongest position is held by the addressee as expressed through the verbal termination *podrieu*:

[Cat17:2125] **em** podrieu recomanar algun antivirus i/o tallafocs que sigui gratuït??? (i a poder ser en català)

While there are few occurrences of this deictic form in the *asking for information* fragments, it is in fact well represented across the entire Catalan corpus. We have evidence of 330 occurrences of the *me* pronominal form.

Another adjectival form, less important than those presented above, is the possessive adjective form. With 95 occurrences in the Catalan corpus, it generally represents possession. In the *asking for information* component we have only found one occurrence indicating the possession of a material object: *al meu ordinador*, or, in the same sentence, the member of the family: *les meves filles*. The use of the possessive shifts the focus of the discourse onto *objects*, *persons* or *concepts* related to the locutor and indirectly affecting the locutor too. These adjectives help to establish a certain relation between the different objects mentioned in the discourse and the locutor. In this case, the locutor assumes that he is emotionally involved in the situation he presents because he assumes that the elements marked by the possessive are strongly linked with him.

It is also important to observe that the Catalan locutor prefers to refer to 'his computer' as 'l'ordinador' (the computer):

[Cat30:3578-3579] Necessito ajuda amb el corrector de català per al word, com puc fer per baixar-ho **al meu ordinador**, es que no el trovo per en lloc, si algú em pot ajudar us l'ho agrairia molt, ja que es per a **les meves filles**.

As in the French corpus, the signature of the locutor is a special representation of the self. Even if on the forum every member has his own presentation with characteristic information, in the Catalan corpus the contributors tend to sign the messages they post:

[Cat2:169] Carles

[Cat1:10] Jordi

[Cat16:1926] Pere

It is important to observe that usually the identity the locutor assumes on the forums is an electronic identity used to authenticate a user on the server. This means that the user will choose a name and will fill the authentication form with the information he wants. The fact that the locutor signs the messages he sends on the forum with his real name

suggests that he wants to socialise under his/her true identity. It also means that the user transmits genuine information.

### 7.1.5.2 The Addressee, an Informant

The representation of the addressee is usually realised by the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronominal form in the plural *vosaltres*, identified explicitly in the Catalan corpus 14 times. The implicit representations of the addressee are created through the verbal forms.

As we have already seen, the Catalan locutor manifests a strong tendency to monopolise the discursive space and leave very little room for manifestation to the other participants in the communicational interaction.

Generally, in the locutor's discourse the addressee is considered as a source of information he or she needs. The locutor establishes the communication in order to discuss a very specific topic, so every other communicational element not concerning the topic tends to be eliminated.

As in the case of the representation of the Catalan *locutor*, the Catalan *addressee* is not the object of evaluations or qualifications. He merely represents a reliable source of information, a person who shares his/her opinions or can recommend what one should do in a certain context in the specialised field of computer science.

The form *vosaltres* and the absence of *tu* indicate that the addressee is perceived as a group rather than as an individual. This manner of perceiving the other is conditioned by the "mise en scène" of the communication on web forums. The locutor assumes that his message reaches the whole forum community and after the impact of the message, the members may either choose to interact with the locutor and assume voluntarily the active role of the *addressee* or they can avoid any communicational interaction and merely be an *audience*.

The locutor is aware that his message is not addressed to one particular person and he orients the message marking the distinction between "I" and "you" in the first stage of the communication. After the addressee decides to get involved in the communicational interaction, the deictic for the addressee changes from the plural to the singular since the locutor interacts with one person at a time and everyone is individualised by one's nickname or even by one's real name in some cases.

The *addressee* is represented as a source of information:

[Cat7:855] Sabeu com fer-ho?

The *addressee* can also be represented as a possible source of the opinion the locutor asks for. In this case the discourse is structured as a statement in the part that enunciates the intention of the locutor: "estic buscant algun programa de còpies de seguretat", and ends as an

interrogative phrase: “quin utilitzeu vosaltres”, “podeu donar-me una opinió”.

[Cat44:5069] Estic buscant algun programa de còpies de seguretat, **quin utilitzeu vosaltres?**

In [Cat34:3944] the locutor presents his/her opinion and asks for the addressee’s opinion for comparison:

[Cat34:3944] He baixat la demo de bit defender, que sembla molt bo, podeu donar-me alguna opinió?

Another conceptualisation of the addressee, as it results from [Cat19:2286], is that of a *specialist* and/or a *counsellor*. In this occurrence, by using the verb *recomanar* (to recommend) the locutor indirectly credits the addressee as knowledgeable. Implicitly, the locutor admits that the addressee has a superior level of knowledge in the computer science field and he asks and accepts recommendations from him/her. This question involves a positioning of both interlocutors as well as an implicit evaluation of the addressee:

[Cat19:2286] Quines característiques hem **recomaneu?**

The addressee gains an even more powerful position in [Cat29:3525]. Here, the locutor begins by admitting his/her ignorance, and consequently asks for *guidance* (orientar). The use of this verb locates the locutor in the weaker position thus giving more room to the addressee. Even so, it is important to observe that the locutor doesn’t abandon his/her position and asks only for “guidance” which means that he accepts to follow another person’s idea but whose exactly, it is for him to decide.. We can observe that in his rapport with the addressee the locutor is in control of his/her actions and decisions despite the fact that s/he openly admits his/her ignorance:

[Cat29:3525] **No sé que fer.** Hem podeu **orientar??**

Another manifestation of the locutor’s complete control of the communicational interaction is the suite of questions in [Cat44]. The first question is oriented to the addressee as a source of information “*coneixeu algú que em pugui anar millor?*”; the second question introduces the opinion of the locutor modalised as a *possibility* or *probability* as expressed by the conditional form of the verb and the adverb *potser*. This illustrates that the locutor is trying to figure out a solution for himself even if he has already asked for help:

[Cat35:4145] Així doncs, **en coneixeu algú que em pugui anar millor?** o potser hauria de continuar amb el Sygate un temporadeta més?

A different attitude by the locutor can be observed in example [Cat47:5420], where the locutor exceptionally introduces the polite formula “Si us plau” in the *asking for information* fragment as an opening for his sequence. He develops a rhetorical strategy in order to elicit a response from the other members of the forum emphasising and qualifying the potential response of the addressee as a “big favour” (*em fareu un enorme favor*). Unexpectedly, the locutor shows his availability for a dialogue encouraging the collocutors to ask questions in order to find a solution. An important detail is that the locutor never abandons the control of the situation. The discourse is oriented to the locutor “*em fareu un enorme favour (a mi)*” and in the second part of the intervention the user reverses the situation. Suddenly, he is not the one with the doubts but the addressee is: “*si teniu algun dubte o voleu preguntar alguna cosa*”. The locutor assumes complete control of the situation and becomes the source of information for the addressee. At this point we feel that a brief comment on the multimodal aspect of this fragment is important for the context of the communication. Usually the formula “Si us plau, em fareu un enorme favor” is a powerful mark of personal involvement in a situation and is generally associated with expressions of worry and despair. In this case, the locutor wants to mark from a multimodal point of view a different use of this formula and to mitigate it. For this purpose, he introduces two emoticons with smiley faces in order to underline the fact that he is neither worried nor desperate and he simply uses the formula as a politeness mark:

[Cat47:5420] Si us plau, em fareu un enorme favor 😊  
Si teniu algun dubte o voleu preguntar alguna cosa, feu-ho  
😊

A peculiar form the locutor chooses in order to express personal involvement in a situation is to *shout*, viewed as yet another form of drawing the attention of the other members of the forum. As a suprasegmental aspect of communication, shouting is marked by capitals in Internet communication. We have preserved the original form of [Cat46:5255] without any editing so that one can notice how different this message is compared with the others as well as the impact it may have on the receptor of the message. The denominator “*algú de vosaltres*” is emphatically used in this context, since the collocutor on the web forums can be referred to as *algú* or as *vosaltres* or simply through the use of the verbal form:

[Cat46:5255] Sabeu algú de vosaltres si això funciona així per defecte, o hi ha alguna manera perquè es pugui configurar i faci el mateix que amb el navegador Internet Explorer?

As one can notice, the addressee has little space in the locutor's discourse and he/she is envisaged only as a source of information or counsellor. The locutor makes it clear at all times that his positioning in the "mise en scène" of the situation of communication will never abandon the leading position. He makes it clear every time that the addressee is just a help and it depends on him or her to make the final decision whether to follow the addressee's advice.

### 7.1.5.3 The Audience, the Imperceptible Expert

We have already seen that in the web forum communicational interactions one of the most common discursive practices is that of addressing a group of inactive and unknown identities, identified at first as *the audience*. Then, after members of the audience actively respond to the board messages of the locutor, we can distinguish between *audience* and *addressees*. The *audience* is commonly referred to via indefinite pronominal forms like "algú" in Catalan.

The use of the indefinite pronominal forms indicates a different type of opposition between "I" and the "other" than we have observed before in the case of the "I" and "vosaltres" antonym pair in Catalan. The representation of the addressee is not differently emphasised as in the "I" and "vosaltres" rapport, and it indicates that the locutor envisages the target of his/her messages as an indefinite group of persons which are not necessarily part of a cohesive group as referred to by "vosaltres". The pronominal form used to refer to the collocutor is *algú*, which basically conceptualises an individual within an indefinite group. This individual has all the attributes of a teacher, as we will see. First of all, s/he is represented as a person who "knows", an attribute defined by the verbs "coneixer" and "saber":

[Cat9:1194] **Algú coneix** algun programa per copiar CDs i DVDs, equivalent al Nero però en català?.

[Cat20:2400] **Algú sap** si ja hi ha la versió 2.0 del thunderbird traduïda al Català o cap altre versió d'aquesta extensió

Another attribute of the teacher-addressee is that of a guide or assistant as constructed by verbal expressions such as "donar un cop de mà", "donar una pista", or by the verb "ajudar":

[Cat25:3219] algú hem pot **donar un cop de mà**

[Cat33:3875] Algú de vosaltres em podria **donar una "pista"...**

[Cat15:1862] No si si algú em podria **donar un cop de ma.**



[Cat41:4810] Algú em pot **ajudar**? Li hauria de canviar tot el paquet Office? O només cal instal·lar un corrector? Estic força verda en informàtica.

One should also note that these constructions are introductory formulas in the locutor's contribution to the communication and "invite" the addressee to take up the role of the teacher. This conceptualisation entails the type of communicational rapport established between the participants in the communicational interaction. For example, a more precise "image" of the addressee as teacher is formed by the use of the verbs "explicar", "recomanar", "dir" or "solucionar", which are the habitual actions performed by teachers in class. Likewise, the questions asked by the locutor are very similar to those the students ask in a classroom situation, the only difference being that the addressee is indefinite.

In [Cat28:3484] we can observe that the locutor demands an explanation for a topic he needs practical information on:

[Cat28:3484] Algu em podria **explicar** com trobar aquest volum es que no se pas que s'ha de fer en aquest pas.

In [Cat40:4728] and [Cat45:5193] the locutor needs only an opinion on the topic since he is dealing with a partial ignorance situation. Consequently, the addressee is asked to simply provide a recommendation (recomanar, dir):

[Cat40:4728] algú hem pot **recomanar** algun programa lliure que sigui compatible amb vista o ubuntu i també el pugui posar amb una pocket pc?

[Cat45:5193] Algú que hi entengui, pot **dir-me**, si fent-ho d'aquesta manera, queda ben net?. Si no és així, quin altre procediment hi ha que sigui més efectiu?

By comparison, in [Cat43:4963] the members of the audience are asked for a solution to the problem:

[Cat43:4963] Algú sap com es **soluciona**? O si sortirà una actualització properament?

An exceptional situation occurs where the collocutor is envisaged by the locutor as a computer expert. This means that in this case "algun" is used to identify a category of people defined by their professional characteristics:

[Cat47:5420] hi ha algun programa per actualitzar-la? o hi ha per aquí algun **informàtic** que em pugui ajudar?

### 7.1.5.4 The Discourse of the Distance

The use of impersonal verbal constructions or of elliptic expressions is aimed at avoiding socialisation and contact with the others. In this case, the locutor chooses not to introduce the other in his/her discourse who thus is only indirectly present due to the interrogatives used by the locutor which are ontologically bound to an addressee. Another reason accounting for the locutor's choice for impersonal expressions is the effectiveness of the communication and its results. Impersonal messages may be regarded as a strategy of non-participation in the social dimension of the forum. This is the reason why the locutor excludes from his/her discourse any explicit mark of *himself/herself* or the *other*. In addition, this is a way of avoiding any digression to a topic other than the technical problem he/she is interested in. This strategy has different advantages. It makes the communication quicker, more fluent, objective, and clear, thus guaranteeing a rapid solution to the problem. The strategy the locutor uses in this case is to orient the communication either to the problem he faces, which is usually a specific technical problem or computer process as in [Cat6:825]:

[Cat6:825] A part de la obietat de desinstal·lar i tornar a instal·lar, hi alguna altre via ??

or to the solution [Cat6:844]:

[Cat6:844] quina **solució** hi ha per a corretgir-ho?

The impersonal verbal constructions can involve *modalisation*, as in [Cat3:249], where they add *obligation* (s'ha de pagar):

[Cat3:249] pero **s'ha de pagar** o es un sistema gratuit?

Several other nuances may be introduced through modalisation such as *possibility* in [Cat16:1924] as expressed by the impersonal “es pot”:

[Cat16:1924] **es pot** descarregar un arxiu a mitges i l'endemà acabar de descarregar l'arxiu?

or, as in [Cat9:1276], where the negative construction “No hi ha manera de ...” represents a different way of modalising *possibility*:

[Cat9:1276] **No hi ha manera de** trobar un pedaç de traducció al català o un sistema de traducció?

In [Cat4:447] the locutor opts for the elliptic expression “Cap idea?” in order to avoid mentioning the addressee:

[Cat4:447] Cap idea?

The *asking for information* sequence is marked as in [Cat15:1747], where before asking the actual question the locutor says “una pregunta” in order to mark that what follows is an important part of the message. Once again, the communication is impersonal and refers to a hypothetical situation:

[Cat15:1747] Una pregunta, amb el windows vista instal·lat algú com per exemple microsoft pot veure que hi tens instal·lat aL pc?

The suites of impersonal interrogatives represent just another strategy to make the message clearer and to avoid any ambiguity. The locutor tries to define through the interrogatives the area of his/her interest in the specialised domain.

[Cat6:749] Que significa ? com s'arregla aixó ?

[Cat39:4600] Se sap per a quant n'hi haurà un ? S'hi està treballant o de moment no és previst treure'l ?

These questions generally appear in the context of a previous descriptive fragment where the locutor has presented the technical problem he is dealing with. The *asking for information* aspect represented by the interrogative structures has the role of emphasising the goal of the locutor.

### 7.1.5.5 The Bilingual/Multilingual Locutor

Multilingual communication is quite common in electronic communication of all types. However, we have to make a distinction in this context and identify the level where multilingualism is manifested. The distinction must be made between the message level, the thread level and the forum level. Due to the fact that Catalans are bilinguals, in the Catalan sub-corpus multilingualism is manifest at the forum and the thread levels. Multilingualism at the level of the message is a general Internet practice where the locutor is tempted to introduce different words from another language because he feels he will be better understood.

In the case of Catalan forum it is not uncommon for one to find posts written in Spanish, as in the following example. This is a linguistic reality emerging at the discursive level:

[Cat36:4206] hola aber si alguien puede ayudarme se me queda bloqueado el ordenador se para la flecha y no me deja otra opcion que pararlo de golpe abeces escaneando o simplemente al conertarme a internet gracias

The multilingualism in the Catalan forums usually involves Spanish messages, since the Catalonia region has two official languages. Internet users living in Catalonia, while not being highly proficient in Catalan they *do* know that everyone on a Catalan forum understands them and, in exchange, even if the reponse of the community members is in Catalan, the locutor *will* understand it.

### 7.1.6 Conclusions on Identity on Web Forums

#### a) General considerations about identity on professional web forums:

Our analysis of the multilingual corpus has demonstrated that the discourse on the professional web forums displays the existence of two opposite identities: *the novice* and *the expert*, both involved in a process of cognitive transfer. The main agent of the communication is *the novice*, since it is the identity that starts the communicational relation, keeps it active until he/she fulfils his/her cognitive needs, and closes it when the needed cognitive content has been successfully transferred.

The novice enters a relation with the *expert*, identified on the professional web forum discourse as the *addressee* or the *audience*, and constructs their discursive representations as web forum identities.

*I, novice:*

As the main identity on the professional web forum, *the novice* is discursively constructed in relation to *ignorance*, a key-concept in the process of knowledge transmission on the Internet.

Knowledge transmission in cyberspace can be described as a step-by-step process in which *the novice* assumes his/her ignorance and establishes a communicative relation in the virtual space of the Internet with the purpose of fulfilling his/her cognitive needs:

- a. the locutor is confronted with cognitive limits in a specialised field (in our case: computer and Internet);
- b. he assumes his/her *ignorance* and seeks help on a specialised web forum;
- c. on the web forum, he establishes a communicative relation with other members of the forum through a discourse in which he/she encodes:
  - a. his attitude in relation to himself/herself (*representing ignorance*)
  - b. his attitude in relation to the addressee/audience (*positioning/evaluation*)
  - c. his attitude in relation to the topic of discussion (*subjectivity marks: motivation, emotion*)
- d. the locutor closes the communicational relation when the cognitive content has been successfully transferred. If the cognitive needs of the *novice* are fulfilled, s/he changes

his/her status from *novice* to *expert* in what concerns the topic discussed.

The construction of identities is the result of the way the locutor relates to himself/herself and the others (addressee/audience):

Who is communicating?	Locutor communicating about/with:	Manner of communicating	Identity assumed/attributed	Degrees of identity
I (locutor)	I (locutor)	Discourse of ignorance	Novice	Degrees of ignorance: <i>complete, partial</i>
	You	Discourse of experience (Positioning/evaluation)	Expert	Degrees of experience: <i>equal, superior</i>
	Somebody (audience)	Discourse of distance Discourse of experience (Positioning)	Expert	Distance: <i>impersonal</i> ; Degrees of experience: <i>equal, superior</i>

Based on our analysis of the *Computer Web Forums Corpora*, identities on professional web forums are assumed/attributed by the locutor right from the start of the discourse. The locutor assumes the identity of a *novice* by talking about his/her situation in a specialised context through a *discourse of ignorance*. The identity he/she can assume is either that of a *completely ignorant novice* or of a *partially ignorant novice*.

*You, expert:*

Once the locutor assumes his/her identity, he/she establishes a communicational relation (see in the table above *locutor communicating about/with:*) with the *addressee*. The identity of the addressee is attributed by the locutor, who assumes that he/she is talking with competent people. The identity which the locutor attributes to the addressee is that of an *expert*. The locutor achieves this through a discourse of experience he/she associates with the addressee, through *evaluation*, and *positioning*. The discourse of experience consists in addressee-oriented utterances used by the *locutor* to ask for opinion/recommendation/expertise (ex: *cual recomendarias??*). The *evaluation* of the addressee consists in explicit references to the addressee's proficiency in the specialised field of the web forum (*un tit tuyau pr moi docteurs?*; *algun informàtic que em pugui ajudar?*; *pero uds son los expertos, agradezco sugerencias de los sabios*). The *positioning* contrasts the position of *the novice* with the position of *the expert*. The locutor attributes different degrees of experience to the expert in relation to the degree of ignorance he/she has assumed. In the positioning of the participants in a professional web forum situation it is

impossible for *the novice* to be placed in a superior position to the *expert*. This would signify that the degree of experience of the novice is superior to that of the expert, which is a non-sense. The locutor as *the novice* implicitly attributes to the expert a superior or, at least, an equal positioning in the communicational relation. The *positioning* of the addressee is regulated by the locutor's *degree of ignorance*. A *completely ignorant novice* will place the addressee in a position of authority because of his/her superior degree of experience, while a *partially ignorant novice* will place the addressee in a position of equality.

*Someone, expert:*

The locutor attributes the identity of the *expert* to the audience too because he/she assumes that the members of a professional web forum are competent persons. The locutors relate to the audience by engaging in a *discourse of experience* (evaluation and positioning) and a *discourse of distance* (impersonal constructions). The audience is conceptualised by the locutor as an indefinite group of persons sharing the same interest and proficiency in a specialised domain. This is expressed in the locutor's discourse *explicitly* (indefinite pronouns) or *implicitly* (every utterance is addressed to someone).

The *discourse of experience* consists in topic-oriented utterances used by the *locutor* to ask for help/advice/ideas (ex: ¿*Existe otra manera de poder acceder?*). The *positioning* places *the novice* and *the experts* (audience is conceived as group) in complementary positions. The locutor assumes that the heterogeneous groups of members of the virtual community present different degrees of experience. *The novice* attributes to the experts a superior or equal positioning in the communicational relation. The *positioning* of the audience as the addressee is regulated by the locutor's *degree of ignorance*. The *completely ignorant novice* will place the audience in a position of authority because of the latter's presumed degree of experience, while the *partially ignorant novice* will place the audience in a position of equality.

#### b) Specific aspects of identity on the professional web forum in different languages:

Even if constructed similarly, the identities emerging on the professional web forum discussions display particularities that individualise them. In order to highlight the construction of the locutor's identity on the professional web forums in the different languages of our corpus we have decided to observe this phenomenon as the reaction of the subject ("I", locutor) to the different elements contained by his/her discourse (self-reference, relation to the other, and relation to the topic of discussion).

The observation of these parameters, based on the qualitative analysis we have carried out in the present chapter, has allowed us to portray different profiles of the locutor in every language of the corpus.

However, since the profiles are not supported by statistical values, they should be treated as mere guidelines:

Language	Who?	Related to:	Attitude	Nuance
En	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>emotional</b>
		YOU	Interactive	rational
		TOPIC	Objective	rational
Es	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>emotional</b>
		YOU	Interactive	emotional
		TOPIC	Objective	emotional
Fr	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>emotional</b>
		YOU	Interactive	emotional
		TOPIC	Objective	rational
Ro	I	I	Subjective	rational
		YOU	Interactive	emotional
		<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>rational</b>
Cat	I	I	Subjective	rational
		YOU	Interactive	rational
		<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>rational</b>

As one can notice from the table above, the profile of the locutor is primarily constructed as related to self-reference, interaction with the other, and his/her attitude concerning the topic. The definable values are bolded for each of the corpus languages. Not surprisingly, the most important aspects taken into consideration by the locutor are the self (in 3 out of the 5 languages) and the topic (in 2 out of the 5 languages). The interaction of the locutor with the self, the other, or the topic has allowed us to determine the attitude of the locutor as: *subjective* (in relation to self-reference), *interactive* (in relation to the other), and *objective* (in relation to the cognitive content/topic). Each attitude has been divided into two nuances: *rational* and *emotional* depending on the locutor's insight and the communication content.

With that in view, we have identified two main groups of locutors that share the same profiles. Surprisingly, the same characteristics have been noted both in the English sub-corpus and the Spanish sub-corpus, where the locutor is *self-referential*, *subjective*, and *emotional*<sup>102</sup>. The second profile of the locutor groups the Romanian and the Catalan sub-corpora, where the profile of the locutor is: *topic-oriented*, *objective*, and *rational*. A transitional value is registered in the French sub-corpus, where the locutor is *self-referential*, *subjective*, and *rational*.

<sup>102</sup> We don't refer to English as the official language of a country, a determined region or a social-professional category, but to English as the language of the Internet. These results don't have to be interpreted as definable for the cultural context of a country but for the Internet. They represent *how Internauts use English on professional web forums*.

It is interesting to observe how some of the main languages used on the Internet (English and Spanish) share characteristics as regards the locutor, while the less used languages form a distinct group too:

En	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>emotional</b>
Es	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>emotional</b>
Fr	I	<b>I</b>	<b>Subjective</b>	<b>rational</b>
Ro	I	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>rational</b>
Cat	I	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>rational</b>

The analysis of our corpus confirms Thurlow's (2001) claim that CMC is liable to use more deictics than written or face-to-face communication. Likewise, it confirms the author's assertion concerning the prevailing presence of the 1<sup>st</sup> person deictic and the poor presence of other deictics. Thus, as we have too noted in our corpus, the identities of the *addressee* and/or the *audience* are less precisely represented and consequently it becomes more difficult to appreciate their specific profiles in each of the sub-corpora. Even so, we have been able to point out their profiles in general.

In what concerns the *addressee*'s profile in our sub-corpora, it has been considered in relation to the locutor as follows:

Addressee:

- En:** an adviser that provides information to the locutor
- Es:** appreciated by the locutor who often gives him/her prominence and who values him/her as a possible source of information and especially as a collocutor
- Fr:** his/her place is reduced to the minimum, valued as a source of specialised knowledge
- Ro:** considered by the locutor as a supporting source of knowledge given the familiarity of the communication
- Cat:** considered objectively as a source of knowledge

Audience:

- En:** indefinite group or persons to whom the locutor has to appeal in order to obtain information
- Es:** indefinite group or persons whom the locutor will incessantly ask questions in order to obtain the information he/she needs (passivity)
- Fr:** indefinite group or persons whom the locutor implicitly asks questions (impersonal)
- Ro:** indefinite group or persons whom the locutor can address informally in order to obtain information (familiarity)
- Cat:** indefinite group or persons whom the locutor refers to implicitly (distant)

Our intention is to provide an insight into this topic in order to note that within the genre, communication can be different. In order to obtain more accurate information on the specificity of communication on



Internet professional web forums the analysis should be supported by statistical data from an annotated corpus.

c) Qualitative Analysis vs. Quantitative Analysis:

Another partial conclusion of our analysis concerns the comparison of the quantitative analyses of the Computer Web Forums Corpora (see sections 5.5 and 5.6 of this work). At that stage in our work we noted that each sub-corpus displayed a different profile based on a set of parameters we devised. Our analysis of the identities in the Computer Web Forums Corpora has shown that there is a relation between the *textual extent* of each sub-corpus and the emotional-rational nuance of the locutor's attitude. Thus, in the sub-corpora where the extent of the text has been assessed as "highly extended" (English, French, Spanish) the locutor proved to be *emotional*. Instead, in the other sub-corpora, where the extent of the text is "low" (Romanian, Catalan) the profile of the locutor is *rational*. The logical relation between them can be explained by the fact that the locutor's contributions to the En, Fr, and Es sub-corpora web forum communication (text) are more substantial because he/she encodes in his/her discourse several elements of subjectivity.



## 7.2 Discourses of Experience: Explanation on Web Forums

The locutor as member of a professional web forum receives and recognises the “information request” of the initiator of a thread. He/she evaluates his/her proficiency in the specialised domain the collocutor wants to be informed on and, if the locutor appreciates that he/she can provide effective information, he/she reacts to the initial post of the thread. By providing information to the initiator of the thread, the locutor assumes the position of *expert* and decides the best way to organise discursively the cognitive content asked by the initiator. As mentioned in chapter 4.5, the knowledge is encoded in different *speech acts* such as: *definitions, description of actions (procedures/instructions), explanations, meta-explanations, explanatory references, and quotations*. In what follows we will analyse the way the explanation is structured as speech act in each language of the corpus. Firstly we will analyse the explanation as *speech act* and the discursive strategies one uses in order to introduce or to close an explanatory sequence, then we will move on to observe an *explanatory text* in order to observe how complex explanation are constructed in an professional web forum intervention.

### 7.2.1 Explanation on English Forums

As it was already explained in chapter 3, explanations on web forums can be analysed as *speech acts* and as *interaction*. It is this double perspective on the phenomenon that will permit an accurate description of the discursive organisation essential for the communication of knowledge.

In this section of the corpus analysis, as pointed out in the theoretical approach to the explanatory sequence, we begin by analysing explanation as *speech acts* (internal structure and variations), and then move on to observing the co-construction of explanations as *interaction*.

We consider the explanatory sequences on web forums to be discursive sequences that appear as part of a *post*, a discursive subunit of the *thread* representing the main unit of interaction on web forums. From a conversationalist point of view the *post* represents the user’s intervention on a *forum*. A minimum of two posts form an *exchange* and the totality of the *posts* sharing the same topic form a *thread*, which is equivalent to an *intervention*. *Threads* are heterogeneous textual constructions. They include *explanatory, descriptive, narrative* and/or *argumentative* sequences. *Explanatory texts* are most frequent in specialised forum discussions, since they are the main mechanism of knowledge communication.

### 7.2.1.1 Introductory Strategies

The function of *explanations* is to clarify, to render understandable, to detail incomprehensible cognitive aspects of a topic. Since the object of an explanation is always something unclear, ambiguous, and/or confusing, the locutor, before enunciating an explanation uses introductory strategies with the intention of attracting the collocutor's attention. Through these strategies, he/she points out to the receiver that the fragment of communication has to be considered attentively so that s/he should understand the cognitive content transmitted. The locutor uses various introductory strategies which will be commented on in the following pages.

If explanatory sequences are generally introduced by the verb *to explain* and its synonyms, the situation is different in web forum communication, where the cognitive content of the explanations is rather oriented to transmitting practical, applicative and pragmatic knowledge, thus favouring the use of verbal constructions denoting action, as follows:

1. *Trial and error*: One of the most popular methods of learning in the computer / internet environment is known as *trial and error*. It consists in trying all the possible solutions until finding the one that works. This is the explanation for the generalised use of the verb "try" when introducing an explanation on English web forums.

This strategy points out that the explanation it introduces represents a possible solution to the topic presented by the locutor, however, with no guarantee that it will work. *Trial and error* is determinant for the type of knowledge transmitted by explanations. It explains *how to do something* that is suitable for the transmission of practical / pragmatic knowledge. This is why the verb "try" is generally accompanied by other verbs indicating actions, such as "go" or "do":

[E7:3681] You can try going to...

[E10:4083] Try doing...

Sometimes the explanation is introduced as a prescription without being accompanied by any other element:

[E10:4142] Try this:

There are also situations in which besides the prescriptive aspect of the introductory strategy one may note the use of modalisation for introducing the idea of probability:

[E5:2424] try this it might work for you

In example [E5:2424], the intention of the locutor is not only to provide a solution to the topic of the thread but also to reassure and to comfort the addressee.

2. *Put Things Back Into Working Order*: Other introductory strategies involve the idea of *damaged / dysfunctional / broken things* and the explanations they introduce are conceptualised as a “fix”. The introductory strategies used for this purpose are introduced by the verbs “to fix” and “to work”. The knowledge they introduce is practical / pragmatic, which means that it is intended to be applied and presumes that the collocutor will accomplish a series of actions as a consequence of the enunciation.

The use of the verb and/or noun “(to) fix” introduces the idea of self-confidence on the part of the locutor. It denotes that the locutor is convinced that the explanatory content s/he communicates is effective. The explanations may be introduced by addressee-oriented introductory strategies, like in [E6:2819]:

[E6:2819] This will fix **your** problem...

Other introductory strategies are locutor-oriented, as in [E11:5069], where the solution is provided on account of a previous positive personal experience, and yet the locutor makes it clear that s/he is not the source/creator of the solution s/he suggests:

[E11:5069] This fix worked **for me**...

Some of the introductory explanations mention clearly that the locutor is the source of the solution. The cognitive content of the explanation is conceptualised in terms of possession:

[E10:4869] **My** fix for this:

Sometimes the locutor adds a third opinion in order to support his/her affirmation and to make it more convincing. The source they invoke is generally an Internet source<sup>103</sup>:

[E2:1485] This is the Fix, from **Hadoyle Windows forum**  
"This fixed it:

[E5:2531] I was having this problem for about 3 months before finally finding a fix on the **official Microsoft usenet forums**. I hope this fix works for you.

3. *Emotive Introductory Strategies*: Explanatory texts are generally expected to be formal, accurate and impersonal. The explanatory texts

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<sup>103</sup> References to expert opinion or books are almost inexistent. For example, in our multilingual corpus comprising 1000 pages and 5 languages references to expert opinions or specialised books are absent.

used in the academic milieu, such as articles, manuals, courses, reports, generally follow these rules. In web forum communication, as on the Internet in general, the use of informal language eliminates the distance imposed by formal communication.

Explanations, like descriptions, argumentations, and narrations, add strong emotional touches to web forum communication, which can also be noted in the discursive strategies used to introduce explanations.

An important introductory strategy that shows emotional involvement is the use of the name<sup>104</sup> of the addressee in order to attract his/her attention to a topic which particularly interests him/her. It is also a mechanism of the organisation of turns in interaction, for the use of the name of the addressee represents a manner in which the locutor selects the next speaker. As we have noted in example [E1:109], the explanation is addressee-oriented and it mentions the name of the collocutor: “Ok Mark”, followed by an informal introductory expression “in case you haven’t figured it out...”:

[E1:109] Ok Mark, just in case you haven't figured it out...

Other introductory strategies are locutor-oriented and they mention the locutor’s name. Self-reference by using one’s name in communication always has an emotional content. In such cases it is intended to reduce the distance between the participants in the discussion. The locutor assumes the role of the leader in the explanatory interaction. S/He shows confidence in what concerns the efficiency of the information s/he is providing:

[E8:3726] beeboy is pointing you to right direction.

A different emotional intervention occurs in [E11:5370], where the locutor assumes that the previous speaker is “sad”, so he introduces the explanation with the intention of cheering him up:

[E11:5370] Smile i have a soloution...

The introduction of explanations accompanied by personal opinions/evaluations is also a form of personal involvement. They are meant to boost the collocutor’s self-confidence and to assure him/her that the solution exists and it is not too difficult to implement even for a person who is not an expert in computers:

[E4:2161-2162] The answer is simple,...

[E6:2759] I had the same problem and the solution is really simple.

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<sup>104</sup> We use the term name in a very general sense, including the real name and the virtual name (*nickname*) of the web forum user.

*Talking From Experience:* Sometimes the explanation is conceptualised as the solution to a problem. The use of a possessive like in “my solution” and “my method” indicates that the source of the information is the locutor her/himself, who thus assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of the information he/she provides:

[E8:3795] Here's *my* method:

[E11:5346] *My* solution was as follows;

Another locutor-oriented intervention, comprising the idea that the locutor is the source of the information s/he provides, is presented in [E6:3121]. It indicates the locutor as the creator of the information by the use of the verb “to do”. In addition, the locutor indicates that the cognitive content he introduces is practical. It explains “how I did it”, which is the explanation for a procedure:

[E6:3121] here is how i did it...

A different introductory strategy, more restrictive but locutor-oriented too, is presented in examples [E11:5124] and [E11:5145]. Here the locutor indicates that he/she is not the source of the solution but that, nevertheless, it was effective in at least one case: his/hers. “For me” adds a touch of imprecision. Maybe the solution is not fully effective in all cases but at least it worked in one concrete context, which means that it probably is a good solution:

[E11:5124] Solution that worked *for me*...

[E11:5145] solution that worked *for me*:

The interventions above point out to the fact that the locutor has not enough cognitive competence in order to assess whether the explanation s/he provides is fully or partially functional.

As noted, the introductory strategies are not explanations *per se*. They are part of a more general context of the communication. Their function is to draw attention to a specific cognitive content the locutor has previously asked for. They are locutor or addressee oriented and introduce, habitually, practical cognitive content. Personal involvement and imprecision are specific marks of the introductory strategies of explanations on web forums.

### 7.2.1.2 Explanations to Explanations

As pointed out in the previous analysis, explanations as speech acts in a web forum discussion present different levels. Meta-explanations represent a regular occurrence in web forum discussions. As speech acts

they have a polyphonic construction since the explanation to an explanation activates a second voice of the locutor, which specifies the points of the main explanation considered ambiguous by the locutor. Their diversity can be observed in the next example:

[E1:110-117] CHKDSK can check all drives during a windows session BUT NOT DRIVE C: for errors. Drive C: must be checked after reboot to allow CHKDSK access to the entire drive (1)(which it can not whilst Windows is running).

So, if you want to check (2)(and fix any errors found) a drive other than C: (3)(F: for example), you can use Start -> Run and type "CHKDSK F:/f" (4)(without quotes), which means:

CHECK DISK F: and FIX errors if found

You can change F: for another drive letter. If you wish to check drive C:, you can use the above, but you must reboot to allow the program to work. This is only true of drive C:.

(You can see from the above that you are confusing "F:" (5) (the disk to be checked), with "/f" (6)(the option to automatically fix any errors found).

In the English corpus, intervention [E1:110-117] offers a complex preview of the functions of meta-explanations in web forum communication. Their use is recurrent in all the threads of the English corpus. Suffice it to consider the example we have chosen in order to illustrate their function, and we can readily note six meta-explanations in a twelve line text. They are numbered from (1) to (6) and marked by different colours.

Because of the function they fulfil, specifying concepts/actions/reasons within a more developed explanatory structure, they develop a relation of dependency on the main explanatory structure. They can occur within a simple or a complex explanatory structure, and any one structure can have one or several meta-explanations. Meta-explanations work as a polyphonic mechanism where the locutor, after having explained the topic, realises that there are some points where his/her text may be interpreted differently by the addressee. Consequently, s/he will insert brief explanations at the points where he/she considers them necessary. In order to point out that these explanations are not part of the main explanatory body, s/he will place them between parentheses. The meta-explanation is a disambiguation mechanism.

The first paragraph of example [E1:110-117] consists of an explanation of what a specific operating system function (CHKDSK) can do. In this fragment, (1) is a meta-explanation pointing out the condition sine qua non for the success of the operation described by the locutor. The dependence of the meta-explanation on the explanatory sequence is underlined by its introductory element: "which". The meta-explanation is a relative subordinate making no sense without the main fragment.



The second paragraph contains three meta-explanations (2), (3), and (4), every one of which fulfils the same function in the communication. Meta-explanation (2) brings more precision to the specification of the objective of the explanation “if you want to check (2)(and fix any errors found)...”. Meta-explanation (3) “(F: for example)” is an illustrative example meant to facilitate for the addressee the understanding of what he/she has to do. Meta-explanation (4) “(without quotes)” is an indication for writing a computer instruction. This information is very specific and is given because, if not properly written, the instruction the locutor explains will not work. The locutor insists on covering all the informational details of the explanation.

In the closing of explanatory intervention [E1:110-117] one can note two meta-explanations: (5) and (6). Their function is to underline the difference between two elements mistaken by the collocutor. As in the case of the other meta-explanations, (5) and (6) are intended to lend more intelligibility to an ambiguous aspect of the explanation: “... (5) (the disk to be checked)... (6) (the option to automatically fix any errors found).

It follows from the analysis of the examples above, [E1:110-117] and [E7:3413-3428], that explanations on web forums develop complex structures. These structures are produced by combinations of simple explanatory structures. Their forms and functions will be detailed in the next section.

### 7.2.1.3 Prototypical Explanation and Other Types of Explanations

As we have already pointed out in chapter 3.5, explanations are used in order to highlight and to clarify things. Explanations are used to specify things/concepts, to detail processes/methods/manners, to reach a goal and to indicate the reasons for the occurrence of phenomena. This classifies explanations into three main types. Of course, within each main category there are different ways to explain concepts/processes/reasons. In this section we will analyse the categories of explanations and their variation as used in the English corpus.

*1. Definitions:* When the topic of an explanation is an object or a notion, the aim of the locutor is to specify, to distinguish or to describe it. The most common way of explaining what and how a concept/object works is by defining it. Actually, a *definition* is itself an explanation<sup>105</sup>.

*Definitions* on web forums are *simple explanatory structures* that, together with other explanatory structures, construct an explanatory intervention. Their function is to describe, define or classify notions and objects that appear in the topic of discussion and whose meanings are

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<sup>105</sup> The theory of communication considers that definitions fall into the category of explanatory texts.

unclear. A definition may contain completely unknown terms, polysemantic or ambiguous terms, and sometimes very general terms which, in order to be well understood, need to be specified.

Even more categories of definitions can be observed in the English corpus. A *direct definition* is<sup>106</sup> [E7:3521], explaining the meaning of an abstract notion (path) of the computer operative system:

[E7:3521] A relative path is an incomplete path that allows the OS to assume certain things. An example is  
 "\desktop\firefox.exe"

Its structure is most similar to a regular definition:

[notion] + vb. IS + [description] + [example]

<name of the notion>A relative path...

<vb.>... is...

<explanation body>... an incomplete path that allows the OS to assume certain things.

<illustrative example> An example is  
 "\desktop\firefox.exe"

Example [E7: 3524-3527] consists in a very complex explanatory structure formed by four definitions. Definition (1) “...*specific characters* that are meant to be *unknown variables*...” is a direct definition where the <name of notion> is related to another <name of notion> through an expression of equivalence: “are meant to be”. In defining fragment (2), the first notion: “specific characters”, referred to by “these”, is specified by the term “wildcards” through the expression “are called”. Definitions (3) and (4) are mathematical definitions, the *definiens* and the *definiendum* being correlated by the mathematical symbol of equivalence “=”:

[E7: 3524-3527]...however this is not completely true as  
 (1)there are specific characters that are meant to be unknown variables. (2)These are called wildcards.

(3) ? = one unknown character

(4) \* = one or more unknown character

This complex explanatory structure formed by definitions is meant to explain and to organise a specific cognitive content. The explanation starts from a very general basis and ends with very specific definitions. In (1) the notion “specific characters” is very general and ambiguous. It is specified in (2) by a more precise term: “wildcards”. In (3) and (4) every wildcard is defined by explaining its meaning.

Another category of definitions describe objects in terms of their functions. This means that the definition doesn’t focus on *what a notion*

<sup>106</sup> We use the term *definition* in a very general sense and we don’t contemplate the restrictions that other disciplines, such as terminology, impose on it.

is, but on *what an object does*, as in [E10:4141]. This defining behaviour is frequent in computer science, where it is used especially to distinguish one program or electronic tool from the other. In example [E10:4141] we have noted that the notion “registry mechanic”, also denominated “registry cleaner”, is explained in terms of its functions:

[E10:4141] A registry mechanic or cleaner scans your registry looking for registry keys that have been added by programs (e.g. spyware) or changes to keys such as default windows keys.

2. *Instructions/procedures*: an explanation that too has the function of specifying the ways/manners/methods of *doing something*. In web forum communication many of the information requests are action-oriented. On a specialised forum the locutor generally asks to be guided in order to accomplish an action/procedure/process. Consequently, the explanation focuses on the description of the steps one needs to take in order to obtain a certain result. The explanatory answer can adopt various forms in terms of discursive organisation. It is generally addressee-oriented, since it is the addressee that has to apply the procedure as explained by the locutor, and the cognitive content it transmits is pragmatic and applicative.

In terms of discursive organisation, explaining *how to do something* has different variations:

a. *List of actions*: The simplest form of explaining *how to do something* is by specifying every step of the procedure. In written technical communication it can be reduced to a list of steps one has to follow in order to complete a process. Since the forum communication we have analysed focuses on technical problems, many of the explanations its members give and receive are discursively organised as *lists of actions*.

The *list of actions* forms the essential part of the explanation of a procedure. A *list of actions* usually describes simple procedures and is fairly brief. The aim of a *list of actions* is to distinguish clearly every operation, sequence, and step to follow in order to complete a procedure. On web forums the list of instructions may take different forms of discursive organisation. The locutor's choice in what concerns the discursive organisation of the explanation determines its degree of precision. Several examples of imprecise explanation can be noted in the English corpus.

One such example of imprecise communication is [E11:5327-5329], where the content of the explanation is a *enumeration of actions* but is not organised as a *list*. The explanation has the form of a regular text without punctuation. It is difficult to establish where an instruction begins or ends. The locutor's explanation lacks proper description. Obviously, the locutor assumes that the collocutor is already familiar

with the environment, so s/he focuses on the applicative aspect of the explanation rather than taking into account its theoretical aspects :

[E11:5327-5329] hit ctrl-alt-delete in task mgr hit file then new task type services.msc

on the services panel look for rpc and rpc locutor make sure they are both set to automatic start then log out and log back in...voila!

[E6:1305] is a better example because the punctuation here allows the receiver to individualise every action:

[E6:1305] Start, Control Panel, System, Advanced tab, under Performance click on Settings, and check Use Drop shadows for icon labels on the desktop...

The examples above are not the best for knowledge communication because they are imprecise, ambiguous and omit important complementary information. They can be effective only if the receiver is familiarised with the domain of application of these commands.

Complex instructions with a minimum of explanation can be effectively communicated if, like in example [E6:3122-3135], the locutor organises the text. On a *list of instructions* explanations are implicit. The locutor has to understand and follow the instructions that supply the practical knowledge enclosed in the instructions. The explanatory text can be avoided through good textual organisation, as in the following example. In [E6:3122-3135] knowledge is organised in such a way that the receiver can understand, without even reading the text, that the instructions specify a process in two stages, every instruction being clearly separated and the order of the instructional sequence being marked by numbering:

[E6:3122-3135]

- 1) start
- 2) settings
- 3) control panel
- 4) system
- 5) advanced --> performance settings
- 6) uncheck the 'use drop shadows...' box

now, follow the next steps to put a different background color behind your icons...

- 1) start
- 2) settings
- 3) control panel
- 4) display
- 5) Appearance

- 7) Click on Advanced
- 8) You'll see Item: Desktop and Color 1. Changing the color in "color 1" of the desktop will change the background color of your desktop icons.

This is an example of effective cognitive communication where the information is kept to a minimum and any subjective communication is missing. It is obvious that the locutor has chosen this form of communication because he considers that the main focus of the communication is the cognitive content.

Other forms of explaining a procedure/action show more precision in the communication of the cognitive content and more concern for the addressee. This is the case of *instructions* accompanied by supplementary information. They are not a mere *list of instructions*, as the text of the explanation is more developed than in the case previously commented on. In addition, they are more precise leaving the receiver in no doubt as to how he/she is to follow the instructions.

Such an example is [E6:3044-3051], where the instructions are individualised and their order well established. Furthermore, every instruction is accompanied by an indication such as: "right click", "window", "tab", and "scroll down". The indications are meant to explain how the addressee is to interact with the environment.

[E6:3044-3051]

1. Right click on MY COMPUTER
2. In the SYSTEM PROPERTIES window, click the ADVANCED tab
3. Under PREFORMANCE, click SETTINGS
4. In the white spce that has all of the checkboxes in it, scroll down to USE DROP SHADOWS FOR ICON LABELS ON THE DESKTOP
5. Make sure that checkbox is checked.
  
6. Click APPLY
7. Click OK
8. Click OK in the SYSTEM PROPERTIES window
9. The background of your icons should now match any background that you put on your desktop. 😊

As one can note, explaining a procedure can be done efficiently through a *list of instructions*.

*c. Instructions accompanied by descriptions:* A different way of explaining the steps of a process is *describing* it. This modality supposes a more developed discursive organisation, as in example [E6:2724]. This example describes through a complex discourse, which comprises *an opening, a body, and a conclusion*, two ways of solving a technical

problem. The different parts of the explained procedure are presented in a sequential order.

This intervention comprises five *simple explanatory structures*, four of which describe the steps of a procedure and the actions to be taken. They form together a coherent discourse regulated by discursive markers such as “if”, “then”, “where”. A different explanatory structure is represented by (4), which explains the reasons behind explanation (3).

[E6:2724] (1) if you bring up your display properties window, select the appearance tab, then click the effects button, where it says use the following method to smooth edges of screen fonts, (2) set it to clear type and apply. if this does not fix it (3) go to the themes tab, select windows xp theme and apply, (4) it will override any other settings and should get them clear. (5) you may have to reset your wallpaper and a few other settings, but they are easy to do.

Presenting instructions in the form of descriptions is not a very accurate method of communicating cognitive content. Nevertheless, it does have its advantages since it is less specialised, as one can note in example [E6:2724], where the use of specialised terminology is exceptional. Moreover, the communication will reveal more personal involvement, like in the example mentioned, which ends with the locutor enunciating a personal opinion: “they are easy to do”.

*c. Instructions and personal involvement:* Since web communication presents a strong tendency to eliminate distance between the participants in discussions, one can frequently trace emotion or personal involvement in the communication of knowledge. This makes specialised communication more accessible but less precise. For example, the terminology may be inappropriate, like in [E1:426], where the locutor says: “the disk/partition is DIRTY”, which is a metaphorical approach to a technical problem. Yet, whereas the discourse may be ambiguous, the instructions can be followed. The constant presence of “you” reduces the distance between the participants. The closing of the explanatory intervention is not a conclusion or a general evaluation of the procedure explained, but is rather conceptualised in terms of a celebration: “...and then drink a beer or two and celebrate fixing this issue...”

[E1:426] First, check to see if the disk/partition is actually DIRTY (IE broken/lost chains, bad cluster data etc), which it probably is. [...] Reboot to make sure the scheduled checkdisk no longer launches on reboot (it should not) and then drink a beer or two and celebrate fixing this issue without the hassle of reloading the OS! 🍺

Another way of showing personal involvement and concern for the collocutor is by presenting instructions as *advice*, like in [E8:3726-3732], where the locutor very kindly advises the collocutor: “Please remember

that if you are going to make the changes...” or “Also remember that...” in order to prevent any misunderstanding.

Another proof of emotional involvement in the explanatory intervention is represented by the locutor’s personal opinions concerning the procedure s/he describes. For example, in [E8:3726-3732] s/he warns the collocutor that the operation s/he describes is not very easy to realise nor to understand: “It is a bit more difficult if you are running stand alone computer...”

[E8:3726-3732] It is a bit more difficult if you are running stand alone computer rather than a domain computer which gets its policy from domain server, [...]Please remember that if you are going to make the changes, you HAVE to be logged into that specific account to do that. You can't make the changes from your account into another. Also remember that gpedit.msc is very powerful tool so don't make changes where it would lock you /account out.

3. *Explaining Reasons and Causes*: An important aspect in knowledge communication is the cause-effect relation. It is the object of explanations and it transmits theoretical knowledge. It is related to practical knowledge, for if someone knows the cause of a phenomenon, they can think practically.

Communication on web forums focuses more on the practical aspects of the cognitive content. Nonetheless, there are also explanatory interventions that provide expertise and opinions based on theoretical knowledge.

The forms these explanations take are motivated by the specificity of the communication channel. Thus, in many cases they are introduced by discursive strategies that suggest different degrees of precision and confidence. This relativity in knowledge communication can be explained by the fact that it is quite difficult to evaluate a technical problem without having a direct contact with the context of the phenomenon.

When the participants in a web forum discussion want to explain the causes of a phenomenon, the most common discursive strategy used is modalisation. The latter introduces different nuances such as imprecision, insecurity, obligation, relativity, etc. The degree of imprecision is controlled by the locutor and his/her confidence in his/her knowledge. Depending on what the locutors says we have distinguished in the English corpus three degrees of explanatory precision:

*Subjective reasoning* is the weakest and the most unreliable basis for a cause-effect explanation, as it is impossible for the collocutor to evaluate the cognitive competencies of the locutor. The introductory formula, through modalisation, lends a touch of imprecision to the explanation: “I think this problem has something to do with...”. “I think” has a high degree of imprecision. The imprecision is further accentuated

by the continuation of the sentence: "... has something to do with...". The use of "something" in a context considered to be as precise as that of computer science and the Internet is no warrantee even if the explanation becomes more precise towards the end:

[E10:4867-4868] **I think this problem has something to do with** file permissions for the ntuser.dat file or the directory it is located under. (typically located at c:\Documents and Settings\\ntuser.dat) Ntuser.dat is the user specific registry file for HKEY Current User under regedit.

- a) *Personal reasoning based on facts*: in [E1:291], [E1:597] and [E5:2488] the explanations are the result of a generalisation made by the locutor and based on his/her expertise in a specific domain. In this case the explanations for the reasons and causes entailed are more precise. The explanations are introduced by modalisers such as: *usually signifies, it could be, it sounds like, it should..., perhaps, this may be the problem, it may be caused due to*. Communication is more precise than in the example previously analysed under varied aspects, such as terminology and topic focalisation. Likewise, the communication of the cognitive content is more effective:

[E1:291] **It could be** that the chkdsk program or one of its support files is damaged or corrupted. **It seems** a little drastic (not as drastic as a format) but you could try the recovery console on the cdrom, which should restore any damaged/corrupted or missing files.

[E1:597] **It sounds like** different symptoms but **may have the same solution**.

[E5:2488] **Perhaps** you have disabled your updates.

We can illustrate our claim with [E9:3951], which clearly shows that the reasoning of the locutor is the result of a generalisation process. In this example the locutor explains the cause of a phenomenon (beep) on account of his/her experience with computers. The explanations s/he provides can be formalised as follows:

<phenomenon> usually <operator of equivalence> <cause> -  
where "usually" is a modaliser of the generalisation.

[E9:3951] beeping usually signifies RAM IS NOT IN PROPERLY check your ram.



- b) *Cartesian reasoning*: is the most formal and precise type of all theoretical explanations. On forums it represents cause-effect explanations. It is also most similar to formal and impersonal didactic explanations.

A prime example of such an explanation is represented by the *consecutive constructions* in example [E11:5307]. This example is concise and focuses on facts that are presented logically. The explanation of the reason is introduced by a modaliser - “it is likely” - which highlights the idea of probability. The locutor tries to reduce the impact of his/her expertise through modalisation:

[E11:5307] And **since** it is not loading in Safe Mode either, **it is likely very damaged**.

A more personal approach is present in example [E4:2161-2162], where the distance between the participants is reduced through the repetition of the personal pronoun “you”. This personalises the explanation and shifts focus onto the addressee. The locutor modalises his/her communication in this explanation too. “Obviously” is the element that introduces the idea of evidence, suggesting a high degree of precision and logic in this explanation:

[E4:2161-2162]... you have more than one hard drive on your system, the bios is trying to boot windows of your second drive **obviously** there is no windows to boot on the other drive.

As we can see, the explanation of the reasons/motives of a phenomenon is one way of observing how confident the locutor is in his/her skills. It is also observable that, when providing an explanation, the locutor not only delivers cognitive content but also qualifies the knowledge he/she provides, its precision and effectiveness.

### 7.2.1.4 Fewer References

We agree with most of the discourse analysts that claim that all texts are heterogeneous. Internet texts are not only heterogeneous but also *non-linear*<sup>107</sup>. Internet *hyperlinks* allow users to read the same information in a different order than intended. This is why different readers of the same information may assimilate it in different ways while accessing it randomly.

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<sup>107</sup> This is a characteristic of the channel of communication. The most important characteristic of the hypertext is its lack of linearity and the possibility to read the same information in a different order than intended depending on priorities and current interests.

On web forums references are formed through links, which is an easy way of providing further information about a concept, an idea, or a procedure. The function of the links is to offer more details and clarify things for the reader, which is somewhat similar with the function carried out by the explanatory sequence. For this reason, on web forums the explanatory sequences are sometimes replaced by simple links that offer the necessary explanation.

We are aware that not all links are explanatory and that the majority are simply referential. We will distinguish some situations where the hyperlinks are clearly explanatory. A first example is [E1:68-70], where the locutor knows a reliable source of information on the Internet and he/she has no time or is in no disposition to write the entire explanation for the collocutor. He chooses the simplest solution to provide the reference rather than forwarding a personal explanation. He also motivates his/her choice presenting a self-referential excuse “Toooooo lazy to type it again.”:

[E1:68-70]  
<http://www.softwaretipsandtricks.com...ad.php?t=19201>  
 the answer to all your problems 😊  
 Toooooo lazy to type it again.

If the locutor in [E1:68-70] shows emotional involvement by using emoticons and referring to himself/herself as “toooooo lazy”, the locutor in example [E2:1119] is very formal and distant. The explanation he/she offers is mathematically concise and precise, and it is an *explanatory reference* since it stands for the explanation of a specific notion:

[E2:1119] MMS =  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft\\_Media\\_Services](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_Media_Services)

The locutor in the next example, [E9:4005-4006], shows emotional involvement by using a specific orthography<sup>108</sup> and informal expressions. He/she underlines the complexity of the information by mentioning two key words for the context of communication: “more info” and “step by step”, in order to point out that the explanation the collocutor will find is not only theoretical but also practical:

[E9:4005-4006]... HERES MORE INFO AND STEP BY STEP TOO  
<http://neosmart.net/wiki/display/EBCD/Windows+XP>

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<sup>108</sup> It is common knowledge that using capitals in Computer Mediated Communication means shouting.

### 7.2.1.5 Concluding Closures

As noted in the corpus, explanatory sequences sometimes comprise a *closing* part, which is not mandatory. In web forum communication, since the *thread* is usually opened and anybody can add new messages, *closures* are infrequent.

Their function in the explanatory intervention is not only to put an end to the explanatory sequence but also to sum up the cognitive content presented or to evaluate it. Since there are so many potential explanations and varied ways of solving a technical problem, sometimes it seems that the locutor wants to point out that the explanation he/she provides is not a “panaceum universalis” and it probably won’t work for everybody.. This is why some of the *closures* represent a delimitation of other possible solutions to the same topic. This is the case in example [E7:3411-3412], where the locutor very modestly affirms that he merely wrote from his experience in the field and that he can provide no further specialised support and explanation for the topic:

[E7:3411-3412] I've simply explained my experience with shortcuts which differs from common experience presented on many forums, so don't ask me what happens "inside" the Windows and how all it works.

A different closing of an explanation insists on its practical aspect and on the utility of the explanation:

[E6:2945] this is just how I fixed my problem, perhaps it'll help someone one day.

A more didactic closing of an explanatory intervention is [E7:3536-3541]. The locutor chooses here to close the explanation by rephrasing step by step what he explained before in a more concise manner. As one can note, the closing is introduced by the conclusive marker “in short” and presents a developed structure which carries four meta-explanations:

[E7:3536-3541]

In Short

=====

1. place your portable app in a uniquely named folder (something that that app would not normally be placed in)
2. Make a shortcut that points to the file you want
3. edit the shortcut (start in not target) and place a wildcard (\*) as the drive descriptor in the path. (make sure the rest of the path is correct)
4. try it out.

This closing example illustrates the determination of the locutor to make the information easy to understand for the collocutor. The effort of summing up the entire explanation in the conclusion is an indicator of his/her determination.

### 7.2.1.6 Heterogeneous Explanatory Text

One can note in [E7:3413-3428] an extended explanatory structure, very similar to classroom discourse. This text is formed by explanatory cores marked in the text by (1), (2), (3), (4), etc. Together, they form a complex and heterogeneous explanatory text that represents the entire intervention.

The example below, [E7:3413-3428], displays an explanatory intervention formed by *opening*, *body* and *closing* elements, whose aim is to explain theoretically<sup>109</sup> and practically<sup>110</sup> a phenomenon/process. These aspects are marked in the text by different colours: red for description of actions, blue for theoretical explanations, and purple for meta-explanations/explanatory comments. In our text, the aim is to explain practically *how to dynamically allocate a shortcut on a desktop*.

[E7:3413-3428]

Suppose that you have file start.exe in folder '\Program' (subfolder from the root) on drive d: and you want to make shortcut so that works on any other drive. (1a) Right click on the file start.exe and choose "create shortcut". Move that shortcut in the root, moreover you may rename it if you want (start.lnk for example). Notice the size of the file start.lnk. (1b) Now, double-click on start.lnk to run start.exe. (2) Program will, naturally, start because the shortcut refers to absolute location (3)(path) of the start.exe.

(4)Now, rename folder "Program' in any another name, for example 'New'. Click on start.lnk. Amazingly, start.exe starts again. (5a) What happened? Look at start.lnk (right click, properties) - now, it points to new location of start.exe in folder 'New'. (5b) It means that Windows "intelligently" managed shortcut and found it in new location 'New' and changed path in the shortcut start.lnk. The size of the file start.lnk changed (6) (naturally, because the location have changed also). But now, (7) rename folder 'New' again in 'Program'. Click again start.lnk, start.exe will run again, and the path in start.lnk is again changed in the original one. Look at the size of the file start.lnk. It's not the same as it initially was. And not only it's not the same size, now it allocates file start.exe "dynamically". If you move both the start.lnk and 'Program' folder in any other location on any other drive (don't forget to erase it

<sup>109</sup> An example of theoretical knowledge transmitted by an explanation is revealing the reasons / motives / causes of a phenomenon.

<sup>110</sup> An example of practical knowledge is explaining step by step the actions one needs to follow in order to obtain a certain result.

from the original location to be sure that all this work), you will always run program by clicking start.lnk.

If you move the shortcut and program folder on another location before you start it via shortcut in original location, Windows will not be able to find it. (8) Only if you start it via shortcut on initial location, and start it again after renaming folder, Windows will be able to find it and, in certain way, "dinamically" allocate program inside the shortcut and find it later regardless of the new location ond new drive.

When taking into consideration the entire *explanatory text*, we will notice that the *opening* sketches out the entire explanatory trajectory. It begins with the enunciation of the situation to be explained (the point of start) “Suppose that you have file start.exe...”, which is followed by the enunciation of the goal of the subject who is performing the action: “and you want to make shortcut so that works on any other drive” (the aim).

The body of the [E7:3413-3428] explanation is formed by different explanatory cores separated by other speech acts. As regards the former we have distinguished eight, numbered from (1) to (8). Their inventory illustrates how diverse and complex explanatory texts may be. The criterion for distinguishing the explanatory cores is the aim of the explanation. As pointed out in chapter 3.5 we admit the existence of three explanatory categories, everyone of which has a distinctive function. They explain: *why something happens (prototypical explanation)*, *how to do something (description of actions)*, and *what is something (definitory explanation)*.

The first (1a) explanation is a *description of actions* and its aim is to transmit practical knowledge. It consists of an addressee-oriented instructional progression. From the point of view of its content, (1a) is a *simple explanation* because it encloses only a part of the entire explanation. (1a) alone, with no other complementary explanation, has no meaning. Fragment (1b) is an isolated part of the instructional structure (1a).. Together, they cohere.

Fragment (2) is a different explanatory core. It corresponds to a prototypical explanatory sequence which explains the reasons why a phenomenon is produced. It is intended to transmit theoretical knowledge. This fragment represents an *explanatory text*, since it includes different explanatory cores (3). Thus, fragment (2) contains a short explanatory structure (3) enclosed in parenthesis “location (path)”. This is an implicit explanation which is grounded on the partial synonymy between the terms “location” and “path” in informatics. The intention of the locutor in this case is to be more specific. Thus the general term “location”, which has many uses and is rather ambiguous in the computer domain, is reinforced by “path”, a specialised term.

Fragment (4) marks the next step in the progression of the explanation. It continues the description of actions begun in fragment (1). It is an explanatory core, addressee-oriented, it transmits simple knowledge, and it represents a step in the explanatory chain.

The structure formed by (5a) and (5b) is a *prototypical explanatory sequence*. It has two components: (5a) and (5b). (5a) is the question that generates the explanatory sequence in answer. According to their description, the two components of the explanatory sequence must be the result of a verbal exchange, which is supposed to have two participants. In [E7:3413-3428], (5a) and (5b) are part of an intervention and are produced by the same locutor. The 1<sup>st</sup> explanatory element of sequence (5a): “What happened?” is a rhetorical question. The second part of the explanatory sequence is introduced by “It means that...” and clarifies the reasons for the operation described in “Windows "intelligently" managed shortcut and found it in new location 'New' and changed path in the shortcut start.lnk”. The cognitive content transmitted by the explanatory sequence is theoretical and is meant to complement the practical knowledge described before in order to provide a complete description of the process.

Sequence (6), in parenthesis, is an explanatory structure introduced by “because”. It represents an explanatory comment on the fact presented in the previous enunciation. It is a simple explanation and the cognitive content it transmits is theoretical.

The explanation in excerpt (7) represents the last step of the procedure explained by the locutor : “rename folder 'New' again in 'Program'. Click again start.lnk”. Similar to the other description of actions, this is a simple explanation because its cognitive content can't be understood without the other steps of the process. The aim of this explanatory sequence is to transmit practical knowledge.

The closing of explanatory intervention [E7:3413-3428] consists in a final explanatory sequence (8):

“Only if you start it via shortcut on initial location, and start it again after renaming folder, Windows will be able to find it and, in certain way, "dinamically" allocate program inside the shortcut and find it later regardless of the new location and new drive.”

The closing of the explanation enounces the condition *sine qua non* for the correct functioning of the procedure presented previously step by step. Its function is to stress out that it is important to follow the locutor's explanations in order to obtain the desired result.

This *explanatory text* reveals how complex an explanation can be. In [E7:3413-3428] we can identify three levels of explanation. The first level specifies the steps of a procedure the addressee has to follow on her/his computer, exactly as indicated by the locutor. This level explains *how to do things* and in web forum communication it corresponds to an instructional sequence. The second level of explanation is complementary to the first and involves theoretical knowledge. It is intended to reveal to the addressee the reasons for which a certain phenomenon occurs. It represents a more subtle form of knowledge, not

as evident as the practical cognitive aspects. The last level of explanation is represented by meta-explanations (explanations to explanations) and/or explanatory comments. Its function is to clarify for the receiver parts of an explanation considered ambiguous by the locutor. Other levels of explanation can appear too, but it is not the case in [E7:3413-3428].

## 7.2.2 Explanation on Spanish Forums

An analysis of the explanatory strategies used on Spanish web forums had allowed us to distinguish between the different discursive patterns that structure knowledge. In the next sections of this chapter we will detail these strategies pointing out to their exact locations in the explanatory sequence: *opening*, *body* or *closing*. We will also pay attention to the orientation of the messages, the cognitive content transmitted, and their orality marks, such as spontaneity and interaction.

The first discursive strategies we have chosen to analyse don't represent parts of the explanatory sequence. They are part of the web forum post and represent the discursive element used by the locutor to call the attention of the collocutor, telling him/her that what follows is important. Since these elements are used to introduce explanatory sequences, we call them *introductory strategies*.

### 7.2.2.1 Supporting Introductory Strategies

Explanations on Spanish web forums have a specific discursive organisation and present very strong orality marks. Conversational markers such as: “bueno”, “pues”, “claro”, and so on, are constantly present in the web forum conversations. Their presence lends coherence and interactivity to the web forum communication and shapes it into *written conversation*. The discursive strategies used to introduce an explanatory sequence emphasise the importance of the cognitive content conveyed and maintain the coherence of the interaction. Their use eliminates the distance between the locutor and the addressee, giving the forum discussion the appearance of a spontaneous and interactive *written dialogue*.

As one can observe in the corpus we have analysed, the Spanish locutor explaining something is conceptualised as a specific form of conversation for he/she constructs his/her discourse by following a conversational structure.

The following introductory strategies were encountered:

*a. Introductory interjections:* Web forum conversations in Spanish present a high degree of spontaneity and are very similar with face to face dialogues. The use of interjections like those noted in [Es2: 265] and [Es17: ] represent an example of interactive and oral introduction to an

explanatory sequence. The interjections that introduce explanations don't contain any semantic meaning; they represent a natural reaction in a spontaneous oral dialogue to the question of the previous speaker. In [Es2: 265] "Pfff ..." is an interjection of disregard which marks the attitude of the locutor in relation with the topic of discussion:

[Es2: 265] **Pfff** las versiones personalizadas de Windows **son una basura**, son como a ti te pasa a unos les va y a otros no y ellos ya tendran problemas ya veras. Dejate un Windows normal es mucho mayor.

"Pffff" represents an evaluation and underlines the locutor's negative opinion about the topic before announcing it verbally. This negative opinion is enforced by a second evaluation: "son una basura"<sup>111</sup>

In the next example, [Es17: 4038-4039], "Mmmm,..." introduces an explanation: "[porque] el cablemodem no los cierra". This interjection points out that the locutor is evaluating the situation and he/she is thinking of how to better organise his/her ideas in order to produce a good explanation. "Mmmm...", like "pffff..." is not necessary in written conversation; nevertheless, its presence in asynchronic communication creates an oral-like discourse, very specific to Spanish web forum communication<sup>112</sup>:

[Es17: 4038-4039] **Mmmm**, si eres cliente de Euskaltel, es posible que no tengas router, solo un cablemodem, si es asi, no necesitas abrir puertos, el cablemodem no los cierra.

*b. Markers of modality introducing explanations:* One of the introductory strategies is the use of modality markers, as in [Es4: 720], where the explanation is introduced by "hombre". The latter is categorised as a *conversational marker*, it is addressee-oriented and indicates the kind of relation the participants in a discussion establish during the intervention. In [Es4: 720] it marks the fact that the locutor and the collocutor are in an informal peer relation. The locutor talks to the addressee as to a friend:

[Es4: 720] **Hombre**, si haces una imagen de todo tu PC ahora y cambias de placa no funcionará. No se si entiendes lo que quiero decir

[Es4: 720] also underlines the spontaneity of the communication, "hombre" being used in communicational interactions in order to

<sup>111</sup> In this case, the explanation "Dejate un Windows normal [porque] es mucho mejor" explains the reason why the addressee should use a standard version of an operative system rather than a personalised one. One should also note the disproportion between the introductory sequence (2.5 lines) and the explanatory sequence (0.5 lines).

<sup>112</sup> As an orality marker "Mmmm..." has many occurrences in the Spanish forum we have analysed.



maintain the coherence between the initiative and the reactive interventions of an exchange. In [Es4: 720] “hombre” introduces an explanatory comment and marks the difference of opinions between the participants in the dialogue.

There is another conversational marker that brings together the locutor and the addressee. Like “hombre”, “Veamos” is a marker of alterity but it is oriented to both participants in the discussion. It suggests an estimative attitude to the topic of discussion by both participants:

[Es12: 2807-2808] **Veamos.**

Puedes probar a eliminar todo el software "estupido" (es decir, que no sirve para nada, basura) que viene preinstalado.

*c. Discursive markers introducing explanations:* An explanation can be introduced by *opening discursive markers* like in example [Es8: 2224-2232], where “para empezar” is intended to mark the beginning of a sequential communication whose content is well organised. “Para empezar” introduces a secondary explanation, necessary for a correct explanation of the main topic of the thread:

[Es8: 2224-2232] Esas ventanitas, **para empezar**, no aparecen cuando quieres iniciar un programa, sino al realizar un cambio, por ejemplo, del sistema y que precisa autorizacion

*d. Introducing explanations as comments:* Following the dynamics of a written conversation, the majority of the explanatory sequences in Spanish are introduced as comments through discursive markers such as: “pues” and “bien”. They are used to introduce a new comment which, in our case, is an explanatory sequence. The use of “pues” or “bien” doesn’t change the meaning of the sentence but makes it spontaneous and interactive, and more conversation-like:

[Es5: 1094-1095] **Pues** si tu HD no esta dañado cosa que no parece por lo que dices, y si Vista si se instala solo te queda los controladores de terceros para el HD, esto justificaria que Xp no detecte.

[Es6: ] **Pues** una manera es cuando lo metes y lo cambias en la BIOS tendría que ir...

While “pues” introduces only a comment, “bien” in [Es7: 1836-1840] is a *conversational marker* that indicates the attitude of the locutor to what the previous speaker asserted in his/her intervention. In this case the locutor acknowledges what was said by the previous speaker and introduces an alternative explanation:

[Es7: 1836-1840] **Bien**, pues prueba todas las teclas F cuando se encienda, excepto las dos que citas.

*e. Introducing explanations as opinions:* Another introductory strategy presents the explanation as the locutor's personal opinion. These explanations are introduced by a verb of opinion, as in examples [Es15: 3639-3640] and [Es8, 2025-2029]. In [Es15: 3639-3640] the opinion is expressed directly and is topic-oriented:

[Es15: 3639-3640] **Opino que** el problema ...

In the second example, [Es8, 2025-2029], the verb “opino” is a confirmation of the availability of the opinion expressed by one of the previous speakers (FiTi), and thus creates the impression of interactivity:

[Es8, 2025-2029] **Opino igual que**.FiTi. el ultimate es lo mejor...

The opinion can be expressed indirectly through *verba dicendi*, like in example [Es9: 2278-2279], where the agreement with the opinion of the previous speaker is expressed through the epistemic modality marker “exactamente”. The previous speaker, as in the example above, is referred to by his/her nickname “mi\_amigo”:

[Es9: 2278-2279] **Exactamente**, lo que **dice** mi\_amigo es lo mejor...

Other explanations are introduced as opinions based on evidence or logical deductions made by the locutor. He/she presents the explanation not as an independent cognitive content which exists no matter what, but as something that reflects his/her opinion that depends on the locutor and his/her interpretation. Some of the explanations are introduced by *epistemic modality* markers, such as: “es obvio que”, “es lógico”, “lo que pasa es que”:

[Es5: 1149-1163]...**Es obvio que**...

[Es5: 1260-1261] **lo que pasa es que**...

[Es6: 1666] **Es logico**,...

Explanations can also be introduced as the result of direct experience:

[Es5: 1439] **tuve mismo problema con el 5715z** solucioné instalando linux y despues xp

A different introductory strategy, using *epistemic modality*, presents the discourse as an indirect reference. The opinion the locutor expresses is something he/she heard from the others:

[Es7: 1897-1901] ... **por lo que tengo entendido**, cuando te vienen, te viene el mismo que tienes en tu pc:S as probado con el que te vino y F11?¿?

*f. Trial and error:* is the most popular method to become Internet and computer literate. It is universally applied to acquire technical skills and knowledge, therefore it is conceptualised in all languages. It has already been noted as an introductory strategy in the English corpus and now in the in the Spanish corpus too. The typical introductory verbs are “probar” and “intentar”. Both of them can introduce different explanatory structures. The explanation introduced by this discursive strategy is addressee-oriented, it generally introduces explanatory instructions as well as transmitting practical knowledge. The verbal structure used as an introductory strategy is “probar/intentar” + Verb:

[Es5: 965] **prueba** con el disco live superdiscogrup y elegir que restaure las particiones de windows en el arranque.

In [Es5: 965] the structure “probar + verb” is implicit. “Prueba con el disco live” is actually an elliptic sentence where the verb is implicitly present: “Prueba [a restaurar el sistema operativo] con el disco live”. This structure can be explicitly observed in the examples below:

[Es5: 1292] **prueva** a instalar ...

[Es5: 1422] **Prueba** a recuperar el gestor de arranque de Vista...

At times, *trial and error* is modalised like in [Es9: 2264], where the locutor introduces the explanation as a possibility:

[Es9: 2264] **podrias intentar** arrancar el PC...

In other cases it may be accompanied by markers of *deontic* or *epistemic modalities*. In [Es1, 206] the locutor introduces the explanation as a new comment:

[Es1, 206] **Bueno prueba** algo sencillo,...

*g. Introducing a solution:* The conceptualisation of an explanation as a *solution* to a problem is not habitual in the Spanish web forum discussions. Only one such occurrence has been identified in the entire Spanish corpus. This is a marked difference from the generally used strategies, which present a high degree of orality and interaction. The introduction of an explanation as a solution is implicitly addressee-oriented but completely lacks any orality or interaction markers. We consider that this impersonal and formal discursive structure is atypical of the Spanish web forum interactions:

[Es16: 3762-3764] **la solución es** poner el siguiente fichero mountmgr.sys en esta dirección de windows C:\WINDOWS\system32\drivers. Y reiniciar...

*h. Personal involvement when introducing an explanation:* The strong conversational characteristics of web forum interaction are completed by strong emotional involvement. Thus the discursive strategies used to introduce explanations present a large variety of expressions that show the participants' emotional involvement in the discussion. A prime example would be the use of the addressee's name before the enunciation of an explanation. This introductory strategy makes web forum discussions more interactive and represents for the locutor a modality to orient his/her discourse. It is also a manner of eliminating the distance between the participants in the exchange. For the locutor it is a modality of choosing the next speaker.

[Es19: 4415-4419] **mercadder**, te confundes en varias cosas...

Emotional introduction of an explanation can be observed in examples [Es1: 52] and [Es7: 1752-1754]. In these examples the locutor "announces" in the introduction of the explanation he/she gives some negative aspects related with the topic of the discussion. These negative comments are introduced with due concern for the addressee, as made obvious by the locutor's use of discourse attenuators. The introduction is enunciated as a reflection of the locutor's the personal opinion, which introduces a slight idea of imprecision functioning as an attenuator.

In example [Es1: 52] the locutor evaluates the situation as "no... muy normal" suggesting a "problem" further confirmed by the continuation of the explanation "a ver que bicho se te ha colado"<sup>113</sup>. The second part of the enunciation, too, has an attenuator: "a ver". This strategy shows the the locutor's concern lest he should frighten unnecessarily the addressee:

[Es1: 52] Ahora lo que comentas **no es muy normal** a ver que bicho se te a colado.

Another example of concern by the locutor is featured in example [Es7: 1752-1754].

[Es7: 1752-1754] **El problema** del arranque **es algo preocupante**... te da algun error el CD?...

He begins with a general evaluation of the situation which hardly seems positive. As one can notice, the Spanish locutor uses the attenuator "algo" in order to diminish the semantic content of "preocupante". This introduction functions as a warning concerning the topic of the

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<sup>113</sup> By "bicho" the locutor refers to a virus.

discussion. Its intention is to signal to the addressee that the problem may be critical without, however, overstressing its gravity.

Other introductory strategies that show emotional involvement are related with the attitude of the locutor towards the topic of the thread. Sometimes the locutor chooses an informal manner to introduce an explanation. This reflects his/her attitude and positioning in relation with the collocutor. The most habitual attitude of the locutor towards the addressee is that of a friendly relation. This attitude justifies the use of colloquial expressions, as in example [Es3: 598-606], where the introductory strategy chosen by the locutor in order to explain different computer concepts is the following:

[Es3: 598-606] Vamos a aclarar conceptos **asi a saco jajaja**  
...

In the example above besides the interjection “jajaja”, which presents suprasegmental information about the attitude of the locutor, the colloquial expression “a saco”, meaning “in detail/seriously”, establishes a certain relation between both participants in the exchange.

In example [Es7: 1880-1881] the locutor uses a colloquial expression in order to evaluate the complexity of the problem that has generated a lot of discussions on the web forum. He/she also uses the modality marker “pues”, introducing the explanation by a comment:

[Es7: 1880-1881] **Pues vaya movida** que ha habido con lo del X64...

A different strategy to introduce an explanation can be observed in example [Es5: 981]. Here, the locutor points out that the situation is irretrievably compromised. In this case the use of the colloquial phrase “adios muy buenas” is only an expression of spontaneity:

[Es5: 981] **Bueno** si has formateado la particion que contenia Windows **adios muy buenas...**

The emotional involvement is more forcefully expressed in the introductory sequences, where the locutor is openly concerned about the addressee’s state of mind. More than one explanation is introduced by expressions through which the locutor tries to calm down the addressee. Such behaviour appears especially when the previous speaker has manifested his/her concern about the situation he/she faces:

[Es8, 2044-2045] **Si** puedes meterlo, **tranquilo**

[Es14: 3404-3405] **SI**, tiene solucion, **tranquila tranquila...**

[Es14: 3470-3478] **Tranquila** que no hay nada perdido.

puedes hacer 3 cosas:

As one can note from examples [Es8, 2044-2045], [Es14: 3404-3405] and [Es14: 3470-3478], the locutor introduces the explanations as a discursive strategy through which he tries to diminish the anxiety in the addressee and reduce his/her worries.

The introductory strategies used by the Spanish speakers in order to introduce explanations are diversified and the majority of them involve aspects of orality such as spontaneity and interaction markers that make web forum discussions very similar to written conversations.

### 7.2.2.2 Rhetorical Explanations

Example [Es10:2435-2443] is a reactive intervention explaining *how one should make an operating system work properly*.

[Es10:2435-2443] Antes que nada, no se por que decis que el SP3 trae problemas. (1)Yo lo tengo en todos mis equipos y aparte de agilizar los procesos de mis equipos, lo veo mucho mejor dotado en seguridad que el antiguo y un tanto mastodontico SP2.

(2a)En cuanto a pasarse al Vista, CUIDADO! Es tu equipo lo suficientemente moderno para ello? (2b)Porque si no, estarias yendo de Guatemala a Guatepeor xD.

Aunque el Vista administre bien el equipo en general, (2c)considero que puede instalarse BIEN a partir de un equipo de 2.4 Ghz con 2 Gb de RAM.

(2d)Si tu equipo supera estas especificaciones, es una opcion a considerar.

En fin, yo creo que ahi hay otro problema aparte del SP3. (3)Has una pasada del Tunep Utilities (4)(Registry Cleaner), junto con la tipica del antivirus y antiespias a tu eleccion y comentanos el resultado.

A ver si va a ser eso...

The explanatory fragment is formed by four simple explanatory structures numbered from (1) to (4). The former presents a high degree of interaction and orality due to the presence of numerous discursive markers that organise the information and to the presence of deixis, used in this intervention by the locutor in order to distinguish between the participants in the discussion and to focus his/her discourse. Firstly, in the *introductory sequence* of the intervention “Antes que nada, no se por que **decis** que el SP3 trae problemas”, one can observe a reference to the

previous speakers as *vosotros* expressed through the verbal form “decís”. The locutor marks a divergence of opinions in what concerns the affirmations of the previous speakers by emphasising his/her opinion. The deictic “yo” is not mandatory in Spanish. Here, it is used in order to mark this divergence: “Yo lo tengo en todos mis equipos y aparte de agilizar los procesos de mis equipos, lo veo mucho mejor dotado en seguridad que el antiguo y un tanto mastodontico SP2”. The locutor not only marks the distance between him/herself and the other participants in the discussion but also increases the interactivity of the communication by changing the orientation of his/her discourse.

If the introductory fragment is *vosotros*-oriented and explanatory sequence (1) is locutor-oriented (“yo”), in the explanatory sequences (2a+b+c+d) the locutor changes the addressee and orients the discourse to the initiator of the thread referred in his/her discourse as “tu”. Changing the focus of the discourse in only one intervention makes the discourse more conversation-like, since all the previous participants are involved in.

The second explanatory sequence has a peculiar organisation. It is formed by an initial fragment (2a) which adopts the form of a warning: “En cuanto a pasarse al Vista, CUIDADO!”, continued by a first explanatory sequence (2b) introduced by “porque”. “Porque si no, estarias yendo de Guatemala a Guatepeor xD”. The content of (2b) isn’t cognitive since it doesn’t transmit new information. Its function in the discourse is not to offer an explanation but to warn. The explanation comes with (2c): “considero que puede instalarse BIEN a partir de un equipo de 2.4 Ghz con 2 Gb de RAM”. The modalisation of the explanatory structure “...considero que puede instalarse BIEN...” creates an atypical explanatory structure because it is locutor-oriented. (2c) is so constructed as to reflect the locutor’s personal opinion on the topic explaining the warning expressed in (2a) and emphasised in (2b). Sequence (2d): “Si tu equipo supera estas especificaciones, es una opcion a considerar” is an addressee-oriented conditional structure that completes the explanation expressed in (2c) by defining the context of application.

The main goal of the entire explanatory intervention is expressed at the end, in the instructional sequence (3): “Has una pasada del Tunep Utilities [...], junto con la tipica del antivirus y antiespias a tu eleccion”. In this sequence the explanation is addressee-oriented and transmits practical knowledge expressed as instructions. Explanatory sequence (3) incorporates a meta-explanation (4) “...(Registry Cleaner)...”, an elliptic definition which explains what “Tunep Utilities” is. The instruction succession ends with a request of an addressee-oriented feed-back: “...y comentanos el resultado”.

The closing of the explanatory intervention introduces a sense of imprecision and insecurity on the part of the locutor: “A ver si va a ser eso...” as if the locutor were not completely sure what the problem was.

In terms of the cognitive content, [Es10:2435-2443] presents a lack of precision at multiple levels within the explanation. The introductory sequence suggests the locutor's first nuance of imprecision when s/he chooses not to express directly his/her disagreement with the opinions presented by the previous speakers, but to introduce a shade of doubt: "no se por que decis que el SP3 trae problemas". The reason why he/she opposes their opinions is also expressed imprecisely: "...lo veo mucho mayor dotado..." which is locutor-oriented and introduces a personal point of view. The locutor alternates his/her explanations with warnings. The explanations are locutor-oriented and take the form of personal opinions, while the warnings are addressee-oriented. The warnings, too, lack precision. Exclamations like "CUIDADO! [...] Porque si no, estarias yendo de Guatemala a Guatepeor xD" take the form of explanatory sequences, they are addressee-oriented and their function is to warn against a possible problem. If we scrutinize the semantic content of the exclamation it is easy to observe that its use is only rhetorical, for it lacks any cognitive content. It doesn't transmit knowledge. It only serves to introduce explanations (2c) and (2d), which further develop the discourse of imprecision: "... considero que..." and "... es una opción a considerar". The explanatory instructions in (4) form the only explanatory structure that communicates knowledge in the entire intervention. The knowledge it transmits also presents a high degree of imprecision. An instruction is expected to be precise, informal and focused. In this case, the locutor chooses to refer to the 'execution of a program' as "has una pasada del Tuneup Utilities". The transition to the following instruction doesn't involve a logical succession of actions but of different other actions taking place at the same time: "junto con la tipica del antivirus y antiespias", which is completed with a commentary that makes the message even more imprecise: "a tu elección". The last instruction gives the impression that the locutor doesn't know what the result of his/her explanation may be, which lends the communication even more insecurity and inexactness: "y comentanos el resultado". The explanation ends in the same tone: "A ver si va a ser eso..."

Intervention [Es10:2435-2443] takes on the form of an explanatory sequence but from the content point of view, cognitive precision is inexistent. These rhetoric explanations<sup>114</sup> don't represent an exceptional occurrence in the Spanish corpus. More than one discursive sequence in Spanish is formally constructed as a simple explanatory structure<sup>115</sup>, and yet they don't communicate cognitive content.

The explanatory intervention [Es3:443-444] is an explanation to the question about *how one should go about making some videogame work in*

<sup>114</sup> We decided to denominate them *rhetoric explanations* since they have the form of an explanation, they take the place of an explanation but they don't fulfil the function of an explanation.

<sup>115</sup> They are introduced by "porque" and explain the reason for a phenomenon, they point out what a concept is or they detail how to follow step by step a procedure.



*a specific model of computer.* The cognitive content expected is practical and the most suited explanatory structure will adopt the form of explanatory instructions. The explanatory structure is not very extended being formed by two explanations numbered from (1) to (2):

[Es3:443-444] mmm, pues nose qe decirte, (1) prueba aver actualizando los drivers....

(2) yo te recomendaria usar una nvidia 8600 q es muy wena en vista, pero aver si sera compatible con tu procesador.....nose, qizas alguien de aki t solvente la duda

Our claim is that [Es3:443-444] is an *explanation* because even if it has the form of an explanatory intervention it doesn't fulfil the function of an 'explanation', which is to explain what an object is, make clear how to realise a procedure or point out the reasons for an event/phenomenon.

The explanation is expected to be clear, formal and precise. It is also supposed to contribute new cognitive content to the topic. In [Es3:443-444] none of these characteristics is present. As one can observe, the register isn't formal since the explanatory structure begins with "...mmm, ..." which is an interjection that marks orality. The message isn't as clear as in (2): "yo te recomendaria usar una nvidia 8600 q es muy wena en vista", The locutor doesn't really explain why he/she recommends nvidia 8600: "porque es muy buena" is a subjective opinion dealing with the affective aspects of the communication rather than a rational explanation.

As far as the degree of the discursive precision in explanations is concerned, the former fails repeatedly in this text. The first indication of imprecision is a direct recognition of the ignorance of the topic on the part of the locutor: "pues nose qe decirte"... followed by "prueba aver". The expressions "a ver" and "no se", both involving a high degree of imprecision, have two occurrences in the text. The modalisation in the closing, by its components "quisaz" and "alguien", augments the impression of imprecision.

### 7.2.2.3 Modalised Explanatory Cores

*Simple explanations* are basically the explanatory sequences that form an *explanatory intervention*, representing a *complex explanation*. The simple explanation is a minimal explanatory unit. Its goal is to detail, to clarify the ambiguous aspects of the communication or knowledge. We can distinguish between different classes of simple explanations: *concept-oriented*, *procedure description-oriented*, and *reasons-oriented*. In what follows we will analyse the discursive strategies used on a Spanish web forum in order to explain concepts, procedures and/or reasons.

a. Specifying a concept/object: In Spanish web forum discussions the explanatory strategy chosen by the locutor in order to clarify a concept/object is the definition. The definition takes different forms and focuses on what an object is, as in the following examples:

[Es15: 3694] pilitos es un **live cd**

In example [Es15: 3694] the locutor explains the significance of the name “pilitos” by including it in a class of objects. “Pilitos es un live cd” refers to a certain category of programs. In the same post:

[Es15: 3677-3680] **Un liveCD es un sistema operativo, por ejemplo, un Windows XP que funciona desde el CD, es como si el CD fuera el disco duro.**

the locutor explains what the program “live cd” is. The definition of the object is realised by including a particular object into the general class of objects. This means that a “live cd” is a particular class of programs that is included in the general class of operating systems. The locutor defines it as a “sistema operativo”, which makes it more familiar to the addressee. In order to clarify things, the locutor accompanies the definition by a particular example and details the characteristics of this class of programs: “... por ejemplo, un Windows XP que funciona desde el CD, es como si el CD fuera el disco duro”.

Another discursive strategy applied to define concepts/objects is the one used in [Es1: 51-55], where a locutor explains what is an executable file by including it in a class of objects and specifying its location:

[Es1: 51-55] **imapi.exe es de windows si, esta ubicado en system32**, lo puedes copiar de de otra maquina y colocarlo en su ruta.

Definitions can also be constructed, as one can note in the next example, by explaining *what an object is used for* and/or *what it does*:

[Es19: 4296-4297] **Un gestor de arranque solo sirve para iniciar sistemas operativos ( MBR)**, el Bios es como un sistema operativo independiente y cerrado de la placa base, por lo que la única forma de entrar es al iniciar el PC.

Sometimes the locutor defines repeatedly the notion at different levels in order to give the addressee a more complex explanation. In [Es19: 4395-4403] one can note a multiple definition of one notion: “live cd”.

[Es19: 4395-4403] ... Mira **(1)un livecd es un "demo" de un S.O., (2)fijate que el livecd no "conoce" tu computadora, solo carga lo minimo que necesita. (3)es**

**como un parasito.** [...] el disco duro externo NO tiene la conexion interna como la tiene el disco duro interno...

The first definition, (1), explains what “live cd” is in terms of classes of objects. This perspective represents the first approach to the definition of the notion, as the locutor continues by explaining what the program does in (2): “fijate que el livecd no "conoce" tu computadora, solo carga lo minimo que necesita”. The last definition, (3), is the most general of the three, because it involves a metaphor meant to give a non-specialist addressee the most general explanation possible in what concerns this notion, by using a comparison: “**es como un parasito**”.

*b. Explaining a procedure:* The discursive strategies used on the Spanish web forum to explain a process involve primarily instructions. In the computer and Internet domains they represent the most used discursive strategies. Instructions are expected to be short, clear and objective. They also involve a high level of specialisation through the use of terminology, like in the following example:

[Es21: 5023-5034]

-Sigue estas indicaciones:

-Activa Ver Archivos Ocultos

-Haz un chequeo con los antivirus online en modo seguro con funciona red

<http://www.ewido.net/en/onlinescan/>

<http://www.eset-la.com/online-scanner/>

- Haz una limpieza del sistema (registro y temporales) usando: Ccleaner

-Descarga Hijackthis

[http://www.trendsecure.com/portal/en-](http://www.trendsecure.com/portal/en-US/threat_analytics/HJTInstall.exe)

[US/threat\\_analytics/HJTInstall.exe](http://www.trendsecure.com/portal/en-US/threat_analytics/HJTInstall.exe)

Crea una carpeta y mete dentro hijackthis.exe. Ejecutalo seleccionando la opción Do a system scan and save log, y pega el contenido completo del bloc de notas.

Instruction sequence [Es21: 5023-5034] is one of the most extended on the Spanish forum. Its structure consists in an introductory element: “Sigue estas indicaciones:” and its textual organisation takes the form of a list of instructions. Every instruction is accompanied by links in order to offer the maximum of information the addressee may need.

Usually, the instruction sequences in the Spanish corpus are reduced to one or two lines and they are very general, as in the following example:

[Es1:26] desde un live CD eliminar el imapi o rescribir el Windows

Quite frequently in the Spanish corpus the instructions are the main explanatory sequences, yet they may be accompanied by other secondary

explanatory structures such as explanations of the reasons for an event or meta-explanations. This makes explanations in Spanish very heterogeneous and interactive:

[Es5: 1202-1206] Tienes otro HD?? Si puedes (1)instala en otro HD, y (2)sacas todo lo que quieras guardar de datos, etc...

Luego (3)formatea a bajo nivel, se que es una burrada, pero (4)asi eliminas por completo todo rastro de S.O`s y tambien de (5)archivos borrados de papelera, etc, (6) es decir TODO, TODO y TODO... jejeje

Si decides seguir esta opcion, que ya digo que es una burrada (7)(no porque joda el HD ni nada por el estilo) pero eso ya tu veras, pues nos preguntas y te guiamos.

As one can notice in [Es5: 1202-1206], there are seven explanatory sequences numbered from (1) to (7). Only the first three explanatory structures are instructions. The remaining four explain reasons or are meta-explanations (7). This hybrid structure forms a dynamic discursive structure which is very accessible and easy to understand. From the beginning the locutor chooses informal communication in a familiar register. His/her intervention is addressee-oriented, as in the question “Tienes otro HD??”, which, too, creates the impression of orality and interactivity. The first question is followed by the first instruction subject to condition: “Si puedes instala en otro HD”. The instructions are organised as a coherent text through textual connectors like “y” and “luego”. Sequences (4), (5) and (6) are explanatory sequences and explain the reason for the procedure explained in (1), (2) and (3). One should also note that the function of (4), (5) and (6) is also rhetorical, as the three sequences explain albeit differently the same fact:

(4) asi eliminas por completo todo rastro de S.O`s y tambien de (5) archivos borrados de papelera, etc, (6) es decir TODO, TODO y TODO... jejeje

The last sequence is formally a meta-explanation and as regards its content the cognitive contribution is minimal: (7) (no porque joda el HD ni nada por el estilo).

In the Spanish corpus, similar examples of interactive explanatory instructions can be observed in: [Es1, 206], [Es5: 1175-1176], [Es5:1243-1244 ], [Es8, 1999-2000] or [Es9: 2330-2332], [Es16: 3751-3753], [Es20: 4801], [Es20: 4778-4783].

One of the characteristics of the Spanish explanatory communication is the personal involvement in the process of conveying instructions.

When explaining a procedure, the locutor is supposed to take the stronger position in the discourse since he/she possesses the “authority” conferred by his/her skills in the field. A characteristic of the communication of instructions in Spanish is the use of deixis in the locutor’s posts. This represents a discursive strategy through which the locutor wants to eliminate the distance between him/herself and the addressee. In order to offer a warranty of the accuracy of the cognitive content of the instructions he/she gives, the locutor treats the addressee with empathy and he/she puts himself/herself in “the addressee’s shoes”, as in [Es18: 4080-4081] “yo formatearía... despues instalaría el vista ... y posteriormente el xp”. At the end of the communication the locutor orients the discourse to the addressee and lets him/her decide what to do: “el orden de arranque podrías hacerlo despues como quisieras”.

[Es18: 4080-4081] **yo formatearía** las dos unidades porque tienes un cacao de cojones, **despues instalaría** el vista en el disco duro mas grande **y posteriormente el xp**, el orden de arranque podrías hacerlo despues como quisieras.

Another demonstration of locutor-addressee empathy is the next example:

[Es20: 4722-4723] Hola, (1)**yo le pasaría un anti-virus** actualizado, un anti-espías, (2)**desfragmentaría** el disco duro, (3)**miraría los programas** q se cargan en el Inicio y (4)**borrar** los q no sean necesarios, **desinstalaría** software q ya no utilizas y (5)**le pasaría** una progama de limpieza como Ccleaner.

The instructions are sometimes introduced by attenuators. The modalisation is a discursive strategy that permits the locutor a more nuanced communication when he/she transmits instructions, since through modalisation the locutor takes a position in relation with the topic of the discussion. An example is [Es21: 4970-4982], where the locutor gives instructions about the activation of the administrator account. One can note how the discourse developed by the locutor is strongly modalised by the use of the verb “poder”.

[Es21: 4970-4982] ... (1)**lo que te puedo decir** es que para activar la cuenta de admin el comando es:

net user administrador /active:yes

Ahora el problema es acceder

(2)**Puedes intentar entrar** con un cd de instalacion del XP entrar en la consola de recuperacion pulsando la **R** cosa que nunca hice y no se si te dejara (3)**pero por probar intentalo.**

Si entra solo (4)**tienes que teclear** el comando y reiniciar.

The first explanatory sequence is introduced by modalisation: “lo que te puedo decir”, the message is addressee-oriented, and the attitude of the locutor in relation with the topic of the discussion expressed through modalisation refers to the locutor’s cognitive competencies. The verb “poder” introduces the idea of relativity and of limitation. The locutor is not sure whether the knowledge he/she conveys is effective. This idea is continued in the second explanatory sequence: (2) “Puedes intentar entrar...”, where the accumulation of verbs suggesting probability: e.g. “poder” and “intentar” before another verb describing an action accentuates the idea of relativity. The third sequence, (3), represents the reverse of sequence (2): “pero por probar intentalo”. It means that the locutor offers no warranty that the knowledge he/she shares is effective, and suggests a practical approach to the topic.

Other uses of the verb “poder” and/or “intentar” as modalisers can be observed in the Spanish corpus in the following examples. They usually introduce imprecision and do not represent a warranty for the expected result:

[Es8: 2109] **Puedes hacer** una actualizacion directa de Vista a XP introduciendo el DVD de Vista e instalandolo desde Windows XP

[Es19: 4316] **Puedes intentar** instalar el XP en el disco externo y configurando el Bios para que inicie desde el USB.

[Es9: 2264] **podrias intentar** arrancar el PC en modo seguro **e intentar eliminarlas** desde ahi.

In Spanish web forum communication, modalisation is a very frequent practice. The locutor introduces the instructions as a piece of advice, which will permit the locutor to avoid assuming any responsibility for the cognitive content he/she transmits. The instructions are frequently introduced by the verb “probar” (*try*) followed by a suite of other verbs representing the actions the locutor has to accomplish, as in the following examples:

[Es1: 147-149] Es un problema de windows **prueba a reparar** los archivos del sistema en ejecutar telea:  
sfc /scannow  
Ten a mano el cd de instalacion del xp te lo pedira.

[Es5: 965] **prueba con el disco live** superdiscogrup y elegir que restaure las particiones de windows en el arranque.

Another way of avoiding responsibility and introducing relativity is the use of the verb “creer” by the locutor. Instructional sequence [Es5: 1405-1406] lends accuracy to the post: (1) “Has de instalar primero...” is

a regular instruction: short, clear and objective. This first statement is invalidated by modalisation in sequence (2): “creo que era así”, which suggests that the locutor is not very confident of his/her knowledge. In sequence (3) the locutor tries to balance the discourse by reiterating the first statement, (1,) not without maintaining the shade of doubt introduced by modalisation through the verb “creer”:

[Es5: 1405-1406] (1)**Has de instalar** primero XP y luego Vista para que te deje escojer entre los dos, (2)**creo que era asi** si ya lo has echo asi pues al revés, (3)**pero creo que es como digo**

*c. Explaining reasons:* The explanation of the reasons behind an event/action presents different degrees of accuracy on the Spanish forums. In what follows, we will illustrate all the discursive forms taken by explanations. The first and most general and imprecise level is that of subjective explanation. This explanation depends completely on the locutor’s subjectivity and frequently lacks cognitive content, which makes us consider it to be a rhetoric explanation. These *rhetoric explanations* can be very general, like in [Es1: 227], where the explanation is placed in a very general context. By claiming that certain versions of a computer program “... solo dan problemas”, the locutor warns the addressee without specifying anything:

[Es1: 227] Intalate una verion normal de windows, nada de versiones "tuning" **que solo dan problemas**

Or, in a similar example:

[Es10: 2407] Quita el SP3, [porque] **da muchos problemas**, yo de ti probaria Vista seguro que tienes menos problemas

We include in the same category of rhetoric explanations the discursive sequences that take the form of an explanation and whose contents consist in personal evaluations of the locutor, as in [Es8, 1962] or [Es8, 2012]:

[Es8, 1962] Si podrias instalarlo el problema es la version de windows que le vayas a meter [porque] **hay algunas que son muy pesadas...**

[Es8, 2012] si la version ultimate es la mas recomendable **porque las demas a mi no me gustan mucho son bastante pesadas y la ultimate va bastante bien.**

Another rhetoric explanation offering very general explanations without cognitive content is [Es6: 1620], where one can note the use of the Internet-type communication orthography: “xk” stands in Spanish for

“porque”, and “k” stands for “que”. The last element of the discourse: “xD”, is an emoticon<sup>116</sup>.

[Es6: 1620]... Y coji el 95 **xk** fue el primero **k** encuentre **xD**  
...

The next example features a *rhetoric explanation*. Even if it is very general, the text has a cognitive content for which specialised terminology is used. This is the most focused *rhetoric explanation*:

[Es2: 281-282] si, **lo que pasa es que los desatendidos de windows desactivan algunas opciones del pc para hacerlo mas rapido.....** al igual que dark knight quedate con windows original.....

[Es12: 2898-2900] Pues el que vaya lento no se debe a Vista en si, **sino que algo mas debe haber mal ahi.** Yo tengo un ordenador similar a ese, y Vista me va la mar de bien la verdad. No sabria que decirte, pero debemos mirar si hay infecciones de virus.

The *explanation of the reasons behind an event/action* can be presented as a possibility; this is a more prudent perspective, since the topic of discussion is a theoretical problem for the locutor, who can only present hypotheses based on his/her knowledge about the field of specialisation. One of the most common expressions of probability is “puede que”:

[Es9: 2278-2279] ...**Puede que tengas un virus por ahí rondando** o simplemente un error en el sistema.

[Es15: 3599] tiene razon Dark Knight **puede que tengas el cd en mal estado**,hacte con otra copia,pero no descartes lo del disco duro sata

Another expression that introduces the idea of probability/possibility is “puede ser”:

[Es15: 3624] BUeno entonces **puede ser fallo de la lectora de CD** o a las malas, del disco duro

[Es11: 2617-2618] ... Lo que no veo tan facil yo es que lo consigas, ya que el problema de CRC **puede ser** porque el DVD que quieres clonar este rayado o en mal estado.

The verb “parecer” introduces the idea of possibility in an explanatory sequence, but also underlines the idea of uncertainty on account of its meaning:

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116 For more information about emoticons and their meanings, please see: <http://fsymbols.com/smileys/>



[Es14: 3404-3405] ...Solamente tienes que iniciar con el CD de Instalación de Windows y Reparar la particion. **Parece** un problema de Inicio de Windows.

The same discursive mechanism can be observed in [Es11: 2650-2651]. Here, it is more focused due to the expression “lo más seguro”, and yet introduces through “algún” the idea of limited cognitive competencies:

[Es11: 2650-2651] **Lo mas seguro es** que sea algun tipo de proteccion.

In addition to the inaccurate, probabilistic and subjective explanations in the Spanish corpus, there also appears the explanation of a fact described by users in terms of logic and Cartesian reasoning. In the next example a hypothesis (1) isn't confirmed, and then a second hypothesis is evaluated. If the latter is not confirmed either, the locutor evaluates a third hypothesis (3):

[Es5: 1093-1095]...Pues (1)**si tu HD no esta dañado** cosa que no parece por lo que dices, y (2)si Vista si se instala (3)**solo te queda los controladores de terceros para el HD**, esto justificaria que Xp no detecte.

The same principle works in fragments [Es15: 3556] and [Es6: 1671-1672]; here the explanation is based on precise observations: “...si llega al 82%...”, “Es logico, minimo te pide 64 y recomendando 128”, as a logical result:

[Es15: 3556] albertolr, Si llega al 82% **es que ha pasado de ese punto y ha reconocido el disco duro**(en algun sitio lo estar ainstalando digo yo)

[Es6: 1671-1672] **Es logico**, minimo te pide 64 y recomendando 128, **por eso te iba mal**, aunque podias aver probado con algun mini-xp que estan hechos precisamente para ordenadores antiguos.

*d. References:* During the process of knowledge communication the locutor may use at times references as a complementary source of explanation or as a reinforcement of the information s/he presents. References can have an explanatory function.

The reference stands for an explanation that points out *how one should do something*, and consequently it represents an explanatory reference because it fulfils the same function as the *description of actions (procedural text)*:

[Es5: 1422-1423] Prueba a recuperar el gestor de arranque de Vista  
**Aqui lo explican**, utilizando el VistaBOOT Pro

An interesting use of *reference* in Spanish is *self-reference*. The locutor doesn't quote third entities or other authorities in the specialised field of the topic but he quotes himself/herself, as in [Es5: 1306], where the locutor claims to be the author of the information s/he refers to:

[Es5: 1306] Para el tema de los drivers **se puede usar ese tutorial que puse hace un tiempo**, sobre como usar los drivers de Vista en XP

Sometimes, *self-reference* is related with the practical aspect of knowledge communication on the web forum. The locutor refers to her/himself not as the source of the information but as its user:

[Es17: 4009] **bueno yo lo hago de esta manera:**  
<http://blog.almadark.com/2005/08/01/abrir-puertos-router-zyxel-prestige-643/>

In this example the reference is explanatory because it also stands for the description of the steps of a procedure and replaces an instructional sequence.

### 7.2.2.4 Empathic Closures

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter about the explanatory sequence (reference), the explanations end with a closing fragment which is not mandatory. In the Spanish corpus *closings* are not very habitual. Their function is to mark the end of the explanatory communication and, like in the following example, to check if the information transmitted to the addressee was received and understood:

[Es4: 720] ... No se si entiendes lo que quiero decir

Other *closing* elements in the explanation are interactive and form discursive mechanisms that generate the interaction in web forum communication. It happens quite often in the Spanish corpus for the locutor to finish the explanation with a feed-back request, meaning that if the explanation isn't sufficient the participants in the thread should stay in touch for more information if necessary:

[Es6: 1573] ... mira a ver y nos cuentas.

[Es: 1158] y suerte, prueba y nos cuentas

[Es21: 4982] Nos comentas

Another function of the *closings* in the explanatory sequence is to show empathy to the addressee. The locutor will show emotion on the web forum, in addition to personal involvement and/or empathy with the other participants in the communication. We should note that in this case the locutor shows moderate personal involvement, diminished by modalisation through “poder” or by expressions of probability: “es muy probable que”, like in the following examples.

[Es15: 3639-3640] ...**puede que consigas solucionar** el problema.

[Es16: 3751-3753] ...**es muy probable que** con esto se solucione.

It is evident that as speech acts, explanatory sequences on the Spanish forums are constructed following the general principles mentioned in the theoretical chapter but also develop specific discursive strategies to transmit knowledge via explanations.

### 7.2.2.5 Brief Explanatory Text

Our analysis of representative examples of *explanatory texts* reveal the different manners in which the *explanatory cores* are interrelated and how they articulate in order to form *complex explanatory structures*. We have chosen to analyse these complex structures firstly in order to observe how they form *explanatory texts*. In the next section of this chapter we will identify and extract the *explanatory cores* as they appear in the Spanish corpus in order to realise an inventory of the *simple explanation* content in Spanish.

Our first observation concerning the *explanatory texts* on the Spanish forum is their reduced extension. Conceived as reactive interventions, the explanatory sequences on Spanish forums are generally very short. The majority are not longer than three lines. In order to better observe their structure we have chosen different *explanatory texts* and we will analyse them in what follows.

Complex explanations respect the general structure described in chapter 3 which includes *opening*, *body* and *closing* elements. In our analysis we will point out the *types of explanations* that construct an explanatory intervention insisting on their cognitive content be it theoretical or practical.

Just as in the analysis of the previous corpus, we will highlight the different explanatory structures in different colours: red for explanatory

instructions, blue for theoretical explanations, purple for meta-explanations, and green for definitions<sup>117</sup>.

The first example we propose for scrutiny is [Es14: 3470-3478], an explanatory intervention where the locutor describes *how one should recover the information stored in a computer whose operating system doesn't start*.

[Es14: 3470-3478] Tranquila que no hay nada perdido.

puedes hacer 3 cosas:

**La primera.** (1) *Saca el disco duro, pinchalo en otro PC como esclavo y le haces un chkdisk X: /r* (2) *( donde esta la X debes poner la letra de la unidad del disco averiado).*

(3)\* *Esto tambien lo puedes hacer si arrancas el PC desde un LiveCD*

**La segunda.** (4) *Ya que tienes el disco pinchado en otro PC le sacas la info que necesitas y la guardas en un disco extraible o donde quieras.*

(5)\* *Esto tambien lo puedes hacer si arrancas el PC desde un LiveCD*

**La tercera.** *Creo que no has entendido muy bien lo que te decia. FiTi., (6) para reparar la instalación debes hacerlo con el CD bootable de instalación de Windows, no el de la placa base.*

The intervention is formed by an introductory sequence where the locutor shows emotional involvement by being preoccupied with calming down the addressee before explaining. The explanation sequence is a complex structure formed by six explanatory cores marked with numbers from (1) to (6). The locutor structures the discourse strictly following a scheme he announces at the beginning: “puedes hacer 3 cosas”. He/she underlines the existence of three methods of solving the problem the addressee faces and presents the solutions. Every explanation is introduced by a numeral: “La primera”, “La segunda” and “La tercera”, which function as text organisers. In [Es14: 3470-3478] we can note only two explanation forms: *description of actions* and *meta-explanations*. The explanatory instructions are addressee-oriented and transmit practical cognitive content because they guide the addressee through the steps of a procedure. These sequences are (1), (4) and (6):

(1) *Saca el disco duro, pinchalo en otro PC como esclavo y le haces un chkdisk X: /r*

(4) *Ya que tienes el disco pinchado en otro PC le sacas la info que necesitas y la guardas en un disco extraible o donde quieras.*

<sup>117</sup> These colours will be applied in the analysis of the explanatory sequences in the entire corpus.

(6)... para reparar la instalación debes hacerlo con el CD bootable de instalación de Windows, no el de la placa base.

The main explanatory part, the practical explanation of the different ways a user can recover the information from a damaged computer is completed with meta-explanations that form the background comment whose function is to specify the different details the locutor considers important for the process he/she describes. Meta-explanations are explanations that refer to some punctual aspects in the main explanatory core. For example, (2) is a meta-explanation that brings more details for a special command mentioned by the main explanation (1) “chkdsk X: /r”, more precisely it refers to “X:”

(2)( donde esta la X debes poner la letra de la unidad del disco averiado).

The main explanation (1) is related to another meta-explanation. (3) specifies the fact that the procedure described in (1) can be applied, but by using a different method:

(3) Esto tambien lo puedes hacer si arrancas el PC desde un LiveCD

The meta-explanations are either marked with an asterisk or they are written in parenthesis, both of which mark graphically that they represent only a background explanation completely dependent on the main explanations. The meta-explanations in our example are addressee-oriented and transmit instructions whose cognitive content is practical.

Example [Es14: 3470-3478] lacks the *opening* and *closing* sequences but it presents a very strict textual organisation that is easy to understand and to follow.

### 7.2.3 Explanation on French Forums

The explanatory sequence in the French corpus is represented at the level of the act of speech by different discursive strategies. The following analysis of the French web forum discussions aims to describe the structures of the explanatory sequences. At the beginning we will draw up an inventory of the introductory strategies chosen by the locutors, then we will move on to the analysis of the *systematic explanations*, and we will finish by categorising the different *punctual explanations* that have been identified in the French corpus.

### 7.2.3.1 Clarifying Introduction of Explanations

The introductory strategies signal that the content of the communication they introduce is important for the addressee to a certain degree. The strategy the locutor chooses to introduce an explanation is relevant for his/her intentions. Furthermore, the way he/she constructs the discourse is relevant for the communicational behaviour and for the discursive production in a specific culture.

In the French corpus many introductory strategies can be observed. For example, an explanation may be introduced *ex abrupto*, like in sequence [Frr6: 1475-1481]. Here, the locutor introduces the explanation through a conclusive mark. He also mentions directly that the following communicational content has an explanatory goal:

[Frr6: 1475-1481] Alors **petite explication** :

An explanation can be introduced by an *opening discursive marker*, such as “voilà”, and completed by the evaluation of the information it carries:

[Frr7 , 1949-1952] **voilà** un autre site que je vien tout juste de trouver rempli de pub **mais bon...**

Other introductory strategies are manifestly interactional, as in [Frr7: 1684-1689]. Here the locutor refers to a previous verbal intervention and he/she introduces the new explanation as a rhetorical question which confers to his/her intervention a more dialogue-like aspect due to the interaction and spontaneity it involves:

[Frr7 : 1684-1689] **Qu'est-ce que tu racontes**, c'est marqué sur le lien que je t'ai donné :

Moreover, an explanation can be introduced in order to correct the information transmitted in a previous intervention. In [Frr16: 4987-4989] the locutor uses an ‘*expression figée*’ in French in order to introduce a *reparatory intervention*<sup>118</sup>, which retracts the cognitive content of the previous intervention and aims to replace it with the correct cognitive content:

[Frr16 : 4987-4989] **que nenni mon ami ...**

In addition to negating the previous intervention, the use of the expression “que nenni mon ami” also involves a certain level of familiarity between the collocutors and defines the relation between the participants in the written dialogue.

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<sup>118</sup> We regard as a *reparatory explanation* every explanatory sequence that corrects a previous *explanatory sequence* considered incorrect by its enunciator.

Sometimes, the introductory strategies also provide important information about how the locutor conceives the explanation he/she provides. For example, in the French corpus the explanation is intended to be clear and effective. Consequently, there are very few expressions of imprecision. We found only one occurrence, in [Fr18: 5593-5560], which introduces a suite of instructions with the verb *essayer* which involves semantically the idea of imprecision:

[Fr18 : 5593-5560] Sous IE7, **essaye** ceci :

The rest of the introductory strategies are constructed as *expressions of action*. The introductory strategy can be in this case a noun, as in [Fr14: 4140-4142], where the explanation is very impersonally introduced by the word “manip”, short for “manipulation” in French, which designates a “procedure” in the computer language :

[Fr14: 4140-4142] **Manip:**

Through this introductory strategy the locutor orients the entire communication to the topic of the discussion and avoids the social/interactional dimension of the web forum communication.

Other introductory strategies are evidently action-oriented. They take the form of a command, like in [Fr 7, 2075-2081], because of the use of the imperative form of the verb “faire”. “Ceci” in this enunciation sums up the explanation it introduces:

[Fr 7, 2075-2081] **Fais ceci :**

Other introductory strategies are goal-oriented, as in [Fr14: 4212] and [Fr18: 5509]. The expressions “pour ce faire” and “pour cela” generally introduce an instructional sequence. They determine a goal-oriented communication, for they don’t involve explicitly the participants in the interaction:

[Fr14: 4212] Pour ce faire ...

[Fr18: 5509] pour cela ...

The explanation can also be conceived as a “solution” and presented as an alternative to a previous explanation. Even if it is expressed impersonally, this strategy brings interactivity to the knowledge communication:

[Fr15 : 4704] **AUtre solution:**

In some cases the introductory strategies only suggest that the text they introduce is an explanation without mentioning it explicitly. These indirect mentions of the explanatory process are realised by expressions like “make things clear” or “in order to know”. In [Fr15: 4644-4649], the

explanation is conceived as a discursive mechanism for cognitive disambiguation:

[Fr15: 4644-4649] On va **éclaircir les choses** :

In [Fr12: 3701-3704], the introductory strategy conceives the explanation as a source of knowledge:

[Fr12: 3701-3704] Alors **pour le savoir** ...

As one can notice, the introductory strategies in the French corpus are constructed in order to introduce practical and theoretical cognitive content with a high level of precision. This makes the web forum an effective place for interchanging and constructing knowledge through communicative interaction.

### 7.2.3.2 Definitions and Other Types of Explanations

The results yielded by our previous analysis show that a *systematic explanation* is formed by different interrelated *explanatory sequences*. These simple explanatory structures can carry information on the *notions/actions/procedures* and *reasons* for a phenomenon's occurrence. In what follows we will analyse their presence and variety in the French corpus.

*a. Concept-oriented explanations:* In the French corpus the explanation of a notion can be very complex, like in [Fr11: 3420-3424], where the locutor gives different definitions of the operative system Windows and its versions:

[Fr11 : 3420-3424] Pour l'instant Vista n'est pas vraiment abouti

(1)Vista en fait est un système d'exploitation qui permettra de faire la transition entre XP et windows seven qui sortira en 2009/2010

Il ont sorti Vista pour pas que le temps d'ecart entre XP et Seven soit trop grand (2)(XP = 2002 / Seven = 2010)

Je te conseille de prendre XP, (3)il sera plus stable que Vista pour travailler, pour faire tourner tes applications et tes jeux 😊

Example [Fr11: 3420-3424] consists of three definitions, numbered from (1) to (3). They refer to the same notion but in different manners. The first definition (1) “Vista en fait est un **système d'exploitation...**” explains *what a notion is*. It is a *real definition* by *proximate genus* and *diferentia*. The *definiendum* “Vista” is defined as belonging to the



general class of “système d'exploitation” and it is individualised within the class by *diferentia*: “transition entre XP et windows seven...”

The second definition, (2), establishes a mathematical relation of equivalence between the object and its position within the class of objects. The locutor establishes a chronological relation between the different objects of the same class in order to differentiate them. Fragment (2) represents a definitory aspect for both of the objects mentioned in this sequence: “(XP = 2002 / Seven = 2010)”. In this definitory sequence the verb TO BE is replaced by the mathematical operator of equivalence “=” but it conserves the same structure: **A is/= B**.

Fragment (3) has the same *definiendum*, “système d’operation”, but this time it is defined by a *descriptive definition* that highlights the unessential attributes of the *definiendum*. The locutor contrasts the objects Windows XP and Windows Vista. He/she appreciates that “[XP] il sera plus **stable** que Vista **pour travailler, pour faire tourner tes applications et tes jeux**”.

In conclusion, [Fr11: 3420-3424] is a complex definitory intervention formed by a series of definitions. As one can observe, the object is defined sequentially, first by explaining *what the object is*, then explaining *when it was created*, and last by describing its attributes. This makes [Fr11: 3420-3424] a complex concept-oriented definitory discursive structure.

Complex definitions of the notions are generally used in the French corpus and [Fr13:4087-4090] is another example of how complex the explanation of a notion can be in French. Indirectly, this perseverance of the French users in the web forum discussions to explain correctly and completely a notion suggests that the notion is regarded as an essential aspect of the explanatory process:

[Fr13 :4087-4090] (1)Acer, c'est le **low cost** de l'informatique. (2)Du matos **cheap**, livré avec un faux système d'exploitation (3)(ce n'est pas un **windows standard** tel qu'on peut l'acheter en boîte mais (4)une version **modifiée** et plus **bugguée**, (5) **non standardisée**).

Example [Fr13:4087-4090] consists of a suite of five definitions concerning an Acer computer and its operating system. The locutor begins by explaining the type of computer where this system of operation is installed. He/she needs in [Fr13:4087-4090] no more than five definitions to make his/her point clear. The first two definitions, (1) and (2), refer to the Acer computer, while definitions (3), (4) and (5) refer to the operating system installed on it.

Definitions (1) and (2) are complementary descriptive definitions highlighting one of the attributes of the same *definiendum*: “Acer, c'est le low cost de l'informatique.” is a neutral definition rephrased in a familiar register by (2): “Du matos cheap”. One should note the presence of the ‘anglicismes’ “low cost” and “cheap” and the familiar French word

“matos” which stands for “materiel”, the French equivalent for “hardware”. Definitions (1) and (2) are completely independent *definiens* of the same *definiendum*. The recurrence of the definition points out the emphasis on a certain aspect of the communication. Here the locutor insists on an attribute of the object he/she describes and regards as important for the explanation.

Definitions (4) and (5) are *real descriptive definitions* that refer to the notion “faux système d'exploitation” and point out every attribute of the *definiendum*. Fragment (3) represents a *definition by negation*: “ce n'est pas un **windows standard** tel qu'on peut **l'acheter en boîte**”. The locutor is saying *what a notion is not*. This first explanatory approach is completed by a common definition explaining *what a notion is*: “... une **version modifiée et plus bugguée**”. Definitions (4) and (5) require that the addressee should be familiar with specialised terms like “bugguée” (an adapted form of the English “bugged”). In order to be sure that the explanation is effective, the locutor rephrases it in (5) by using a more accessible term: “non standardisée”.

Another discursive strategy used to explain a *definiendum* is to describe its functions, like in [Fr7: 2268]. Here the locutor explains the use of a button on the web forum in terms of “exister”. The definition has the following form: **A “exists for”<sup>119</sup> B**, where the **A** stands for the name of the notion, “exists for” is the operator that defines the relation between **A** and **B**, and **B** represents the definitory function of **A**.

[Fr7 : 2268] Evites les doubles posts stp, **le bouton "Editer" existe pour corriger une phrase ou bien ajouter une phrase**, merci

Quite frequently on the French forum the locutor chooses to define a notion in terms of goals or functions. When the locutor insists on describing *what a object does*, he/she chooses different manners to express it. Some of the expressions he/she uses are modalities like “is necessary” in [Fr14: 4273-4274]. Here the locutor defines the file “boot.ini” in terms of its function – “lancer le démarrage de Windows”:

[Fr14 : 4273-4274] Oui, **le boot.ini est nécessaire** justement pour lancer le démarrage de windows.

Sans lui, pas étonnant que ça ne démarre pas.

As we have already noted, a very typical explanatory strategy used in the French corpus in order to explain concepts/objects is to create series of *complementary definitions*. This works like a contrastive definition and consists of a *definition by negation* that usually refers to the content of the previous speaker's intervention with a clear corrective

<sup>119</sup> In this pattern “exists for” represents the literally translation of “existe pour”.

intention, followed by a second part which is a simple *real definition* meant to bring the correct information on the topic.

One can notice in the following examples that the order of the definitions within a series is not strict. Thus, sometimes, the *real definition* precedes the *definition by negation*, like in [Fr10: 3245] and [Fr15: 4743-4744]:

[Fr10 : 3245] **ça c 'est** un touch pad, **pas** une souris

[Fr15 : 4743-4744] que **photoshop et un log professionnel qui n'est pas destiné** a monsieur tout le monde si l'utilisateur lambda utilise deja 5% de photoshop c'est deja bien 🍷

Other times, the *definition by negation* precedes the *real definition*, like in [Fr9:3065] and [Fr18:5551]:

[Fr9 : 3065] Ccleaner **n'est pas** un anti-spy, **c'est** un nettoyeur.

[Fr18 :5501] yon code image **n'est pas bon c'est sa**

**Code:**

[img=http://img353.imageshack.us/img353/1276/01uu7.th.jpg[/img]

Nevertheless, the series of definitions represent an element characteristic of the strategies of knowledge communication on the French web forums. Its structure increases the level of orality and interactivity of the communication on the web forums.

*b. Explaining actions/procedures:* The description of the actions a user must follow in order to solve a technical problem represents an important mechanism of knowledge communication on the web forums. Many discursive strategies are used by the participants in these interactions in order to better explain step by step a suit of actions. In [Fr4: 994-999], the locutor explains to the collocutor how to open an image with the program XnView.

[Fr4 : 994-999] Fait un copier/coller de ton image (pour garder l'originale) juste à coté de l'autre.  
télécharge XnView et installe le normalement sur ton poste de travail.  
Après tu l'ouvres en cliquant sur l'icône ; dans l'arborescence à gauche cherche le dossier ou est ta photo ; une fois trouvé tu clique dessus et il apparait en bas sous forme de vignette dans la barre grise.  
Maintenant dans la barre d'outils en haut tu clique sur : **Outils/Convertir**, dans la fenêtre qui apparait a la ligne **Format** tu déroule et choisi la 1° **BMP Windows Bitmap** ; et tu clique sur **Lancer** en bas à gauche. 🗑️  
Pour finir tu ouvres la nouvelle image [/b]

As one can observe, the majority of verbs in [Fr4: 994-999] are imperative verbal forms. The actions they point to are related to the semantic field of informatics and computer science: *télécharger, installer, ouvrir, chercher, cliquer* et *dérouler*. The discursive organisation of the explanatory sequence is realised with the help of different markers: *après, une fois trouvé, maintenant*, and *pour finir*. These markers organise the information in order to construct a logical progression of the different steps of the procedure.

Other explanatory strategies avoid completely the discursive organisation of the information and prefer a visual organisation of the text (*list of actions*). The explanation is reduced to a minimum and is topic-oriented. It is intended to be objective, effective and impersonal. Many of the explanatory sequences in the French corpus are organised in this form. Its generalised use in the specialised web forum communication is due to the fact that this explanatory sequence is very easy to understand and to follow.

Example [Fr 7, 2075-2081] is illustrative:

[Fr 7, 2075-2081] **Fais** ceci :

**Démarrer**

Exécuter

**Tapes** msconfig

Ok

**Onglet "Démarrage"**

Et tu **postes** une ou plusieurs capture(s) d'écran(s) de sorte qu'on voit toute la liste

It is obvious that this is only a punctual explanatory structure, for the explanation is not complete. This sequence describes only a part of a procedure that has to be continued after the locutor has accomplished the steps already described. It is also interesting to observe that the verbal constructions in this communication are sometimes imperatives: *faire, taper*, and *poster*, and other times elliptic constructions, as in "Démarrer" where the collocutor has to understand "tu fais clic sur Démarrer", or in "Onglet Démarrage" where the collocutor has to understand "déplacement et clic sur l'onglet Démarrage".

Sometimes the locutor may choose a twofold organisation for his/her discourse: visual and discursive. Thus, in [Fr10: 3210-2316] one can notice a doubly organised explanatory sequence. The instructions form a list where every instruction is positioned as a separate entry, which makes them easily distinguishable visually. Besides this organisation, a discursive organisation is also present. It structures the explanation internally and brings cohesion and logic to the text.

[Fr10 : 3210-2316] **si** ta souris ne fonctionne plus, ( tout simplement les piles peut etre.. si sans fil)

**dans ce cas**, change les piles

**autres cas:** change de souris  
**et ensuite** tu redemarre sur " derniere bonne configuration connue"  
**voir avant meme :** "Démarrer windows normalement "  
 pour essai ...

The same structure can be observed in explanatory sequences [Fr12: 3701-3704], [Fr14: 4140-4142] and [Fr18: 5593-5560]. The three examples also confirm our previous claim concerning the generalised use of the imperative forms in the explanation of a procedure in French.

If the advantage of such schematic explanation is the easy understanding of the topic, the disadvantage is that the explanation is superficial, without details or auxiliary information. This makes the discursive strategy illustrated above suitable for the communication of practical/applied knowledge.

A more developed discursive strategy consists in the presentation of the instructions accompanied by comments. The visual organisation of the text disappears and the discourse is more extended and heterogeneous.

[Fr1: 151-152] is an example of such an intervention. As one can observe, there are three explanatory sequences here: (1) and (3) are instructions while (2) explains the reasons for (1) and is logically related to the first instruction. The discourse is addressee-oriented and it displays different deictic occurrences, such as “ton”, “te”, and “me”, which makes the discourse more personal and more interactive:

[Fr1: 151-152] (1)Désinstalle le driver de **ton** chipset graphique (2)ainsi ça va bousculer automatiquement en VGA de base (800x600 il me semble), il **te** restera simplement à (3)réinstaller **ton** driver !

As in the previous example, in [Fr3 : 535-537] the instructions are very general in character. Actually, they are mere denomination of the procedures the addressee must follow, such as: “formatage de bas niveau”, “installation de Windows”, “faire deux partitions”, etc. The same addressee-oriented discourse can be noted here with its numerous deictic occurrences:

[Fr3: 535-537] **tu** fais **ton** formatage bas niveau [...] lors de l'installation de Windows **tu** choisi de faire deux partition, **tu** choisi une lettre pour chaque et c'est tout. le CD de la carte mère **tu** le lance depuis **ton** lecteur ; en premier ; avant d'installer autre chose.

In what concerns the cognitive content, examples [Fr1: 151-152] and [Fr3: 535-537] are general explanations showing that the locutor considers the addressee to have already minimal background knowledge in the computer field. The locutor only names the actions the addressee

must follow without giving any detail on how to perform them, suggesting that the addressee needs a specialised background in order to understand and follow these instructions.

Different sequences of instructions use modality. However, modalisation is not a frequent phenomenon in the French corpus and when it does occur it is related to addressee-oriented expressions of obligation and/or duty such as “tu dois”, or impersonal expressions such as “il faut”. In the case of [Fr3:414-415], the modalisation involves directly the participants in the dialogue and orients the discourse to the addressee:

[Fr3:414-415] si tu change ta carte-mère, **tu dois** installer les pilotes qui vont avec (le CD), puis ceux de la carte graphique.

Ensuite ce fait l'installation de Windows.

In the case of “il faut”, the modalisation only involves the idea of obligation in a more formal, objective and distant manner:

[Fr7: 1840] ...

**Il faut** que tu ouvres Paint pour coller ta capture :

Démarrer

Programmes

Accessoires

Paint ...

In order to avoid the unnecessary repetition of the same information, the locutor introduces in his/her discourse, as a complementary element to his/her instructions, different types of references. These references are represented by links to different other web pages related to the topic of discussion and their function can be only *referential* (the majority of the cases) or *explanatory*, if they work as knowledge source for the explanatory sequence where they appear. For example, in [Fr7: 2190-2194] the locutor explains how to fix the IE6 program. The references the locutor introduces in this discourse have different functions. The function of the first link (1) is *referential*. It informs the addressee where the program can be downloaded. The locutor's instructions are continued by the reference he/she gives to the addressee in (2) in order to avoid the repetition of already existing information :

[Fr7 : 2190-2194]

Le fichier d'installation qui s'appelle ie6setup, il est bien sur ton bureau ? car il ne faut pas l'exécuter à partir du site

Sinon tu peux essayer avec Power IE6

(1)<http://www.technicland.com/powerie6.php3>

Télécharge-le et installe-le

Essaye de réparer IE6 comme indiqué ici :

(2)<http://www.technicland.com/doc/reparationinternetexplorer.htm>

A more detailed analysis on the presence and the variation of the references in the explanatory sequences will be presented in the following section of this chapter.

*The description of an action* is yet another manner of clarifying concepts or explaining a procedure. In this case the instructions form part of a more extended descriptive sequence, as in [Fr13: 3882-3885] where the locutor refers to the intervention of a previous speaker “comme dit bilifly” and alternates the instructions (1) and (3) with descriptive sequences where the locutor explains what the computer does, like in (2) and (4). The explanation ends with (5), a clarification of the content of sequence (4):

[Fr13 : 3882-3885] comme dit bilifly (1)tu doit dabord sauvegarder toutes données importante sur un cd/dvd puis ensuite tu met ton cd de restauration dans le lecteur cd et tu redemarre l'ordi.  
 (2)Au redemarrage l'ordi va booter(demarrer)sur le cd puis il va te demander si tu veu réinstaller le systeme!  
 (3)Si tu dit oui (4)le systeme de restauration(du cd) va formater le disque dur et reinstaller tout d'origine.(5)(comme au premier jour ou tu as eu ton ordi).

In some cases, the explanatory sequences are very complex and extended, as in [Fr9: 2729-2747] where the locutor explains the different computer programs and procedures the addressee must execute in order to optimise his/her system. Basically, this extended explanatory intervention is formed by 6 sequences of instructions describing different actions.

[Fr9 : 2729-2747] tu as téléchargée JKdefrag sous forme d'archive compressé ?  
 (1)tu l'ouvre avec WinRAR ou Winzip par exemple, et tu clic (2)(dans le dossier qui c'est créé) sur l'icône JKDefrag ; et tu attend la fin de la défragmentation.  
 Pour BootVis tu l'utilise comme ceci :  
 (3)Une fois le logiciel téléchargé et décompressé, exécute-le.  
 Lance l'analyse de ton système via le menu :  
 Trace, Next Boot + Drivers delays.  
 Le programme va redémarrer ton ordinateur.  
 (4)Exécute de nouveau Bootvis afin d'afficher les résultats de l'analyse.  
 Tu vois alors combien de temps met ton PC à démarrer,  
 l'utilisation du processeur, du disque dur, etc...  
 (5)Cliquez sur le menu :  
 Trace  
 puis sur :  
 Optimize System  
 pour débiter l'optimisation. Ton système redémarre de nouveau.  
 Une petite fenêtre s'affiche t' indiquant que la procédure d'optimisation est en cours.

Cela peut durer quelques minutes. Le démarrage de Windows est alors optimisé !  
 Pour finir tu utiliseras aussi EasyCleaner, (6)lance le et clic **UNIQUEMENT** sur la cage **Registre---**>**Trouver---**>**Supprime tout---**  
 >**Fermer**  
 Après ce traitement, ton pc devrais démarrer plus rapidement 🍀

The optimisation of a computer is a complex problem. As one can notice in [Fr9: 2729-2747], in order to explain the entire procedure the locutor needs to organise the information very strictly. The discursive organisation the locutor chooses in this case is to mention from the beginning the name of every program the addressee must execute: JKdefrag, Bootvis, and EasyCleaner. After every name is referred to, he/she introduces a detailed explanatory sequence of instructions: (1), (3), (4), (5), and (6). When necessary, as in the case of explanatory sequence (2), he/she introduces an additional meta-explanation in order to lend more precision to the cognitive content. These sequences are interrupted by descriptions meant to be reference points and to guide the addressee. The closing of the explanation tries to reassure the addressee of the efficiency of the procedure he must apply. Nevertheless, the modalisation in “devrais” (*should*) and the use of its conditional form introduce a slight idea of probability: “Après ce traitement, ton pc **devrais** démarrer plus rapidement”.

Actually, the expressions of imprecision are very rare in the French web forum communication. They are usually introduced through modalisation, as in the example above, [Fr9: 2729-2747], or by certain verbal constructions that involve the imprecision semantically, such as the verb “se souvenir de” or structures like “ça doit + vb. inf.”. Fragment [Fr18: 5710] represents an illustrative example of this situation. Its opening is an expression of imprecision: “Si he me souviens bien...”, which determines the modalisation of the entire text. Consequently, the first instruction is modalised as possibility “tu peux faire”, while the closing of the explanatory sequence is structured as an expression of probability: “ça doit marcher”. The use of modalisation confirms the idea of imprecision introduced by the locutor in his/her discourse since the beginning:

[Fr18: 5710] **Si je me souviens bien**, tu **peux faire** le click droit un peu n'importe où mais dans la barre supérieure avec "lecture en cours", etc. **ça doit marcher**.

Orality in the communication on the French web forum has three sources: *interactivity* (conversational markers), *subjectivity* (personal involvement), and *familiarity* (the use of a familiar register).

The *personal involvement*, not frequent in knowledge communication in French, consists in verbal constructions intended to persuade the addressee that the procedures he/she must follow present a low level of difficulty. For example, in [Fr14: 4199-4206] the locutor



insists on the simplicity of the procedure he/she explains, showing concern for the addressee and trying to encourage him/her.

[Fr14 : 4199-4206] Si tu as en ta possession le cd d'instal d'Xp, (1)**c'est extrêmement simple.**

(2)**Il te suffit** de faire une réparation de windows, (3)**pas besoin de s'embeter** a essayer de régler le problème en lignes de commande !

Pour ce faire

>> Tu bootes le pc sur le cd

>> Une fois le cd chargé, tu tapes entrée pour installer windows

>> Sur l'écran suivant, tu tapes R pour lancer la réparation  
La réparation se lance alors, (4)**tout se fait tout seul**, le pc va redémarrer et tu pourra de nouveau accéder à ta session.

(5)**Jettes un oeil Ici la manip' est détaillée en images.**

Different expressions of evaluation are recurrent in this explanatory discourse. The first of them, (1) “c'est extrêmement simple”, a superlative, is meant to make it clear from the beginning that even if the explanation is long and complex, there are no complications. The entire intervention of the locutor is addressee-oriented and conceived with a special focus on the addressee's state of mind. Fragment (2) “il te suffit de...” is intended to assure that with a minimum of action by the addressee the problem can be solved. Fragment (2) is complemented by (3): “pas besoin de s'embeter...”, whose intention is to convince the addressee that in this context a simple solution is sufficient. After a few more instructions, the locutor assures once again the addressee of the simplicity of the procedure he has to follow: (4) “tout se fait tout seul”. The locutor also provides a supplementary source of information in (5) as well as making an evaluation of the informational source insisting on the accuracy and effectiveness of the presentation: “**la manip' est détaillée en images**”.

Orality in the French web forum discussions is also created by the use of a *familiar register* and by the presence of different *conversational markers*. They bring the specific spontaneity and interactivity of face-to-face communication to the written discourse. In examples [Fr7: 1810] and [Fr15:4705] the conversational markers that can be observed are: “donc” and “bien évidemment”. The first of these markers, “donc” introduces a comment on the intervention of the previous speaker. “Bien évidemment” is a conversational marker that introduces supplementary information in the locutor's discourse, a supplementary comment meant to bring more information on what he/she explains:

[Fr7: 1810] **Donc**, si tu a le même **truc** que moi **bah** tu fait alt+ctrl+suppr puis tu regarde la zone rouge de mon image et tu double clic la dessus ;) **Bien évidemment** tu ne clic pas sur mon image -\_- mais sur ton "alt+ctrl+suppr"

[Fr15: 4705] la premeirer solution reste la meilleure, tu appel window et tu leur dis que tu as grillé te carte mère, et que tu réinstalle tout, et **zou, en avant Guinguan!**

Another characteristic of face-to-face conversation that can be observed in the web forum discourse in French is the presence of interjections. While useless in a written communication, they *are* present in web forum discourse. The use of some of them, such as “bah”<sup>120</sup>, “zou”<sup>121</sup>, and “en avant Guingan!” can be observed in [Fr7: 1810] and [Fr15: 4705]. They bring suprasegmental information on the attitude of the locutor in relation to the topic of discussion. “Bah”, for example, introduces in [Fr7: 1810] the idea of an easy solution to the problem the addressee faces. With “zou”, in [Fr15: 4705], the locutor illustrates the simplicity and swiftness of the procedure he/she describes. This idea is emphasised by the expression of encouragement “en avant Guingan!” which has the same emphatic function as “zou”. Communication on the French web forum is constantly related to the real context of the communication: the computer. Quite frequently, the participants in the discussions request screen captures in order to give an effective solution to the technical problem presented by the locutor. Sometimes, the instructions are not textual, or not only textual. They can be accompanied by screen captures which become *visual instructions*.

An illustrative example of an explanatory intervention which involves visual instructions is [Fr18: 5510-5516]. The function of the visual instructions is to back the textual explanation. The textual explanation is organised as a list of instructions. Inside this list, the locutor introduces two explanatory images. In order to give coherence to the heterogeneous cognitive content, the locutor uses introductory strategies: “comme ici” or “ainsi”, like in the case of explanations. This makes the visual and the textual components of the message cohere.

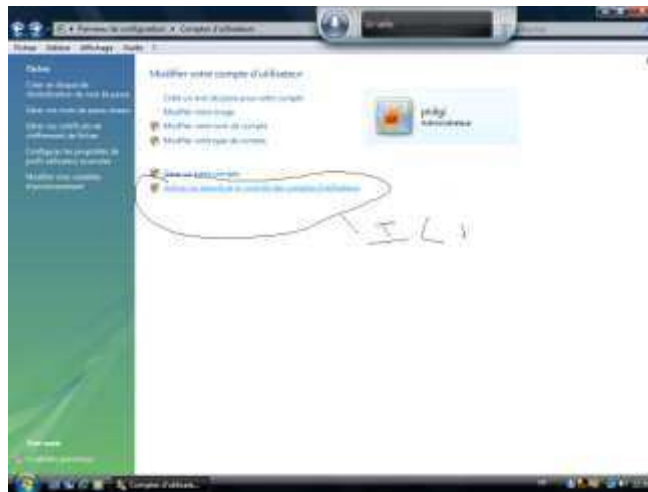
It is interesting to observe that the locutor includes his/her own instructions (see below “ici” and “décocher”) on the screen capture in order to better relate the visual element to the action.

[Fr18: 5510-5516] ...  
demarrer  
panneau configuration  
comptes utilisateurs et protections des utilisateurs  
dans l ecran qui va suivre tu fais:  
comptes utilisateurs

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/bah> - *Fam.* Exprime, suivant la nature du ton, l'étonnement mêlé de doute, l'absence de surprise ou de désappointement; ou au contraire, et le plus souvent, l'indifférence ou l'insouciance.

<sup>121</sup> <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/zou> - *Fam.* (surtout dans le sud de la France). [Pour marquer une invitation à agir, à se dépêcher, à quitter les lieux; pour exprimer la soudaineté d'un procès] *Donnez-moi un coup de cachemire et débarrassez-moi de ces œufs. Portez-moi ça au lointain. Zou!* (Courteline, *Conv. Alceste*, Mentons bleus, 1906, p. 172). Voir aussi – Larousse et Petit Robert.

"activer ou desactiver le controle des comptes utilisateurs"  
comme ici



forcement L UAC se declenche!!!

clic sur continuer

ensuite:

deselectionne l option 'utiliser le controle des comptes  
pour vous aider a proteger votre ordinateur'

ainsi:



c. *Explaining Reasons*: The transmission of the theoretical knowledge is related to the explanation of the reasons for an event/process. This category of explanations, in the specialised forum discussion, relate the concepts and the procedures therein. *Expressions of probability/certainty (epistemic modalities)*: The way the locutor chooses to structure an explanation may also involve collateral information, such as how important the locutor considers the information to be, how confident the locutor is in his/her expertise, and if the locutor considers that the solution he/she gives is effective or not. Explaining the reasons for a phenomenon someone describes in a complex context such as the computer science field, makes the locutor prudent. It is no surprise that in these explanatory sequences one can note expressions of imprecision. In the French forum discussion these expressions of imprecision are not so frequent and contrary to what someone may expect, expressions of

certainty and confidence in the effectiveness of the cognitive content of the text are recurrent. In what follows we will analyse both aspects of the explanatory sequence.

Sequence [Fr1:30-32] is introduced by an expression of probability: “apparemment” and the possible reason that generated the phenomenon described by the previous speaker:

[Fr1:30-32] **Apparemment** tu as appliqué une résolution très grande pour te retrouver avec une image super petite 😊  
...

In other situations, like in [Fr10: 3210-2316], the locutor rephrases the topic of the discussion as a conditional clause: “si ta souris ne fonctionne plus”, and introduces the explanation as a probability by “peut-être” (epistemic modality marker). The second conditional clause “si sans fil” gives reason for the use of probability in this explanation: lack of information on the topic. It is obvious that the previous speaker forgot to mention the type of mouse he has. Consequently, the collocutor can’t provide an adequate explanation:

[Fr10 : 3210-2316] si ta souris ne fonctionne plus, ( **tout simplement** les piles **peut etre..** si sans fil)

A similar discursive construction of an imprecise explanatory text is introduced in [Fr5: 1125] by the familiar expression “ça se trouve que ...”, a version of “peut-être”:

[Fr5: 1125] et j'aimerais savoir quel logiciel tu veux installer ? **ça se trouve que** c'est le logiciel qui bug !

The archetypical explanatory sequence, introduced by “parce que”, can be observed in fragment [Fr8: 2434-2435]. The presence of the expressions of probability is also visible: “c’est un peu ambigu” as accentuated by the use of modalisation in the second sentence of the intervention: “ne devrait être utilisé que...”. These expressions give the explanation a touch of imprecision:

[Fr8 : 2434-2435] Dans ce cas, **c'est un peu ambigu** parce qu'effectivement tu as une licence d'utilisation pour chaque PC. Mais d'un autre côté, un CD OEM **ne devrait être utilisé que** sur la machine à laquelle elle est destinée.

*Expressions of self-confidence* accompany the explanation of the reasons for an event on the French web forum. They are intended to reassure the addressee that nothing wrong will happen and that the event the latter describes is quite common, like in [Fr6 : 1309]:

[Fr6: 1309] Si sur ton ordi tu possèdes plusieurs sessions d'XP, **c'est normal**, il nettoie que les fichiers temporaires de la session actuelle 😊

A similar construction can be observed in [Fr9: 3019-3020], where the locutor informs the addressee about an automatic feature of the operating system. The exclamation “pas grave!” is an addressee-oriented expression of reassurance :

[Fr9: 3019-3020] Si tu n'as pas fait de point de restauration, **pas grave ! Windows le fait tout seul !**

In [Fr5:1087] we can observe an explanation whose topic is not the computer but the web forum discussion ( which makes it a meta-explanation). The reason for the explanation – “elle a son importance” – is accompanied by a strong expression of certainty: “c’est certainement”, in order to assure the addressee that, even if not evident, there is a good reason behind a certain request expressed by a previous locutor :

[Fr5:1087] ps : si Bili te pose cette question, **c'est certainement** qu'elle a son importance...

The idea of certainty is influenced in [Fr5: 1124-1125] by the presence of “un peu”, which diminishes its effect without, however, introducing the idea of imprecision:

[Fr5: 1124-1125] Tu possèdes un lecteur de CD uniquement ou bien un lecteur DVD ?

Car si tu possèdes un lecteur CD et que tu insères un DVD **c'est un peu normal** qu'il ne se passe rien 😊

These explanatory structures show how important collateral information is and how it may influence the content of the message.

*ii. Explaining cause-effect relations:* The explanation of the reason/cause behind an event/process is expressed in the French web forum discussions through causal clauses. The expression of the cause in the French forum is introduced, with few exceptions, by “car”, as in [Fr6: 1238-1240] and [Fr9: 2961-2962], or “mais” in [Fr9: 3146]:

[Fr6: 1238-1240] Tes lunettes sont couvertes de buées ? 😊

**Car** il ne s'agit pas de Spybot mais de CCleaner, deux logiciels différents, le premier qui est un anti-spyware et l'autre un logiciel pour effacer des fichiers temporaires et clefs du registre obsolètes ...

[Fr9: 2961-2962] Oui rebranche Kaspersky et fait une analyse complète, **car** il n'ai jamais bon de rester sans protection !

[Fr9: 3146] Désolé si je n'ai pas répondu plus tôt, **mais** j'ai attrapé une bronchite et je viens de passer un sale moment



Sometimes, the explanation is implicit, given the absence of the introductory conjunction, as in [Fr11: 3465], where the receiver of the message has to understand the explanation as follows: “[car] Vista fait payer trop cher ... ses effets graphiques”:

[Fr11: 3465] +1 pour XP, **VISTA fait payer trop cher** (en prix et en ressource) **ses effets graphiques** 🤖

Concerning the explanation of the reasons behind a process or an event on the web forum, we have to mention that the prototypical explanatory sequence introduced by *parce que* is almost absent in the French corpus (only 5 occurrences in 200 pages). The evidence supports our claim that in web forum communication a different expression of the *cause-effect* relation is preferred.

### 7.2.3.3 Sporadic Meta-Explanations

When a locutor explains, he/she mentally disseminates a specific cognitive content which he/she has organised discursively. Sometimes the topic of the explanation is complex, and supplementary information is added during the process of knowledge communication. The locutor inserts the extra information as digressions, usually in parenthesis. These digressions are related to the topic of the explanation or to its collateral aspects. They work as an explanation for the explanation. In [Fr11: 3465], for example, the entire fragment represents the explanation of the reason why the locutor prefers the operating system Windows XP: “... VISTA fait payer trop cher [...] ses effets graphiques.” The locutor, who wants to avoid ambiguities in communication and be more precise, explains that there are two aspects of “trop cher” he refers to. In order to do this, he inserts a meta-explanation: “en prix et en ressources”. The meta-explanation clarifies that “trop cher” refers to a financial aspect (financial resources) as well as to a technical aspect (hardware resources):

[Fr11: 3465] +1 pour XP, **VISTA fait payer trop cher** (en prix et en ressource) **ses effets graphiques** 🤖

Complex explanatory sequences can have more than one meta-explanation. An illustrative example is [Fr15: 4683-4687]. Here the locutor explains that he has no intention to “faire un cours sur les OS” for the addressee. The first meta-explanation gives details about the reasons for his/her denial. As one can notice, there are two meta-explanations enclosed in the first parenthesis, marked as (1) and (2):

[Fr15: 4683-4687] A part ça je vais pas te faire un cours sur les OS alternatifs **((1)trop long, et (2)de nombreux sites le font déjà très bien)** mais les Mac font tourner OSX et windows à la fois donc les jeux ne sont plus un problème pour eux **(3)(même s'il faut redémarrer pour passer de l'un à l'autre) ...**

Meta-explanation (3) details an aspect of the main explanation of the locutor for the way Mac computers work with two operating systems. The meta-explanation clarifies a particular aspect of this procedure: “... il faut redémarrer pour passer de l’un à l’autre”.

As one can notice, the meta-explanation has a complex structure in the French corpus and is an important mechanism in the knowledge communication.

### 7.2.3.4 References and Quotations

References and quotations are frequently used in the web forum communication in French. They are a mechanism of knowledge transmission that permits the locutor to reinforce with supplementary information the knowledge he/she transmits, the addressee to evaluate the effectiveness of the information provided by the locutor, and finally, the locutor to re-use information already existing in Internet.

In the French corpus one can observe the recurrent use of the references (links) with explanatory functions. Some of them are explicit, as in [Fr7: 1780-1781], where the locutor introduces a link explaining its content:

[Fr7: 1780-1781] **Pour faire une capture d'écran :**  
<http://www.pcpardise.fr/Forum-informatique/astuces-windows-t873.html#10310>

Other references have an implicit content, as in [Fr14: 4206]:

[Fr14: 4206] Jettes un oeil **ici** la manip' est détaillée en images.

A specific aspect of the French corpus is the presence of references accompanied by quotations from the referenced document. In [F11: 3486-3499], the locutor provides two references about the future version of the operating system Windows7<sup>122</sup>:

<sup>122</sup> The topic was discussed in 2008, two years before the release of Windows7.

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows\\_Seven](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_Seven)

and

<http://www.fredcavazza.net/2006/01/24/la-nouvelle-interface-de-windows-vista-ne-serait-qu-une-transition/>

Every reference is followed by quotations containing important information selected by the locutor from the referenced document. The reason for this peculiar use of references and quotations may reside in the fact that the locutor wants to provide some essential information directly and leave it to the addressee to get the rest of the information, if interested. Another explanation can be the fact that the references in www are usually shortlived. They can be updated, modified or deleted anytime.

[F11: 3486-3499] Biensûr

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows\\_Seven](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_Seven)<sup>123</sup>

**Code:**

=> Ben Fathi, le vice-président de la Windows Core Operating System Division, sans donner de détails précis (Microsoft a demandé de ne pas en parler publiquement), a insisté sur le fait que l'écart de cinq années entre la sortie de Windows XP (octobre 2001) et celle de Windows Vista (janvier 2007) était exceptionnel. Un tel écart n'est à priori pas censé se reproduire, et le prochain Windows, quel qu'il soit, est prévu dans une période de deux à trois ans. Windows Vienna est présenté comme une innovation importante, contrairement à Windows Vista qui n'est qu'une transition entre Windows XP et Windows Vienna.

<http://www.fredcavazza.net/2006/01/24/la-nouvelle-interface-de-windows-vista-ne-serait-qu-une-transition/>

**Code:**

Voilà une nouvelle qui me scotche : la nouvelle version de Windows (Vista pour ceux qui étaient sur une autre planète) avec sa nouvelle interface graphique (nom de code Avalon) ne serait en fait qu'une transition vers une prochaine version (Vienna) qui implémentera une interface graphique entièrement repensée (avec la disparition du bouton Démarrer) et enrichie d'effets visuels 3D à couper le souffle (nom de code Aéro).

Nevertheless, the choice of the locutor in structuring the explanation as personal communication (see in the example above the introductory "Biensur") accompanied by references and quotations creates a very complex explanatory discourse which guarantees the effectiveness and the objectivity of the knowledge communication.


<sup>123</sup> This link was edited and now it contains updated information about Windows7. We have recuperated the quotation from another link: <http://medmatiq.xooit.com/t1219-Windows-seven-ou-Vienna.htm>




### 7.2.3.5 Humour in the Explanation

Irony and humour seem to be a constant presence in the web forum communication in French. The participants in interactions habitually make jokes, puns, and funny comments. This aspect of the communication will also affect the knowledge communication and give rise to a peculiar and interesting discursive structure.


In the French corpus a serious explanation such as [Fr6: 1393-1394] can be introduced ironically. Here the locutor chooses a humorous approach in order to explain why executing cleaning programs too often on a computer is not recommendable:

[Fr6: 1393-1394] Trop de nettoyages tuent le nettoyage<sup>124</sup>  



The jokes can take the form of meta-explanations, as in [Fr3: 535-537], where the locutor explains in a serious tone the reinstallation of an operating system: “tu fais ton formatage bas niveau”. The meta-explanation, which has the form of an instruction, represents an indirect way of saying that the operation will take a long time:

[Fr3: 535-537] tu fais ton formatage bas niveau (**ensuite tu loue une vidéo** )

The same structure can be observed in fragment [Fr13: 3938], where a sequence of instructions constitute an ironic meta-explanation. The mechanism of the humour in this case consists in the coherent relation between the main instruction: “un nettoyage dans les clés de registre” and the ironic meta-explanation: “avec un chiffon doux”. In the two sentences the main element is “nettoyage”, a two-meaning word (“register cleaning” and “house cleaning”). It is the use of an element of the “house cleaning” semantic field, “un chiffon doux”, in the “register cleaning” semantic field of computer programming that generates the humour:

[Fr13: 3938] et un nettoyage dans les clés de registre (**avec un chiffon doux** ) , tu l'as fait ?

Other discursive sources of humour in the explanatory process consist in ironic commentaries on the topic of discussion as in [Fr9: 3019-3020]. Here the locutor is in the process of explaining seriously the process of restoration of an operating system, when, after the explanation he/she inserts an ironic comment: “Windows le fait tout seul!”

[Fr9: 3019-3020] Si tu n'as pas fait de point de restauration, pas grave ! Windows le fait tout seul ! **Il faut bien qu'il face qlq chose quand même** ...

<sup>124</sup> Allusion to Chirac statement: “trop d’impôt tue l’impôt ».

The ironic commentaries are sometimes fairly extended. In [Fr10: 3214-2316] after the serious explanation about the operating system Windows, the locutor continues the explanation in an ironic register. It begins with a comparison followed by an evaluation “xp c'est un peu comme une fille.. susceptible et capricieuse...!”:

[Fr10: 3214-2316] ...  
 xp c'est un peu **comme une fille.. susceptible et capricieuse...!**  
**mais avec un peu de courtoisie, il revient vite a de meilleurs sentiments..**

While less recurrent than the ironic instructions and comments, puns are also present on the French web forum. For instance, [Fr13: 3998] represents the answer to a question about computer brands and their quality. As one can observe, the discourse is structured as an answer to this question. It consists in a statement “une grande marque c'est”, which can be interpreted seriously, while the second part of the intervention completes the general context of the communication and generates the humour:

[Fr13: 3998] **une grande marque c'est : Packard Bell !**  
**Toutes les autres font moins de 10 lettres !! 🤪**

In conclusion, we can state that the web forum communication in French is characterised by displaying an ironic/humorous component that influences the form of knowledge transmission. We consider that this humorous/ironic approach to knowledge communication is intended to eliminate the distance between the participants in the discussions and to ease the communication between the participants.

### 7.2.3.6 Closures and Invitation to Action

In general, the explanatory sequences end bluntly on the French web forum with the last instruction or with the explanatory sequence. In some rare cases, after the enunciation of the first part of an explanatory sequence, the locutor introduces expressions that stimulate the continuation of the dialogue.

In the following examples, [Fr12: 3775], [Fr16: 4992], and [Fr14: 4207] represent the closings of explanatory sequences that suggest that the explanation is not complete and the dialogue on the topic should continue:

[Fr12: 3775] A suivre

[Fr16: 4992] a suivre donc..!

[Fr14: 4207] A te lire

Other closings, as in [Fr16: 4933], present the addressee with different options from which he/she will apply whichever he/she considers to be the best. The locutor closes the dialogue leaving the addressee with the responsibility to choose (deontic modality):

[Fr16: 4933] A tes essais !

A different discursive strategy used in order to close an explanatory sequence is to underline that there is no risk involved in applying the solution proposed by the locutor:

[Fr14: 4468] ...toute façon cela ne te coute rien

Sometimes, as in examples [Fr4: 554] and [Fr1: 114], the locutor introduces a slight idea of imprecision, using the impersonal expression “on sait jamais” in order to suggest that the addressee should apply the solution proposed in the explanatory sequence but that there is no warrantee that it is *the* solution to the technical problem the addressee has presented:

[Fr1: 114] ...sait-on jamais !

[Fr4: 554] ...on sait jamais...

When the locutor is sure of the result of the procedure he/she describes, he/she announces the result as in [Fr13: 3912]:

[Fr13: 3912] ...et tu verras déjà une grosse différence.

In other situations, he/she can choose to conclude the explanatory sequence by enunciating personal preferences concerning the application of computer procedures:

[Fr16: 5013] Enfin bon, j'aime les install propres aussi... ^^"

Knowledge communication on the French web forums presents both shared and specific characteristics. The ones it shares concern the general types of the explanatory sequences: concept-oriented, procedure-description, and reason-explanation. The specific aspects are the use of the *meta-explanations*, the presence of *double explanations* and most interesting, the display of irony and humour in the explanatory sequences. All these elements confirm our hypothesis that the explanatory process in French, even if it has a general structure similar to that of the other languages, is constructed in a specific way.

### 7.2.3.7 Uniform Explanatory Text

The *systematic explanation* is a complex explanatory structure which involves different types of explanatory sequences in order to clarify the topic of a thread on a web forum. The *systematic explanation* involves different discursive productions, all of which focus on the three main elements of an explanation: *notions* (explaining what), *procedures/actions* (explaining how), and *reasons/motives* (explaining why).

A *systematic explanation* and its internal structure can be observed in example [Fr9: 3059-3065]. The locutor constructs a complex discursive structure formed by explanatory sequences describing *notions* and *reasons* in order to explain a computer problem commonly known as “blue screen”:

[Fr9 : 3059-3065] (1)c'est le fameux "écran bleu", (2)c'est a cause d'un pb. matériel ; (3)barrettes mémoires, carte graphique ou autre périphérique installé.  
 Tu as changé qlq chose sur ton pc ? Tes pilotes sont à jour ?  
 Mais pour ça je laisse la parole à mes collègues (4)car ce n'ai pas mon domaine de prédilection...  
 Si tu as fait une analyse avec Kaspersky et qu'il n'as rien trouvé c'est une bonne chose 🍊  
 (5)Ccleaner n'est pas un anti-spy, c'est un nettoyeur.  
 Comme anti-spy gratuit tu as aussi AVG Anti-spy, qui en plus de donne beaucoup d'informations sur ta machine : (6)processus, connexions, démarrage automatique, etc...

In the example above, we have identified six explanatory sequences, numbered from 1 to 6 and individualised with different colours (*definitions* in blue, *reasons* in red, and *examples* in green). The explanatory structure is constructed by *explanatory kernels* isolated by other text sequences. The first explanatory sequence is a definition “(1)c'est le fameux "écran bleu"”, used in this context as a discursive element of the dialogic interaction. This definition is constructed as the locutor’s verbal reaction to the description of a notion in the previous intervention.

The reason why the error defined in (1) occurs is presented in explanatory sequence (2), which is formed by a causal subordinate clause and is very general in terms of the content : “**c'est a cause** d'un pb. materiel”. In order to bring more consistence to his/her intervention, the locutor introduces a new explanatory sequence, (3), formed by several examples. Sequence (3) explains what “un pb materiel” is: “**barrettes mémoires, carte graphique ou autre périphérique** installé”.

The locutor brings more interactivity to his/her intervention when he decides to interrupt abruptly his/her explanations on the topic and ‘talks’ directly to the addressee. He/she digresses from the main topic of the

discussion and decides to bring in his discourse a third entity, perceived as a close and friendly presence “mes collègues”: “Mais pour ça je laisse la parole à mes collègues...”. The locutor’s affirmation is enforced by the explanation of the reason in sequence (4): “**car ce n'est pas mon domaine de prédilection**”. Sequence (4) represents an indirect manner of expressing his/her cognitive limits.

Nevertheless, after the digression, the locutor continues to explain the erroneous points he/she has encountered in the previous speaker’s intervention. It is important to observe sequence (5) of his/her intervention, a peculiar structure whose presence is constant in the definitions the users give on the French web forum. We have denominated this structure a *complementary definition*. It is an explanatory sequence which describes objects in a complete manner. It is formed by two definitions: the one is a negative construction equivalent to a “definition by negation”, and the other is a common definitory structure of the type **A is B**. Sequence (5) consists of a definition by negation: “Ccleaner **n'est pas un anti-spy**”, completed by (6), a real definition “**...c'est un nettoyeur**”.

The last sequence, (7), of the locutor’s intervention is formed by a suite of examples “...processus, connexions, démarrage automatique...”, and its function is to explain concretely what the locutor means when he states that the computer program AVG Anti spy “donne beaucoup d’informations sur ta machine”.

## 7.2.4 Explanation on Romanian Forums

The communication of knowledge on the Romanian web forums reveals varied strategies that organise the discourse in a specific way, as we will show in what follows. These strategies configure the profile of the professional web forum communication. Since the Romanian language is less spoken in Europe and for reasons of scientific rigour, we felt it was appropriate to translate the examples analysed. The translation of the Romanian examples will be literal or very close to the original texts.

### 7.2.4.1 Introducing Explanation by Epistemic Modalisation

An important aspect in the construction of the explanatory sequence is represented by the way it is conceptualised by the locutor. The conceptualisation of an explanation results from the introductory strategies used by the locutor for an explanation.

In the Romanian sub-corpus a very specific strategy, which we have not encountered in the other sub-corpora as an introductory strategy, is

the *example*. The locutor doesn't comment, describe or explain. He/she introduces an illustrative example which can help the addressee find his/her own solution.

[Ro16: 3623-3629] Iti atasez aici un **exemplu...**  
**(I attach here an example)**

In example [Ro16: 3623-3629] one can notice that the explanation is implicit, since the addressee has to analyse and understand the example and then to apply the situation illustrated by the example to the particular one he/she faces.

An explanation can also be introduced as a *warning*, as in [Ro3: 285]. „Vezi ca...” (**see that**) in Romanian has the function of calling the attention of the addressee to the content of the communication that follows. This introductory strategy is addressee-oriented, it is expressed in a familiar register and it is commonly used in face-to-face communication. Its use on web forum communication eliminates the distance between the participants in an exchange, making it oral and interactive:

[Ro3: 285] Vezi ca...  
**(See that...)**

At times, the locutor introduces the explanation by accompanying it with supplementary information suggesting his/her attitude to the topic. The different modalities used on the Romanian web forums in the explanatory sequences suggest different degrees of imprecision. We have identified the first degree of imprecision in the introduction of an explanation as a possibility, as in example [Ro3: 301], where the locutor admits the possibility of the existence of a computer device:

[Ro3: 301] Da, s-ar putea sa ai un buton pentru wireless.  
**(Yes, there could be a key for wireless)**

The imprecision may also be expressed through verbs like “a spera” (**to hope**), as in [Ro18: 4827-4929], where the locutor expresses his/her good intentions and yet shows insecurity in what concerns the final result:

[Ro18: 4827-4929] sper ca te ajuta asta :  
**(I hope this will help you)**

The introduction of the explanatory sequences as *trial and error* procedures involves, too, some degree of imprecision. This structure is very popular on the Romanian web forums, as one can observe from their high incidence. It involves an invitation to action, even if the final result is uncertain, and leaves it to the addressee to decide whether s/he should take action or not. From this perspective “a încerca” (**to try**) is opposed

to the verb “a face” (**to do**), the latter involving obligation for the addressee and positioning the locutor as the stronger of the exchange pair:

[Ro4: 577] **Incearca...** (try)

[Ro5: 646] **Incearca...**(try)

[Ro12: 2294] **Incearca...**(try)

[Ro13: 2566-2568] **Încearcă și varianta asta...**  
(**Try this variant/option too...**)

A more formal introduction of the explanatory sequences may adopt the form of recommendation or advice. In example [Ro6: 976-977] one can notice the emphasis on the 1<sup>st</sup> person deictic “eu” (I) and the use of the verb “a recomanda” (**to recommend**). As in the case of “a încerca” (**to try**), the verb “a recomanda” (**to recommend**) modalises the communication suggesting a certain distance between the partners in communication. In this situation, the locutor acts as mere adviser and it is for the addressee to decide whether he/she will follow or the recommendations. The construction is locutor-oriented and its use increases the distance and the degree of formality between the participants in the conversation:

[Ro6: 976-977] Eu **recomand...**  
(**I recommend**)

The same discursive construction, but using the oral/familiar register, can be observed in example [Ro7: 1103]. Here, the locutor starts the explanation with a conversational marker introducing a comment “păi” ( well) followed by the introduction of the explanatory sequence as advice “sfatul meu e...” (**my advice is...**). One should note that the modalisation here is similar to that in the previous cases. The locutor focuses the message on him/herself and lets the addressee decide what to do with the information he/she receives:

[Ro7: 1103] pai,sfatul meu e...  
(**well, my advice is...**)

In some cases in the Romanian forum communication, the explanatory sequences are introduced through *negative constructions*. They usually express imprecision. A prime example is [Ro3: 319-320], where the insecurity of the locutor concerns the attitude of the receptor with regard to the explanation he/she has provided rather than the result:

[Ro3: 319-320] Sper sa nu sune ciudat dar verifica...  
(**I hope this will not sound strange, but verify...**)

At times, the locutor may post an explanation of whose result he/she is not sure because he/she has only theoretical knowledge of it. In such situations, it is natural that the locutor should commence by assuming partial ignorance of the topic. Such a construction can be observed in [Ro19: 5615-5618]. The locutor begins with “nu știu” (**I don’t know**) and uses the adverb “exact” (**exactly**) as an attenuator, which diminishes the force of the previous negation:

[Ro19: 5615-5618] Nu știu exact...  
(**I don’t know exactly**)

There are few expressions of certainty in the Romanian sub-corpus. A 100% sure explanation will be introduced in Romanian *ex abrupto*. Once again, the locutor avoids direct expressions and modalises his/her intervention by introducing the idea of *necessity*. He/She chooses to introduce the explanation as *something the addressee needs* in order to solve the problem. He/she lets the addressee decide whether he/she will use the information provided by the former:

[Ro3: 335] Ai nevoie de... (**you need**)

[Ro15: 3017-3018] Ai nevoie de (**you need**)

A specific Romanian introductory strategy is the *reparatory introduction*, where the locutor introduces the explanatory sequence as the answer to a previous explanation. The introduction cancels the content of the previous explanation. This structure is very simple and presupposes the existence of a previous negative construction. In the case of [Ro10, 1923-1924], the structure “ba merge” (**it does work**) involves the existence of a previous negative construction: “nu merge” (**it doesn’t work**). The conversational marker “ba”, which can be interpreted as either “yes” or “no” depending on the context, marks the locutor’s intervention as oral and interactive:

[Ro10, 1923-1924] ba merge...(yes it works)

It is also important to observe that the incidence of introductory strategies on the Romanian web forums is fairly low. It seems that Romanians favour introducing explanations *ex abrupto* and avoid the introductory strategies. This reduces the subjectivity and personal interaction in the communication, eludes the positioning of the participants in the communication, and restricts the interaction to the main topic of discussion. The constant use of this strategy defines the profile of the professional web forum communication in Romanian as objective, effective, and impersonal. From this point of view, the conceptualisation of explanations is very close to their conceptualisation in science and research.



### 7.2.4.2 Concise Instructions and Other Types of Explanations

Simple explanations are the basic explanatory cores that form complex systematic explanations. We have distinguished between the following basic explanatory types: *concept definitions*, *descriptions of actions*, and the explanations of *reasons for an event/process*.

*a. Explaining concepts:* As explanatory strategies, definitions are not very popular on the Romanian web forums. The definitions in this context are short, objective and impersonal. One can observe different kinds of definitions in the Romanian corpus.

*Definition by genus and difference* is the definition's classic meaning, where an object may first be described by a general category (the genus), and then further distinguished within the genus by distinctive attributes. In example [Ro20: 6304], the RegCleaner is defined as a part of JV16 PowerTools<sup>125</sup> (genus) and “ultima versiune freeware” (**the latest freeware version**) (difference). One should also note the *aspectualisation* in the *difference* part of the definition: “ultima” (**the latest**) and “freeware”.

[Ro20: 6304] RegCleaner e ultima versiune freeware a JV16 PowerTools. (**RegCleaner is the latest freeware version of JV16 PowerTools**)

A similar example is [Ro8: 1360]. Here, X (**DirectX 10**) is expressed in a familiar register as genus “făcătură rusească” (**Russian makedo**) and is further distinguished within the category as “pentru xp” (**for xp**) (difference):

[Ro8: 1360] **Directx 10** pentru xp este o **facatura ruseasca**.

Another classic category of the definition is the definition by essential predicates, where the predicates can be as pointed out in chapter 3.5: substance, quality, quantity, and so on. The definitions by essential predicates identified on the Romanian web forums describe the object in terms of *substance* and *qualities*. For example, in [Ro15: 3103] X, the topic of discussion is defined as “o eroare cunoscută” (**a well-known error**), where X = Y (“eroare” – substance) and Y = cunoscută (**well-known**) is an aspectualisation of Y.

[Ro15: 3103] Este o eroare cunoscuta ... (**It is a well-known error**).

The same structure X = Y (substance); Y (progrămel – **little program**) = “free” (aspectualisation) can be observed in [Ro21: 6502-

<sup>125</sup> JV16 PowerTools is a system cleaning and error fixing utility suite.

6503]. We have noted that X, in both examples [Ro21: 6502-6503] and [Ro15: 3103], is implicit.

[Ro21: 6502-6503] Un progrămel free (**A free little program**)

Another defining strategy is *the definition by negation*. In example [Ro20: 5973-5976], the locutor expresses the idea of “commercial computer program” as “din păcate nu sunt free” (**unfortunately are not free**). In this case, “din păcate” (**unfortunately**) represents a marker of modality entailing a touch of regret. The structure of the negative definition is, as in the previous cases, an essential predicate referring to a quality (**free**):

[Ro20: 5973-5976] Registry Healer si jv16 Power Tools [...] din păcate nu sunt free (**Registry Healer and jv16 Power Tools ... unfortunately are not free**)

Some definitions fall into a different category of essential predication (action – *what an object does*). It is the case of [Ro10: 1756-1763]. Here, in a more developed explanatory sequence, the locutor explains the finality of the functions LEFT and RIGHT of the computer program MsExcel. Both definitions, (3) and (4), have identical structures: the *definiens* X (a) and (c) is explained as actions in (b) and (d) which form the *definiendum*:

[Ro10: 1756-1763] ... (3)- (a)functia LEFT (b)va retine din sirul de cifre al CNP primele 5 cifre dinspre stânga;

(4)- (c)functia RIGHT (d)va retine din sirul anterior de 5 cifre ultimele 2 cifre ...

**(3 – function LEFT stores from the numeric string of CNP the first five numbers starting from the left ;**

**4 – function RIGHT stores from the previous five number string the last two...)**

Other defining forms are the essential predications expressing relations, as in example [Ro19: 5237]. Here, the locutor puts the *definiens* X (eroarea 10061 – **error 10061**) in relation with the *definiendum* Y (Winsock). The relation between the *definiens* and the *definiendum* is created through modalisation and introduces the idea of uncertainty:

[Ro19: 5237] ... eroarea 10061 ar avea legătură cu Winsock.

**error 10061 may have to do with Winsock.**

At times, on the forum discussions the locutor uses the so-called *nominal definition*. In [Ro22: 6840] the locutor answers the question of the collocutor concerning a specific computer program. In this case the verb “a numi” (**to name**) is the element that constructs the nominal definition. The definition has a *definiens* X (the name of the computer program – tryit!) and a *definiendum* (“programel” – **little program**). In the definition the genus is represented by the class of objects (“programel” – **little program**) and the *difference* is marked lexically by the name of the program (tryit!):

[Ro22: 6840] exista un programel numit tryit! (**there is a little program named tryit!**)

A similar definition is [Ro3: 335]:

[Ro3: 335] Ai nevoie de un utilitar pentru a putea porni placa wireless, care numeste Launch Manager. (In order to start the wireless board you need a tool named Launch Manager)

The definitions may display even more complex structures. In [Ro4: 493] the definition is introduced by modalisation, through the use of the conditional form of a verb which in Romanian introduces the idea of possibility (see the first part of the definition) followed by aspectualisation in the second part:

[Ro4: 493] ...un program ar fi Recuva si este free. (**one [such] program could be Recuva and it's free**)

Another essential predication expressing a relation is the elliptic example [Ro13: 2549-2550]. Here, the locutor reacts to the remark of the previous speaker who has stated that he/she sees no relation between the technical problem he/she exposed and the explanation. The answer of the locutor is elliptic, with the noun “legătura” (**relation**), repeated by the locutor in [Ro13: 2549-2550], representing the element of discursive cohesion in the verbal exchange as well as a definition. The *definiens* is Office XP SP3 and “legătura” (**relation**) is the *definiendum*. The meaning of the elliptic message is that the addressee must install Service Pack 3 for Microsoft Office (Office XP).

[Ro13: 2549-2550] Uite legatura: Office XP SP3  
(**This is the relation: Office XP SP3**)

As one can notice, on the Romanian web forums the definition is not an essential aspect in the communication of knowledge. We have identified only a few examples in the Romanian sub-corpus. Their structure is very simple, usually formed by a unique core. Sometimes definitions are elliptic expressions or implicit constructions.

*b. Descriptions of actions:* The description of actions seems to be the most popular explanatory strategy on the Romanian web forums. The high number of occurrences and the diversity of constructions found in the Romanian sub-corpus support our claim.

One such category that seems to be characteristic of the web forum communication in Romanian is represented by *elliptic instructions*<sup>126</sup>. The elliptic descriptions of actions present a rich diversity on the web forums communication. The most reduced explanatory structure can be observed in example [Ro12: 2333], which only consists in the name of a computer program, all the rest of the communication being implicit. This kind of knowledge transmission is informational, impersonal and distant. The locutor provides useful information for the addressee but rejects every other social, communicational contact outside the topic:

[Ro12: 2333] "File and folder protector"

Many of the explanatory sequences on the forum are short enunciations having the form of an order/command, as in [Ro4: 594]:

[Ro4: 594] Foloseste Disk Scrubber. (**Use Disk Scrubber**)

These *elliptic instructions* are elliptic explanatory structures involving elements implicit in the communication. For example, in [Ro4: 594] the locutor refers to a computer program **Disk Scrubber** which apparently is using a simple structure. Its meaning is actually complex because of the implicits involved in the communication, as we will illustrate in the following. Implicit in the verb "a folosi" (**to use**) is the idea that in order to use the program the addressee must **download** it from the Internet, **install** it on the computer, and **learn** how to **use** it. Notice that the mention of the last verb in the logical chain of actions (**download**, **install**, **learn**, and **use**) creates an implicit logical series of actions easy to "re-create" by a computer user.

The same implicit structure can be observed in the case of [Ro8: 1344]. Here, the sequence is shorter and involves only two acts, **download** and **install**:

[Ro8: 1344] Instalează ultimul driver pentru placa video.  
(**Install the latest driver for the video board**)

This is noticeable in the case of [Ro2: 155], where the *elliptic instruction* involves an implicit previous procedure: **download** and **install**. This structure is complex because of the necessity for installing more than one program, which makes the instruction more implicit and more complex. [Ro2: 155] displays the following conceptual structure:

<sup>126</sup> We denominate *elliptic instructions* the procedural texts consisting explicitly in a unique act expressed by one verb which involves implicitly one or more other actions forming a series that precedes or succeeds the explicit verb.

**download** (implicit) + **install** (explicit) – concerns – Adobe Flash Player

**download** (implicit) + **install** (explicit) – concerns – Shockwave

**download** (implicit) + **install** (explicit) – concerns – Java

The following structure repeats implicitly the sequence download+install three times, for every program mentioned:

[Ro2: 155] **Instalează** ultima versiune a **Adobe Flash Player+Shockwave și Java. (Install the latest version of Adobe Flash Player+Shockwave and Java)**

Occasionally, the locutor mentions explicitly the first verb of the series **download + install**, leaving the second verb as implicit, as one can notice in example [Ro8: 1305]:

[Ro8: 1305] Descarcă acest DirectX. **(download this DirectX)**

We have also identified a category of *unique instructions*<sup>127</sup> which can involve different modalities. Example [Ro9: 1620] entails the idea of obligation and is an instruction given by the locutor to the addressee:

[Ro9: 1620] Trebuie sa cumperi programul acela. **(You must buy that program)**

Other modalisations introduce a divergence of ideas, as in [Ro10, 1923-1924], where the locutor takes a different position concerning a previously expressed opinion. The explanation in this case is interactively constructed, part oriented to the addressee (the explanatory part) and part to the previous speaker (modalisation):

[Ro10, 1923-1924] ba merge pe la Format-Conditional Formatting **(it does work from Format-Conditional Formatting)**

At times, they may introduce the idea of *restriction* (numai/**only**), claiming that the instructions the locutor provides is the only solution to the problem discussed:

[Ro10: 1889] numai scriind cod in VBA **(only writing codes inVBA)**

The modalisation of the instruction as *possibility* in example [Ro16: 4096] reveals the intention of the locutor to diminish the force of the imperative, which in Romanian functions as an order/command, and to

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<sup>127</sup> Unique instructions are complete structures rather than elliptic, in the form of an instruction/procedural text, and contain one act only.

compel the addressee to decide whether he/she will follow the instructions or not:

[Ro16: 4096] Poti sa folosesti oertype. **(You can use oertype)**

Another way of mitigating an imperative in Romanian is the use of verbal forms in the present tense, Indicative. This transforms the message in advice and positions the participants in the discussion as peers :

[Ro23: 6932] Il blochezi cel mai simplu din firewall **(You simply block it from firewall)**

A more developed explanatory sequence describing actions identified in the Romanian sub-corpus consists in the *enumeration of actions*. More complex than the *elliptic* and *unique instructions*, the *enumeration of actions* consists in a series of actions. The text has a very simple structure and the communication is reduced to the cognitive content. The series of actions are linear and follow a logic order:

[Ro16: 4022-4023] In meniul:  
Tabel-Sortare... **(In the menu Table - Sort)**

[Ro8: 1443] Device Manager: Start>Run scrii devmgmt.msc>Enter **(Device Manager: Start>Run write devmgmt.msc>Enter)**

[Ro4: 527-528] Tune-up Utilities -> Tune Up Shreder

[Ro6: 835] Excel Options> Advanced> Gridline color> alegi negru (de ex.). **(Excel Options> Advanced> Gridline color> select black (for example))**

Some of the enumerations of actions display a more developed discursive structure involving interactive communication, as in [Ro7: 1119], where the locutor commences the procedural explanation by confirming (“correct”) a previous statement by the collocutor:

[Ro7: 1119] Corect... instaleaza CCleaner, si in program alegi Tools -> Uninstall -> Delete Entry. **(Correct ... install CCleaner and in program select Tools-> Uninstall -> Delete Entry)**

Text cohesion is ensured by the discursive markers that organise the flux of information, such as “și” (**and**) and “apoi” (**then**):

[Ro9: 1585] Dezinstaleaza programul si instaleaza apoi versiunea Trial. **(Uninstall the program and install then the Trial version)**

Similar examples in the Romanian corpus are: [Ro16: 3666-3667], [Ro14: 2922], and [Ro16: 3922].

The procedural texts may also adopt the form of *lists of actions*, similar to the enumeration of actions, but formally the text is organised as a list. The order of the entries in the list is also the order of the logical flux of the actions. In [Ro18: 4907-4911] the list consists of the 2 variants that the locutor presents to the addressee as alternatives. Every element of the list describes a series of actions. The first series, 1., consists of four acts ordered logically as a series of actions: “a repeta” (**to repeat**), “a presupune” (**to suppose**), “a apăsa” (**to press**), and “a căuta” (**to search**). The alternative to this first sequence, 2., is a *unique instruction*: “incerci diverse combinatii la "forgot my...”” (**2. try different combinations at „forgot my...”**). The sequence is firmly ended by the locutor’s statement that there are no other solutions to the addressee’s problem:

[Ro18: 4907-4911] Ai 2 variante: (**you have 2 alternatives**)  
 1. fie incerci sa repeti greseala.. adica, presupui ca ai apasat 2 taste atunci cand ai scris noua parola si cauti diverse combinatii.. (**1. either try repeating the error ... I mean, suppose that you pressed 2 keys when you typed the new password and look for different combinations**)  
 2. incerci diverse combinatii la "forgot my...”” (**2. try different combinations at „forgot my”**)  
 Alte varinate nu exista. (**Other alternatives do not exist**)

Other lists of actions can form a unique explanatory sequence, as in [Ro14: 2773-2778], where every entry in the list of actions is marked by hyphenation (-). Thus, one can observe three main entries in the list of actions. The first and the second entries are each formed by a single act: “asigura-te” (**check**) and “șterge” (**delete**). The third entry in the list is formed by two acts: “intri” (**enter**) and “stergi” (**delete**), and a meta-explanation. The list of actions ends with the last instruction of the procedural text, which is not marked by the locutor as an entry :

[Ro14: 2773-2778] - asigura-te ca in Control Panel n-a mai ramas nimic legat de Adobe Photoshop (**check if in Control Panel nothing is left about Adobe Photoshop**)  
 - sterge si directorul aferent din "Program Files" (**also delete the corresponding folder in "Program Files"**)  
 - incearca sa intri in registri si sa sterghi eventualele urme de Photoshop ramase pe acolo. (Start - Run - tastezi regedit; CTRL+F pentru cautare cheie, DEL pentru stergere, F3 pentru Find Next); eu nu folosesc programe de curatat registrii, ci sterg cheile manual. (**try to enter registry and delete the possible traces of Photoshop left there. (Start – Run – type regedit; CTRL+F for search key, DEL for delete, F3 for Find Next); I don’t use programs for**

**cleaning the registry, but delete the keys manually.)**  
Restart & retry install

One should note that the *list of actions* is not a common practice in the Romanian web forum communication. We have identified in our corpus only three occurrences of such textual organisation, which means that Romanian locutors construct the discursive organisation of information in other ways.

The instructions may be constructed as *conditional relations*, as in the example below. The text in example [Ro3: 319-320] and the following sequences displays a heterogeneous structure. Here, the procedural sequences are mixed with causal clauses and create a coherent and logic structure based on a cause-effect relation. For example, in [Ro3: 319-320], the locutor presents the solution to the addressee by mentioning the possible causes of the problem. The structure of the phrase represents an invitation to action and is intended to eliminate the distance between the participants in the discussion. The “computer” in the discussion is replaced by “you”, the locutor discussing the technical details in a personal way. Thus, he/she doesn’t say “if your computer has errors”, which corresponds to reality, but “if you don’t have errors”. He/she conceives of the computer in this discussion as “part” of the addressee’s identity<sup>128</sup>:

[Ro3: 319-320]...verifica in Start – Settings – Control Panel – System – Hardware tab – Device Manager – Network adapters **daca** nu ai erori pt adaptorul wireless si **daca** in (right-click) Properties este Enabled. **(verify in Start – Settings – Control Panel – System – Hardware tab – Device Manager – Network adapters if there are no errors to the wireless adaptor and if it is Enabled in (right-click) Properties)**

Other examples of *conditional relations* in the description of action sequences on the Romanian forum can be observed in [Ro3: 441], [Ro7: 1230-1232], and [Ro8: 1400-1401]. These examples demonstrate that in Romanian the description of actions sequence as conditional relations are systematically introduced by “dacă” (**if**), which is an effective way of structuring a discourse in two parts: the first is a procedural part which communicates the cognitive content followed by a complementary clause containing the conditions of validation of the actions described in the first part.

It seems that in the Romanian forum the instructions and the procedural texts represent very powerful mechanisms of knowledge

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<sup>128</sup> The identity assumed by the locutors on the specialised web forums is that of a person facing a cognitive problem in a technical context. Since the web forum field is the Computer and the Internet, a particular focus on the participants’ identity on the forum shows them to be persons facing a cognitive problem related to the computer.



communication. A special category of instructions is represented by the *multimodal instructions*. This category is represented in a different fashion on the Romanian web forum. While on the Catalan and French Forums the multimodal communication mixes images and texts on the screen, in the case of the Romanian web forum the image exists but is not directly visible. The locutor has a link where he can open the image if interested in the topic of discussion. The image accompanies a description of actions (for example), as in [Ro16: 4455-4458], and represents a visual example intended to complete the description of actions. It is important to observe that on the Romanian forum the addressee can decide to follow either one of the channels of communication (text **or** image) or both channels (text **and** image). If he/she considers that the textual information is sufficient, he/she can ignore the visual part of the communication, whereas if he/she decides to view the image he/she has to download it. This option is imposed by the communication device, which can be implemented should the provider want to either display the multimedia content of communication or let the participants in the forum decide whether they want to see textual only and/or multimedia content. This structure can be observed in example [Ro16: 4455-4458], where the image is represented by an icon and a link consisting in the name of the document. This link also displays some supplementary information, such as the dimension of the file and the number of views:

 untitled.JPG ( 90.56K) Number of downloads: 16

The visual part of the multimodal sequence appears within a procedural text and is coherent with the content of the latter:

[Ro16: 4455-4458] ...Le gasesti in josul documentului, in bara DESEN (patratul ce are in interior un A in dreapta sus), sau la Insert (Inserare) / Text Box (Caseta text). **(you can find them at the bottom of the document in the toolbar DRAWING (the square with an A inside at the top on the right), or at Insert / Text Box)**

 untitled.JPG ( 90.56K) Number of downloads: 16

A similar multimodal construction is example [Ro16: 3623-3629], which is formed by an enumeration of actions – sequences 1, 2, 3, 5 – and a prototypical explanation. The intention of the locutor to provide multimodal information is announced at the beginning of the sequence: “Îți atașez aici un exemplu” (I attach here an example). The visual information consists in a screen capture and, as in the previous example ; viewing it is optional and depends on the addressee. The same information as in example [Ro16: 4455-4458] accompanies the image file:

[Ro16: 3623-3629] Iti atasez aici un exemplu: **(I attach here an example)**  
 (1)dezarhivezi si (2)pui in C: in radacina. **(extract and put it in C: in the root)**  
 (3)Nu modifici numele sau locatia la fisierul excel (4)ca nu o sa mearga.  
 Si apoi din butonul "imbinare pt imprimanta" (5)listezi de la ce nr vrei la ce nr. **(Don't modify the name or the location of the Excel file because it won't work. Then with the „Print Merge” button print from the number to the number you want)**



EX.ZIP ( 153.31K) Number of downloads: 27

As one can observe, the description of actions and its varieties may be the main discursive strategy employed on the web forums in Romanian for knowledge communication. Our claim is based on the fact that the highest incidence of explanatory sequences consists of action descriptions.

*c. Explaining reasons:* Another category of explanations consists of sequences explaining the reasons/causes/motives for an event/action. Also known as *prototypical explanatory sequence*, it consists of an answer to a *why-question*. In Romanian, the locutor can adopt different strategies in order to respond to a *why-question*. Nonetheless, the prototypical explanation, a basic explanatory structure, is one of them. Very popular on the web forum discussions, it consists of two steps: (1) a general statement concerning the topic of the thread or an invitation to action, and (2) an explanation of the reason for (1). This relation between the two parts is generally constructed through specific discursive markers or by juxtaposition. The juxtaposition involves an implicit *cause-effect* relation between the two sentences (1) and (2) of an explanatory sequence, as in example [Ro4: 577], where the statement (1) is an invitation to action “încearcă Eraser” (**try Eraser**) and the following sentence expresses the reason: “e gratuit și are multe opțiuni” (**it is free and has multiple features**). The juxtaposition lends orality and interactivity to the written dialogue:

[Ro4: 577] (1)Încearca Eraser. (2)E gratuit si are multe optiuni. **(Try Eraser. It is free and has multiple features)**

There are some prototypical explanations, such as [Ro12: 2202], which are addressee-oriented. Here, (1) represents an addressee-oriented invitation to action - “mai caută” (**keep searching**) -, followed by an expression of support “sigur găsești” (**you’ll surely find**) intended to eliminate the distance between the participants in the discussion and to reassure the addressee:

[Ro12: 2202] (1)Mai cauta, (2)sigur gasesti. Pe forum sau Gugle (keep searching you'll surely find [it]. On the forum or on Google)

There are some particular cases where the prototypical explanation is impersonal, formal and accurate, as in [Ro6: 940-942], where (1) is a statement presented as supplementary information to a more extended explanatory content, completed by a similarly formal and impersonal sequence (2).

[Ro6: 940-942] ...(1)utilizatorul nu va avea nevoie de programul de arhivare pentru a dezarhiva arhiva [...], (2)arhiva se va despacheta singura **(the user won't need the archiving program for unpacking the archive [...], the archive is self-extracting)**

A similar formal, impersonal and topic-oriented explanation can be observed in example [Ro17: 4311]:

[Ro17: 4311] ...(1)wordul nu se foloseste la reproducerea documentelor color. (2)Nu ai separatie de culoare si nici prea precis nu este... **(Word can't be used to convey colour documents. There is no colour separation and it is not very accurate either...)**

The locutor can choose to orient the discourse towards his/her own person for personal involvement. For example, the reason why he/she is present in a statement, as in [Ro11, 2026], can be to express a personal habit "eu așa găsesc orice" (this is how I find everything). The locutor "invites" the addressee to adopt his/her own routines because of the similarity of the situation presented by the addressee:

[Ro11, 2026] cauta cu google eu asa gasesc orice **(search with google this is how I find everything)**

Personal involvement can adopt the form of an expression of solidarity with the previous speaker. In [Ro12: 2347-2349], such an expression - "folosesc și eu" **(I too use ...)** - is present in (1). The prototypical explanation (2), which is a presentation of the computer program's features, warrants the locutor's statement in (1):

[Ro12: 2347-2349] (1)Tot "File and Folder Protector" folosesc si eu. (2)Ai optiuni de ascundere sau de parolare a folderului, cat timp sa poti vizualiza ce-i in folder dupa ce ai bagat parola corecta,si altele. **(I too use „File and Folder Protector”. It has options to hide and protect a folder by password, to set the time for viewing the archived folder after typing the correct password, and so on.)**

A *prototypical explanation*, due to the particular characteristics of communication on web forums, can be introduced, as in example [Ro12: 2294], by an operator in the form of a symbol. We have established that this is not a very popular discursive strategy in the Romanian corpus, since we have identified a single occurrence where the operator is a symbol. The argument supporting its interpretation as an explanatory operator is the possibility of replacing it by a discursive marker such as “pentru că” (**because**). The explanatory structure in (2) is formal and impersonal. The basis for its explanatory content is the aspectualisation “simplu, eficient și gratis” (**simple, efficient and free**):

[Ro12: 2294] Incearca Folder Guard Xp --> simplu, eficient si gratis (**Try Folder Guard Xp --> simple, efficient and free**)

Another discursive strategy suggesting personal involvement in an explanatory process is modalisation. The strategy adopted in this case by the locutor consists in a consecutive clause that modalises the conversation as possibility. “Poate” (**maybe**), in [Ro14: 2731], introduces the explanatory sequence as a hypothesis for the facts exposed in (2). This construction displays oral characteristics such as the use of the familiar register: “e prea coaptă” (**it is too old**) and “să meargă” (literally **to go**, contextual meaning **to work**), and interactivity. “Poate” (**maybe**) is also a reaction to a previous spate of interaction:

[Ro14: 2731] (1)Poate ti-e prea coapta (2)sa mearga un program asa de complex... (**maybe yours is too old to work with such a complex program**)

The prototypical explanatory sequences are also introduced by explanatory operators such as: “deoarece” (**for**), “pentru că” (**because**), “că” (**cause**), “ținând cont că” (**taking into account that**), “datorită” (**because of**), “așa că” (**so**).

The explanations introduced by “deoarece” (**for**) and “pentru că” (**because**) are constructions using a neutral register as in [Ro5: 646] and [Ro20: 6222]:

[Ro5: 646] Incearca OpenOffice.org Writer, **deoarece** acesta suporta formatul A3. (**Try OpenOffice.org Writer, for this supports format A3**)

Example [Ro20: 6222] is a modalised explanation. The locutor introduces the explanation accompanied by an expression of indecision: “As recomanda si n-as recomanda”. The first part of the explanatory structure in this case isn’t a statement but an affirmative-negative complementary construction emphasising the locutor’s indecision followed in (2) by the reason for the fact expressed in (1):

[Ro20: 6222] (1)As recomanda si n-as recomanda Tune-up Utilities **deoarece** (2)mi-a sters odata ce n-a trebuit

**(I'd recommend and not recommend Tune-up Utilities for once it deleted something it wasn't supposed to)**

The operator “pentru că” (**because**) introduces the explanations in a more familiar way and reduces the distance between the participants in the communicational exchange:

[Ro6: 976-977] Eu recomand 7ZIP, **pentru că** este freeware. **(I recommend 7ZIP because it is freeware)**

[Ro18: 4966-4967] Vezi sa nu fie apast Caps Lock cand scrii parola sau Shift, **pentru ca** in acest caz, chiar daca o scrii corect dar cu majuscule, sau cu o litera doar majuscula (si ea e minuscule) atunci nu te autentifica. **(Check if CapsLock is locked when you type the password or Shift, because in this case, even if you type it correctly but in capitals, or even if in just one capital letter (and it is lowercase) then it doesn't authenticate you)**

A touch of exaggerated familiarity is introduced in the explanation by the operator „că de-aia” (**that's why**). I The locutor also introduces an additional ironical nuance. He/she constructs the initial part of the explanatory sequence as a rhetorical question, then, in (2) the locutor introduces a nominal definition “**Că de-aia** îi spune Guest” (‘cause **that's why it is called Guest**), binding the explanation with the name of a computer account. Through this explanation, the locutor not only suggests a solution to the problem the addressee initiated, but also points to the simplicity and obviousness of the solution:

[Ro12: 2382-2384] (1)Nu e mai simplu să activezi userul Guest pentru vizitatori? (2)Că de-aia îi spune Guest... (Isn't it simpler if you activated Guest user account for visitors? 'cause that's why it is called Guest...)

The use of “datorită” (**due to**) as an explanatory operator represents a familiar but also erroneous way of using it. The locutor uses a formal register that is not used very often in face-to-face communication. In this case the operator is used as an explanatory operator replacing a more popular operator “din cauza” (**because of**), which is correct rather than formal :

[Ro15: 3153] Deobicei aceasta eroare apare **datorita** prezentei anumitor daunatori precum Heur.Trojan. Iti recomand o scanare! **(Generally this error appears due to the presence of malware such as Heur.Trojan. I recommend a scanning!)**

*Conclusive nuances in explanatory sequences:* Sometimes, an explanation can be the result of the background knowledge or of the direct experience of the locutor. In this case, the explanatory content carries a conclusive nuance, as the explanation is the result of a cognitive

process. One such example would be [Ro15: 3103]. Here, the locutor introduces the explanatory content (2) by “ținând cont că” (**taking into account that**). He/she expresses the result of the locutor’s personal observation (the error the previous speaker talks about is well-known since a lot of people have begun complaining about it):

[Ro15: 3103] (1)Este o eroare cunoscuta ... (de mine - am avut-o in computer) tinand cont ca (2)multi au inceput sa se planga de ea. (This is a well-known error ... ( to me – I had it on my computer) taking into account that a lot of people have begun complaining about it lately)

Another conclusive nuance refers to the locutor’s cognitive background. In such cases the explanation is constructed as the conclusion to an expositive process formed by three acts, the first of which presents the general context of the explanation followed by two expositive acts. The explanation comes as a conclusion to the intervention. Its content isn’t cognitive but subjective, since the locutor seems rather preoccupied by the addressee’s state of mind of:

[Ro20: 6016] (1)daca le lasi cu setarile care iti vin din start (2)nu iti strica nimic...(3)oricum toate fac BackUp la registry....**asa ca** (4)nu trebuie sa-ti faci griji (**If you leave the initial settings they don’t damage anything ...anyway they all do a registry back-up ... so you don’t have to worry**)

### 7.2.4.3 Personal, Titles and Internet References

The locutor may introduce in his/her discourse references as discursive strategy. Their role in the discourse, as pointed out in the previous chapters, can be referential or explanatory. In this section we will only consider the references used for explanatory purposes.

In the Romanian corpus there are many different kinds of references and verbal constructions incorporating references. If one considers the focus of the references, one will observe that they fall into three main categories: *personal references*, *title references*, and *Internet references*. *Personal references* focus on the person (usually, the locutor – self-reference), the *title references* mention the title or the genre of the text referred to, and the *Internet references* are URLs.

*Personal references* are just a few in the Romanian corpus. They are self-referential and denote previous explanatory interventions by the locutor, as in [Ro16: 4477-4478]:

[Ro16: 4477-4478] asa cum ti-am zis si eu... (**as I told you too**)

Other instances of self-reference are oriented not to the communication but to the locutor's cognitive background. In example [Ro23: 6915-6916], the locutor refers to his/her experience in the field: "vorbesc din experiență" (**I speak from experience**):

[Ro23: 6915-6916] ...Asta pe partea tehnica. Pe de alta parte, ce rost are sa-i limitezi doar WOW cand poate butona net-ul? Vorbesc din experienta. (**This concerns the technical aspects. On the other hand, why limit his WOW only if he can surf the net? I speak from experience**)

*Title references* are rare too, for we have identified a single occurrence on the Romanian forum. Its use is explanatory, since the locutor introduces the reference after an expression of invitation to action: "citește acest articol" (**read this article**), where the word "articol" (**article**) is a link to a webpage. The reference is accompanied by a description of its content: "unde este explicat modul de remediere al problemei" (**where the remedy to the problem is explained**):

[Ro17: 4785] Oricum, citește acest articol, unde este explicat modul de remediere al problemei. (**Anyway, read this article, where the remedy to the problem is explained**)

Sometimes the references are conceptualised as locations. In [Ro17: 4871], for example, the locutor points out to the reference in terms of location: "aici și aici" (**here and here**). He/she implicitly invites the addressee to take action and follow the links for more information on the topic:

[Ro17: 4871] Vezi aici, sau aici, depinde ce versiune Outlook ai, dacă ai procedat corect. Din ce am putut să observ, serverul este setat greșit. (**Look here or here, depending on the version of Outlook you have, if you did the right thing. As far as I could notice, the server is incorrectly set**).

The *Internet references* on the Romanian web forum may represent an entire intervention consisting in a single line, with no other text but the URL. This occurrence is the most compact structure of an explanatory reference found in the entire corpus. Implicitly, the locutor invites the addressee to access the referred web page in order to obtain information on the topic of the thread:

[Ro16: 3987] <http://www.techsupportforum.com/microsoft-...n-t-resize.html>

Generally, URLs are accompanied by comments, descriptions, and warnings concerning their content, as in [Ro11, 2091-2100]. Here, the locutor presents the main features of the program Fileprotpro. In the last line of the post, the locutor mentions that he/she hasn't tried the program, which means that this computer program may not represent the solution to the topic discussed:

[Ro11, 2091-2100]  
<http://www.softstack.com/fileprotpro.html>  
 Major Features:  
 \* Protect files and folders  
 \* Protect files  
 \* Protect Folders  
 \* Disable Internet access  
 \* Password-protect any program  
 \* Protect files and programs by time  
 \* Hide folders  
 Nu l-am incercat. **(I haven't tried it)**

Similar examples of explanatory references accompanied by comments are [Ro12: 2256-2258] and [Ro16: 4160-4163].

In the first case, the introductory comment of the explanatory reference consists of an invitation to action followed by the enunciation of the goal of the action: "Vezi aici cum se face." **(See here how it is done):**

[Ro3: 409-410] Vezi aici cum se face. **(See here how it is done)**  
<http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showt...p;#entry4547913>

In the second example, the verb "a vedea" **(to see)** is accompanied by the attenuator "un pic" **(a little)** in order to diminish the force of the imperative:

[Ro3: 351] Vezi un pic si topicul asta: **(see a little this topic too)**  
<http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showtopic=419192>

The explanatory references may also be introduced through expressions of uncertainty, as in example [Ro15: 3482-3483], where the locutor introduces the reference using the verb "a încerca" **(to try)**, which besides prefiguring the cognitive information also bears a slight hint at uncertainty. It is also important to observe that the reference is conceptualised as location: "aici" **(here)**:

[Ro15: 3482-3483] Incerci ce e aici: **(you try what is here)**  
<http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showt...t&p=4099695>



In other cases, the modalisation of communication introduces a different expression of uncertainty, conceptualised as hope: “sper ca te ajuta asta” (**I hope this will help**). The locutor ends his/her intervention with a ps (*post scriptum* - which reminds us that while web forum communication displays many of the characteristics of face-to-face communication, it is, nevertheless, conceptualised as written text). The final comment by the locutor re-emphasises the idea of uncertainty, as he/she specifies: nu l-am testat...stiam duar ca exista asa ceva.... (**I haven't tested it ... I just knew that it exists**):

[Ro18: 4827-4929] sper ca te ajuta asta : (**I hope this will help**)

<http://www.softpedia.com/get/System/Back-U...-Recovery.shtml>

ps: nu l-am testat...stiam duar ca exista asa ceva.... (**I haven't tested it ... I just knew that it exists**)

It results from the analysis of the simple explanations in this section of our work that web forum communication in Romanian presents a rich diversity of discursive strategies aiming at explaining. They are simple cores that can form complex combinations in order to construct and communicate knowledge.

#### 7.2.4.4 Complex Meta-explanatory Structures

Meta-explanations are a constant presence in the Romanian sub-corpus, which is only natural since, as we have already observed, the ellipse is a characteristic of orality. The use of ellipse and implicits can also be a source of ambiguity and misunderstanding which warrants the use of meta-explanations, whose function is to specify and concretise the cognitive content of the communication.

Several complex structures of meta-explanations are noticeable on the Romanian web forum. An illustrative example would be [Ro16: 4412-4416], where we have noted three meta-explanations. The fragment below is a complex explanation describing the use of tabs in a text document. Meta-explanations act as supplementary explanations on the simple elements in the main explanatory sequence. There are many kinds of meta-explanations. Thus, the first sequence in example [Ro16: 4412-4416] is a comment intended to clarify the situation of the document the locutor talks about. By “(si se pare ca nu sunt)” (**and it seems they are not**) the locutor pinpoints the general context of the problem he/she discusses. The meta-explanation continues thematically the main explanation to which it relates through the lexical items “document” and “tabs”, *the* topic of the meta-explanation. The second meta-explanation, (2), is a nominal definition explaining what the key INS is, while meta-explanation (3) begins as a nominal definition explaining “suprascrierea”

**(overwriting)** and continues with instructions about how to localise the OVR option:

[Ro16: 4412-4416] Daca in document sunt folositi tabulatorii de care vorbeam (1)(si se pare ca nu sunt) atunci era simplu: ce tastai lua locul punctelor.  
In cazul in care nu ai tabulatori ai putea folosi tasta INS (2)(insert).  
Apasata o data se va activa suprascrierea (3)(OVR, vezi in bara de jos a word-ului, unde ai informatii despre numarul paginii, linii etc.)

**If the tabs I told you about are used in the document (and it seems they are not) then it would have been simple: what you typed replaced the points.**

**In case you don't have tabs you could use the key INS (insert).**

**Pressed once it activates the overtyping (OVR, see in Word's bottom status bar, where you have information about the page number, lines, etc.)**

Another complex structure consists in series of meta-explanations, as in [Ro13: 2566-2568]. Here, the locutor tries to define “folderul inf” (**folder inf**). This defining process, as one can notice, affects different levels of the term. In (1), the object is defined as *location* (the addressee can identify the file following its location in the computer). In (2), the definition is aspectual “(implicit, folderul este ascuns)” (**implicitly, the folder is hidden**) and informs on the properties of the folder:

[Ro13: 2566-2568] Caută în folderul inf (1)(C:\Windows\inf) (2)(implicit, folderul este ascuns), fişierul pchealth.inf... **(Search in folder inf (C:\Windows\inf) (implicitly, the folder is hidden), file pchealth.inf)**

The meta-explanations on the Romanian web forum fall in different categories depending on their finality. We have distinguished between meta-explanations with *definitory goals*, meta-explanations with *aspectual* characteristics, and *procedural meta-explanations* describing actions.

The first category, meta-explanations with *defining goals*, are basically definitions embedded in the main explanatory sequence. One can identify different sub-categories of definitions within the meta-explanations. One such sub-category would be the *definition by location*, as in examples [Ro16: 3606-3607] and [Ro22: 6713]. In both cases they define an element from the main explanatory structure - “show wireless networks” and “the icon from tray” - in terms of location:

[Ro19: 5615-5618] Nu stiu exact cum e cu wirelessu, dar incearca click dreapta pe My Network (aia de pe desktop) > poroperties > apoi prin stinga show wireless networks [...] De obicei, apare si in tray (jos colt linga ceas) o icoana cu wireles.... **(I don't know how wireless works, but try right click on My Network (the one on the desktop) > properties > and then to the left show wireless networks [...]. Usually it also appears in tray (bottom corner by the clock))**

[Ro22: 6713] Icoana din tray (de lângă ceas), o poți ascunde ușor. **(The icon in tray ( by the clock) you can hide it easily).**

Other defining meta-explanations consist of *nominal definitions*, which means that they are specifying the meaning of a term, as in examples [Ro16: 3561-3571], [Ro16: 3606-3607], and [Ro16: 4311]. The first example, [Ro16: 3561-3571], consists of a series of five meta-explanations used with defining goals and falling in the category of nominal definitions. In his/her intervention, the locutor is not sure which is the Word version used by the addressee, English or Romanian. In order to be sure of the effectiveness of his/her explanation, the locutor uses double terminology, in both Romanian and English, establishing a terminological equivalence : File=Fișier, Page Setup=Inițializare pagină), Portrait=în picioare, Landscape=pe orizontală, and Tools=Instrumente.

[Ro16: 3561-3571] intri in Word in File(1)(Fișier)-->Page Setup (2)(Initializare pagina)—[...] **( enter Word in File (File) → Page Setup (Page Setup))**

De asemenea aici mai poti alege si cum sa fie foaia Portrait (3)(in picioare), Landscape (4)(pe orizontala). **( here you can also select how the page should be Portrait( standing), landscape (horizontally))**

Daca nu ai ca unitate de masura intri in Tools (5)(instrumente)-->General si mai jos ai unitati de masura schimbi in centimentri si dai OK. **(If you don't have it as unit of measure enter Tools (Tools) → General and below you find unit of measure change to centimeters and click OK.)**

The same discursive mechanism is used in examples [Ro16: 3606-3607] and [Ro:], where the definition can be a terminological equivalent in another language or a definition of the meaning of a word, like “precis” (accurate) in [Ro:]:

[Ro16: 3606-3607] Si cu mail merge (sau imbinare corespondenta) dai print de la foaia 1 pana la 100. Si automat acele serii se vor schimba. **( with mail merge (or mail merge – txt in Romanian) too press print from**


**pages 1 to 100. And those series will change automatically)**

[Ro16: 4311] Nu ai separatie de culoare si nici prea precis nu este (vorbim de precizia la punct tipografic). **(There is no colour separation nor is it very accurate (I mean pixel accuracy))**

Some of the meta-explanations that fall in the category of definitions describe attributes of the *definiens*, as in [Ro6: 971], where the meta-explanation focuses on the aspectual part of the definition: “de asemenea free” **(also free)**:

[Ro6: 971] Dacă ai nevoie de ceva puțin mai avansat, adică dacă vrei să faci chiar un installer, nu doar o simplă arhivă, încearcă NSIS (de asemenea free). **(If you need something more advanced, if you want to do an installer, not only an archive, try NSIS – also free).**

A similar aspectual meta-explanation can be observed in example [Ro6: 1010-1012], where the locutor uses the meta-explanation in order to warn the addressee about the content of the file s/he attached to the message:

[Ro6: 1010-1012] Cand arhivezi bifezi optiunea "create SFX archive"  
Attached File(s)  
 untitled.JPG ( 32.79K) Number of downloads: 12 (asta este multimedia are captura de ecran atasata) **(When you create the archive tick option "create SFX archive" ... (this is multimedia it has a screen capture attached))**

Meta-explanations can also take the form of a procedural text when the locutor's intention is to specify a series of actions as in [Ro19: 5389-5395], where the locutor assumes that the general indication “Mai porneste o data serviciul Diskeeper” **(Start again service Diskeeper)** may not be very clear as to whether the addressee is a user of this service. In order to lend more precision to his/her indications, the locutor introduces a procedural meta-explanation: “cu “net stop”, apoi “net start”” **(with “net stop” then “net start”)**:

[Ro19: 5389-5395] ... Mai porneste o data serviciul Diskeeper (cu "net stop", apoi "net start"), apoi programul... **(start again service Diskeeper)**

A more complex procedural meta-explanation is described in [Ro14: 2773-2778], whose discursive structure is similar to the previous example. After a general description of the procedure, every move is further described by meta-explanations. [Ro14: 2773-2778] is formed by

a series of six acts indicating to the addressee the steps s/he has to take in order to eliminate the traces of Photoshop from the system:

[Ro14: 2773-2778] – incerca sa intri in registri si sa stergi eventualele urme de Photoshop ramase pe acolo. (Start - Run - tastezi regedit; CTRL+F pentru cautare cheie, DEL pentru stergere, F3 pentru Find Next); eu nu folosesc programe de curatat registrii, ci sterg cheile manual. **(try to enter registry and delete the possible Photoshop traces left there. (Start – Run – type regedit, CTRL+F for key search, DEL for delete, F3 for Find Next), I don't use programs for cleaning registry, but do it manually)**

As one can notice, in the Romanian forum conversations meta-explanations represent a discursive strategy the locutor uses in order to avoid ambiguity and lend more efficiency to the communication of the cognitive content he/she transmits.

### 7.2.4.5 Fewer Closures

It seems that in Romanian web forum communications the locutors avoid including the closing part in the construction of the explanatory sequence. Very few occurrences have been identified as closures of the explanatory sequences. The end of an explanation can be marked abruptly by the locutor, as in [Ro10: 1830]:

[Ro10: 1830] Gata **(That's it!)**

At times, it can be an invitation to action as in “try to install” or “I hope you ...”. This means that the explanation is oriented to a practical goal and actively involves the addressee:

[Ro13: 2549-2550] ...Incearca sa-l instalezi. **(Try to install it)**

[Ro16: 3561-3571] ...Sper sa te descurci... **(I hope you'll manage)**

As well, the closures can be constructed as greetings and good wishes, as in the case of examples [Ro10, 1947] and [Ro10, 1969]. This discursive construction suggests the idea of an invitation to act on behalf of the locutor:

[Ro10, 1947] Spor! **(Way to go!)**

[Ro10, 1969] Spor! **(Way to go!)**

### 7.2.4.6 Diversity in Explanatory Texts

As already pointed out in chapter 3.5 we have considered two main aspects of explanations: the *speech act* and the *explanatory text*. The first is a complex structure, formed by different interrelated explanatory cores. The explanatory cores reveal the complexity of the internal structure of an explanatory sequence. In the case of the Romanian sub-corpus it was quite difficult to encounter complex explanatory structures for, in general, the explanations on the Romanian web forums are formed by short explanatory cores.

In the first example, [Ro8: 1482-1488], the locutor explains the complex procedure of solving a driver conflict of the operating system Windows:

[Ro8: 1482-1488]<sup>129</sup> Sigur e driverul e cel corespunzător? **Faptul că** a stat atât până să instaleze driverul, nu cred că are legatură directă cu eroarea. **Din câte știi eu**, (1)DirectInput se ocupă cu procesarea datelor venite de la tastatură, mouse sau vreun game-controller (2)(joystick, gamepad, volan). (3)**De aceea** te-am întrebat dacă apare vreun semn de avertizare în Device Manager, fie la "Display Adapters", fie la "Sound,Video & Game Controllers", fie de altundeva. (4)**După ce ai deconectat ce aveai în USB-uri, tot în Device Manager, dă-i "Action> Scan for Hardware Changes", apoi reîncearcă să intri în DxDiag, să vezi dacă reappare eroarea.**

(5)**Încearcă să cauți și să instalezi ultimul driver pentru modelul plăcii video, cel mai bine de pe site-ul producătorului.**

LE: (6)**Uitam un lucru, reinstalează și driverele plăcii de bază, cele pentru Chipset.**

The explanatory sequence is formed by six cores marked by numbers from (1) to (6). In order to better observe the different categories of simple explanations involved, a colour was assigned to each category (description of actions – red; definitions – green; examples – purple, and prototypical explanations - blue). In [Ro8: 1482-1488] there can be identified the main explanatory core formed by simple sequences (4), (5) and (6). Sequences (1), (2), and (3) precede the main core and form together a separate explanatory core that is highly cohesive. The example is interactively constructed and this aspect can be observed in (3), where

<sup>129</sup> In the case of the extended fragments we will provide translation only for the sequences and examples analysed. The analysis has been revised and evaluated by Romanian native speakers, specialists in linguistics and discourse analysis.

the locutor mentions a previous question: “De aceea te-am întrebat dacă apare vreun semn de avertizare în Device Manager” (**that’s why I asked you if there is a warning sign in Device Manager**). The way the three first sequences are interrelated is quite unique. Sequence (1) has a double explanatory function. It is both a definition, so its primary function is to point out what a concept is, and a part of a more complex structure, a prototypical explanation (responding to a *why-question*).

Simply as a definition, (1) explains what DirectInput is: “DirectInput se ocupă cu procesarea datelor venite de la tastatură, mouse sau vreun game-controller” (**DirectInput processes the data received from the keyboard, mouse or some other game-controller**). As one can notice, the definition is constructed by pointing out the functions of the computer program. This first sequence is completed by a meta-explanation (2), in turn formed by examples: “joystick, gamepad, volan” (**joystick, gamepad, wheel**). The latter determines sequence (1) by explaining what the locutor understands by “game-controller”.

The last component of this explanatory structure is “De aceea te-am întrebat dacă apare vreun semn de avertizare în Device Manager, fie la "Display Adapters", fie la "Sound,Video & Game Controllers", fie de altundeva.” (**That is why I asked you if there is any warning sign in Device Manager, either at "Display Adapters", or at "Sound,Video & Game Controllers", or from elsewhere**). This structure is strongly related with (1) through the pro-form<sup>130</sup> “de aceea” (**that is why**), which usually pairs up with “pentru că” (**because**), which is elliptic in (1). It is also important to observe that (3) rephrases questions asked by the locutor in a previous intervention. The repetition of these questions represent in [Ro8: 1482-1488] the *problematization* stage of the explanatory process<sup>131</sup>. In this explanatory process (1) is the explanation, which corresponds to the second explanatory function cumulated by (1).

As we have already mentioned, the main explanation is a description of actions divided into 3 sequences: (3), (4), and (5). Every sequence consists of different acts, and the information is organised by using temporal markers: “după ce” (**after**), “apoi” (**then**). Sequence (4) consists of three acts: “ai deconectat” (**you have disconnected**), dă-i (**click**), and “reîncearcă” (**retry**). The sequence ends with a reference to the finality of the actions described: “să vezi dacă reapare eroarea” (**to see if the error reappears**).

Another series of action descriptions forms sequence (5). Here, the description of actions is modalised by the use of the verb “a încerca” (**to try**), which apparently in Romanian acts as the attenuator of an imperative, since it eliminates the idea of order/command and introduces that of an invitation to action. Example (5) is formed by two acts: “a căuta” (**to search**) and “a instala” (**to install**).

<sup>130</sup> The Romanian Grammar denominates this pronoun as “element corelativ”.

<sup>131</sup> by Jean-Michel Adam (1992: 95-97)

The last sequence, (6), is intended to complete the instructions in the preceding sequences, (4) and (5). It contains a singular act: “reinstalează” (**reinstall**) and it is introduced as the last piece of information the locutor needs to add in order to complete the information on the topic for the addressee. “Uitam un lucru” (**I forgot one thing**) is meant to actualise the context of the discussion and to create thematic cohesion with it. It also creates the impression of a conversation-like dialogue, since it eliminates the distance between the participants in the interaction.

The second example of systematic explanation confirms the importance of the description of action sequence on the Romanian web forums. This example is also a description of actions<sup>132</sup> explaining the simplest way to filter information in an MsExcel file.

[Ro10: 1834-1840] cel mai simplu e cu AutoFilter, dupa care (1)pe coloana cu data selectezi din drop-down optiunea "Custom" si (2)la conditii introduci:  
 "is greater than or equal to" si (3)selectezi in dreapta inceputul perioadei care te intereseaza  
 (4a)AND (5)(conditia a doua)  
 (4b)"is less than or equal to" si (6)selectezi in dreapta sfarsitul perioadei  
 (7)Dupa OK, vei avea filtrate doar acele randuri care indeplinesc cele doua conditii, (8)adica se gasesc in perioada pe care o doresti.  
 Ca sa insumezi campurile, la sfarsit (9)scrii formula =SUBTOTAL(9,coloana H (10)de la primul la ultimul rand selectat).  
 Gata.

This fragment consists in ten explanatory cores marked by numbers from (1) to (10). The main explanation is a *description of actions* but the text displays the heterogeneous structure of other different explanatory sequences, which are also present. For this reason we have assigned different colours to each category (red for instructions ; purple for meta-explanations). The text is a description of actions formed by a series of sequences: (1), (2), (3), (4a+b), (6), (7), and (9). The entire text displays a linear structure. The sequences from (1) to (3) present a sequential progression of the description and involve explicit actions: (1) “[you] select), (2) “introduce” ([you] introduce), and (3) “selectezi” ([you] select). The cohesion between these sequences is maintained with the help of the conjunction “și” (**and**). Sequence (4) is split into two by

<sup>132</sup> Actually, the most complex explanations in Romanian are formed by instructions. The procedural texts seem to be the most important on the Romanian web forums in terms of complexity, extension and quantity.



sequence (5), a meta-explanation. This sequence represents the second part of the description of an Excel formula, and it is formed by elliptic structures. The role of meta-explanation (5) is to mark the introduction of a second condition as required by the syntax of a mathematical formula. Sequences (4b) and (6) are separated by the conjunction “și” (**and**). The elliptic construction (7) is introduced by the temporal marker “după” (**after**) indicating that the action in (7) is coherent with the actions previously described. This sequence is followed by an expositive sequence presenting the result of the actions. This sequence generates the prototypical explanatory sequence (8) which explains the meaning of “cele două condiții” (**the two conditions**) belonging to the previous sequence. The description of actions ends with (9), a sequence determined by meta-explanation (10) which explains the meaning of the formula in (9).

As one can notice, the explanations in Romanian form complex structures, whose main parts seem to be procedural<sup>133</sup>. The main explanation is reinforced by varied minor explanatory cores that supplement the information in the main structure.

## 7.2.5 Explanation on Catalan Forums

Knowledge communication on the Catalan web forums follows the discursive patterns determined by the constraints of the channel of communication. Nevertheless, our analysis will point out that, besides these constraints and the general characteristics of the genre, specific features of knowledge communication in Catalan are also observable. As we have already established that in web forums communication the core of knowledge transmission is the explanatory sequence, in this section we will focus on the description of this particular sequence.

### 7.2.5.1 Introducing Explanation as Possibility or Alternative

We shall begin the analysis by taking into account not only the explanatory sequence but also the discursive strategies used by the locutor in order to introduce an explanation. We consider the introductory strategies as determinant for the manner the locutor considers the topic of the discussion. An explanation introduced as a *warning*, *recommendation*, or as a *personal opinion* represents the locutor's different attitudes towards the topic and the addressee.

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<sup>133</sup> This statement has resulted from our empiric observations on the Romanian corpus that the three explanatory texts we considered for analysis were all procedural texts.

Many introductory strategies can be observed in the Catalan forum. The simplest of them seems to be the announcement of the cognitive content to be explained, as in example [Cat26: 3373-3376]. Here, the locutor shows an impersonal and distant attitude towards the addressee and the topic, which suggests that the explanation is conceptualised as concise, objective, and accurate:

[Cat26: 3373-3376] Com instal·lar-ne en el Thunderbird

The more developed introductory strategies usually announce the cognitive content of the explanation (1) and its finality (2), as in [Cat36: 4349-4371]:

[Cat36: 4349-4371] (1)Comandes ms-Dos (2)per a intentar reanimar el windows

A more personal perspective is introduced by the conceptualisation of explanations as *opinion*. The expressions of the locutor's subjectivity, such as "penso que" or "crec que", reveal his/her position as regards the topic of communication:

[Cat4: 472-473] **Penso que** la millor solució és...

[Cat28: 3495-3496] **Crec que**...

Another discursive strategy that reveals the position of the locutor concerning the topic of the thread is the *evaluation*. In examples [Cat13: 1485-1488] and [Cat2, 203-205] the use of the adjectives "senzill" and the negation of "estrany" are intended to evaluate the situation and to reassure the addressee through the aspectualisation of the explanatory content to follow. The locutor, before commencing to explain, assures the addressee that the situation he/she describes is within normal parameters:

[Cat13: 1485-1488] És molt **senzill**

[Cat2, 203-205] I no és **estrany** que...

An introductory strategy illustrating the locutor's rapport with the addressee and his/her position regarding the topic of discussion is represented by the introduction of the explanation as a *recommendation*. The *recommendation* involves the locutor as the *source of knowledge* and the addressee as the *receiver* of the cognitive content, thus positioning them in an asymmetric relation of authority. This means that the stronger position is occupied by the locutor (*source of knowledge*), but the addressee is free to follow the locutor's directions or ignore them. The use of the verb "recomanar" suggests that the locutor is only a provider of information and he/she neither imposes on nor does he/she oblige the addressee to take action:

[Cat18: 2333-2334] et **recomanaria**...

[Cat39: 4613-4614] et **recomano** que usis ...

When the locutor wants to call the attention of the addressee to the importance of the content he/she communicates, he/she can choose to introduce the explanation as a *warning*. *Warnings* can be implicit, as in example [Cat1: 65-66], where the locutor interrupts the verbal exchange of the participants in the discussion and *warns* them that the topic of discussion is inappropriate for the *thread*. We consider this to be an *implicit warning* because it consists in the locutor's statement: "això és el fòrum de Windows", suggesting that the recommendations concerning the use of other operating systems, such as Linux (the topic of the warned participants), are not appropriate for the *thread*. The appellative "nois" is meant to call to order in an informal manner the participants in the discussion:

[Cat1: 65-66] Nois, això és el fòrum de Windows.

The explanation can also be introduced as an *explicit warning* by precautionary statements as in examples [Cat2: 162-197] and [Cat36: 4349-4371]:

[Cat2: 162-197] Atenció...

[Cat36: 4349-4371] ATENCIO:

As already commented upon in the previous sections of this chapter, the conceptualisation of the explanation as *trial and error* is universal. Evidences of this conceptualisation can be found on every specialised web forum independently of the topic or the language. In the Catalan forum discussions there are just a few such occurrences, which means this is not a very popular discursive strategy. Usually, it is introduced by the verb "provar" in the Imperative:

[Cat17: 2220] prova...

As we have already observed in the other corpora, a generalised method of learning about computers and Internet is known as *trial and error*. Conceptualisations of this method can be observed in examples [Cat5: 683] and [Cat6: 765]. The use of the verb "provar" introduces the explanation as a *possible* solution:

[Cat5: 683] **Pots provar** a...

[Cat6: 765] Jo **provaria** de...

Modalisation is a current strategy in introducing explanations on the Catalan web forums. One of the most common modalisations is

constructed with the verb “poder” and the infinitive form of a verb of action, like “fer” in example [Cat3: 439-440]. The idea behind this introduction conceptualises the explanation as *possibility*:

[Cat3: 439-440] El que **pots fer** es...

Other modalisations in Catalan introduce the explanation as *obligation*. An example is [Cat30: 3734-3737], where the explanation is introduced by the structure “**haver**” + **Vb. of action**, and conceptualises it as a series of actions the addressee has to perform in order to obtain the result he/she desires:

[Cat30: 3734-3737] Si tens el windows xp **has de fer** el següent.

The explanations introduced by “potser” are modalised either as *eventuality*, example [Cat32: 3909] or as *alternatives*, in [Cat6: 777-778]:

[Cat32: 3909] **potser** ús serveix

[Cat6: 777-778] o **potser**...

The explanation can be introduced as an answer to the intervention of the previous speaker, a strategy that brings interaction to the web forums communication. There are different manners the locutor can introduce an explanation interactively. One such possibility would be to introduce the explanatory sequence as an *alternative option* in relation with the content of the previous interventions, as in example [Cat4: 484-485], where “altra” refers to the previous solutions proposed by the participants:

[Cat4: 484-485] **Una altra opció**, per si no et vols complicar la vida, es...

Another strategy the locutor can use to interactively introduce an explanation is by naming his/her advice an *answer*. This introductory strategy involves directly both of the participants in an exchange and describes the explanation as verbal interaction:

[Cat8: 9668-970] Aquí tens la **resposta**:

A peculiar situation, where the locutor may adopt a different introductory strategy, is represented by the case where the problem presented has more than one solution and the locutor tries to give an exhaustive explanation. According to J-M Adam (1992), this introductory strategy would correspond to a process of *decomposition*, where the locutor identifies multiple “methods” each supposing an individual explanation. The role of the introductory structure is to make known to the addressee information about the explanatory structure it

introduces. In example [Cat7: 871-877], the introductory strategy announces a complex explanatory structure, interactively constructed and consisting of a series of explanations:

[Cat7: 871-877] Hi ha mes d'una **manera** de fer-ho...

At times, the introductory strategies are not only interactive but they also carry orality marks, as in example [Cat15, 1998-1903] where the introduction of the explanation consists in the interjection (ui!) followed by an exclamation: “se m’oblidava...”. This introductory sequence represents a special situation, where the locutor, after having provided an explanation, realises that he/she has forgotten to provide some significant information. “Ui, que se m’oblidava!” is a spontaneous exclamation, specific to face-to-face communication:

[Cat15, 1998-1903] **Ui, q se m'blidava...**

Another conversation-like introduction can be observed in example [Cat33: 3974-3977], where the locutor introduces the explanation as a personal contribution to a verbal interaction involving a group of participants, each presenting his/her own explanation concerning the topic:

[Cat33: 3974-3977] **Posats a comentar el tema...** sense cap dubte et recomanaria...

The explanatory sequences can also be introduced as *declarations* through which the locutor expresses his/her position with regard to what he/she says. These introductions are marked by the emphasis of the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun “jo”<sup>134</sup>. They also contain *expressions of solidarity* with the addressee, which creates a strong bonding between the participants in the discussion:

[Cat1: 88-90] **tens raó marcbel, jo** normalment miro de buscar la solució per windows,...

[Cat5: 607-611] **Jo** quan haig de fer servir els títols amb xifres, sempre faig servir el mateix "truc"...

[Cat22: 3025] **Jo de tu** intentaria fer...

The introductory strategy the locutor chooses is important for the further development of the construction of the explanation on the web forums. Its main function is to create a sort of *horizon d’attente* for the addressee concerning the explanation, the attitude of the locutor in relation with the explained content.

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<sup>134</sup> The use of the personal pronoun in Catalan is not mandatory.

### 7.2.5.2 Description of Actions and Other Explanatory Cores

Simple explanations are the basic explanatory cores that allow the locutor to explain a *concept*, a *procedure* or the *reasons* for an event/action. In this section we will analyse the following categories of explanatory sequences: *definitions*, *descriptions of actions* and *prototypical explanations*.

*Explaining concepts:* In the Catalan corpus definitions can adopt a wide range of forms. Sometimes they may form complex structures, as in [Cat8: 1016-1024], where the definitory sequence displays different cores. It consists of four definitions (1 to 4) aiming to define the software AIM:

[Cat8: 1016-1024] (1)El BSplayer és una cagerà de bou com una catedral, i (2)amb un adaware d'eixos q fan botar l'AV de mala manera. De fet, tractí d'instal·lar-me una versió del pro per a provar, i ni el pro es quedava sense la sorpresa.

**En canvi**, (3)l'AIMP és un reproductor q és l'hòstia, li ha llevatr, per mèrits propis, el lloc al durant molt de temps il·lustre Winamp, i no cal recordar q el Winamp des q fou comprat per AOL fulminà totes les traduccions. (4)L'AIMP proporciona una qualitat de so, unes eines i unes prestacions,q a hores d'ara, el posa per damunt de qualsevol reproductor de música. I tot això amb un consum de recursos q fa riure...

One can observe the oral rhetoric and the familiar register of the text from the beginning. Sequence (1) represents the *metaphorical definition* of an object (BSPlayer): “El BSplayer és una cagerà de bou...”. The metaphorical definition is emphasised by a comparison “com una catedral” superlativising the definition. The initial definitory sequence is followed immediately by a second *distinctive definition*: “i amb un adaware d'eixos q fan botar l'AV de mala manera”. This definition completes sequence (1) adding the external features (action) of the defined object. Segment (3), “l'AIMP és un reproductor q és l'hòstia”, is also a *distinctive definition* (aspectualisation) which shows the locutor's subjective involvement. The last definitory fragment (4) is by contrast a definition. Before (4), the locutor describes the inconvenience of a similar program (Winamp). Fragment (4) enumerates a series of external features of the object (AIMP) as evaluated by the locutor. The construction of the superlatives in this definition “el posa per damunt de qualsevol reproductor de música” and “un consum de recursos q fa riure...” is coherent with the beginning of the fragment and contributes to the orality of the entire fragment.

*i. Essential definitions:* The first category of definitions one can observe in the Catalan corpus explains *what is a notion*. They respect the general pattern <definiendum> + **operator** + <definiens> and define the object in terms of *proximate genus*:

[Cat28: 3519] **L'etiqueta del volument actual es el nom del disc** que volem fer el canvi.

In example [Cat28: 3519] “l'etiqueta del volument actual” represents the *definiendum* and “el nom del disc” represents its *proximate genus*.

Some definitions, besides their semantic content, can transmit intentions, like in [Cat1: 65-66], where the locutor reminds the participants in the discussion that the topic is inappropriate (thematic) and that a change is mandatory in the *thread*: “Nois, això és el fòrum de Windows”. This definitory sequence has a rhetorical use:

[Cat1: 65-66] Nois, **això és el fòrum de Windows**. Si s'hi fa una pregunta, no s'hi val respondre "passa't a Linux", sinó mirar de respondre de forma concreta els dubtes dels altres....

*ii. Definition by similarity:* A different definitory strategy consists in the construction of the definition as comparison “es com”, in example [Cat16: 2201-2202]. Here, the locutor compares the two concepts “firewall” and “asegurança” in order to create a more explicit image of what the first concept is. This definition is completed with the description of the finality of the computer program:

[Cat16: 2201-2202] El firewall **es com una assegurança** que actua per a que sigui difícil tenir accés al teu ordinador des de fora en cas de que l'antimalware no detecti la infecció.

A similar construction is [Cat22: 2987], where the *definiendum* is not clearly mentioned by the locutor, its place being taken by a reference (link) “<http://www.gnulinix.cat/>” and the *definiens* providing the *proximate genus* of the defined object “com alternativa a un altre sistema operatiu”:

[Cat22: 2987] Sino, **com alternativa a un altre sistema operatiu, tens <http://www.gnulinix.cat/>**

*iii. Nominal Definitions:* *Nominal definitions* are powerful cognitive mechanisms. Used in specialised fields they can be very effective in explaining the terminology of a specific domain. In example [Cat3: 231], the nominal definition is constructed interactively. The locutor mentions a statement of the previous speaker “d' això que esmentes” and the *nominal definition* he/she provides is an answer to this statement. In this case, the *definiendum* is referred to by “això” and actualises in the locutor’s enunciation a description of the object. The *definiens* (domini) is the appropriate technical term corresponding to the object described. The function of the definition in this case is to assure optimal knowledge communication and avoid ambiguities. Once defined, the object is

referred to by its proper name. In [Cat3: 231], after the definition of “domini” the term is used in the very next explanatory structure:

[Cat3: 231] d' **això que esmentes, s' en diu domini**. Tens que contractar un **domini**, i amb ell pots apuntar-lo al hosting ( allotjament) que vulguis.

*iv. Descriptive definitions:* A recurrent manner of defining notions on web forums is to describe the non-essential features of an object. As pointed out in chapter 3, we have distinguished between the following kinds of *descriptive definitions*: *distinctive definition*, *genetic definition* and *causal definition*. In example [Cat3: 308-310] an object (Adsense) is defined by three *descriptive definitions*. The first is a *distinctive definition*: “El més fàcil és el programa Adsense”, which describes the attributes of the object (aspectualisation). This first sequence is completed by a *genetic definition* “Adsense de Google”, followed by (3), another *distinctive definition*, which describes the non-essential features of the object in terms of actions (*what the object does*) “elegeix anuncis relacionats amb el contingut de la teva web”:

[Cat3: 308-310] (1)**El més fàcil és el programa Adsense**  
(2)**de Google**, (3)**que elegeix anuncis relacionats amb el contingut de la teva web**, per tant un percentatge important seran en català.

In example [Cat22: 2892-2895] consisting of a *distinctive definition*, one can observe that the *definiendum* is a reference (URL) which is described in terms of actions:

[Cat22: 2892-2895]... Pots formatejar amb <http://gparted.sourceforge.net/livecd.php> **és un cd que arrenca, i et donarà les opcions de formatar els discos** que tens a l' ordinador.

In other cases, the *distinctive definitions* are structured as final clauses, as in [Cat4: 495-498]. Here, the *definiendum* is represented by the demonstrative “aquest”, which ensures the thematic cohesion of the dialogue, and the *definiens*, which is structured in two parts: the *proximate genus* (és un programa pensat per fer còpies íntegres de discs d'àudio) and the *specific difference* (especialment per els que no tenen talls entre pistes). The definitory sequence also presents an *ostensive definition* illustrating with examples what the locutor means by “discs d'àudio que no tenen talls entre pistes”:

[Cat4: 495-498] (1)**Aquest és un programa pensat per fer còpies íntegres de discs d'àudio, especialment per els que no tenen talls entre pistes** (2)(disc de concerts, per exemple).



Other *distinctive definitions* can be observed in [Cat3: 308-310], where the *definiens* describes some non-essential features (aspectualisation) of the *definienda* (Tradedoubler, Comission Junction):

[Cat3: 308-310]... Altres programes com **Tradedoubler i Comission Junction són més complicats**, cada empresa ha d'aprovar la teva web i després tu pots elegir quins banners seus poses.

Example [Cat9: 1206-1209] displays a more complex defintory structure. The *definiendum* (Ashampoo Burning Studio 8) is described repeatedly in (1), (2), and (3). The first defintory sequence represents an *essential definition* describing the nature of the defined object in terms of the *proximate genus* (software de gravació). The definition also comprises a subjective evaluation of the object (aspectualisation) by the locutor. Sequences (2) and (3) are *distinctive definitions* which focus on several non-essential features of the *definiendum*: “és de pagament” and “és més senzill i no ocupa”. The last definition (4) has a different *definiendum* “la versió 6.6 del programa”, and represents a *distinctive definition* (aspectualisation):

[Cat9: 1206-1209] Doncs tens l'Ashampoo Burning Studio 8, (1)**un excel·lent software de gravació** que li fa sombra al Nero (2)**(també és de pagament)** (3)**però que és més senzill i no ocupa tant**. La versió 6.6 del programa (4)**és gratuïta** i et pots baixar també el pack de traducció al català.

Similar *distinctive definitions* can be observed in the Catalan corpus in examples like [Cat12: 1467-1469] and [Cat22: 2987].

A *definition by negation* (1) can be observed in example [Cat11: 1380]. Here, the locutor has the intention to correct by a negative definition a previous statement by the collocutor. Both (1) and (2) are definitions describing non-essential features of the object.

[Cat11: 1380] (1)**No està en asccii (2)sinó en ISO-8859-15**. Crec que has de convertir-lo a utf-8.

*b. Description of actions and procedural texts:* The procedural texts are essential in the explanation of *how to do something* on the computer and in the Internet domains. The instructions and indications the locutor gives to the addressee in a web forum situation of communication can adopt different forms. One can observe the preference of the Catalan speakers to *describe* and *comment* on the actions in a procedure bringing details and mentioning all of its aspects in order to provide complete knowledge.

As a result of this propensity of the Catalan speakers on the web forums, their procedural texts are, generally, heterogeneous, extensive

and complex. In some rare cases, the explanation of a procedure can adopt other forms. In this section we propose to describe all the varieties of *descriptions of actions* that can be observed on the Catalan web forms, beginning from the simplest to the most complex.

The simplest form a procedural text can adopt is the *list of actions*. In the Catalan corpus we have identified only two cases in which the *list of actions* was chosen as a discursive strategy intended to explain a procedure. Our first example, [Cat26: 3373-3376], is a list of actions formed by three series of acts and introduced by an enunciating sequence specifying the content of the *list of actions*. Every series of acts is marked with a number by the locutor. Sequence (1) consists of two acts (*cliqueu* and *escolliu*) followed by the description of the finality of the action. The next step of the procedure consists of a single act (*obriu*) and the third step consists of a series of three acts (*cliqueu*, *cerqueu* and *cliqueu*). All the acts refer to the same object, the program Thunderbird:

[Cat26: 3373-3376] Com instal·lar-ne en el Thunderbird

1. **Cliqueu** amb el botó dret a l'enllaç de sota i **escolliu** "Anomena i desa..." per a baixar-vos el fitxer i desar-lo al disc.
2. En el Mozilla Thunderbird, **obriu** Complementos del menú Eines.
3. **Cliqueu** el botó Instal·la, **cerqueu** el fitxer que us heu baixat i **cliqueu** "D'acord".

The next example, [Cat11: 1424-1427], as one can observe, is not a list of actions proper, but a list considered to be a simple enumeration of elements. In this example the procedural text has the form of a list but it presents a heterogeneous structure due to the presence of descriptive sequences and meta-explanations. In [Cat11: 1424-1427], the main explanatory sequence consists of a list of actions marked with numbers, 1) and 2), by the locutor:

[Cat11: 1424-1427] Amb caràcter general:

- 1) (1)**Descarregar** el fitxer, però en comptes de donar-li la terminació.txt (que és el que se sol fer en els fitxers sense format), (2)**donar-li** la terminació.csv
- 2) (3)**Obrir** el fitxer.csv amb el Calc. Immediatament apareixerà un quadre de diàleg que ens preguntarà quin és el separador (en aquest cas, '!'). I ja està.

Each element of the list is formed by a series of acts, (1), (2), and (3), representing actions to be performed by the addressee. In this sequence there are acts concerning the download of a file and acts concerning the opening of a file. Some aspects of the *list of actions* are specified by meta-explanations, others by expositive sequences.

The most important explanatory sequence on the Catalan web forums seems to be the *description of actions*, since the majority of the occurrences concerning the explanatory sequences belong to this discursive strategy. The attention the users of the forum show to the *description of actions* on the Catalan forums can be observed in the extension and the high precision a procedure can acquire. An illustrative example from this point of view is example [Cat29: 3610-3624]. Here, the locutor explains meticulously every step of the procedure of downloading a file from the Internet. One can notice different levels of explanation in this example, such as: *descriptions of actions*, *descriptions of reactions*<sup>135</sup> and *descriptions of the context of work*. The entire explanatory sequence consists in alternations of the different types of descriptions used by the locutor as discursive strategy in order to create a complete image of the procedure to perform:

[Cat29: 3610-3624] Pel que fa a baixar-se un a programa, sempre (1)s'ha de clicar (2)a la pàgina Web on el trobis un botó, tecla o enllaç que pot estar escrit en anglès (**Download**), en castellà (**Descargar**) o en català com en aquest Web.

(3)Després de clicar aquest botó o enllaç, s'obre un quadre de diàleg en el teu navegador d'Internet (*Netscape, Mozilla, Internet Explorer...*), una pantalla peticona, on se t'indica que s'iniciarà la descàrrega en el teu PC.

(4)Normalment el quadre de diàleg, que acostuma a dir-ho en castellà, et demana si vols executar directament el programa que et vas a baixar, amb la qual cosa s'instal·larà directament en el teu PC una vegada s'hagi acabat la descàrrega, o si el vols desar en alguna carpeta per executar-lo després. Si esculls la primera opció hi ha un botó que es diu "**Ejecutar**", mentre que si esculls la segona opció, hi ha un botó que es diu "**Guardar**". Si no vols fer cap de les dues hi ha un botó que et permet abortar la descàrrega, en qualsevol moment, que es diu "**Cancelar**".

Si has descarregat i desat el programa en una carpeta especial del teu PC, (5)pots fer-ho en el mateix Escriptori o en una carpeta concreta. (6)Per defecte, el Windows té una carpeta dins del grup **Mis documentos** que es diu **Mis archivos recibidos** i una altra que es diu **Mis descargas**.

(7)Cerca el fitxer descarregat i (8)clica directament sobre seu. Acostuma a ser un fitxer amb l'extensió **.exe**, (9)després ell farà la resta. Se t'obrirà un assistent que t'ajudarà a instal·lar el programa en el seu lloc i ubicació, i que demanrà diverses dades o confirmació de pantalles fins a acabar amb la instal·lació.

(10)Sovint, quan s'acabi la instal·lació, el Windows es reiniciarà automàticament o et sortirà un missatge confirmant-te que el programa ja està completament instal·lat i operatiu i se't proposarà de fer-lo funcionar des d'aquell mateix moment. Espero que m'hagis entès.

Que la força t'acompanyi!

<sup>135</sup> By *description of reactions* we mean the reaction of the electronic environment (in the case of our corpus the operating system Windows) to the actions of the user.

[Cat29: 3610-3624] presents four main cores, (1), (5), (7), and (8), representing the description of the actions the addressee has to perform. Each description of actions represents the starting point for a *description of the work context* (2) and/or a *description of reactions* (3).

Besides the descriptions of actions (cognitive goal) the locutor also manifests his/her attitude (subjectivity) with regard to the content of the communication. Different modalities can be observed during the description of the action process: the first core is modalised as *obligation*: “s’ha de clicar”, while the following one, (5), is structured as *possibility*: “pots fer-ho”. The last descriptions of actions, (7) and (8), are constructed as commands using the imperative forms of the verbs. The alternation of the description sequences follows a logical pattern a) action; b) description of the work context, and c) reaction. Sometimes, only two of the three discursive strategies are used. For example, instruction (5) is followed only by the description of the working context. In other cases, (7) and (8), the instruction is followed only by a *description of reactions*.

The example we have just analysed, [Cat29: 3610-3624], represents the most complex description of action sequences one can observe in the Catalan corpus. Other explanatory sequences present the same heterogeneity even if they don’t display the same complexity. Some of these can be observed in sequences: [Cat5:714- 722], [Cat25: 3275-3279], and [Cat7: 928-935] of the Catalan corpus.

A different discursive implementation of the descriptions of actions can be observed in example [Cat41: 4822-4832], where the *description of the context of work* is reduced to a minimum (names of menus, buttons, and options) while the *description of the reactions* is mentioned just once. The locutor’s intervention in this example consists of two complementary parts: a solution (1<sup>st</sup> part of the intervention) and its alternative (2<sup>nd</sup> part of the intervention). This double structured intervention shows the intention of the locutor to provide a complete cognitive content. The two parts present different structures and content. In addition, the locutor positions himself/herself differently in relation with the two parts of the text. For example, if in the first part the verbal forms indicate the confidence of the locutor in the effectiveness of the solution he/she provides, the modalisation “pots provar d’instal·lar” in the second part of the same text indicates less self-confidence. This idea of uncertainty is reinforced in the end of the explanation by a reference: “segons diuen en la descripcio”, which suggests that the locutor has limited knowledge of the aspect presented.

[Cat41: 4822-4832] SI tens el cd d'instal·lacio de l'office, la solucio es molt facil. [...]:

(1)Introdueixes el cd d'instal·lacio, (2)selecciones "Agregar o quitar funciones". En el següent pas, (3)selecciones "Elegir personalizacion avanzada de aplicaciones", (4)fas clic a següent i tot seguit desplega (fent

clic al símbol "+") l'apartat "Funciones compartidas de Office", (5)desplega ara "Herramientas de correccion" i ara (6)fent clic sobre la icona que té una fletxeta cap a baix, (7)selecciona en el menu que s'obrija la opcio "ejecutar todo des de mi PC".

Finalment ja nomes (8)queda clicar "Actualizar".

-----Alternativa-----

Si no tens el cd, o els passos anteriors no et convencen, pots provar d'instal·lar el paquet d'interficie en catala corresponent a la teva versio d'office oferits aqui a softcatala en el següent enllaç: <http://www.softcatala.org/ofimatica.htm>, el qual instal·la el corrector en català segons diuen en la descripcio.

Ja diras si això t'ha servit o no.

Similar explanatory sequences presenting a high density of *descriptions of actions* have been identified in the following examples: [Cat22: 3011-3013], [Cat3: 439-440], [Cat5: 683], [Cat13: 1485-1488], [Cat13: 1500-1501], [Cat28: 3556-3558], [Cat30: 3734-3737], [Cat33: 4108-4010].

A more personal approach to the *description of actions* in the Catalan web forums can be observed in the description of the actions in the 1<sup>st</sup> person, like in example [Cat5: 607-611]. Here, the locutor explains a personal method describing the actions in the 1<sup>st</sup> person. The intervention ends with an invitation to action which justifies the locutor-oriented presentation “Pots provar així a veure si et serveix” :

[Cat5: 607-611]...

Primer **escric** tots els títols un sota l'altre fins que **aconsegueixo** la numeració que **m'agrada** i llavors **afegeixo** el contingut dels diferents capítols i apartats. Si **necessito** saltar de pàgina jo sempre **utilitzo** CTRL + Intro que afegeix un salt de pàgina. Des de el menú **em sembla** que és insertar salt, i llavors escollir salt de pàgina. Pots provar així a veure si et serveix.

At times, one can also observe concise descriptions of actions on the Catalan forum, as in [Cat6: 777-778]:

[Cat6: 777-778] **Prova de fer copia** dels teus preferits, i del que t'interessi, i **borres** la carpeta de confuguració de perfil de thunderbird

A specific aspect of the explanations on the Catalan forum seems to be the presence of *multiple explanations*<sup>136</sup>. More than one occurrence of the description of actions display two alternatives methods about how to perform a procedure, as in example [Cat7: 871-877], where the locutor

<sup>136</sup> By *multiple explanations* we mean the presentations of more than one explanation for a single topic.

introduces the first explanation as “una possibilitat”. After this first explanatory sequence, he/she introduces in the second section of the intervention a different explanatory sequence describing “una altra manera”. This strategy permits a more complex form of knowledge acquisition and provides complex information on the topic of the discussion. It also introduces the idea of the existence of multiple solutions to a problem, which makes the forum members continue the learning process even if the first intent to apply a procedure has failed:

[Cat7: 871-877]...

**Una possibilitat** és tenir diferents registres a la taula, un per cada esdeveniment que ha assistit la persona, encara que així repeteixes bastant informació. Ja que si una persona va a 3 esdeveniments tindràs gravada la seva informació personal 3 cops.

**Una altra manera** que s'hem acut és utilitzar dues taules, una amb les dades bàsiques de la gent i una altre amb les assistències de la gent. D'aquesta manera les dades bàsiques (nom, cognom) estaran gravades una sola vegada i llavors a l'altre taula tens gravat el codi de la persona, juntament amb els esdeveniments que ha assistit.

Generally, the interactions on the web forums present orality markers and their aspect is that of written conversation. Multiple aspects of orality can be observed, one such example being [Cat38: 4497-4500]. Thus, the opening of the description of actions is an explanative sequence where the appellative “home” marks the familiar interpellation of the addressee. The following orality mark (2) is represented by the emphasis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> form of the personal pronoun “tu”, not mandatory in Catalan, which represents an invitation to action concordant with “home”. The third mark of orality is an instruction in a familiar register, “ni puto cas”, followed by (4), an oral construction: “espera't”. An alternative - we have already mentioned the propensity of the Catalans to provide complete explanations - is introduced in the second part of the locutor's intervention through a familiar construction (5). The same enunciation ends with another mark of orality, (6), an evaluation made by the locutor in a familiar register. The intervention ends with an exclamative sentence that consists in an invitation to action: “**No te'n penediràs!**”:

[Cat38: 4497-4500] (1)**No t'obliguen a res, home.** (2)**Tu selecciona** un dels molts llocs de descàrrega i s'obrirà una pàgina, on efectivament hi ha una sponsorització del Registry Mechanic però fixa't que diu RECOMENDEU DOWNLOAD (descàrrega recomanada). (3)**Ni puto cas.** (4)**Espera't** i se t'obrirà el gestor de descàrregues. (5)**Cas de no tenir-ne**, des de Softcatalà, baixa't l'Star Downloader que també és en català (6)**i va de conya.** I repeteixes l'operació.

O vés al Google demana AIMP 2.10 i te'l baixes d'un altre lloc. El fitxer de llengua ve incorporat. **(7)No te'n penediràs!**

At times, the description of actions is accompanied by complementary sources of information such as images (screen captures). Their function is explanatory too, for they serve to illustrate the working context of the explanation. On the Catalan forum the *multimodal explanation* is not frequent. Due to the complexity of the description of actions multimodal communication represents just an alternative to a detailed explanation.

An example of *multimodal description of actions* is [Cat15, 1998-1903]. Here, the locutor describes the set of actions necessary for the configuration of an email account. His/her explanation is completed by an image showing the context where the instructions have to be applied.

[Cat15, 1998-1903] Ui, q se m'blidava, lo del correu eixint ho has de configurar **així(mira la captura)**. En Afegeix afegixes rl servidoe d'eixida de cada compte q tingues i ho associes a cada compte, és clar.



Per a configurar, una vegada hages creat cada servidor d'eixida, les dades les pots trobar a les webs de cada correu, si és q no les saps ja. I si no,, et puc ajudar.



As one can notice, the description of actions on the Catalan forums is very complex and diverse. It represents an essential mechanism of knowledge communication.

*c. Prototypical explanations:* The prototypical explanation is the sequence which points out the reasons/motives behind the production of an event/phenomenon.

As in the case of the other explanatory structures on the Catalan forums, complex explanatory structures explaining reasons/motivations are currently used. In example [Cat19: 2601-2613] one can observe such

a complex structure developed by the locutor who motivates his/her preference for the navigator Firefox.

[Cat19: 2601-2613] Tinc unes quantes raons que fan del Firefox molt millor que Internet Explorer:

1. Segurament això no t'importarà, però **té versions per Windows, GNU/Linux i MacOS**. A més (almenys en Windows i GNU/Linux) **s'integra bé en tots**.

2. **És gratuït i lliure**. Això implica que **evoluciona més ràpid** que Internet Explorer.

3. **Té gairebé infinites extensions**, que milloren els possibles punts flacs, i que són creades pels usuaris. Per tant, **s'adapten a tot tipus de necessitats**.

4. Seguretat: **Internet Explorer té molts forats de seguretat** (no sé si en la versió 7 continua tenint-los, però segur que sí 😊).

5. Aspecte. Si t'agrada l'aspecte de l'internet explorer, doncs bé, millor per tu. Però el **Firefox té moltíssims temes** per canviar-li l'aspecte i **fer-lo molt més bonic** (o integrar-lo millor en el teu sistema operatiu).

6. Moltes webs no es veuen bé per culpa de **no seguir alguns estàndards bàsics** del llenguatge HTML, CSS i PHP.

7. **M'agrada en general, i això és molt important** 😊

Apa, ja m'he desfogat XD

PD: m'ho havia descuidat, si l'IE ocupa 50 mb deu ser perquè el codi no està tan optimitzat, però no entenc que un navegador web tan simple pugui ocupar tant 😊

Però si és tan complexa, no hauria de estar a l'apartat “complex explanations”?

Example [Cat19: 2601-2613] represents an extended prototypical explanatory structure where the locutor explains the reasons why he considers the navigator Firefox better than other navigators (IE). The reasons form a list and represent a contrastive analysis of the two programs. The goal of the explanatory sequence is announced in the introductory part: “Tinc unes quantes raons que fan del Firefox molt millor que Internet Explorer”. The following text is a thematic progression of the initial statement. The explanatory sequences focus alternatively on the complementary elements: Firefox and IE. The prototypical explanations describe positively Firefox and IE negatively. The structure of the explanatory cores is heterogeneous; some of them focus on the attributes of the programs (aspectualisation) as in (1)-(5), on the *action* (6), or as in (7) they display a subjective attitude regarding the topic: “M'agrada en general, i això és molt important”. This entire complex explanatory structure is subjective. Its subjectivity is announced at the beginning: “tinc unes quantes raons” and, as one can notice, its expression gets stronger by the end of the fragment: “Apa, ja m'he desfogat XD”.



In the Catalan corpus different *explanatory operators* can introduce prototypical explanations, such as: “que”, “ja que”, “perquè”, and “doncs”:

[Cat19: 2565] Jo abans utilitzava el firefox però me'n vaig cansar, **doncs** de vegades se'm quedava penjat al intentar validar un simple formulari!

[Cat2, 203-205] I no és estrany que no el tinguis **ja que** una persona que s'instal·la el Office en francès només té accés a Francès, Castellà, Àrab, i Anglès...

[Cat19: 2697] A mi sempre m'ha funcionat bé, excepte quan utilitzava Ubuntu amb Gnome, **que** a vegades se'm penjava al navegar pel Youtube 😊

[Cat44: 5087] Després vaig passar a la versió de pagament, sobretot **perque** pots programar còpies periòdiques, però el bàsic està molt bé.

Usually, the explanatory sequences are constructed as a *cause-effect* relation, as in examples [Cat1: 88-90], [Cat22: 2985], and [Cat2: 162-197]:

[Cat1: 88-90]... diria **que windows 2000 ja fa temps que no té suport**, per això m' eh decantat per gnulinux que per ara a mi em funciona bé. 😊

[Cat22: 2985] Si vols instal·lar el XP després de formatejar, hauras d' aconseguir-lo, **per que sinó en quedarà el disc sense poder arrancar cap sistema operatiu.**

At times, a prototypical explanation presents a more complex explanatory structure, as in example [Cat2: 162-197], where sequence (2) is related with sequence (1):

[Cat2: 162-197] Atenció, no serveixen els office 2003 "reduïts" que formen part de les distribucions modificades o "desateses" (ue) del Windows XP, **(1)ja que només contenen el diccionari castellà i els altres han estat extrets (2)perquè ocupi menys espai.**

In this case, the sequence is structured, one sequence (1) explaining the initial statement of the locutor: “no serveixen els office 2003 "reduïts" que formen part de les distribucions modificades o "desateses" (ue) del Windows XP” and the other (2) continuing the explanatory process initiated in (1) and providing the reason for it: “han estat extrets”.

Sometimes, the prototypical explanations may show the personal involvement of the locutor. A form of personal involvement is when the

locutor claims to be the source of the knowledge he/she provides, as in example [Cat16: 2115-2118]:

[Cat16: 2115-2118] Ho sé perquè l'he traduït **jo**.

A different form of self-involvement is mentioning the locutor's state of mind as warranting his/her actions, like in [Cat36: 4349-4371], where the locutor explains his/her gratitude to the addressee:

[Cat36: 4349-4371] I ja q estem, gràcies per la traducció, **perquè** quan al seu moment viu q estava traduït al català **em duguí una gran alegria**. I de fet, tota la meua família el gasta,hehehe.

Manifestations of the locutor's subjectivity (modalisation) can be observed in the explanatory process. For example, in [Cat6: 777-778] the attitude of the locutor concerning the topic is expressed as *possibility* and constructs the explanation hypothetically:

[Cat6: 777-778] o **potser** la capreta de configuració de thunderbird **ha quedat malmes algun arxiu**.

The reason for an action/event can consist in attributes and qualities (aspectualisation), as in [Cat3: 428], where “gratuit” and “gratis” explain the locutor's action:

[Cat3: 428] Jo he obert un compte a AldeaGlobal que és **gratuït** i em donen 1GB d'espai web **gratis**: <http://www.aldeaglobal.net>

Aspectualisation can also sometimes adopt a superlative form: “molt fàcil”, or that of an adjectival phrase like in “costa molt que entrin virus”, synonymous to “segur”:

[Cat12: 1454] Mira, si fas servir molt el correu, t'aconsello que obris una compta per gmail. És **molt fàcil i costa molt que entrin virus**. És **gratuïta**, com la hotmail

*Complex aspectualisation* can also be observed in [Cat41: 4843], where the explanatory sequence presents four aspectual segments or constructions: two adjectival (1) and (2), one nominal (3) and one verbal (4):

[Cat41: 4843] sempre pots instal·lar openoffice que és (1)**gratis** (2)**lliure** i està (3)**en català** i (4)**té corrector**.

The *reparatory explanation* is not a common structure on the Catalan web forums but it can be observed in such an example as [Cat6: 792]. Here, the explanatory sequence is intended to correct a statement by the previous speaker. The locutor's intervention begins with a

negative enunciation followed by the reparatory statement “la carpeta Mozilla” and by a *reparatory explanation*. The intervention ends with an implicit explanation concerning the initial negative construction:

[Cat6: 792] La carpeta Thunderbird no. La carpeta Mozilla, **q és la q conté els fixers del FF**. La carpeta Thunder conté els fixers del gestor de correu.

A special aspect of the prototypical explanation on the Catalan forums is the *narrativisation* of the explanations. This represents a peculiar type of explanations. Its explanatory operator is also atypical; here, “quan” points out a motive/reason and a moment in time. The text presents a linear structure with a logic progression which makes it very similar to narration:

[Cat16, 1963-1964] El Getrigh va ser deixat d'utilitzar per molta gent **quan es va saber que portava dins seu un troià** que informava sobre el que es descarregava a l'empresa que té la propietat del programa.

As one can notice, there is a rich diversity of prototypical explanations on the Catalan forums, each form expressing the cognitive content in a very different manner.

### 7.2.5.3 Fewer Meta-explanations

Meta-explanations are not a very recurrent explanatory phenomenon on the Catalan web forums. Nevertheless, they are used at times, when the locutor wants to specify an aspect of the main explanation sequence. They have the form of an enunciation representing a comment like in [Cat16: 2201-2202], where the meta-explanation revokes the main explanatory sequence “encara que fen servir windows mai es impossible”:

[Cat16: 2201-2202] El firewall es com una assegurança que actua per a que sigui difícil tenir accés al teu ordinador des de fora en cas de que l'antimalware no detecti la infecció **(encara que fen servir windows mai es impossible, si algú et vol fotre i ho sap fer, ho farà)**

Their extension and complexity may differ; a meta-explanation can sometimes consist of a single lexical unit. In example [Cat16, 2022-2025] its aim is to define the meaning assigned by the locutor to “applications”, with “addons” serving as its lexical definition:

[Cat16, 2022-2025] Pel que heu anat dient, penso que seria millor tenir un programa per separat per a gestionar totes les

descàrregues, ja que si es te tot centralitzat en el Firefox, certes aplicacions (**addons**) no funcionen en segons quina versió.

### 7.2.5.4 Explanatory References

The use of references is generalised in the knowledge communication process and the explanatory texts are no exception. On web forums they may adopt distinct forms, such as: link, URL, auto-reference, quotation, and so on. We also distinguish between two main functions: *referential* and *explanatory*. In this section we will describe the references with an *explanatory function* as part of the discursive strategy of knowledge communication.

The references with explanatory functions contribute to the effectiveness and rapidity of knowledge communication on the web forums. When a locutor wants to explain something, he/she has two possibilities: to write on the forum his/her own text or re-use reliable information that already exists on the Internet such as tutorials, manuals, articles, and books.

Explanatory references represent a form of web intertextuality. Their use is motivated by the authority, the high quality, and complexity of the information they provide.

As one can observe in examples [Cat2: 178-182] and [Cat8: 9668-970], a reference can be constructed interactively as an *answer*. Moreover, it is characterised by textual accuracy because all of the cognitive content is provided by the text pointed out by the reference rather than by the referential explanation itself:

[Cat2: 178-182] El de català, aquí tens la **resposta**:  
**<http://www.softcatala.org/articles/article30.htm>**

i

**[http://www.softcatala.org/articles/article30\\_2.htm](http://www.softcatala.org/articles/article30_2.htm)**

[Cat8: 9668-970] Aquí tens la **resposta**:  
**[http://www.softcatala.org/wiki/Wiki\\_de\\_Softcatal](http://www.softcatala.org/wiki/Wiki_de_Softcatal)**

At times, the reference is explicitly identified as an *explanation*, like in example [Cat33: 4079-4080]:

[Cat33: 4079-4080] Una bona forma de configurar un sistema Windows XP és com **s'explica** aquí:  
**<http://anelkaos.blogspot.com/2006/12/fo... ws-xp.html>**

In example [Cat17: 2220] the explanatory reference is introduced by an invitation to action followed by the description of its cognitive content: “aquesta guia que configura el Firefox pas per pas”:

[Cat17: 2220] **prova** aquesta guia que configurar el firefox pas per pas <http://www.informatics.cat/wiki/index.p...>  
**iccionaris**

Other times, the explanatory reference may be introduced as the reason for an evaluation (*aspectualisation*):

[Cat26: 3344-3346] ho he enllaça **millor** a:  
<http://softcatala.org/wiki/Rebot:Thunderbird>  
i segueix les instruccions pertinents per a baixar un complement per al Thunderbird.

We mentioned at the beginning of this section that there are different forms of explanatory references on the web forums. The majority of them are links and/or URLs, as we have already observed. Others, as in [Cat30: 3756-3757], are interdiscursivity elements consisting in references to what a previous speaker said. In this case, the reference is a construction that involves a *verbum dicendi* and an identifier of the author of the information referred to. In [Cat30: 3756-3757] the reference is “...**la opció que deia en Pere el gran**”, pointing to a previous intervention (la opció que deia) by the speaker (Pere el Gran):

[Cat30: 3756-3757] ves a "Opcions regionals, d'idioma i de data i hora"->"Opcions regionals i de llengua" i pestanya llengües. Allí apareix **la opció que deia en Pere el gran**

A different form of *explanatory reference* can be observed in [Cat33: 3956]. Here, the locutor defines a computer program (TrendMicro) as “al millor” (*aspectualisation*). The definition is supported by the reference to a third opinion, in order to give more authority to the information provided by the locutor. The reference consists in the word “estudi” formatted as a hyperlink and sending to an Internet location where the addressee can access the information referred to:

[Cat33: 3956] Segons un [estudi](#), en principi independent, el millor antivirus es el de TrendMicro en global,...

As one can notice, on the Catalan forums, references adopt different forms and they are an important aspect of the process of knowledge communication.

### 7.2.5.5 Encouraging Closures

A brief survey of the explanatory sequences on the Catalan forums reveals their complex construction. The latter consists in the constant presence of all the components of an explanatory structure: *opening*, *body* and *closing* sequences, even if the first and the last of the components are optional. As in the case of the openings (see section 6.3.4.1), the closures present a rich diversity of expressions, which will be analysed in this section.

Many of the explanatory sequences on the Catalan web forums end with an *invitation to action*. In example [Cat12: 1467-1469], the closing is a simple exclamative structure:

[Cat12: 1467-1469]...Tu mateix 😊.

A more complex construction can be observed in example [Cat4: 472-473], where the *invitation to action* adopts the form of an evaluation by the locutor. This construction is intended to reassure the addressee and to make him/her to take action:

[Cat4: 472-473]... això ho podràs fer amb molta facilitat.

The locutor expresses sometimes his/her own attitude concerning the topic. The closings in this case can be expressed as *possibility*; this modalisation adds a slight sense of uncertainty further emphasised by the second part of the sequence: “a veure si et serveix”:

[Cat5: 607-611]... Pots provar així a veure si et serveix.

A more irresolute closing is presented by sequence [Cat29: 3537-3539]:

[Cat29: 3537-3539] No sé...,pots provar. 😞

A different discursive strategy consists in structuring the closing as a piece of *advice*:

[Cat1: 50] No perdis el temps amb software del any 2000, el Linux és el SO del 2008!

When the solution described is highly recommendable, the locutor can choose to close it with the promise of success:

[Cat38: 4497-4500]... No te'n penediràs!

A different manner of closing an explanation involves ending markers. They usually belong to the familiar register, making the cognitive

exchange more conversation-like, as in [Cat11: 1424-1427] and [Cat33: 3974-3977]:

[Cat11: 1424-1427]... **I ja està.**

[Cat33: 3974-3977]... **i llestos!**

A less common discursive strategy is interdiscursivity, as in [Cat1: 66]. Interdiscursivity consists in the repetition of *quotations*, *proverbs* and *famous sayings* whose meanings are directly related with the context of the communication. Example [Cat1: 66] represents a quotation from the movie *Stars War* representing a Jedy knight greeting. This interdiscursive sequence individualises discursively the member of the forum who ends all of his posts with this phrase:

[Cat1: 66] Que la força t'acompanyi!

A discursive strategy generally used on the Catalan forums in order to close an explanation consists in an enunciative construction with a phatic function through which the locutor checks the permanent contact with the addressee. The locutor indirectly asks for feedback like in [Cat7: 871-877] or expresses the hope that the explanation provided is useful, as in [Cat30: 3734-3737]:

[Cat7: 871-877]...Espero que s'entengui.

[Cat30: 3734-3737]... espero haver-te ajudat.

At times, the locutor not only expresses his/her hope that the information he/she provided was useful but also continues to maintain the contact with the addressee, as noticeable in [Cat7: 928-935], [Cat9: 1206-1209], and [Cat15, 1900]:

[Cat7: 928-935] Espero haver-me explicat be.  
Qualsevol dubte **ja saps on som**

[Cat9: 1206-1209] Si tens algun problema, diga-ho que  
**t'ajudaré en el que pugui.**

[Cat15, 1900]I si no,, **et puc ajudar.**

In other cases, the locutor concentrates his/her request for feed-back on the result of the explanation:

[Cat36: 4313-4325] Be, **ja diras com ha anat** això de reparar...

[Cat44: 5159-5187] **Ja em diràs que tal ha anat tot...**  
Arreveureeeeeeeee!!! 😊

[Cat41: 4822-4832] **Ja diras si això t'ha servit o no.**

An unusual construction is the situation where the locutor, after providing an explanation asks, if necessary, for a *reparatory feedback* through which the other participants in the forum correct his/her knowledge in a field where he/she admittedly has limited competencies:

[Cat28: 3495-3496]... Si he posat la pota **que algú em corregeixi.**

### 7.2.5.6 Complex Procedural Structures

The *explanatory text* is a heterogeneous explanatory structure formed by different interrelated explanatory cores. The Catalan specialised web forums display extended explanatory texts, as in example [Cat36: 4349-4371], where the locutor explains *the procedure of data recovery from a damaged computer* (hardware and software damage):

[Cat36: 4349-4371] Pero que el disc dur hagi petat encara no esta clar, en tot cas, per ara es el Windows. Concretament, un dakets arxius se't pot haver corromput (1)per alguna rao, (2)ja que si el disc falla, possiblement no podras recuperar cap dada tampoc, pro ja veurem.....

(3a)Des de la consola de recuperacio, si es que t'arranca be i et deixa fer lo següent, (3b)pots provar de reanimar el windows per tal que torni a arrancar, pero amb el problema que molts programes que tens, segurament fallaran i no arrancaran, pro be, podras guardar les dades des d'una finestra del explorer i et sera mes comode que no pas per comandes, (4)q ti pots tirar els anys de Deu si no tens totes les dades en un únic lloc.

(5)En tot cas, pots usar la opcio d'arrancar la consola del windows prement repetidament la tecla F8 abans que es comenci a carregar el windows, i tot seguit despres de carregar la BIOS, en el cas que no puguis instal·lar la consola de recuperacio, pq com l'has instal·lat si no t'arranca ni el windows i no et reconeix el cd d'instal·lacio?

Comandes ms-Dos per a intentar reanimar el windows (6)(premer return al introduir cada comanda):

(7a)situarte a la C: (8)(si no hi estas ja, si es la que hi tens el Windows instal·lat amb: c:)

(7b)cd C:\WINDOWS\system32\config

ren system system.old

ren system.bak system

Si l'arxiu software tambe falles, fas el mateix, pro amb "software" en comptes de "system".

ATENCIO: amb això, arrancaràs el windows, pero el tindras tan podrit q lo millor sera que el reinstal·lis de nou, pro clar, això si et reconeix el cd



del windows la lectora, que per a instal·lar la consola l'has d'haver usat, no? (9)pq si el windows no arranca.....). Si es que el cd

(10)-Per a fer un backup dels arxius, possiblement amb una versio Live d'un Linux tambe podras salvar les dades a l'altre disc dur.

(11)-Per altra banda, instal·lant el windows a sobre de la instal·lacio actual, sense formatejar tambe podries arrancar el windows, tot i que aquesta opcio tampoc m'agrada...

(12)-la opcio de reparar el windows no esborra res! (13)I es lo que hauries de provar abans, pro clar necessites arrancar la instal·lacio des del cd.

-Et reconeix la unitat de cd, la BIOS com a minim?

-Que vas fer l'ultima vegada abans que el windows comences a fallar? Algun tall de llum? (14)pq podria ser algun virus que s'hagues carregat akets arxius....

This *explanatory text* is formed by fourteen explanatory cores, numbered from (1) to (14). They fall into different explanatory categories and, for better distinction, each category has been assigned a different colour (*prototypical explanations* – blue; *descriptions of actions* – red; *meta-explanations* – purple; and *definitions* - green). In [Cat36: 4349-4371] the locutor's intervention presents a sequential progression and the acts that form the explanatory sequences follow a strict hierarchy. The locutor constructs his/her discourse as a very complex structure mixing miscellaneous explanatory cores with expositive and descriptive sequences. The explanation is constructed interactively and is constantly addressee-oriented. In fragment [Cat36: 4349-4371] we have identified what we have called the main *description of actions* structure aimed at explaining a complex procedure. The *description* is formed by different cores. The first core is formed by sequences (3a+b), which is the initial sequence of the *description of actions* enunciating the aim of the procedure. The description of actions follows in sequence (5) and is formed by two acts that display different manners of performing the same action: “prement repetidament la tecla F8 [...] i [premer] tot seguit despres de carregar la BIOS”. A new series of acts is introduced by sequence (7a+b), a *list of actions* consisting of a series of four acts. The last act (7b) is a *description of actions*. It introduces an alternative solution in case of failure and resumes (“fas el mateix”) the actions in (7b): “Si l'arxiu software tambe falles, fas el mateix, pro amb "software" en comptes de "system". The main explanatory structure of the intervention ends with sequences (10) and (11). They describe alternative procedures of data recovery. In sequence (11) the locutor shows subjective involvement as regards (10) and (11): “tot i que aquesta opcio tampoc m'agrada...”

The content of the main explanatory sequence determines the procedural function of the locutor's intervention. It presents a linear structure whose progress can be easily followed by the receiver and

describes the actions the addressee has to perform in order to reach his/her goal, which is intended to give a complete view of the procedure and the different manners of applying it. This complex structure is accompanied by collateral explanatory cores bringing the details of different moments in the explanatory process. Besides such *rhetoric explanations* as (1) “...per alguna rao,...”, example [Cat36: 4349-4371] displays independent explanatory cores, such as (2), a prototypical explanatory sequence: “ja que si el disc falla, possiblement no podras recuperar cap dada tampoc”. Other cores represent collateral explanations of a point in the process, as in (4), where the locutor explains the advantage of using the explorer program when transferring data: “(4)q ti pots tirar els anys de Deu si no tens totes les dades en un únic lloc”. One can also observe a change of register in “ti pots tirar els anys de Deu ...”, which lends a touch of orality to the communicational exchange. Sequence (8) represents a meta-explanation aimed at bringing more precision to the explanatory communication. It also lends more precision to the main explanatory sequence (7a) describing the cases where a specific command has to be applied: “(si no hi estas ja, si es la que hi tens el Windows instal·lat amb: c:)”. Sequence (9) is a rhetoric explanation, since it has the form of an explanation but no cognitive content and its use can be motivated only in terms of rhetoric: “(9)pq si el windows no arranca...”. The communication stays unfinished and the explanatory process is suspended in this case. Sequence (12) is a definitory fragment of an option introduced by the locutor as an alternative to the solutions previously presented. The definition has the classical structure of the *genus* and *diferentia* and is structured in terms of action (*what the object does*): “(a) la opcio de reparar el windows (b)no esborra res!”.

As one can observe, the *definiendum* (a) is a term (reparar – name of an option) belonging to a *species* (option) which in turn belongs to a *genus* (windows<sup>137</sup> – an operating system) and which is described in (b), the *definiens*, in terms of action. It is the *definiens* part which marks the *diferentia* - “no esborra res!” - that individualises the term and permits its inclusion in a class of objects. This definition adds supplementary information and completes the previous explanatory sequence (11). The intervention ends with a series of questions the locutor asks the addressee in order to be sure that s/he took into account all the possible situations and that he himself has described all possible situations. In this last sequence (14), he/she asks for more information explaining his/her reasons in asking them:

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<sup>137</sup> We mention that the user of Windows has two options when he/she inserts the Windows boot CD: install (install the system from the beginning after deleting the previous version) and repair (search the errors on the system already installed and correct them in order to restore the functions of the system). The difference between the two options is that the former deletes all the information in the folder Windows (implicitly My Documents folder), while the latter doesn't.

Que vas fer l'ultima vegada abans que el windows comences a fallar? Algun tall de llum? **(14)pq podria ser algun virus que s'hagues carregat akets arxius....**

As one can note, the complex explanation presents an intricate structure, which entails not only heterogeneous explanatory sequences (*definitions, instructions, meta-explanations, and prototypical explanations*) but also *expositive* and *descriptive* sequences. If we agree with J-M Adam's descriptions of the actions model, this complex structure corresponds to a process of *condensation*, where the locutor puts together different elements in order to reach his/her goal.

The analysed example is not singular. Many complex explanation sequences on the Catalan forums present such complexity and extension. Actually, it seems that one of the distinctive characteristics of explanations on the Catalan web forums is the extension and complexity of the procedural explanations.

## 7.2.6 Conclusions to Explanation on the Web Forums

### a) General considerations about explanation on professional web forums:

The analysis of the multilingual corpus has demonstrated that the discourse on the professional web forums displays the existence of different explanatory strategies: *definition, description of actions, and prototypical explanation*, all involved in the process of cognitive transfer. In addition to the prefigured explanatory strategies, we have also discovered new strategies used with explanatory finalities: *references, meta-explanations, and rhetorical explanations*. Some of the explanatory cores that we have identified through analysis are not documented in the literature and we would like to highlight them here. It is the case of: *the explanatory use of references, the meta-explanations, and the rhetorical explanations*. Since these terms are proposed by us, we would like to define them in our concluding chapter.

*The explanatory reference* represents a speech act consisting in a web reference (active link or web address) that stands for an explanation.

*The meta-explanation* represents a speech act consisting in an explanatory core that specifies the content of another explanatory core or explanatory text. It is usually marked by parentheses.

*The rhetorical explanations* are speech acts that have the form of an explanation, stand for an explanation, function in the communicational context as an explanation, but add no new information or knowledge to the communicational content.

They all represent *sub-systems in interaction* that regulate the configuration of the explanatory text on the professional web forums.

We can also affirm that the explanation can be contemplated on two different levels; the first level is that of *speech act* and the second is that of *series of propositions*, both of which have been analysed in our corpus. If the first level can reveal the rich inventory of explanatory strategies the locutors use in the professional web forums discussions, the second level demonstrates how complex the relations between heterogeneous types of explanatory propositions can be. Both of the analysed levels support the idea that an important part of the communicational interventions on the professional web forum are explanatory, which converts them into *explanatory texts*. This persistence of the explanatory sequences at a textual level also supports the idea that there is a superior level where the explanation can be analysed: the discourse<sup>138</sup>.

Finally, to conclude, let us state that we have noted the existence of a specific structure of the professional web forum explanation. If we take into account the description of the explanatory sequence mentioned in Chapter 4.2 we observe a series of differences between the prototypical explanatory sequence described by the authors and the explanatory sequence we have found in the web forum discourse. These differences determine the features of the explanatory sequence in web genres.

The explanatory texts have been described taking into account the enunciation, the enunciative modalities, the terminology, the descriptive and evaluative adjectives, the stages of the explanatory activity, and finally, the discursive strategies.

One can note that the web forum explanation presents differences in each one of the enunciative and discursive aspects mentioned above, as follows:

	<b>Prototypical explanation</b>	<b>Professional web forum explanation</b>
<b>Enunciation</b>	Spatio-temporal references, Interdiscourse (authors), “We” – 1 <sup>st</sup> person deictic, Verb: Present Tense	Spatio-temporal references, (sporadic) “I”, “We” or “You” oriented enunciation Verb: present tense, imperative, infinitive, conditional, imperfect tense
<b>Enunciative modalities</b>	Logic (necessity), Epistemic (certainty, opinion, possibility), <b>No!</b> affective modalities or subjectivity marks	Logic (necessity), Epistemic (certainty, opinion, possibility), Affective modalities (frequent), Subjectivity marks (frequent)
<b>Terminology</b>	Specialised lexicon, <b>No!</b> Polysemy or ambiguity, Loan words (anglicisms)	Specialised lexicon (sporadic), Polysemy and ambiguity (frequent), Loan words (depending on

<sup>138</sup> The explanation as interaction will be analysed in the next section.

		language)
<b>Stages of the explanatory activity</b>	Deductive explanation (from general to particular), Inductive explanation (from analysis to general), Cause-effect explanation, Discursive markers, Logical connectors	Deductive explanation (from general to particular), Cause-effect explanation, Discursive markers of orality, Logical connectors
<b>Discursive strategies</b>	Definition, Classification, Reformulation, Exemplification, Analogy, Quotation	Definition, Exemplification (sporadic), Analogy (sporadic), Quotation (web quotations), Explanatory reference (self-reference), Description of actions (instructions), Meta-explanation, Rhetorical explanations, Reformulation (sporadic), Analogy (sporadic)

As it results from the table above the explanatory sequence on the professional web forum has different features. We can observe that in the *enunciation* it presents more deictics than the prototypical explanation, more verbal tenses and lower use of the time and space references in the text, especially due to the orality of the communication. Both explanatory forms present the same use of the epistemic and logic modalities in communication, the difference consisting in the fact that the professional web forum explanation also allows the use of *affective modalities* and *subjectivity marks*. The use of specialised lexicon, loan words or technical terms is reduced to the basics in the professional web forums explanation. The imprecision in the explanatory texts of the web is generated by the frequent use of polysemy, ambiguity and professional jargon.

The explanatory forms we have encountered on the professional web forum consist of *deductive explanations* and *cause-effect explanations* accompanied by discursive markers of orality and logical connectors.

The explanatory sequence is constructed through a very rich variety of discursive strategies, such as: definition, exemplification, analogy, quotation, explanatory reference (self-reference), description of actions, meta-explanations, rhetorical explanations, reformulation, and analogy.

We consider that the contrastive profile we have presented of professional web forum explanations and prototypical explanation illustrates how different they are. It is easy to observe that the professional web forum explanation is not a subordinate category of the prototypical explanation. Both explanations share features but they also present complementary aspects which makes it impossible to include the professional web forum explanation in the prototypical explanation category.

b) Specific aspects of explanation on the professional web forums in different languages:

Even if constructed similarly, the explanatory sequences emerging on the professional web forum discussions display particularities that individualise them. We have already observed the general profile of the web forum explanations and the fact that the same categories of *definitions* or *meta-explanations* exist in French or in English. The difference lies in their use. A French locutor will construct in a certain way his/her discourse in order to explain something to a collocutor, while a Catalan locutor, in order to explain the same thing, will use different explanatory sequences. In order to highlight the construction of the explanations on the professional web forums in the different languages of our corpora we have decided to observe this phenomenon from a quantitative point of view.

<b>Explanation</b>	<b>En</b>	<b>Es</b>	<b>Fr</b>	<b>Ro</b>	<b>Cat</b>
<b>Introductory strategies</b>	17	31	12	15	26
<b>Closings</b>	3	6	9	5	18
<b>Procedures</b>	15 (long)	21 (short)	18 (long)	24 (short)	17 (long)
<b>Prototypical expl.</b>	7	9	12	15	14
<b>Definitions</b>	3	5	8	11	14
<b>References</b>	3	1	3	10	8
<b>Self-reference</b>	0	2	0	2	0
<b>Meta-explanations</b>	6	0	2	10	2
<b>Rhetorical expl.</b>	0	9	0	0	0
<b>Visuals</b>	0	0	2	2	0
<b>Humour</b>	0	0	6	0	0
<b>Slang</b>	0	1	0	0	1

As one can observe from the table above, the use of the different types of explanatory sequences we have identified in our corpora differs with every language. The *introductory strategies* mark for every language the importance the locutor allocates to the explanation by highlighting discursively that its content is important. As we can observe, the highest attention to this detail is in (Es, Cat) and the lowest in (Fr, Ro). The *closures* have the role to mark the end of the explanation and to maintain the contact between the collocutors. Their use is much more reduced compared with the *introductory strategies*: high values in (Cat, Fr), low values in (En, Ro).

The explanatory strategies are also differently used. It seems that the procedural explanation (*description of actions*) is the most widely used

strategy. This can be also explained by the technical content of the knowledge communicated on the web forum and the type of knowledge transmitted: practical knowledge. The peak values are in (Ro, Es) and the lowest values in (En, Cat). Here we can observe a relation between the number of occurrences and the length of the explanations. The peaks are represented by languages where the practical knowledge is transmitted through brief explanatory structures, while the extended explanatory structures represent the low values of the table.

The theoretical knowledge is transmitted generally through prototypical explanations; the second most used explanatory strategy. The values are much more uniform in this situation and the peaks indicate that (Ro, Cat) communicate more theoretical knowledge. The lowest values are in (En, Es).

The definitions seem to be used more in (Ro, Cat) and less in (En, Es).

The references present a similar distribution in (Ro, Cat) for the highest values, while (Es) is representative for the lowest.

We consider that the other explanatory strategies (self-reference, meta-explanation, rhetorical explanations) represent features of one or several of the languages in our corpora, since they are not used constantly in each language.. For example, *self-reference* is specific to the Spanish and Romanian sub-corpora, *meta-explanations* are particularly present in En, Fr, Ro, and Cat but not in Es, while the *rhetorical explanation* exists only in Es.

In addition to the explanatory strategies, we have also considered as specific mark of the explanation in the languages of our corpora the presence of visual elements in Es and Ro, the presence of humour in Fr, and the presence of slang in Es and Cat.

We propose below a simple profile for each language based on the use of two main explanatory strategies and one or two specific explanatory strategies:

	<b>Main strategy1</b>	<b>Main strategy2</b>	<b>Specific strategy1</b>	<b>Specific strategy2</b>	<b>Specific strategy3</b>
<b>En</b>	Procedures	Proto. expl.	Meta-expl.	-	-
<b>Es</b>	Procedures	Proto. expl.	Rhetorical expl.	Self-reference	Slang
<b>Fr</b>	Procedures	Proto. expl.	Humour	Visual	Meta-expl.
<b>Ro</b>	Procedures	Proto. expl.	Meta-expl.	Self-reference	Visual
<b>Cat</b>	Procedures	Proto. expl. Definition	Meta-expl.	Slang	-

As one can notice, the main explanatory strategies are of similar importance in each language and the differences are marked by the secondary explanatory strategies.





## **7.3 Knowledge Construction: Negotiation between Ignorance and Experience**

### **7.3.1 Introduction**

The main objective of the professional web forums interactions is to fulfill the cognitive needs of the forum members that assume the condition of novice in a specialised field of knowledge and ask for information.

Knowledge is communicated through verbal interactions between the members of the forum. The initial intervention is essential, for it determines the cognitive needs of the locutor and the context in which they must be applied. The topic enunciated in the initial intervention is debated in successive exchanges between the members of the forum. The direct result of the exchanges is the accumulation of information that will be structured as knowledge. The criterion of validation of the knowledge is its effectiveness in the context described by the initiator of the interaction. The prevalence of the *explanatory sequences* and *interventions* on the professional web forums will determine the explanatory character of the professional web forum interactions.

In what follows, we will analyse the construction of the *explanatory interactions* on the professional web forums. The objective of our analysis is to observe and represent the co-construction of knowledge through polilogical interactions in the different sub-corpora that form our corpus.

Each example of the five sub-corpora will be analysed under three aspects: *construction of interactions*, *organisation of actions within interactions*, and *the thematic construction of interaction*. In each example we will try to highlight the particular interactional aspects displayed in the process of knowledge construction.

### **7.3.2 Explanatory Interactions on the English Web Forums**

Polilogal knowledge communication on the English professional web forums is developed through thematic construction. This is realised through semantic cohesion and anaphoric relations creating a semantic network through the entire interaction.

The following example represents *thread* no. 5 in the English sub-corpus. The theme of the interaction illustrates the the locutor's need to acquire information on the apparent malfunction of the updated official page of the operating system MsWindows. It consists of 16 posts

published by 10 participants as one can notice in the transcript of the interaction:

### Windows Update Page doesn't Load, it's blank.



[mikehartl](#) Offline

Junior Member

#1

Join Date: Jan 2003

Posts: 18

### Windows Update Page doesn't Load, it's blank.

I have a problem with Windows Update:

When I try to use Windows Update, this is all I get. It just doesn't load. When I first installed Windows XP, Windows Update worked just fine, but all of a sudden, thats all I get. **Do you guys know what might be causing *this*?**

My Specs:

Windows XP PRO

Athlon XP 1800

GeForce 4 TI4200 (128MB)

512MB PC2700 RAM

Abit KX7-333 Motherboard

Direct X 9

**Hopefully I will get some help this time. On my last post with this topic**, someone replied and said that I should follow the fix on this website:

<http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=193701> but when I tried to attempt this fix:

1. Install a new Scripting Engine

Go to <http://www.microsoft.com/msdownload/...scripting.asp>.

Click the "x86" link located to the right of your language of Internet Explorer

At the bottom of the page, download the file for your Operating System. Select the "Run this program from its current location" option to download and install the update. After the installation is complete, restart your computer to go back to the Windows Update Site (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>).

...and when I tried to download the new scripting engine, I get this on the next web browser page: "Sorry, there is no Microsoft.com web page matching your request."

**What should I do? Is there another place on the support site to get this same file?** I have no clue what I'm looking for.

-----  
-Mike

#2

04-22-2003, 02:47 PM



[mikehartl](#) Offline

Junior Member


Join Date: Jan 2003

Posts: 18

**This is the same thing that happened last time, no one replied.** Someone please help me, I need to fix this!

-----  
-Mike



#3

55  04-22-2003, 03:07 PM  
swoolgrove Offline  
 Member  
 Join Date: Feb 2003  
 Location: U.K.  
 Posts: 76


60

**Hi Mikart11, try this it might work for you**  
 (1)Start>>Programs>>Accessories>>  
 command prompt>>(type)ipconfig/flushdns  
 and return. You should then see  
 "sucessfully flushed the DNS resolver cache".  
 Then try the MS page.  
 Good luck  
 Steve

70

#4  
 04-22-2003, 04:07 PM  


75 mikehart1 Offline  
 Junior Member  
 Join Date: Jan 2003  
 Posts: 18


80 

**Nope, it didn't work. Do you guys have any other suggestions?**

85 

---



-Mike

#5  
 04-22-2003, 05:44 PM  
swoolgrove Offline  
 Member  
 Join Date: Feb 2003  
 Location: U.K.  
 Posts: 76


90

95 Hi mikart1, (1)this link **doesn't fix your problem** but at least **you can get the updates**  
 (hopefully, fingers crossed)  
<http://www.techspot.com/tweaks/updates/#WindowsXP>  
 (2)**That link** you have to Microsoft 193701 does not apply to Windows XP, it was for  
 ME and 98.  
 Steve

100

#6  
 04-22-2003, 08:00 PM  


105 Daeymon Offline  
 Senior Member  
 Join Date: Jan 2003  
 Location: Texas  
 Posts: 279

110 

**Perhaps you have disabled your updates.** (3) START, RUN, Type services.msc  
Look for windows updates, make sure they are manual or automatic, and started.

115 (4) Other than that try clearing your browser cache.  
Start, Settings, Control Panel, Internet options  
delete cookies, and delete temporary internet files, also clear your history.

You arent paying me so dont complain if Im not helpful. 😊

120 Jeff  
Aim-Jeffzsx  
Yahoo Messenger-Jeffzsx  
If you need help message me Ill see what I can do.

125 #7  
04-23-2003, 12:18 PM



130 mikehartl Offline  
Junior Member  
Join Date: Jan 2003  
Posts: 18

**Nope, none of those fixes worked. Does anyone have any suggestions?**

135 -Mike

#8  
04-25-2003, 03:27 AM

140 vellox Offline  
Junior Member  
Join Date: Apr 2003  
Posts: 3

145 **I was having this problem** for about 3 months **before finally finding a fix** on the  
official Microsoft usenet forums. I hope this fix works for you.

(5)Go to Tools>Internet Options>Languages>

150 It should be empty, if so, add any language (preferably the one you speak 😊) and click  
OK. Close IE and try Windows Update, it should work now.

#9  
04-26-2003, 11:43 AM









155 mikehartl Offline  
Junior Member  
  
Join Date: Jan 2003  
Posts: 18

160 **No, this didn't work either.** I notice this has been happening on other computers as  
well, including my father's. It's not just that Windows Update doesn't load, but also  
some links won't work, and some pages won't load completely. Also, when I try to post  
things on other forums it sometimes won't work. I could type everything in, but when I  
165 hit the "Post" button, it just won't do anything.

**Can no one help me?**

-Mike

170	-Mike
	<b>#10</b>
	04-27-2003, 05:59 PM
	
175	<u>ESALADUANE</u> Offline 
	Senior Member
	Join Date: Nov 2002
	Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
180	Posts: 2,003
	<b>I don't have an answer</b> , but I notice that <b>Microsoft</b> has now created a Troubleshooter page for <b>Windows Update issues</b> .
185	<a href="http://v4.windowsupdate.microsoft.com/troubleshoot/">http://v4.windowsupdate.microsoft.com/troubleshoot/</a>
	<b>#11</b>
	07-27-2003, 10:44 PM
190	<u>JFutter</u> Offline
	Junior Member
	Join Date: Jul 2003
	Posts: 1
	<b>Fix for blank Windows Update page</b>
195	 <b>Had the same issue...</b> along with <b>empty search page</b> , no users at Control Panel / Users, etc.
	(6)We downloaded the Windows Script 5.6 from:
200	<a href="http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/d...DisplayLang=en">http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/d...DisplayLang=en</a>
	(7)(If the link doesn't work, search Microsoft for Windows Script, choose XP or 98)
	(8)Ran the downloaded scripten.exe file, rebooted for good luck, and everything worked again.
	FWIW, this also fixed an "AOL Companion program" error that had been outstanding as well...
205	
	<b>#12</b>
	01-22-2006, 10:29 PM
210	<u>Thirteen</u> Offline
	Registered User
	Join Date: Jan 2006
	Posts: 1
215	<b>I have had the same problem.</b> Question have you run anything by Merijn named "Bugoff"?
	(9)It allows you to disable certain things in the system that are considered vulnerabilities that are not fixed by MS as of the writing of the program. Now this program I downloaded on Jan 20th. And having success with the rest of the programs written by this person (hijackthis, etc.) I ran and applied all the fixes this program did.
220	Well, I just re enabled the things it disabled and windowsupdate.microsoft.com now redirects to the correct place. If you have run bug off and disabled some or all the settings, re-enable them.
	<b>This should fix your problem.</b>

225	<p><b>Sorry just noticed my reply is to a 2.5 year old post.</b> 😞 (If your still having the trouble I'd be shocked)</p>
230	<p><b>#13</b>   02-02-2006, 10:06 PM  <a href="#">pathensley</a> Offline  Registered User  Join Date: Feb 2006  Posts: 1</p>
235	<p><b>Blank Page on Windows Update, no System Restore, etc.</b></p>
240	<p>I had several symptoms: <b>blank page on windows update</b>, couldn't start system restore, web pages weren't displaying properly (some were ok), many applications weren't working right - all after my McAfee Enterprise uninstall hung &amp; I had to shut down. After the reboot, it appeared that the virus app was gone, but then nothing worked. Turns out a bunch of stuff was unregistered. <b>Here's what worked for me:</b></p>
245	<p>(10)regsvr32 jscript  regsvr32 vbscript  regsvr32 /i mshtml</p> <p>I spent the better part of a day trying to figure this out, so I hope someone else finds it helpful. Thanks!</p>
250	<p><b>#14</b>   07-11-2006, 03:48 AM  <a href="#">DangerousNapkin</a> Offline  Registered User  Join Date: Jul 2006  Posts: 1</p>
255	<p>👍 <b>thanks</b></p>
260	<p>Thankyou pathensley, <b>putting those into the command prompt worked for me!</b>  DangerousNapkin</p>
265	<p><b>#15</b>   07-20-2006, 05:47 PM  <a href="#">m_riggs_darling</a> Offline  Registered User  Join Date: Jul 2006  Posts: 1</p>
270	<p><b>Thanks</b></p> <p>I was about to throw my computer out because it would not let me onto the <b>Windows Update page</b>, would not let me start system restore, so on and so on. I just wanted to say thanks because it is working now after I used the <b>command prompt</b> to register. I had searched all over the internet and finally discovered your post. Thanks again! 😊</p>
275	<p>[quote]I had several symptoms: blank page on windows update, couldn't start system restore, web pages weren't displaying properly (some were ok), many applications weren't working right - all after my McAfee Enterprise uninstall hung &amp; I had to shut down. After the reboot, it appeared that the virus app was gone, but then nothing worked.</p>
280	<p>Turns out a bunch of stuff was unregistered. Here's what worked for me:  regsvr32 jscript  regsvr32 vbscript  regsvr32 /i mshtml</p>

285 I spent the better part of a day trying to figure this out, so I hope someone else finds it helpful. Thanks![/quote]

blackburnman04 Offline  
Registered User  
Join Date: Jul 2006

290 Posts: 1  
**#16**  
(10)just switch to windows 2000 professional you always pass windows genuine

### 7.3.2.1 The Unfinished Discussion

*Local* and *global organisations of interactions* on the professional web forums present little variation, since they are determined by the communication device or, in the case of global organisation, by cultural rules concerning the rituals of communication with the others. The variation can be observed in the elements pertaining to the individual discursive production of the locutor.

In the case of the *local organisation* of the turn of speech, the explanatory interaction is constructed sequentially, with its structure determined by the communicational device<sup>139</sup>. Thus, the turns of speech are clearly delimited. Generally, the alternance of the turns is self-assumed. The locutor, especially in the opening posts, doesn't select the addressee, the other members of the forum volunteer information (self-selection) in order to establish a communicational relation with the initiator of a thread. In the *body* of the thread, the participants select implicitly the initiator of the thread as the *addressee* (whom we will call L1 in this section) : [110] "Perhaps you have disabled your updates", or explicitly: [61] and [94]: "Hi mikart1...". If the addressee is not the initiator of the thread, the members of the forum are obliged to select the addressee: [248] "Thankyou pathensley...". The selection of the addressee is realised by using his/her user name.

The turns of speech are formed by *turns* and *transition points*. In the web forum communication the transition points are constructed *discursively* and *graphically*. The end of the turns is graphically marked<sup>140</sup>, for every contribution to the dialogue is browsed in a *text box* or *table cell*. Even if a forum member doesn't read a web forum conversation, s/he will observe the transition points anyway. Sometimes, the participants in the discussion may also mark the transition points

<sup>139</sup> In the web forum communication, the interventions of the participants in a situation are browsed chronologically. Since it is "written conversation", the web forum communication lacks the characteristics specific to face-to-face dialogues, such as: *interruptions, collocation, overlaps*.

<sup>140</sup> Generally, the graphical markers of the transition points in the web forums consist of: lines, images, and/or buttons.

discursively. In the case of the English thread, only the graphical transition points are visible.

As regards the regulation of the turns, web forum communication consists only in *full turns*. Nothing interrupts, overlaps, or eclipses the turns in web forum communication.

The *global organisation* of the speech turns in web forum communication is structured, as in the case of face-to-face conversation, as a three part module consisting of: opening (initial post), body (thread's posts), and closing (end post).

The interaction of thread 5 of the English sub-corpus opens with an initial post written by **mikeart1**, the initiator and the main agent of the thread. With this message, the member of the forum opens the channel and establishes the contact with the other members through an addressee-oriented interrogation: "Do you *guys* know ..." and describes the situation: "I have a problem with Windows Update" followed by an elaborated description. At the end of the message, the locutor enunciates the objective of the communication: [34] "What should I do? Is there another place on the support site to get this same file?" The string of interrogations is a discursive strategy the locutor uses to invite all the other members of the forum to contribute to the interaction, without selecting a particular collocutor.

The *body* of the thread is structured sequentially and comprises posts 2 to 16. Every post is formed by an *opening sequence* (greetings, addressee selection), *body of the post* (main content of the communication), and *closing sequence* (greetings, signature). The thread body contains 10 explanatory sequences that lend the entire interaction an explanatory character.

The thread ends without a closing sequence.

### 7.3.2.2 The English Web Forum Polilogue

Web forum communication is generally considered to be a polilogal "written conversation". Given its polyphonic character, the exchanges can display complex structures of communication.

From this perspective, thread 5 of the English sub-corpus represents an explanatory interaction, formed by two sequences [1-12] and [13-16]. The first sequence represents the main thread's communication and the second is a collateral evolution of the conversation. The first sequence consists of 11 exchanges and the second sequence of 3 exchanges.

All exchanges in this interaction are formed by units of two interventions. The first intervention is an initiative intervention, for it starts the thread, enunciates the theme and the objectives of the communication and establishes the main aspects of the communication. Its author, **mikeart1**, is the initiator of the explanatory interaction. As one can notice in the scheme below, the first initiative intervention, (1), is



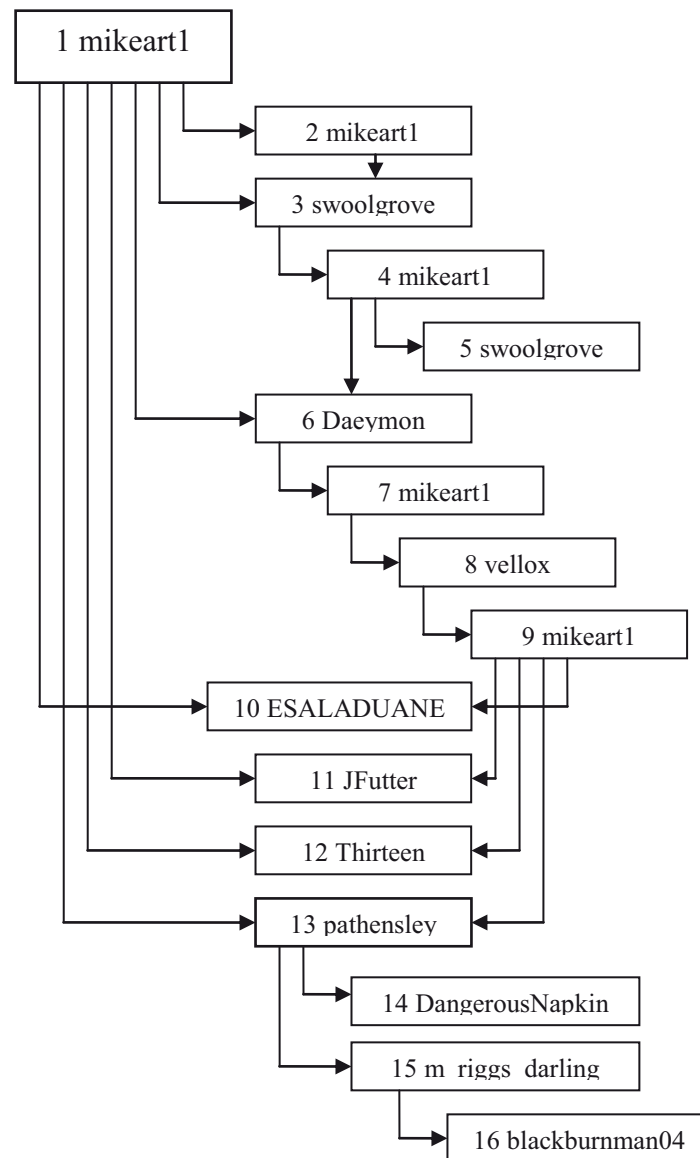
completed by the second initiative intervention, (2). This means that the reactive interventions may be related to both (1) and (2). Some of the interactions on the web forum, especially the interventions forming the body of the thread, can have two functions: they represent a reactive intervention to the previous intervention and an initiative intervention to the following intervention. It is the case, in our example, of intervention (3), which represents a reactive intervention if related to (1) and (2), and represents an initiative intervention if related to (4). Interaction (4), in turn, represents a reactive intervention for (3) and, at the same time, it acts as an initiative intervention for (5) and (6). It is important to observe that (6) also represents a reactive intervention to (1). The same relation can be observed between interventions (7), (8), and (9), which form a string of interventions that enter in a double relation, both being initiative and reactive interventions.

The posts representing the string of interventions from (10) to (13) represent reactive interventions to (1) and (9).

Intervention (13) also represents an initiative intervention to the second sequence of the thread communication. Two reactive interventions, (14) and (15), are directly related to it. Intervention (15) presents a final reactive intervention to (16).

As one can notice, web forum interactions can display complex structures. In this case, it is clear that the initiative intervention is the generator of the communicational interaction and all the ramifications are directly or indirectly related to this center.

A more explicit representation of the communicational relations of the rank structure in the 5th English web forum interaction can be consulted in the following figure:



### 7.3.2.3 The Tardive Solution

Knowledge is constructed through explanations as a thematic progression of the explanation. Every word the participants in a communicational interaction exchange contributes to the construction of a global meaning which, in the case of the professional web forum discussions, has a specialised cognitive content.

The cognitive content of the explanatory interaction can be described, in this case, as the thematic construction of the discourse, which is generally analysed in terms of continuity and discontinuity. In what follows, we will try to examine how knowledge is constructed through dialogue/polilogue on the professional web forums. In order to

do this we will consider the threads as thematic structures created, basically, through *semantic cohesion* and *anaphoric/cataphoric* relations.

We will consider the thematic construction of a discourse as a process consisting of the following essential stages: the proposal of the theme, thematic elaboration and ramification, the closing of the theme. In what follows, each stage will be observed from the perspective of thematic continuity and discontinuity.

*a. the proposal of the theme:* As one can observe, the theme is initiated in thread 5 of the English sub-corpus in the title: “Windows Update Page doesn't Load, it's blank”. This represents an implicit *proposal of the theme*, since it is not directly addressee-oriented. The title of the web forum thread represents more of a label that briefly indicates the content of the communication and that can motivate a forum user to become a member of the *audience*, at the first stage, as reader of the thread and, maybe, to motivate him/her to eventually participate in the interaction. The explicit proposal of the theme, thematically coherent with the thread's title, is expressed in the *opening post* by the *initiator* of the thread. In our case [10-35]:

**Windows Update Page doesn't Load, it's blank.**

I have (1)a problem with Windows Update:  
 (2)When I try to use Windows Update, this is all I get. It just doesn't load. When I first installed Windows XP, Windows Update worked just fine, but all of a sudden, thats all I get. **Do you guys know what might be causing this?**  
 My Specs:  
 Windows XP PRO  
 Athlon XP 1800  
 GeForce 4 TI4200 (128MB)  
 512MB PC2700 RAM  
 Abit KX7-333 Motherboard  
 Direct X 9  
**(3)Hopefully I will get some help this time. On my last post with this topic,**  
 (4)someone replied and said that I should follow the fix on this website:  
<http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=193701> but when I tried to attempt this fix:  
 (5)1.Install a new Scripting Engine  
 Go to <http://www.microsoft.com/msdownload/...scripting.asp>.  
 Click the "x86" link located to the right of your language of Internet Explorer  
 At the bottom of the page, download the file for your Operating System.Select the "Run this program from its current location" option to download and install the update.After the installation is complete, restart your computer to go back to the Windows Update Site (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>).  
 ...and when I tried to download hte new scripting engine, I get this on the next web browser page: "Sorry, there is no Microsoft.com web page matching your request."  
**What should I do? Is there another place on the support site to get this same file? I have no clue what I'm looking for.**

The explicit proposal of the theme is introduced as: “I have a problem with Windows Update:” where the locutor defines the situation he is facing: “I have a problem”, and the focus of the problem: “Windows Update”. Initially the locutor expresses the motive for the creation of the thread, and only then he/she focuses on the topic of the

discussion. In [2] the theme is elaborated by *narration* and *description*, interrupted by the explicit orientation of the communication to the audience: “Do you guys know what might be causing this?”

Fragment (3) consists in an anaphoric relation between the current thread and a previous one: “Hopefully I will get some help this time. *On my last post* with this topic...” The *comment* made by the locutor introduces a secondary theme (4) where the locutor narrates a negative experience he had with a previous topic thematically related with the main subject. Fragment (4) is thematically elaborated in the subsequent fragment, (5), as a description of actions. The post ends with a string of *audience-oriented* interrogations, a discursive strategy through which the locutor tries to motivate the members of the audience to *ratify* the theme.

On web forums in general, the initial post is thematically continued by the posts forming the thread body. Generally, the relation established between the initial post and rest of the posts in the thread is that of thematic continuity. If the other members of the forum respond to the initial post of a thread, they implicitly ratify the theme.

In our example, the theme is ratified by 7 members of the forum, each assuming the role of collocutor by establishing a communicational relation with the initiator of the thread. Their interventions are thematically related to the initial post. Every intervention is coherently related to the initial post (theme) of the thread and brings new information (rheme) about it. The rheme, in this case, represents the cognitive content organised as explanatory sequences.

The explanatory content in the first answer to the initial post [1] is introduced by an expression that accomplishes a double bind: “try *this* it might work for you”. The first cohesion is realised by “it”, which establishes an anaphorical relation and refers to the theme of the topic “Windows Updates”. The second relation is cataphoric and is realised by “this”, which indicates the rheme consisting in a description of actions (procedural text).

The communication continues with the feedback the initiator gives on the information provided. The message is doubly oriented. Firstly, “it” continues thematically by an anaphoric relation the communication in the previous post, and secondly, it invites to the elaboration of the theme through an audience-oriented message: [81] “Nope, *it* didn't work. Do you guys have any *other* suggestions?” By using the word “other” the locutor invites to the elaboration of the theme in a different direction than pointed out by the previous locutor.

Surprisingly, the new direction in the elaboration of the theme comes from the same locutor as in the previous post. This brings new information (rheme) on the topic. The initial line of the post consists in an explanatory sequence (1) that establishes a cataphoric relation with the new content the locutor intends to introduce in the communication by the use of “this”, accompanied by a semantic cohesion realised through “link”. The same initial line of the post establishes a thematic progression

through a semantic cohesion with the initial message – “your problem” and “updates”:

[94] (1) *this link* doesn't fix *your problem* but at least you can get the *updates*

The thematic progression continues with another explanatory sequence, (2), thematically related (semantic cohesion) with the initial post line [31]:

(2)*That link* you have to Microsoft 193701 does not apply to Windows XP, it was for ME and 98.

New cognitive content (3) is added with intervention [6], which is thematically related (semantic coherence) to the initial thread: [110] “Perhaps you have disabled your *updates*”. The thematic progression is ensured by: [112] “*Other* than *that*”, an expression that realises an anaphoric relation through “that” referring to the previous cognitive content, and a cataphoric relation through “other”. “Other” refers to the new explanatory sequence (4) introduced by the locutor in the same intervention [6]. It separates discursively two explanatory sequences.

The initiator reacts to the previous intervention. He/she provides a feedback to the cognitive content introduced in (3) and (4). The thematic progression is realised through anaphora (*those*) and semantic cohesion (*fixes*). In the second part of the intervention, the locutor asks for new cognitive content:

[131] Nope, none of *those fixes* worked. Does anyone have any suggestions?

A new forum member (*vellox*) volunteers to provide new cognitive content for the topic (rheme) at the request of the previous locutor. The introduction of explanatory sequence (5) has the function to relate the locutor’s intervention to the initial post: “this problem” (anaphoric and semantic cohesion). Explanatory sequence (5) is introduced through two cataphoras: “a fix” and “this fix”. At the same time, “a fix” and “this fix” realise the semantic cohesion with the initiator’s intervention, post no 7:

[143-144] I was having this problem for about 3 months before finally *finding a fix* on the official Microsoft usenet forums. I hope *this fix* works for you.

The reaction of the initiator is anaphorically related to the previous locutor’s intervention. The continuation is a narrative elaboration of the theme through which the initiator of the thread tries to bring more information to the other members of the forum in order to supply new cognitive content on the topic of the discussion. The intervention ends, as

in the previous interventions of this locutor, with a request for information:

[159-163] No, *this* didn't work either... Can no one help me?

The following interventions represent reactions to the cognitive request of the novice. Intervention no. 10 (contribution of the user ESALADUANE) doesn't include explanatory structures, while interventions [11], [12] and [13] consist of various explanatory structures (6), (7), (8), (9), and (10). They represent thematic amplifications of the initial post.

The cognitive content in post [13] replaces the initial post in what concerns the thematic cohesion for the interventions following this post. For example, post [14] represents a positive feedback for the content provided by the previous post through an anaphoric relation ("those") and a semantic cohesion ("command prompt"):

[248] "putting *those* into the *command prompt* worked for me!"

Post [15] is thematically related to post [13] through semantic cohesion: [262] "command prompt". The last post of the thread represents a thematic discontinuity.

As one can note, since the cognitive content has demonstrated its effectiveness by solving the locutor's problem, the discussion can be closed.

*Model of knowledge transmission:* The knowledge is communicated from the *expert* to the *novice* through a series of exchanges. The two main categories of participants (*expert* and *novice*) involve different members each: three *novices* and seven *experts*. The main agent of the knowledge communication is the initiator of the message (1<sup>st</sup> novice) who, through different discursive strategies (mostly direct interrogations), challenges the other members of the forum to react. The knowledge communicated is evaluated by the initiator of the thread and rejected if not effective. The experts provide different solutions to the problem the novice faces. Each failure is followed by a new request for information. The communication of knowledge is realised through *one-to-one communication* [3, 6, 7, 8, 15] and *one-to-many communication* [1, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]. The knowledge provided is an accumulation of data pending on validation. The *novice* controls the flux of data. He/she acquires the knowledge provided by the experts and either validates or invalidates it. If invalidated, the knowledge doesn't fulfil the cognitive needs of the novice, who reiterates the request. The end of the cognitive process comes when the cognitive needs are fulfilled. In our example, the validation of the knowledge comes at the end of the thread from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> *novices*.

### 7.3.3 Explanation as Interaction on the Spanish Web Forums

The written conversation on the Spanish professional web forums constructs knowledge interactively through explanation. Each participant in a situation assumes his/her role and contributes to the creation of a cognitive structure in a specialised field.

The selected example illustrates the way the knowledge is provided by a part of the members of the forum (*experts*) to another part of the members of the forum (*novices*) via interactive explanation. The example below represents thread [3] in the Spanish web forums communication. The topic of the discussion focuses on the optimal graphic card model for a gamer computer. There are three participants involved in the interaction and their contribution to the topic consists of 14 posts, as follows<sup>141</sup>:

---

<sup>141</sup> Due to the extended visual content of the corpus, in the current example the images have been reduced to 1.5 cm.

## windows vistaaaa GRRR pantalla azul

### acbenavides

Conociendo Foroz



5 Registrado: 02 Nov 2008

Mensajes, 19

▣ Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:35 am **Título del mensaje:** windows vistaaaa GRRR pantalla azul

10 tengo una **nvidia 6100 nforce 405** y **VISTA de 32 bit** y nose q pasa q se m cualgan muxos juegos tengo tmb una **amd athlon 64 3800+**

como call of duty 1 y uo; fear combat.....

qe tengo q acer pa q no m salga el pantallazo azul???????

me baje el sp1...

qe ago??

15 cambio la grafica a una nvidia de serie 8??? y seria compatible con mi procesador???

lo q kiero es jugar a buenos juegos sin q s cuelgue

gracias de antemano

### Anush

20 Forero



Registrado: 02 Nov 2008

Mensajes: 131

25 Ubicación: En tus sueños ;)

▣ Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:46 am **Título del mensaje:**

mmm, pues nose qe decirte, prueba aver actualizando los drivers....

yo te recomendaria usar una **nvidia 8600** q es muy wena en vista, pero aver si sera compatible con tu procesador.....nose, qizas alguien de aki t solvente la duda

30 bsos!

[Debes ser mayor de 18 años.....ENTRAR](#)

### Dark Knight

35 Yo soy el foro



Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255



40	Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:10 am <b>Título del mensaje:</b>
	Buf, si juegas con la <b>nforce 6100</b> vas listo, es una grafca integrada en placa y enciam bastante antigua.
45	Yo de ti en caso de disponer de una ranura PCI-E en la placa me pillaría una <b>ATI HD3650</b> que por 50€ ya tienes una
	Firma por Forocero: 
50	<u><b>Anush</b></u> Forero
	
	Registrado: 02 Nov 2008 Mensajes: 131
55	Ubicación: En tus sueños ;) Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:13 am <b>Título del mensaje:</b>
60	<b>Dark Knight escribió:</b> Buf, si juegas con la nforce 6100 vas listo, es una grafca integrada en placa y enciam bastante antigua.
	Yo de ti en caso de disponer de una ranura PCI-E en la placa me pillaría una ATI HD3650 que por 50€ ya tienes una ¿Son buenas las <b>ATI</b> para <b>VISTA</b> ?
65	<u><b>Dark Knight</b></u> Yo soy el foro
	
	Registrado: 21 Ago 2006 Mensajes: 3255
70	Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:17 am <b>Título del mensaje:</b>
75	Para <b>Vista</b> van bien hasta las <b>integradas de Intel</b> de las ultimas generaciones si simplemente es para mover el aero, luego si es para <b>juegos</b> ya es otra cosa
	Firma por Forocero: 
80	<u><b>Anush</b></u> Forero



Registrado: 02 Nov 2008

Mensajes: 131

Ubicación: En tus sueños ;)

85  Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:22 am **Título del mensaje:**

Para **juegos**, ¿cual sería mejor?

Hablo de **juegos** de calidad, que a mí me interesa el **Dead Space** XD

90 Debes ser mayor de 18 años.....ENTRAR

### Dark Knight

Yo soy el foro



95 Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255

Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España

Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:26 am **Título del mensaje:**

100 Jejej justo estoy esperando **ese**.

Bueno pues yo ahora mismo estoy jugando al Far Cry 2 con practicamente todo en alto y con una resolucion de 1300 en mi **ATI 3650** asi que supongo que el dead space ira sobrado

105 Firma por Forocero:



### Anush

Forero



110 Registrado: 02 Nov 2008  
Mensajes: 131

Ubicación: En tus sueños ;)

115  Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:30 am **Título del mensaje:**

wow, muchas gracias.

Debes ser mayor de 18 años.....ENTRAR

120 acbenavides

Conociendo Foroz



Registrado: 02 Nov 2008

Mensajes, 19

125  Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:31 am **Título del mensaje:**

Entonces me pillaré una **ATI**  
gracias por todo

130 **Dark Knight**

Yo soy el foro



Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255

135 Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España

Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:33 am **Título del mensaje:**

Antes de comprarte la **grafica** asegurate de que sea **compatible** con tu **placa base**.

140 Y depende del procesador que tengas por mas grafica que le metas el micro lo estará limitando, en el otro post he visto que tienes una **AMD 64** y 1Gb de ram....quizá vaya un poco justo pero bueno si tampoco quieres jugar al maximo de detalles puede aguantar.

Firma por Forocero:



145

**Anush**

Forero



150 Registrado: 02 Nov 2008

Mensajes: 131

Ubicación: En tus sueños ;)

Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:36 am **Título del mensaje:**

155 Yo muy perdida en ésto de la informática. ¿Cómo se comprueba si es compatible?  
mmm ¿qué micro? xd  
ah y yo tengo una duda: ¿Cuál es mejor, la **ATI 3650** o la **ATI HD3650**?  
y ¿Cuánta memoria RAM es la mejor de cada tarjeta?

160 Debes ser mayor de 18 años....ENTRAR

**Dark Knight**

Yo soy el foro



165 Registrado: 21 Ago 2006  
Mensajes: 3255  
Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España  
Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 1:41 am **Título del mensaje:**

170 **Vamos a aclarar conceptos asi a saco jajaja**

Primero, el micro es el microprocesador, es decir el procesador y me referia a que si se ompra una grafica potente pero la monta en un ordenador con un procesador que no es potente el procesador limitará la potencia, es como meter el motor de un ferrari en un coche con ruedas cuadradas ya pude tener un motor muy bueno que no se va a mover.

175 Las dos ATI son las mismas solo que a veces no ponen lo de "HD"

Las graficas no llevan memoria ram sino GDDR cuando mayor sea el numero en GDDR mejor es decir sera mejor una grafica con GDDR3 que una con GDDR2 y sera mejor una grafica con 256 de GDDR3 que una con 1Gb GDDR2 es un poco complicadillo

180 Luego yo decia que con 1Gb ira un poco justillo ya que es lo mismo que el ejemplo del ferrari, en un ordenador todo depende de todo si hay un componente que es mas lento que los demas ralentizará todo el PC

Firma por Forocero:



185

**Anush**

Forero



190 Registrado: 02 Nov 2008  
Mensajes: 131  
Ubicación: En tus sueños ;)  
Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:04 pm **Título del mensaje:**

195 Entonces, (ya que estamos 😊) yo también me voy a pillar una **ATI** porque la mía se queda pequeña ya 😊.  
Si me pillo la **3650** ¿qué **procesador** tendría que comprar para que todo vaya a las mil maravillas?

200 Debes ser mayor de 18 años....ENTRAR

**Dark Knight**

Yo soy el foro




205 Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255  
 Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España  
 Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:09 pm **Título del mensaje:**

210 Primero tendríamos que saber que procesador tienes porque en el otro post decías que tenías un **AMD Athlon** y eso puede ser tanto un **Athlon XP** de hace años como un **Athlon 64 x2** y también tendríamos que saber cuánta RAM tienes, si es 1Gb o 2Gb o en el peor de los casos 512 Mb jejeje

215 También dínos cuánto dinero podrías gastarte en la gráfica y así decirte la mejor gráfica posible por ese precio

**Porcierto mejor si seguimos esto en el post que abriste tu 😊**

Firma por Forocero:  


220

### 7.3.3.1 Unexpected Turn Taking

In what concerns the organisation of the interactions in the Spanish sub-corpus, in the example we have selected the speech turns are regulated by the communicational device. As on the Spanish web forum, the initiator of the thread can choose to focus on the presentation of the topic and he/she can deliberately avoid the explicit selection of an addressee. The other participants in the situation volunteer to engage in the dialogue and their implicit addressee is the initiator of the thread. In our example, one can notice that the participants don't select an addressee explicitly, maybe because the main part of the interaction takes place only between two of the three participants. The peculiar aspect of this situation consists in the fact that the initiator of the thread seems passive and distant. He/she participates with only two interventions in a 14 intervention thread.

As one can note from the speech turns in the example above, since the initiator is non-participative, the discussion is "appropriated" by the collocutors, who have been expected to provide cognitive content from the start. It results that the other participants in the situation have different knowledge levels on the topic they discuss and, in the absence of any reaction from the initiator of the thread, they continue discussing the theme proposed by L1 and exchanging knowledge. The discussion is a dialogue barely interrupted by the initiator. Probably, this is the motive why the participants don't select their addressee explicitly. The replies alternate logically in a question-answer series that regulates the transfer of the knowledge.

The *turns* and the *transition points* are graphically marked on the forum. In this example, we can observe that the *novice* locutor marks discursively the *transition points* by ending the interventions with

interrogatives through which he/she “invites” his/her conversation partners to intervene.

The *global* organisation of the web forum interactions distinguish between three types of speech turns: *opening*, *body*, and *closing*. In our example, the interaction is initiated by **acbenavides**. The initial post is locutor-oriented, who is at the center of this communication: “tengo”, “no se”, “se me cuelgan”, “lo que quiero”. Obviously, the topic is considered the main aspect of the communication. The locutor establishes a communicational relation with the *audience* through a string of four questions representing an invitation to discussion: [533-534] “¿que ago?? cambio la grafica a una nvidia de serie 8??? y seria compatible con mi procesador????”. The initial post ends with the utterance of the objective of the knowledge transmission. The locutor wants to acquire the necessary technical knowledge that would permit him/her to buy an appropriate hardware device for his/her computer and to play a specific videogame.

The thread body is structured in two discursive moments. The first one, posts [2] – [9], represents the dialogue on the initial topic where the other members of the forum provide punctual information on the model and performances of a certain hardware device (graphic/video card). In post [4] we can notice that one of the members of the forum (**Anush**), who initially assumed the role of the *expert*, exchanges roles and assumes the role of the *novice*. The web forum situation changes. Thus, if at the beginning there were two experts and one novice, after post [4] there are two *novices* and one *expert*. Since the initiator of the thread is very passive, the newly self-assumed novice (**Anush**) becomes the active agent of the communicational interaction. **Anush**'s change of identity also marks the initiation of a different discursive moment. This new novice goes into details with the questions he/she asks on the topic, which determines the collocutor (**Dark Knight**) produce an extended explanation on the topic.

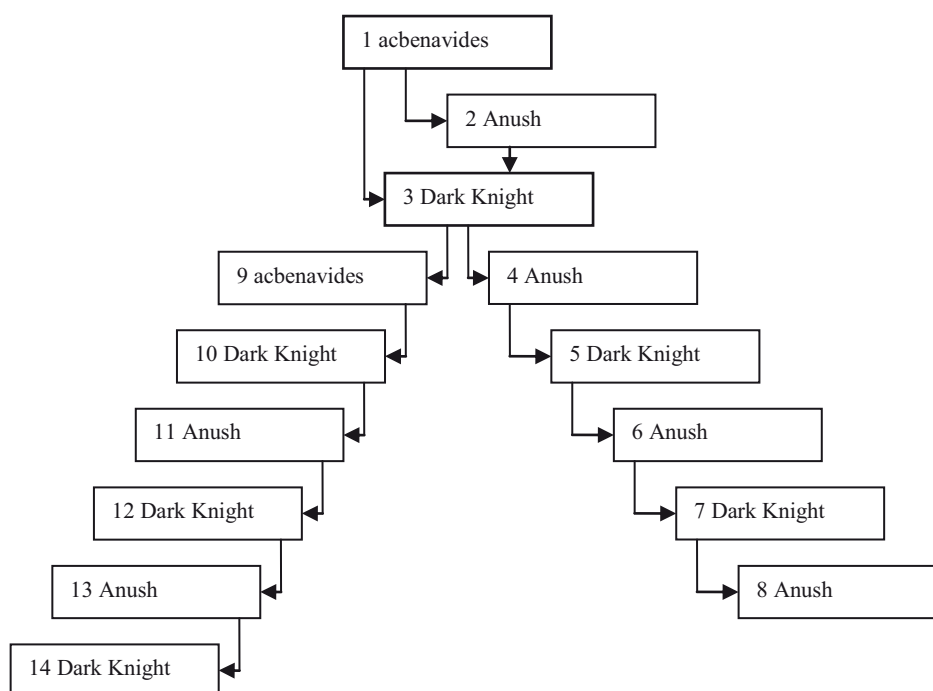
The closing post begins as an explanatory intervention and continues with a request for more information from the *expert*, who claims that in order to offer expertise on the topic he needs more information. The last post closes the current thread and opens a different one: [728] “Porcierto mejor si seguimos esto en el post que abriste tu 😊”.

### 7.3.3.2 Symmetric Organisation of Actions in an Interaction

The way the communicational interactions are organised can illustrate the complex way in which knowledge is transmitted on the Internet. We observe that our example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> intervention in the Spanish sub-corpus, consists of an interaction shaped by 2 sequences: the first sequence formed by posts [1] to [10] and the second sequence formed by

posts [11] to [14]. The first sequence initiates the topic and the second sequence is an amplification of the first.

The graphic representation that concludes this section shows that two reactive interventions, [2] and [3], involving three participants in the communication correspond to the initiative intervention. The structure of the interventions is quite simple, for the number of the participants is reduced. It consists in alternating *initiative* and *reactive* interventions. The initiative interventions [1], [4], [6], [8], [9], [11], and [13] form a gradual systematic structure of interrogatives. Each interrogation generates an explanatory intervention. The entire structure is symmetric and balanced:



### 7.3.3.3 The Changing Themes

In web forum communication knowledge is constructed gradually by the punctual contribution of all the participants in the situation. Thus, the professional web forum communication demonstrates a strong semantic cohesion based on the topic of the thread. The semantic cohesion is completed by complex anaphoric and/or cataphoric relations. The more complex the situation, the more complex the thematic construction of the knowledge.

In the example of thread 3 of the Spanish web forums sub-corpus, the structure of the situation and the discursive organisation are simple. Thus, the thematic progression we expect in this interaction may also be quite simple and symmetric. Our objective is to highlight the way knowledge is communicated and constructed thematically. In order to

analyse this interaction we have distinguished between: the proposal of the theme, the elaboration of the theme, and the closing of the theme.

*The proposal of the theme* establishes the main keywords that define thematically the parameters of the discussion. In our example, lines [8-16]:

tengo una **nvidia 6100 nforce 405** y **VISTA de 32 bit** y nose q pasa q se m cualgan muxos juegos tengo tmb una **amd athlon 64 3800+**  
 como call of duty 1 y uo; fear combat.....  
 qe tengo q acer pa q no m salga el pantallazo azul??????  
 me baje el sp1...  
 qe ago??  
 cambio la grafica a una nvidia de serie 8??? y seria compatible con mi procesador???  
 lo q kiero es jugar a buenos juegos sin q s cuelgue  
 gracias de antemano

It is easy to observe that, since the communication of knowledge concerns a particular field, specific terminology is used as definitory keywords: “nvidia 6100 nforce 405”, “VISTA de 32 bit”, and “amd athlon 64 3800+”. It is also important that the initiator of the thread (L1) presents only the general details on the topic and that the message presents disproportionately the subjective part (subjectivity marks of the locutor involvement in the discussion) and the *objective part* (defining the cognitive area the locutor is interested in) of the post. As one can notice, there are three keywords describing the specialised area of the focus of the knowledge communication versus six lines of text representing the manifestation of the subjectivity of the locutor.

Since L1 initiates the thread as a simple matter of hardware device, the answers coming from the collocutors are similar. They are thematically related only by keywords, as one can observe in posts [2], [3], [4], and [5]. The semantic cohesion of the posts is ensured by the constant presence of such terms as [2] “nvidia 8600”, [3] “nfoce 6100”, [3] “ATI HD3650”, [4] “ATI”, [4] “VISTA”, [5] “Vista” and [5] “integradas de Intel”. The cognitive content is represented in the new information (rheme) provided by the participants in the topic.

A thematic discontinuity can be observed in post no. [6], where the locutor interrupts the main topic of discussion by proposing a sub-theme. The locutor focuses the discussion by asking a more concrete question: [6] “Para juegos, ¿cual seria mejor?” One should also note the anaphoric relation marked by the use of the relative “cuál” referring to [3] “placa”. The answer to this intervention creates a new semantic relation. The locutor develops in post [7] a double thematic message, since he/she refers to the main theme, the videobards “mi ATI 3650”, and also develops a collateral theme that has appeared occasionally in the previous exchanges: videogames. We can observe the anaphoric relation created by “ese” referring to the game (Dead Space) mentioned by the



previous locutor and the semantic cohesion at the end of the post by mentioning the name of the video game.

Posts [8] and [9] each introduce separately a thematic discontinuity in the *close of the theme*. One of the participants (**Anush**) closes the theme she proposed in post [6]: “wow, muchas gracias”. This post is followed by the second *close of the theme* coming from the initiator of the thread in the form of a conclusive structure: [9] “Entonces me pillare una ATI gracias por todo”. This close of the theme signifies that the cognitive needs of the initiator of the thread have been fulfilled and he/she considers that s/he has accumulated sufficient knowledge in order to face the problem he/she wants to solve.

Surprisingly, the discussion continues with a new message bringing supplementary information and coming from an *expert* who adds important recommendations that form a thematically elaboration of post [9]. This message generates a third proposal of theme coming from **Anush**, a participant in the situation that appropriates the role of novice and the role of the main agent of the thread despite the fact that he/she isn't the initiator of the thread.

The third theme of the thread goes into even more detail. The initiator, who assumes a feminine identity, asks for more specialised and more extended knowledge:

Yo muy perdida en ésto de la informática. ¿Cómo se comprueba si es compatible?  
mmm ¿qué micro? xd  
ah y yo tengo una duda: ¿Cuál es mejor, la ATI 3650 o la ATI HD3650?  
y ¿Cuánta memoria RAM es la mejor de cada tarjeta?

The post is thematically related to the previous message. The semantic cohesion refers to procedures: “¿Cómo se comprueba si es compatible?” and objects: “ATI 3650”, “ATI HD3650”. The request for new knowledge, as one can observe, is systematically realised in this post through a series of questions.

The complexity of the post that initiates the new theme is reflected by the complexity of the collocutor's answer consisting in an extended explanatory sequence. The expert provides a complete cognitive scheme, as he declares in the introduction of his/her intervention: “Vamos a aclarar conceptos asi a saco jajaja”.

Post [13] concludes the knowledge communication fulfilled by the extended explanation. The locutor (**Anush**) has now all the necessary knowledge to evaluate, this time as an expert, the situation of the hardware she is interested in. The locutor expresses it as a direct conclusion of what she learned from the previous post: “Entonces, (ya que estamos 😊) yo también me voy a pillar una ATI porque la mía se queda pequeña ya 😊.” It is interesting to observe how the locutor acquires knowledge gradually and how the difficulty and the complexity of the process increases with every post.

Post [12] is semantically related to the previous message by the mention of a hardware element: “la 3650”. This theme is related by the locutor to a new theme she proposes at the end of the post: “procesador”. We can observe that the locutor changes for the third time the theme as the knowledge she receives gradually permits her to better evaluate the global situation.

In post [13] the theme is ratified by the locutor, who accepts to provide knowledge on this new theme. The locutor begins the communication of knowledge with a general introduction where he/she relates semantically the new cognitive content to the cognitive content previously presented. After some lines where the theme is partially elaborated, the locutor introduces a thematic discontinuity asking the addressee for more contextual information.

Since the themes change repeatedly and the current theme is different from the initial thread topic, the locutor suggests a closing of the theme and its continuation in another thread, especially created for this topic, as requested by the rules of web forum communication : “Porcierto mejor si seguimos esto en el post que abriste tu 😊”.

*The knowledge transmission scheme:* The knowledge in the example above is communicated from the *expert* to the *novice*. However, here we witness an exchange of categories. One of the experts exchanges categories and becomes *novice*. The knowledge is communicated between two *novices* and one *expert*. Knowledge communication in this example is the result of the actions of an insistent *novice* who takes control of the turns of speech and “invites” (through a series of interrogations) the *expert* to provide knowledge. The novice controls the communication through changes of themes which allow him/her to focus on the topic of interest. The 2<sup>nd</sup> novice is the active agent. Sometimes the expert takes the initiative and provides supplementary information without any request from the novice. The communicational relation is *many-to-one*, where the knowledge comes from a unique source and is shared with two novices.

The structure of the knowledge transmission is hierarchic. The first post enunciates the general theme. During the transfer of knowledge, the novice realises that different aspects of the theme are unknown to him/her. Therefore, he/she proceeds to focus on a particular aspect of the main theme and requests information on it. Then, when he/she discovers new aspects that he/she needs to know in order to solve the problem he/she faces, he/she focuses on each aspect requesting new information every time. The knowledge is constructed as a hierarchic structure where every piece of information is part of a complex network of relations. When the *novice*, due to lack of knowledge and experience, is not aware that the information he/she has is incomplete, the *expert* voluntarily completes the information.


### 7.3.4 Explanation as Interaction on the French Web Forums

The knowledge communicated on the professional web forums adopts a rich variety of forms. It is transmitted interactively from the *expert* to the *novice*. During the interaction, the cognitive needs of the novice are defined through conversation and the expert provides the cognitive content the latter is looking for.

The example we have chosen to illustrate the interactive construction of the explanation as the main mechanism of knowledge transmission and communication, is *thread* no. 6 in the French sub-corpus. The topic of discussion is the apparent problem the novice has with the installation of a program in his/her notebook. The thread consists of 11 posts which represent the contribution of 4 participants as follows:

**Echec à l'installation d'un logiciel**

Posté le: 31 Oct 2007, 16:03  
**einstein30**  
 Petit delinquant

5 

Inscrit le, 20 Oct 2007  
 Messages: 10  
 Localisation: gard

10 Bonjour:j'ai installé un logiciel sur mon pc bureau sans aucun problème (win xp familiale sp2),il s'est"lancé"tout seul dès la mise en place dans le lecteur.Maintenant,je veux l'installer sur mon pc portable (win xp pro) mais ça ne marche pas,alors,j'ai fais"exécuter" puis D:\install.exe mais sans résultats. Quelqu'un peut-il me donner une explication et surtout la marche à suivre. Merci BYE


15 

---

Quand je vois ce que je vois et que j'entends ce que j'entends,je suis content de penser se que je penses.

Posté le: 31 Oct 2007, 17:08

20 **Bilifly**  
 Modérateur Secu





Inscrit le: 08 Avr 2005  
 Messages: 11271  
 Localisation: Bolshoi Booze

25 Bonjour à toi et bienvenue

Nous aimerions savoir quel est le logiciel que tu veux installer sur ton portable ? C'est un CD-ROM ou bien un DVD ?

30 

---

  **Forum**  
 informatique

Posté le: 31 Oct 2007, 18:53

**einstein30**

Petit delinquant



35

Inscrit le, 20 Oct 2007

Messages: 10

Localisation: gard

40

RE;il s'agit d'un cd rom ; mais qu'elle différence ça peut faire puisque l'installation s'est effectuée normalement sur le pc bureau. BYE

Quand je vois ce que je vois et que j'entends ce que j'entends,je suis content de penser se que je penses.

45

Posté le: 31 Oct 2007, 19:01

**libelool**

Parrain



50

Inscrit le: 26 Déc 2005

Messages: 1051

Bonjour,

55

et si tu ouvres le lecteur par le poste de travail, il ne se passe rien ?

et si tu cliques sur explorer, tu as bien un fichier d'install ?

non ? 

ps : si Bili te pose cette question, c'est certainement qu'elle a son importance...

60

Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 12:31

**einstein30**

Petit delinquant



65

Inscrit le, 20 Oct 2007

Messages: 10

Localisation: gard


70

RE;tout d'abord,il s'agit d'un dvd et non d'un cd; j'ai suivi les instructions présentes dans la notice jointe: "executer" puis "taper: D:\EAUTORUN puis "entrer",il me demande d'insérer le disque puis,il ne se passe rien sauf que le voyant du lecteur clignotte et que le curseur de la souris est accompagné d'un petit cd clignotant également;je suis allé aussi dans poste de travail,en cliquant sur "lecteur D",rien ne ce passe non plus;je suis allé dans fichier et explorer,il me demande d'insérer le disque mais c'est toujours négatif;alors,je ne vois pas comment faire;n'y aurai-t-il pas une solution,voir une modification à faire pour qu'il se lance tout seul lorsque je l'insert dans le lecteur ?

75

Merci BYE

Quand je vois ce que je vois et que j'entends ce que j'entends, je suis content de penser se que je penses.

80  Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 12:59

**Bilifly**  
Moderateur Secu



85 Inscrit le: 08 Avr 2005  
Messages: 11271  
Localisation: Bolshoi Booze

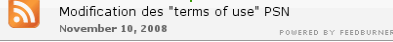
Bonjour à toi

Tu possèdes un lecteur de CD uniquement ou bien un lecteur DVD ?

90 Car si tu possèdes un lecteur CD et que tu insères un DVD c'est un peu normal qu'il ne se passe rien 😊

**et j'aimerais savoir quel logiciel tu veux installer ? ça se trouve que c'est le logiciel qui bug !**

95



[Forum](#)

informatique

 Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 13:08

**R3M\$**  
Parrain



100

Inscrit le: 24 Avr 2006  
Messages: 1697  
Localisation: le poitou

105 si sa setrouve c'est le lecteur qui plante 🤖



110

1.Core 2 Duo E6300 @1.86ghz, 1go DDR II 667,  
CM:GA-945P-S3  
connexion: livebox 1 méga

the web site of R3M\$

 Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 13:15

115

**libelool**  
Parrain



Inscrit le: 26 Déc 2005

Messages: 1051

120

c'est clair... 😊

le fait qu'il se lance tout seul ou non ne changera rien à ton problème d'installation...

Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 15:41

**einstein30**

Petit delinquant

125



Inscrit le, 20 Oct 2007

Messages: 10

Localisation: gard

130

RE; je viens de vérifier avec AIDA32 et j'ai constaté qu'il s'agit d'un lecteur CD et non d'un lecteur DVD ; donc,tout ça pour rien,veuillez m'excuser pour ce dérangement. Est-il possible de le graver sur un cd ou de le copier sur une clé usb à partir du pc bureau ?  
Merci BYE

135

Quand je vois ce que je vois et que j'entends ce que j'entends,je suis content de penser se que je penses.

Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 16:47

**Bilify**

Moderateur Secu



140

Inscrit le: 08 Avr 2005

Messages: 11271

Localisation: Bolshoi Booze

Et oui ! c'est bête 🤖

145

Tu peux copier sur un CD, mais tout dépend du logiciel, pourquoi tu ne veux pas nous dire quel logiciel tu essayes d'installer ?



Actualités informatiques sur PCInfo-Web  
Modification des "terms of use" PSN  
November 16, 2008

POWERED BY FEEDBURNER

[Forum informatique](#)

150

Posté le: 01 Nov 2007, 17:32

**einstein30**

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le, 20 Oct 2007

Messages: 10

155

Localisation: gard

RE; en fait il s'agit du jeu "les chiffres et les lettres" comme sur FR3; pour que ça fonctionne,j'ai dû l'installer et pour l'utiliser,il faut que le dvd soit dans le lecteur; voila,vous savez tout,je n'ai rien à cacher. BYE

160

Quand je vois ce que je vois et que j'entends ce que j'entends,je suis content de penser se que je penses.

### 7.3.4.1 Polite Alternating Turns

The intervention turns in our example are constantly marked by introductory or closing elements which suggest that the locutor either introduces a new utterance or ends the current utterance. In the initial post the locutor orients the message explicitly to the addressee: “Bonjour”. At the end of the turn he/she explicitly selects the addressee: “quelqu’un”. The transition point is discursively marked by the locutor by final greetings: [12] “Merci BYE”. This transition point structure will characterise the locutor throughout the thread, for he/she ends all the messages with this expression.

The turns in the French thread we have analysed are discursively marked at the beginning and at the end of the discourse. The participants frequently begin their turns with *greetings* or other conventional mark such as “Re;” which means that the intervention is an answer to a previous post. Only three of the turns in the thread present no initial mark. It seems that the locutor has the control of his/her turn and he clearly marks his/her enunciation space. When the locutor finishes the communication, he/she marks discursively the end of the communication. The transition point marks can be: a) *post scriptum* as in example [12]: “ps”, b) orthographic marks, like the ellipse, as in example [54]: “si Bili te pose cette question, c’est certainement qu’elle a son importance...”<sup>142</sup>, or c) greetings [70]: “Merci”.

A different way the locutor indicates that he/she finished the message and the communication channel is free to use by a different locutor is through direct questions placed at the end of the intervention. Usually, their function is to communicate that in order to continue the cognitive process the locutor (novice or expert) needs more information from the collocutor.

The turns are shared between one *novice* (**einstein30**) and three *experts*. The addressee is implicitly selected and he/she is the *novice*. The positioning of the *novice* and *experts* is clearly marked. The position of authority is held by the experts who have the right to question, to show deference to, and evaluate the *novice*. All three actions can be observed in the French thread.


**Question:** [25] Nous aimerions savoir quel est le logiciel que tu veux installer sur ton portable ?

**Condescension:** [54] si Bili te pose cette question, c'est certainement qu'elle a son importance...<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> A similar transition point (ellipse) can be observed in the same thread, line [54].

<sup>143</sup> The locutor explains to the initiator why he has to answer the question asked previously by the moderator of the forum (Bili).

**Evaluation:** [132] Et oui ! c'est bête 

The *global organisation* of the professional web forum interaction generally consists of a tripartite structure formed by: *opening*, *body*, and *closing* as moments of the thread discussion.

In the *opening post* [9-12] the initiator of the thread (L1) establishes a communicational relation with the other members of the web forum, describes the context of the communication, and defines the objectives of the communication.

The body of the thread is formed by posts [2] to [11] and represents a polylogical dialogue about the problems L1 has in installing a computer program. It begins as a post that provides insufficient information on the situation. The deficient information makes the *experts* who participate in the situation to ask for more information. Posts [2], [4], and [6] contain questions intended to clarify the situation. L1 reacts to the experts' request for information in posts [3], [5], [9], and [11]. L1 also asks questions, but his/hers are meant to guide the focus of the knowledge the experts transmit. One can observe that the thread is structured as a series of interrogations. They are complementary and point in different directions: from the *novice* to the *experts* and from the *experts* to the *novice*. The main function of these series of questions is to regulate the communication of knowledge.

The *closing post* of the thread appears at the end of the thread, in post no. 11. The thread is closed by its initiator, who has acquired the knowledge he/she needed in order to face the problem he/she presented in the *opening post*. The *closing* is implicit, for there are no explicit discursive marks to indicate the end of the discussion. As we have already observed, the interaction is generated by a series of interrogations. When the interrogations terminate the thread comes to an end as well.

#### 7.3.4.2 Multireferential Interventions

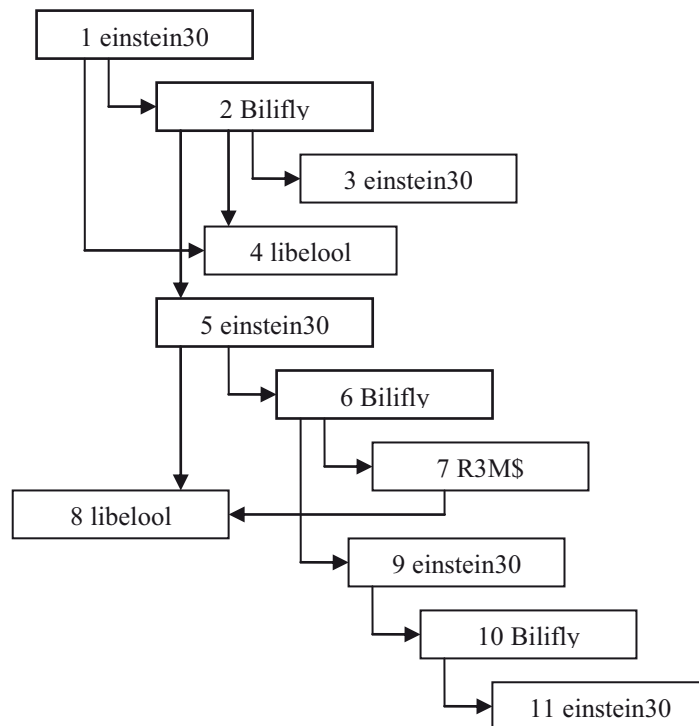
The structure of thread 6 in the French sub-corpus reveals the complex way in which the participants in the situation interact during the process of knowledge transmission. As in the analysis of the examples above (see 7.1.2 and 7.2.2), we will consider the interaction as a complex structure formed by hierarchised elements.

From this perspective, thread 6 of the French sub-corpus consists of two unequal sequences: the main sequence formed by posts [1] to [9] and a secondary sequence consisting of posts [10] and [11]. The first sequence contains the topic of discussion and the cognitive content communicated in the thread. The second sequence is only an appendix to the first one and clarifies a minor aspect of the interaction.



The initiative intervention [1] generates a unique reactive intervention [2] which, in turn, becomes an *initiative intervention* for the following posts. Some of the interventions of the thread generate multiple *reactive interventions* and organise the interaction in a multi-nuclear form consisting of four nuclei: [1], [2], [5], and [6]. This structure demonstrates that the interest of the participants in the situation is focused on the content communicated by the *novice*, the initiator of the thread, [1] and [5], and on the content communicated by one of the *experts* (**Bilifly**), [2] and [6].

In the interaction structure one can appreciate that the posts of the latter are more important, as it becomes clear in the following scheme:



### 7.3.4.3 Interrogation by Experts

The professional web forum interactions represent structured cognitive content co-constructed by the participants in a situation of communication. The knowledge is constructed gradually meeting the cognitive needs of the initiator of the thread and as determined by the level of expertise of the other members of the forum.

In thread 6 of the French sub-corpus the interaction presents a quite complex structure. The *proposal of the theme* defines the general context of communication and highlights semantic units that will construct the thematic progression of the knowledge construction. It is posted by the initiator of the thread (**einstein30**) and defines the context of the specialised communication. The theme proposed is quite general and so is the terminology:

Bonjour; **jai installé un logiciel** sur mon pc bureau sans aucun problème (win xp familiale sp2), il s'est "lancé" tout seul dès la mise en place dans **le lecteur**. Maintenant, je veux l'installer sur mon pc portable (win xp pro) mais ça ne marche pas, alors, j'ai fais "exécuter" puis D:\install.exe mais sans résultats. Quelqu'un peut-il me donner une explication et surtout la marche à suivre. Merci BYE

As the quotation above shows, the locutor succinctly describes the situation he/she faces using some wide-ranging keywords such as: “installer”, “logiciel”, and “le lecteur”. He/she shows more precision in establishing the cognitive content he needs in order to solve the situation he/she faces. Sentence [12]: “Quelqu'un peut-il me donner *une explication* et surtout *la marche à suivre*.” defines two cognitive contents the initiator of the thread (L1) wants to acquire: the first cognitive objective of the locutor is to understand the reasons why his/her computer has a peculiar behaviour. The second objective, logically derived from the first, is to acquire the necessary skills to solve the problem: “... la marche à suivre”.

As we have already observed in the previous analysis, the discursive organisation of the *initiative intervention* influences the structure of the *reactive intervention*. The same phenomenon can be observed in the French thread. The general outline of the context generates a series of questions from L1's collocutors intended to elicit a more precise framework. Consequently, the first *reactive intervention* [2] consists of two interrogations. The first interrogation represents a *thematic elaboration* (semantic cohesion) of the initial post: “logiciel”, “installer”, and “ton portable”. The second interrogation introduces new information to the communication clarifying for the addressee precisely what is the information the locutor asks for: [2] “C'est un CD-ROM ou bien un DVD?”

The initiator of the thread provides the information the previous locutor asked for and the thematic elaboration in the 3<sup>rd</sup> post is realised through semantic cohesion: “cd rom” and “pc bureau”. In the second part of the intervention, the locutor introduces a new knowledge request, for he/she wants to know the reason for the question asked by the previous locutor.

Another *expert (libelool)* volunteers to ratify the proposal of theme [4]. The way he/she organises his/her post supports our previous affirmation that due to the fact that the initiator of the thread gives insufficient information, the *experts* cannot evaluate properly the situation as they need more specialised details in order to provide a solution. Post [4] consists of a series of three interrogations and an explanatory sequence. The message is thematically related (semantic cohesion) in the first part (the interrogative part) to the proposal of the theme: “le lecteur”, “fichier d'install”. The last line of the message is thematically related to post [3] and responds to L1's the question concerning the importance of the CD/DVD unit. The thematic progression is ensured by the mention of the user name (**Bilify**) of the

previous locutor. The explanatory sequence is not intended to clarify the situation, but rather to reassure the addressee that every question the previous locutor asked has a precise goal.

The initiator of the thread reacts in post [5] and provides a complete and exhaustive description of the situation he/she faces. The theme elaboration is realised through description. The fragment ends with the reiteration of the interrogation formulated by the locutor in the initial post: [5] “n'y aurai-t-il pas une *solution*, voir une *modification à faire* pour qu'il se lance tout seul lorsque je l'insert dans le lecteur ?”

Post [6] represents a thematic amplification, for the locutor rephrases the question asked in post [2]: “Tu possèdes un lecteur de CD uniquement ou bien un lecteur DVD?”. The locutor changes the discursive strategy and produces a more complex discourse where he/she alternates the interrogations with the explanatory sequences:

**[6] [interrogation]** Tu possèdes un lecteur de CD uniquement ou bien un lecteur DVD ?

**[explanation]** Car si tu possèdes un lecteur CD et que tu insères un DVD c'est un peu normal qu'il ne se passe rien 🤔

**[interrogation]** et j'aimerais savoir quel logiciel tu veux installer ? **[explanation]** ça se trouve que c'est le logiciel qui bug !

Post [7] represents some supplementary information provided by a new participant in the discussion who has decided to amplify the theme discussed by the previous locutor in post [6]. The contribution of **R3M\$** amplifies the theme in post [6] through cataphoric relation: “ça” referring to the affirmation “c’es le logiciel qui bug” and through semantic cohesion: “c’es le lecteur qui plante”.

The next post, [8], continues a double line of dialogue. The first part of the message: [8] “c’est clair...” is a confirmation of the previous locutor’s statement in post [7]. The last line of the post represents an explanatory thematic amplification of post [5] by semantic cohesion (“ton problème d’installation”)

Post [9] represents thematic discontinuity. The first part of the post represents the *closing of the theme*, for the initiator of the thread obtained alone the answer he/she formulated as the objective of the thread. In the second part of [5] he/she proposes a new theme that, one way or another, continues the closed theme but in a different way. The theme is ratified in [10]. Here the locutor introduces a general evaluation of the entire interaction from post [1] to [9]. He/she also reiterates a question he/she has formulated before: “pourquoi tu ne veux pas nous dire quel logiciel tu essayes d’installer?”.

The last post represents a thematical elaboration of post [10]. L1 provides the information asked repeatedly by the previous locutor.

*The transmission of knowledge scheme:* The communication of knowledge is realised directly from *expert* to *novice* and indirectly from

*expert* to *expert*, through the comments they exchange on the topic of discussion. In our example the knowledge communication is the result of the communicational interaction between one *novice* and three *experts*. The active agents of the construction of knowledge are the *experts*. Knowledge communication is regarded as an expertise situation where the experts have all the information needed in order to provide effective knowledge. The knowledge is constructed through an interrogatory the *experts* apply to the *novice*. This heuristic method leads the *novice* to the discovery of the solution by himself.

### **7.3.5 Explanatory Interactions on the Romanian Web Forums**

The interactive construction of knowledge on the Romanian web forums will be illustrated by the example of an interaction whose topic tackles the different modalities of uninstalling a program from the operating system MsWindows<sup>144</sup>. The interaction is the result of the contribution of six participants. The knowledge is constructed in this thread through 11 posts as follows:

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<sup>144</sup> In this section all examples we comment on will be translated into English.

## Add or Remove Programs, Cum elimin un program?


 [miron1947](#)

Mar 22 2009, 13:36

Post #1


5 Cum elimin un program,**deja dezinstalat**, din lista **Add or Remove Programs**?Cu toate ca l-am sters si din registrii,apare in lista.Nu este grav,dar nu inteleg de ce mai apare si as dori daca stie cineva,cum pot rezolva,astfel incat sa nu mai apara in lista de programe.

10 This post has been edited by **miron1947**: Mar 22 2009, 13:37


 [onlyviu](#)

Mar 22 2009, 13:45

Post #2


15 QUOTE (miron1947 @ Mar 22 2009, 13:36)   
Cum elimin un program,**deja dezinstalat**, din lista **Add or Remove Programs**?Cu toate ca l-am sters si din registrii,apare in lista.Nu este grav,dar nu inteleg de ce mai apare si as dori daca stie cineva,cum pot rezolva,astfel incat sa nu mai apara in lista de programe.

20 pai,sfatul meu e sa folosesti your uninstaller,revo unininstaller sau ccleaner..ultimele doua sunt free.

 [yooman](#)

Mar 22 2009, 14:14

Post #3


25 QUOTE (onlyviu @ Mar 22 2009, 13:45)   
pai,sfatul meu e sa folosesti your uninstaller,revo unininstaller sau ccleaner..ultimele doua sunt free.

Corect... instaleaza CCleaner, si in program alege Tools -> Uninstall -> Delete Entry.

 [miron1947](#)

Mar 22 2009, 14:19

Post #4

35 QUOTE (onlyviu @ Mar 22 2009, 13:45)   
your uninstaller,revo unininstaller sau ccleaner.  
Nu am rezolvat cu nici unul,nici macar nu apare in lista lor,in schimb in lista mea apare.

**Attached File(s)**

 [Add\\_remove.JPG](#) ( 21.38K) Number of downloads: 22

 [Kakashi-Hatake](#)

40 Mar 22 2009, 17:28

Post #5


Pai dai Uninstall si iti va zice ca e deja dezinstalat si daca vrei sa il elimini din lista.

This post has been edited by **Kakashi-Hatake**: Mar 22 2009, 17:28

 [miron1947](#)

Mar 22 2009, 17:30


Post #6





50 QUOTE (Kakashi-Hatake @ Mar 22 2009, 17:28)   
Pai dai **Uninstall** si iti va zice ca e deja dezinstalat  
Daca va uitati atent la poza,vedeti ca nu-mi apare aceasta optiune.  
Nici selectat nu apare optiunea.

This post has been edited by **miron1947**: Mar 22 2009, 17:37

**Attached File(s)**

 [Add\\_remove.JPG](#) ( 20.59K) Number of downloads: 21

55  [Kakashi-Hatake](#)

	<p>☐ Mar 22 2009, 17:33</p> <p>Pai in poza nu il ai selectat asa ca nu am ce sa vad. Dai click pe el si vezi.</p>	Post #7
60	<p> <u>vlad-doru</u></p> <p>☐ Mar 22 2009, 17:54</p> <p>Foloseste uninstallerul asta de la Microsoft (IMG:<a href="http://forum.softpedia.com/style_emoticons/default/biggrin.gif">http://forum.softpedia.com/style_emoticons/default/biggrin.gif</a>) <a href="http://www.qooy.com/files/055O3POH/UNINSTA...AIR_msicuu2.zip">http://www.qooy.com/files/055O3POH/UNINSTA...AIR_msicuu2.zip</a></p>	Post #8
65		
70	<p> <u>Neika</u></p> <p>☐ Mar 23 2009, 18:45</p> <p>Dacă nu ai reușit cu <u>Windows Installer CleanUp</u>, caută în regiștrii la HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall, acel program. și ștergi cheia respectivă. Ce scrie la <i>Display Name</i>, este numele afișat în <i>Add/Remove Programs</i>.</p>	Post #9
75		
80	<p> <u>miron1947</u></p> <p>☐ Mar 23 2009, 21:07</p> <p>Nu apare in lista respectiva(HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall), multsim,dar am reusit cu <u>Windows Installer CleanUp</u>,din link-ul postat de Dvs.Va multumesc. This post has been edited by <b>miron1947</b>: Mar 23 2009, 21:13</p>	Post #10
85	<p> <u>Neika</u></p> <p>☐ Mar 24 2009, 05:29</p> <p>Cu mare plăcere. (IMG:<a href="http://forum.softpedia.com/style_emoticons/default/arigato.gif">http://forum.softpedia.com/style_emoticons/default/arigato.gif</a>)</p>	Post #11

### 7.3.5.1 Waiting for the Right Solution

On the Romanian web forum there are few cases where the discursive marks indicate the end of the *turns of speech* and the *transition points* between the interventions.

*Local organisation of the interaction:* In the initial post, the initiator (L1) addresses the message to the audience: “cineva” (**somebody**) and avoids the explicit selection of the addressee. The members of the audience can willingly participate in the discussion and contribute to the knowledge construction. The participants in the explanatory interaction implicitly select as addressee the initiator of the thread, as one can note in posts [2], [5], [7], [8], [9], and [11]. Post [3] represents an exception, for the locutor selects consecutively two different addressees: the previous speaker (**onlyviu**) and **yooman**. The end of the turn and the transition point are marked by ellipse (...). The transition points between turns are sometimes discursively marked by "pai", which adds orality and interactivity to the message making it more conversation-like.

The *global organisation* of the interaction is conceived as a structure formed generally by three parts: *opening*, *body*, and *closing posts*. The *opening post* is initiated by forum member **miron1947**. Through this post the locutor opens the channel and establishes a communicational contact with the other members of the forum. He/she also enounces the finality of the communication, which, in the current example is the procedure of uninstalling a computer program. As it results from the last part of the initial post, the objectives of the communication are: [10] “Nu este grav, dar nu înțeleg de ce mai apare și aș dori dacă știe cineva, cum pot rezolva, astfel încât să nu mai apară în lista de programe”. **(It is not serious, but I don’t understand why it still appears and I’d like, if somebody knows how, to solve the problem so that it disappears from the program list).**

The body of the message is formed by posts [2] to [9] exchanged between one *novice* (**miron1947**) and five *experts*. The initiator of the thread doesn’t select the next speaker and doesn’t use discursive strategies (interrogation, exclamation, lamentation, etc.) in order to obtain the solution. The collocutors volunteer the knowledge and their number is surprisingly high for such a short thread. The strategy of the construction of knowledge in this case is the description of different solutions to the problem in order to find the appropriate one. Each expert comes with his/her own solution. The novice listens to each of the experts, applies the solutions they propose and eventually provides feedback. The feedback is also a mechanism of communication control, because the thread ends when the solution is found and the initiator of the thread confirms that the problem has disappeared. The closing post of the current thread is [10]. It is not the last thread but is the thread that marks the end of the knowledge communication. As one can notice, the turns are controlled by the initiator of the thread, who can either stop or continue the discussion.

The last post of the thread, [11], is the answer of the *expert* who provided the solution to the problem and consists in a polite (greetings) answer to the previous post.

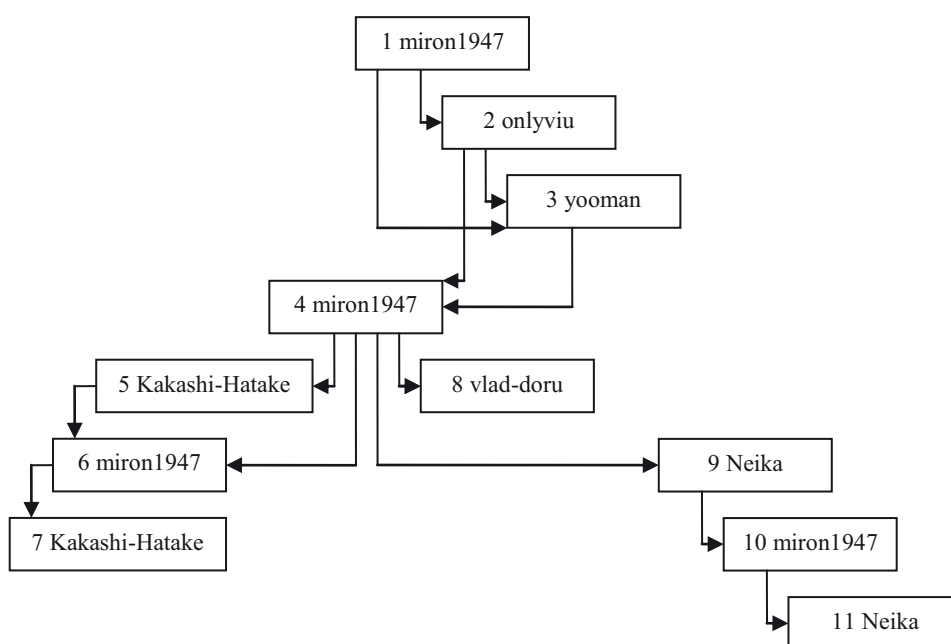
### 7.3.5.2 Multiple Reactions

The thread in the Romanian example consists of different *initiative* and *reactive interventions* forming a complex structure. The *initiative intervention* [1] generates two *reactive interventions*, [2] and [3], which are interrelated because intervention [3] represents a reactive intervention to [2]. These posts ([2] and [3]) generate a reactive intervention from the initiator of the thread in [4]. We can state that post [4] is the main element of the communication since it is connected as *reactive intervention* with posts [2] and [3] as the feedback answer to both these

posts. Moreover, it also represents an *initiative intervention* for multiple posts such as [5], [6], [8], and [9].

Three sequences emerge from [4] and they have a quite linear structure. The first sequence is formed by a series of initiative and reactive interventions: [5], [6] and [7]. The second sequence is formed by [9], [10] and [11]. This sequence is also linear. The last sequence consists of a unique reactive intervention [8]. Each reactive intervention to [4] represents an individual alternative answer to the topic in [4] and indirectly in [1].

The interaction is structured as follows:



### 7.3.5.3 The Quotation and Textual Cohesion

Knowledge is communicated and transmitted on the web forums through a process of collective creation of meaning. Thus, the thematic aspects of the construction of the discourse are essential for the knowledge communication because they reveal the mechanism of creation of knowledge.

In the Romanian thread representing the current example, the initial post represents the *proposal of the theme* and it also defines the key elements that constitute the theme of the thread: “elimin” (**eliminate**), “program” (**program**), “șters” (**delete**), and “registri” (**registers**). The objective of the communication is defined in terms of “a înțelege” (**to understand**) and “rezolva” (**to solve**), which portray two different approaches to the cognitive content, the one theoretical and the other practical. As we will observe, the discussion will take into consideration



only one of the two objectives of the communication, that is, the practical aspect of the construction of knowledge.

A part of the thematic progression in the current Romanian thread is realised through quotation, which creates an explicit thematic continuity between the thread posts. This thematic continuity is only partial, as the interactive construction of the meaning supposes the creation of an entire network of semantic relations throughout thread, as we will see further on.

Post [2] represents an implicit ratification of the theme, for the locutor accepts it by answering the initial post. The thematic progression is realised only by quotation in this case. The text of the locutor represents entirely new information (rheme) implicitly related to the theme.

A second ratification of the theme comes in [3]. Here, the thematic progression is realised through quotation, which relates post [3] thematically to the previous post, [2], and also through semantic cohesion – “correct...” (**correct**) and “CCleaner” – which strengthens the same relation as the quotation does [2 and 3]. The second part of the message is implicitly structured as new information (rheme) provided in response to the initial post. The information supplied corresponds to the second objective of the communication in [1].

Post [4] represents a thematic amplification realised through the following anaphoric relations: “nici unul” (**no one**), “lor” (**their**). The post is structured as multimodal feedback to posts [2] and [3].

The following post, [5], is thematically related (semantic cohesion) “Uninstall” to post [3]. It introduces new information intended to specify the procedures the *novice* has to follow in order to reach his/her cognitive goal. As one can notice, this cognitive content is constantly oriented to the second goal formulated by the initiator of the thread, to practical knowledge respectively.

The initiator of the thread introduces in post no. [6] a thematic discontinuity through thematic rupture intended to explain to the previous speaker why he/she can't follow his/her indications. The post is multimodal. The image file attached to the message represents a thematical amplification of the textual message: “daca va uitati atent la poza” (**if you look attentively at the picture**). The following post represents a ratification of the new theme introduced in [6]. It thematically amplifies, with new information, the theme initiated in the previous post. The relation between the two posts is realised through semantic cohesion: “poza” (**picture**).

With post [7] one can notice that the knowledge communication fails because the cognitive needs of the *novice* (the initiator of the thread) are not fulfilled and the problem is not solved. In conclusion, the thread stays open, which has as direct consequence that other members of the forum will volunteer solutions for the current topic.

The thread continues with new information in [8] and [9]. Both posts are thematically related to post [4] where the failure of the knowledge

communication was announced first. Post [8] is related through semantic cohesion “uninstalerul” (**the uninstaller**) to “nici unul” (**no one**) in post [4].

Post [9] is implicitly related to post [4], and the new information it brings is very complex. It defines semantically two spaces of reference that portray two possible solutions: “Windows Installer CleanUp” and “registri” (**registers**).

Post [10] presents a thematic discontinuity caused by the *close of the theme* introduced by the initiator of the thread. The post is thematically related (semantic cohesion – “Windows Installer CleanUp” and “registri” (**registers**) – to the previous post, [9], which contains the cognitive content necessary for the *novice* to solve the problem he faced. The post ends with greetings addressed to the previous speaker. “Vă mulțumesc.” (**Thank you!**)

The last post [11] represents a *reactive intervention* by the expert who provided the solution to the greetings previously expressed by the *novice*. This reaction is part of a social ritual of giving and accepting thanks.

As we commented in the beginning of the thread’s analysis, the knowledge requested by the *novice* was initially oriented in two directions: theoretical knowledge (understanding) and practical knowledge (instructions, procedures). As we can observe from the thematic construction of the knowledge, the cognitive content the participants in the situation provide is structured as procedures and instructions. The text is short, it has a simple structure and contains many implicits, which may easily lead to misunderstanding.

*Structure of the knowledge communication:* The communication of knowledge in the example above goes from *expert* to *novice* and from *expert* to *expert* in the form of commentaries. The knowledge is the result of the communicational interaction between one *novice* and five *experts*. The active agent in the knowledge communication is the *novice*. He validates/invalidates the information provided by the experts and “invites” them to provide further information. The communication takes the form of *one-to-one communication* in posts [3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11], *one-to-many communication* in [1, 2], and *many-to-one communication* in [4, 6, 9]. The knowledge is constructed through the accumulation of multiple solutions whose effectiveness depends on the validation of the initiator. The process of knowledge transmission ends when one of the solutions is validated. While not regarded as erroneous, the others are considered to be improper for the *novice*’s context of work. Still, they could work for another user.

### 7.3.6 Explanation as Interaction on the Catalan Web Forums

Knowledge communication on the Catalan web forums consists in a communicational relation established between a *novice* and an *expert* through an explanatory contract.

The following example represents thread 22 in the Catalan sub-corpus. In the topic of the thread the members of the forum discuss the procedure of formatting a computer. Four participants are involved in the situation where they exchange 12 replies, as can be noticed in the text below<sup>145</sup>:

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<sup>145</sup> This example has been edited in order for us to present only the information necessary for the analysis. For a complete version of the text see the corpus on the CD-RO annexed to this work.



## Formatejar ordinador

□ Autor: **Andreu** Data: dg. juny 15, 2008 1:09 pm  
Hola!

5 Em vull **formatejar l'ordinador**. Si ho faig clicant amb el botó dret a "Formatejar" i fico "Iniciar" és el pas correcte per **formatejar-lo** o fent això puc **destrossar l'ordinador**?

**Andreu**

---

### 10 **Re: Formatejar ordinador**

□ Autor: **PellRoja** Data: dg. juny 15, 2008 4:00 pm  
crec que no et deixarà **formatejar** el disc, si aquell disc és el que conte el **sistema operatiu** que s' esta executant.

15 Si realment **vols fer net el disc, i borrar totes les dades i sistema operatiu**. Pots **formatejar** amb <http://gparted.sourceforge.net/livecd.php> és un cd que arrenca, i et donarà les opcions de **formatar** els discos que tens a l' ordinador. Un cop **formatat** no i tindras res. fes còpies de seguretat de les dades importants, que qualsevol es pot equivocar i **formatar** el que no tocava. 😊  
[www.informàtics.cat](http://www.informàtics.cat) Informàtica per tothom i totdon



20 **PellRoja**

**Entrades:** 1074

25 **Membre des de:** dl. oct. 16, 2006 11:20 am

**Ubicació:** /home/pellroja

---

### 30 **Re: Formatejar ordinador**

□ Autor: **Andreu** Data: dl. juny 16, 2008 8:31 pm  
Però això vol dir que si tinc configurat el **windows XP** també **me'l treurà**? En el cas que sí, **ho** podria fer amb **el mateix CD**?

gracies

**Andreu**

---

### 35 **Re: Formatejar ordinador**

□ Autor: **PellRoja** Data: dl. juny 16, 2008 8:54 pm  
*Andreu ha escrit:* Però això vol dir que si tinc configurat el windows XP també me'l treurà? En el cas que sí, ho podria fer amb el mateix CD?

gracies

40 si **formatejes** la partició, **esborrara tot el que tinguis en ella ( Sistema operatiu, Dades, musica) tot**. Amb el **CD** que t' he dit pots **formatejar**, ( **borrar el XP, i totes les dades que hi tens a dins**)

que vols fer realment?

[www.informàtics.cat](http://www.informàtics.cat) Informàtica per tothom i totdon



45 **PellRoja**

**Entrades:** 1074



**Membre des de:** dl. oct. 16, 2006 11:20 am

**Ubicació:** /home/pellroja

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### 50 **Re: Formatejar ordinador**

□ Autor: **karlmcfar** Data: dc. juny 18, 2008 7:50 pm

55	<p>Si el q vols fer es <b>formatejar</b>, amb el <b>cd d'instal·lació del windows ho</b> pots abans en l'assistent d'instal·lació (pots elegir la mida de la/es particio/ns i el tipus de sistema de fitxers, fat32 o ntfs en mode rapid o mode complet)</p> <p><a href="#">karlmcfar</a></p> <p><b>Entrades:</b> 42 <b>Membre des de:</b> dc. març 05, 2008 12:03 am</p>
60	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>andreu</b> Data: dv. juny 20, 2008 12:44 pm          Jo el que vull es <b>treure-ho tot excpte el windows XP. Treure programes</b> i més quedant-me només amb el <b>windows</b> i llavors després ja instal·laria jo els programes que vull tenir i els arxius que em fan falta.</p> <p><b>andreu</b></p>
65	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>PellRoja</b> Data: dv. juny 20, 2008 2:13 pm          Doncs el <b>cd de XP</b> et dona l'opció de <b>formateja</b> quan inicias la instal·lació.  <a href="#">www.informàtics.cat</a> Informàtica per tothom i totdon</p>
70	<p></p> <p><a href="#">PellRoja</a></p> <p><b>Entrades:</b> 1074 <b>Membre des de:</b> dl. oct. 16, 2006 11:20 am <b>Ubicació:</b> /home/pellroja</p>
75	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>andreu</b> Data: dt. juny 24, 2008 11:56 am          es que he perdut el CD del windows XP! Què faig? :S</p> <p><b>andreu</b></p>
80	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>PellRoja</b> Data: dt. juny 24, 2008 1:18 pm  <i>andreu ha escrit:</i> es que he perdut el CD del windows XP! Què faig? :S</p> <p>Si vols <b>instal·lar el XP després de formatejar</b>, hauras d'aconseguir-lo, per que sinó en quedarà el disc sense poder arrancar cap <b>sistema operatiu. tens llicencia de XP?</b> en principi amb un altre <b>cd de XP</b>, posant la teva <b>llicencia</b> hauria de funcionar.</p> <p>Sino, com alternativa a un <b>altre sistema operatiu</b>, tens <a href="http://www.gnulinix.cat/">http://www.gnulinix.cat/</a> que és lliure i alguns gratuïts.</p> <p><a href="#">www.informàtics.cat</a> Informàtica per tothom i totdon</p>
85	<p></p> <p><a href="#">PellRoja</a></p> <p><b>Entrades:</b> 1074 <b>Membre des de:</b> dl. oct. 16, 2006 11:20 am <b>Ubicació:</b> /home/pellroja</p>
90	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>Andreu</b> Data: dt. juny 24, 2008 1:45 pm          i com trec la llicencia?</p> <p><b>Andreu</b></p>
95	<p><b><u>Re: Formatejar ordinador</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Autor: <b>karlmcfar</b> Data: dt. juny 24, 2008 4:35 pm          Busca en la caixa de l'ordinador <b>una pegatina q digui Windows XP (Profesional o Home) Original amb un numero de serie.</b></p>
100	
105	

110	<p>Posant <b>aket numero</b> al instal·lar amb <b>el cd d'instal·lacio del Windows</b> (la versio q indiqui la <b>pegatina</b>) ja estara fet tot. despres queda lo de validar en 30 dies segons la versio del cd que usis.</p> <p><a href="#">karlmcfar</a></p> <p><b>Entrades:</b> 42</p> <p><b>Membre des de:</b> dc. març 05, 2008 12:03 am</p>
115	<p><b>Re: Formatejar ordinador</b></p> <p>□ Autor: <b>Visitant</b> Data: dc. juny 25, 2008 11:14 pm</p>
120	<p>Abans de <b>formatejar</b> et recomanaria que fessis una llista dels programes que hi voldràs <b>instal·lar</b>, que miris el que hi tens instal·lat i et preguntis si realment et surt a compte <b>formatejar</b> o si et compensa més desinstal·lar els <b>programes</b> convenients i ja està. Jo de tu intentaria <b>fer una neteja a fons de l'ordinador i intentaria conservar el sistema operatiu, especialment si no tens el CD</b></p>

### 7.3.6.1 Clarifying Turns

The initiator (**Andreu**) of the interaction is the main agent of the polilogue and the center of the discussion, since the communication is locutor-oriented. He/she doesn't select explicitly any addressee. The participants in the interaction volunteer to participate and implicitly select the initiator of the thread as addressee. They answer the initiator's questions and eventually ask questions too.

The interaction is formed by turns of speech and transition points. The initiator of the thread marks discursively the transition points of the turns while the other participants don't. Each intervention of the initiator of the thread ends with an interrogation. The interrogations regulate the turn taking by marking the fact that the locutor ended his/her communication and is standing by for the collocutor(s)' reaction. This means that the channel of communication is free to use. The other participants don't mark discursively the transition points of their turns of speech. Actually, their communicational contribution to the polilogue is limited to the communicational reactions strictly related to the topic. They lack initiative.

In what concerns the *global organisation of turns*, the interaction consists of *opening turn*, *body* and *closing*.

In the initial turn (*opening*), the locutor usually opens the channel and establishes a communicational relation with the other members of the forum. In our example, the enunciation is locutor-oriented, which is realised through a series of verbal expressions strictly focussed on the self: "em vull formatejar", "ho faig", "fico", and "puc destrossar". These expressions portray the objective of the communication. The locutor establishes the communicational relation with the others at the end of the post through an interrogation: [5] "... o fent això puc destrossar l'ordinador?"

The body of the thread consists of posts [2] to [12]. Posts [2]-[6] intend to clarify what exactly the initiator of the thread wants to do. This

step receives maximum attention from the *experts*, for it is a very sensitive procedure which can cause data loss. After identifying precisely the objectives of the initiator of the thread, the other participants in the situation provide the necessary information [7]. From the main topic there derive two secondary topics discussed in the body of the thread, that is, posts [8]-[12].

In the Catalan example, the *closing turn* is missing, which means that the thread is not explicitly finished. Since the *closing turn* generally contains the result of the knowledge communication and the feedback of the initiator of the thread, the absence of the closing post means that there is no evidence about the situation and the efficiency of the solutions provided by the participants in the thread.

### 7.3.6.2 The Linear Interaction

The web forum interaction is a complex structure organised hierarchically. It is formed by different units, such as: sequences, exchanges, interventions, and acts of speech, therefore we can examine the professional web forum interactions from a structural point of view. This will allow us to identify the particular structure of the interactions in the current example extracted from the professional Catalan web forum.

Thread 22 of the Catalan sub-corpus represents an interaction structured in three sequences. The first sequence begins with the initial post, an *initiative intervention*, and comprises all the posts to number [7]. The second sequence is formed by posts [8] and [9], and the third sequence by posts [10] and [12]. The last post, [12], is an isolated post that belongs to the first sequence.

The first sequence consists of a series of exchanges formed by two interventions: an *initiative intervention* and a *reactive intervention*. The exchanges are structured as chains. A reactive intervention becomes the initiative intervention of the next exchange. They are structured as follows: [1]-[2], [2]-[3], [3]-[5], [5]-[6], [6]-[7],[7]-[8],[8]-[9],[9]-[10], [10]-[11], and [6]-[12].

As one can notice from the relations above, the structure of the Catalan example is very simple and suggests a logical chain of communication where every intervention represents a continuation of the previous communication. This also suggests a constant progression of the discussion.

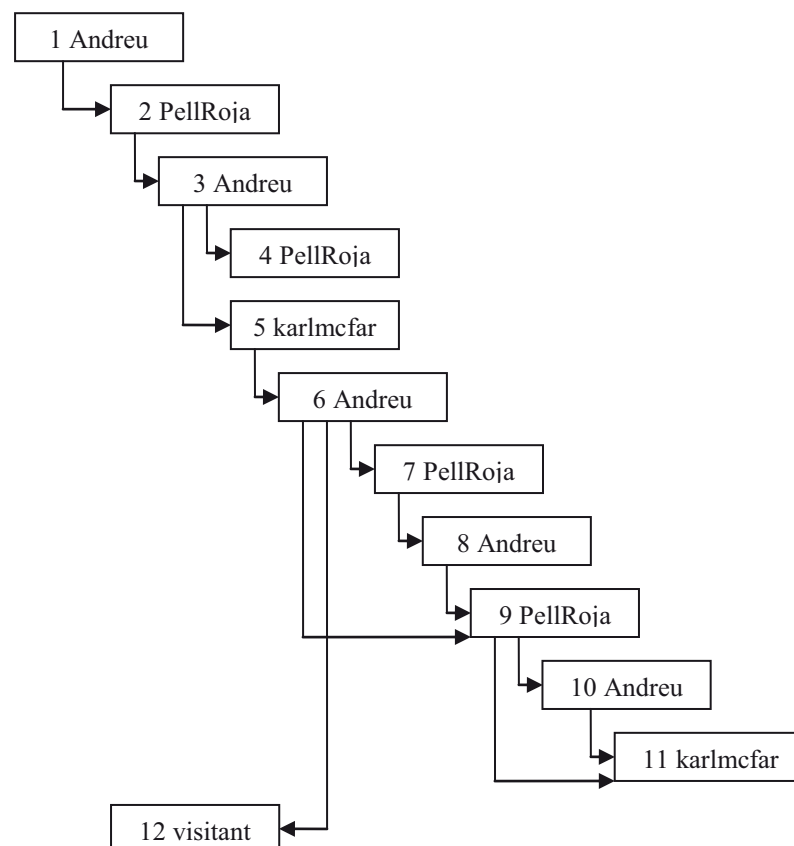
As one can observe from the structure of the interaction, the communicational relations established in the current example are only bilateral. The thread is constructed as a series of dialogues on the same topic and groups the participants in the discussion in *novice-expert* pairs. The *experts* interact exclusively with the *novice*. This allows us to identify different moments of the interaction: the first moment consists of the Andreu-PellRoja dialogue (the two cover most of the interaction),



followed by the Andreu-karlmcfar dialogue ( three interventions). The 3<sup>rd</sup> dialogue involves once again the pair Andreu-PellRoja. At the end of the message the exchanges involve the Andreu-visitant and Andreu-karlmcfar pairs.

What we deduce observing this interaction structure is that the initiator of the intervention is an active agent and assumes the main role in it. The others are present only to such degree as the active agent provokes them to answer.

A more clear representation of this structure can be observed in the following scheme:



### 7.3.6.3 Rephrasing and Linguistic Precision

On the professional web forums, knowledge is constructed and transmitted through the meanings created by the participants in a situation created during the communicational interactions. The thematic analysis of the current example will provide evidence on how the knowledge can be constructed. Basically, we will observe the thematic progression with its continuity and discontinuity moments that can be realised through different modes.

In thread 22 of the Catalan sub-corpus exemplified above three themes are visible. The main theme of the interaction is *initiated* in the first post; the other two themes will derive from this one later. The

*proposal of the theme* sets the general semantic context of the discussion, which basically consists of two words: “formatejar” (3 occurrences in two lines of post) and “ordinador” (two occurrences in 2 lines of posts). This thematic recurrence marks the interest and the preoccupation of the locutor for the topic.

The second post means that the theme has been ratified by a forum member who has accepted to provide information on the topic, and consequently, it represents a thematic amplification of the initial post. This consists in the recurrent semantic cohesion of the elements in the initial post: “formatejar” (4 occurrences) and “ordinador”. New information is also introduced, such as “cd que arrenca” and rephrasings of “formatejar” – “fer net el disc” and “borrar totes les dades i sistema operatiu”.

The following post is also a thematic amplification of post [2]. The thematic continuity is realised through semantic cohesion: “windows XP”, “el mateix CD”, and through anaphoric relations as in the case of “l” referring to the operating system and “ho” referring to the “formatejar”. The semantic cohesion is also realised through a rephrasing of “formatejar”: “treure”. One can observe that the verbal exchange between the locutor and the collocutor has created a complex vocabulary of data destruction due to the complexity and variety of expressions both of them use in order to express “formatejar”.

Post [4] introduces a new thematic continuity with different rephrasings of “formatejar”. One such example is “esborrar”, an expression augmented by the use of the adverbs “tot” and “borar”. The semantic cohesion is also ensured by “formatejar” and “XP”. It is important to observe that this message doesn’t introduce new information (rheme), and its content proves its function is only to clarify an aspect of the main theme and not to bring new cognitive content.

Post no [5] represents a thematic amplification of post [3] with whom it coheres semantically through “formatejar”, “cd d’instalació”, and “windows”. The new information on the topic (rheme) consists in “l’assistant d’instalació”.

The reaction of the initiator of the thread in post [6] represents a focus within the semantic context already defined during the interaction: “treure”, “windows Xp”, and “windows” (semantic cohesion). The precision in this post has as direct result the solution to the problem the initiator faces. Post [7] forms a thematic continuity with the discussion through “formatejar” and introduces new information (rheme): “el cd de XP”.

Post [8] introduces a thematic discontinuity consisting in a rupture of the theme. The initiator of the thread focuses on an aspect of the solution the collocutor provided in post [7] and introduces a new theme: [77] “es que he perdut el CD del windows XP! Què faig?”

The theme is ratified by a forum member in post [9] who also refers to the main theme of the thread by semantic cohesion: “XP” and

“formatejar”. The thematic continuity with the content of post [8] is realised by “lo”, an anaphoric relation. The post also introduces new information, such as “llicencia” and “llicencia de XP”, which will cause a new thematic discontinuity in the next post, [10]. The rupture of the theme is caused by the cognitive needs the locutor has vis-à-vis the new aspect mentioned by the expert in the previous post, [9], and concerning the *serial number*: “llicencia”.

Once again, the theme is ratified by the same expert who introduced the concept in the discussion. Post [11] introduces the new information concerning the “llicencia”, which is semantically related to the main theme of discussion “Windows XP”, and also introduces new information (rheme) on the topic: “pegatina”, “numero de serie”.

The last post is thematically related to the main theme and its position at the end of the post isolates it thematically. It represents an alternative solution to the problem the initiator of the thread presented and amplifies the theme through semantic cohesion : “formatejar” (2 occurrences), “sistema operatiu”, “neteja”, and “ordinador”. The locutor also uses information from the second theme of the thread to endorse the solution he/she has provided. The relation between posts [9] and [12] is realised through semantic cohesion: “no tens el CD”.

*Structure of knowledge transmission:* The knowledge is communicated from the *expert* to the *novice*, and, in the example above, it is the result of the communicational interaction between one *novice* and four *experts*. The active agents of the knowledge communication are the *experts*, who guide and control the exchanges. The structure of the communication of knowledge is realised from *one to one* in [1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12], from *one to many* in post [3], and from *many to one* in the case of posts [6, 9, 11].

The communication of knowledge is provided only after the experts have obtained all the necessary information on the topic of their expertise. The experts are mainly concerned in this situation with the objective of the novice. The novice commences by asking for information on a general topic. His/her questions vary with the aspects of knowledge he/she is interested in. The information is not validated.

### 7.3.7 Conclusions on the Explanation as Interaction

#### a) General conclusions:

We begin our conclusions on the explanation as interaction by confirming that the interactionist model of analysis has turned out to be an efficient tool for the analysis of the CMC texts. The hierarchic model we applied presents the advantage of offering a multilevel description of online interactions. It has also been particularly easy to apply in our analysis for the professional web forum communication, while displaying

multimodal features (images, attached files), is basically formed by text. The texts have the form of *written conversations* and are the result of the contribution of different participants that share a common interest in communicating online specialised cognitive content. This content is organised as explanatory interventions that form, due to the discursive elements that give cohesion and interaction to the text, a conversation-like interactive written structure organised as: interaction, sequences, exchanges, interventions, and speech acts.

Like in face-to-face conversation, the professional web forum communication features many participants. The communicational relations that can be established during an interaction can be of type: *one to one*, *one to many*, *many to one*, or *many to many*. The participants are self-motivated when they open a thread and assume the role of *initiator* in order to contact the other members of the forum. Generally, the initiator doesn't select the next speaker, all the participants in the interaction being self-motivated<sup>146</sup>. The alternance of turns can be either marked or not (graphically, discursively, otrographically), depending on the locutor.

The actions are organised within the professional web forums interactions in different manners, depending on the number of the participants, the complexity of the topic and the cognitive content transmitted and validated or not by the initiator of the thread. Sometimes, they seem to be simply chaotic, with no internal organisation, which is a mere impression since it has already been demonstrated that conversations have internal organisation. Sometimes they are multireferential or consist in multiple reactive interventions. Simple and well structured forms (symmetric or linear) can also be observed in the organisation of actions in the professional web forums interactions.

The thematic construction of the explanatory interaction describes how knowledge is transmitted between the participants and how it is constructed socially as a result of their interaction. A general structure can be observed where the initiator of the interaction defines the *theme* of the conversation for a particular context, and where the other participants add new information (rheme) related to the theme. Discursive mechanisms (semantic cohesion, anaphora, cataphora, etc.) create logical relations between the theme and the rheme, between the new and the already known<sup>147</sup>. By using different explanatory strategies (definitions, description of actions, explanations), the participants in the professional web forums are able to construct knowledge through verbal communication. The effectiveness of the cognitive content is verified and then confirmed or infirmed.

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<sup>146</sup> It is important to observe that the motivations are different: the initiator's to acquire knowledge, and the other forum members' – to share knowledge

<sup>147</sup> This mechanism is very close to the model Polanyi (1958) proposed for the explanation of how man learns.

b) Particular conclusions on the explanation construction in interaction:

In what concerns the particular aspects of the explanatory interaction, we will discuss here a unique aspect, because the basis of analysis (one interaction from each sub-corpus) doesn't allow us to obtain pertinent conclusions beyond this aspect. During the analysis of the professional web forums discussions, we observed that the interrogation seems to play a very important role in the interactive construction of explanation and that different uses of this mechanism can be observed from one sub-corpus to another.

One of the most important roles interrogation plays in the explanatory interaction is that of representing the mechanism which permits the controlling of turns. Thus, after an interrogation the locutor waits for the others to respond, which makes the interrogation itself a signal that the channel is free for use, like in the Spanish sub-corpus. Including a reference to the other in an interrogation is also a modality to select the addressee of a message and regulate turn taking. Likewise, if they include thematic progression and semantic cohesion the interrogations can shift the focus of the communication onto a certain topic or a specific aspect of the topic, depending on the finality of the interaction. From the thematic point of view, the interrogation can be articulated as an information request (the majority of cases in professional web forums communication) which brings new information to the CMC. By considering these elements we arrive at the conclusion that the interrogation on professional web forums represents an important mechanism of thematic progression and, consequently, a mechanism of knowledge construction.

An analysis of the use of interrogations in our sub-corpora reveals different employs, depending on the language. The parameters of its variation in use can consist in: focus of the interrogation, its position in the interaction (initiative or reactive interventions), the direction of interrogation (from whom and to whom it is addressed), and the quantity of interrogations used in an intervention by the participants. The results of our analysis can be observed in the following table:

	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
<b>En</b>	Help / assistance	Initiative	Novice to Audience (explicit – someone)	Moderate
<b>Es</b>	Information	Initiative	Novice to Expert	High
<b>Fr</b>	Information	Reactive	Expert to Novice	High

<b>Ro</b>	Information	Initiative	Novice to Audience (implicit – impersonal)	Low
<b>Cat</b>	Confirmation	Initiative	Novice to Audience (implicit – 1 <sup>st</sup> person)	Moderate

As one can observe from the table above, each language presents a different use of the interrogation in the analysed segment. To begin with, the focus of the interrogation is mainly the information (Es, Fr, Ro) with some variation in En, where the locutor asks for assistance/help after he/she has described the situation. In Cat the locutor asks the other members of the forum to confirm/infirm his/her suppositions. The position of the interrogation and its direction can indicate who is controlling the situation. As we can observe, an interrogative placed in an initiative intervention indicates that the direction of the question is from the *novice* to the *expert* and consequently, the *novice* controls the situation (En, Es, Ro, Cat). When the *expert* is the person who interrogates, the situation is controlled by him. The addressee of an interrogation can be, (see the table) the *novice*, the *expert* or the *audience*. In the last case, the interrogation can be addressed to the audience either explicitly (En) or implicitly (Ro, Cat). Even if they seem to be identical, the Ro and Cat forums present differences in the way they orient the interrogation, which in the case of Ro is impersonal and in the case of Cat is locutor-oriented.

Lastly, the number of interrogations used in an interaction is important too. In our analysis the lowest number of occurrences can be observed in the Romanian interaction, where the novice asks one question, and all the collocutors during the entire interaction refer to this initiative question. A moderate number of interrogations can be observed in En and Cat. The highest number of occurrences can be observed in Fr and Es.

As one can observe, even if the same procedures are used in order to transmit and construct knowledge, each language has a characteristic profile.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS TO THE PROFESSIONAL WEB FORUM COMMUNICATION

As we announced in the beginning of the current work, we have established three purposes for our research. They are: a) to describe the professional web forum as a type of discourse, b) to illustrate the mechanism of knowledge transmission in the professional web forums interactions, and c) to observe the discursive variations of knowledge transmission across languages.

In what follows we will present our conclusions on each of the three aspects. All the affirmations and evaluations will be based on the theoretical framework, on the analysis, and on the partial conclusions each chapter ends with.

### 8.1 Conclusions on the Genre

A genre is a complex discursive construction whose configuration is regulated by a series of conditions external and internal to the discourse. In order to describe the professional web forum as a genre we had to verify the existence of the necessary conditions for its discursive production and determine what these conditions were.

- a) External characteristics of the professional web forums CMC (definition, historic and social aspects, categorisation):

Since the beginning (see Chapter 2) we have focused on the investigation of pertinent information in the literature that would allow us to describe *the nature, the categorisation, the historical evolution, and the social context of work* characteristic of the professional web forum communication. This initial investigation allowed us to observe that the professional web forum is a space where meaning is created as the result of the social interaction between its members whose aim is to communicate knowledge.

We identified as CMC the *nature* of the professional web forum communication, basing our statement on the definition of CMC:

...text-based CMC, in which participants interact by means of the written word, e.g., by typing a message on the keyboard of one computer which is read by others on their computer screens, either immediately (synchronous CMC) or at a later point in time (asynchronous CMC). (Herring, 1996: 1)

The next step in the description of the characteristics of the professional web forum communication was to identify its *category*. Based on its features, the professional web forum belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of asynchronic, text-based CMC (see 2.2.2). If we take into account a categorisation based on the communicational aspects, the professional web forum can be described as a hybridised discursive mode that has the aspect of a *written conversation*. And last of all, if we focus on the thematic aspect of the CMC, we will include the *professional web forums* discourse in the category of specialised discourses.

Another external characteristic of the professional web forum is represented by its historical evolution. The emergence of the professional web forum, as in the case of many other important genres of the web, can be determined in time, since its emergence depends on the channel of communication. The precise chronology of the evolution of the Internet from the beginnings until approximately 2005 allows us to affirm that the professional web forum emerged in the late '70s. This information is important, for it creates a general view of the existence of the mentioned web genre. We can better appreciate the professional web forum as one of the most durable genres of the web. Its constant presence on the Internet is also confirmed by the forums that form our corpus. Their continuous activity on the web was observed over a time span of 2 to 8 years. In other words, the professional web forum as a discursive genre is not only a popular form of communication but also an enduring discursive practice.

The professional web forum communication emerged in a special *social context*. It is the result of the communication between “a group of people who associate themselves over time with a computer-mediated environment” (Herring, 2008 – see 2.3.1). In other words, the professional web forum needs special conditions of production, such as “group of people”, “computer-mediated environment”, a social relation established through language, and communication over “time”.

These four aspects describe the external context and features of the professional web forum communication. The features are completed by *internal characteristics*, which describe the internal configuration of the professional web forum as discourse.

b) Internal characteristics of the professional web forums  
CMC (discursive aspects):



In what concerns the inherent discursive characteristics of the professional web forum, we have tried to describe the professional web forum as genre using the framework developed by Patrick Charaudeau. Thus, we contemplated the professional web forum as *situation of communication* and observed its characteristics as discursive genre. According to the theoretical framework established by Patrick Charaudeau, in the professional web forum, as in any other discursive genre, the discourse is determined by a series of factors: *the identities involved in a social interaction, the objectives of enunciation, the theme, and the enunciative device*. They individualise the professional web forum as a type of discourse from other types.

We observed, thus, that the *identities* the locutor and interlocutor assume on the professional web forum are constructed in accordance with the *goal* of their communication, which is *knowledge acquiring*. This objective makes the locutor who initiates the interaction to assume an identity accordingly. *Learning and knowledge acquisition* are processes that involve an *identity that possesses knowledge* and an identity that is *searching for the knowledge* he/she is deficient in. We designated those identities as the *expert* and the *novice*, and we observed from their discursive production that the identity of the *novice* is characterised by a *discourse of ignorance*, for he/she has to perform ignorance in order to obtain information/assistance. The identity of the *expert* is characterised by a *discourse of experience*, the expert being identified as a source of knowledge.

In what concerns the enunciative device, we determined (see Chapter 4) that the professional web forum is a *monolocutive situation*, where the participants are not physically present at the moment of enunciation. The channel of communication is basically written but can also display extended features of multimodal communication (image, video). We also noticed that the locutor is not conditioned by the immediate reactions of his/her partner of discussion, which determines a certain type of discourse organisation.

We consider that the union of the internal and external characteristics that describe the professional web forum has allowed us to consider it a complex discursive subgenre.

## 8.2 Knowledge Transmission on Professional Web Forums

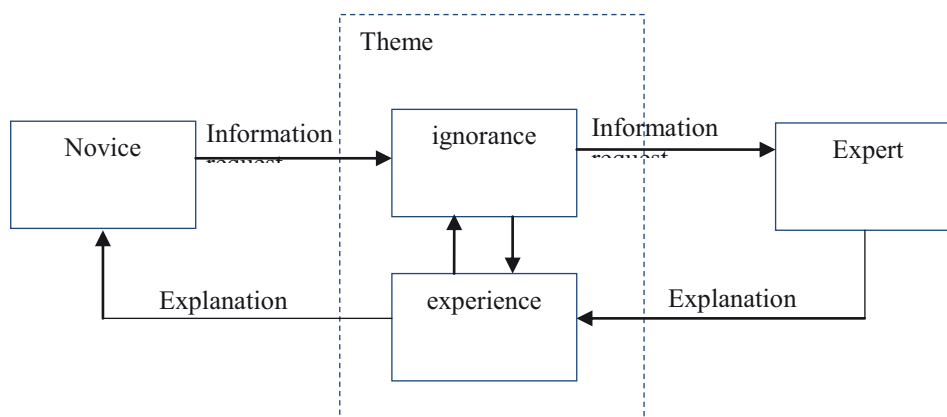
The second objective of our investigation, the description of the mechanism of knowledge transmission in cyberspace through professional web forums communication, has led us to the following conclusions.

The transmission of knowledge in CMC is conceived as an act of creation of meaning that involves tacit and explicit knowledge. One deals

every day with knowledge that can be articulated through language and knowledge than can't be expressed verbally (see Chapter 3). The knowledge transmission process consists in the effort to encode knowledge in language. The knowledge can be oriented to the theory of practice and its transmission may differ based on the type of knowledge and the intentions of transmission. In the professional web forum discussions the knowledge transmitted is *explicit* and *practice-oriented*. Within this classification it is important to distinguish a hierarchy of knowledge transmitted through communication. Based on the theoretical framework we have determined that the knowledge transmitted on the professional web forums can be ordered hierarchically as *skills*, *know-how*, and *expertise* (see Chapter 3). The type of knowledge communicated determines the level of specialisation of the discourse on the professional web forums. It also differentiates the degree of expertise of the members of the forum, where the hierarchy is constructed only on a cognitive basis.

The participants in the process of knowledge communication are also classified by their degree of expertise. The *novice* is a person who lacks knowledge and is motivated to acquire *skills*, *know-how*, or *expertise*, while the expert is evaluated by the type of knowledge he/she can transmit. Lack of knowledge is also important in the process of knowledge communication. It is the lack of skills, know-how, and expertise that constitutes the motive for the existence of the professional web forums..

In order to illustrate the process of knowledge transmission we propose the following scheme:



As one can notice, the knowledge is transmitted from a *source* (expert(s)) to a *receiver* (novice(s)) by an *informal communicational channel*<sup>148</sup>. The message transmitted by the *source* encodes *explicit knowledge* (articulated as *text*) and *tacit knowledge* (multimodal content – audio, video, image). The knowledge is transmitted voluntarily by self-motivated participants. Both participants in the exchange, *source* and

<sup>148</sup> We use here the terminology and classifications of knowledge management we detailed in Chapter 3.

*receiver*, consider knowledge transmission as a social act (*dialogue, collaboration, assistance*). The knowledge communication process on a professional web forum doesn't encourage competition between the participants. Here, the most proficient is considered the best and his/her expertise is widely acknowledged within the virtual community. We can conclude that, compared with other existing models of online learning, such as *e-learning* and *corporatist knowledge communication* (see Chapter 3), the communication of knowledge on the professional web forum presents specific features that individualises it as an alternative to the types of online learning mentioned above.

The specificity of knowledge communication on the professional web forums consists in the fact that it prepares *self-motivated autonomous learners* and that the learning process is precise and flexible, since it doesn't depend on pre-established curricula. On the other hand, the hierarchy is established through negotiation between users and the expertise is recognised and explicitly appreciated. It is a *social* and *collaborative* learning environment where there is no competition between the participants.

As one can notice, the model of knowledge transmission on the professional web forum is individualised by specific features which distinguish it from e-learning and corporatist knowledge communication. In other words, it is a completely different form of knowledge communication.

### 8.3 Knowledge Transmission across Languages

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter we observed that knowledge is encoded in the expert-locutor's discourse and we distinguished between different discursive sequences and discursive strategies used in order to transmit knowledge. The main procedure used in interaction in order to transmit knowledge on the professional web forum seems to be the *explanation*. In the interaction between participants in the situation, the *explanation* presents a rich variety of forms and strategies. Within the theoretical framework we presented the main explanatory strategies discussed in the literature: *the definition, the description of actions* (instructions/procedures), and the *prototypical explanation*.

In our contrastive analysis of the corpus we tried to observe and outline the way knowledge was constructed within discourse. We also observed that the same discursive strategies and forms were used in different languages, but the explanation as strategy of knowledge transmission was configured in a different way in each language.

The analysis of our corpus revealed two important elements concerning the explanatory strategies. The first element consisted in new explanatory forms, not mentioned in the literature. The second important

element consisted in the profile of the explanation on the professional web forums, which presents a completely different profile if compared with the description of the prototypical explanation. One of those aspects, the explanatory strategies, differs from language to language, the other is identical in all the languages analysed.

The *explanatory forms* the locutor chooses when constructing an explanation in order to transmit knowledge consist mainly of *definitions*, *description of actions*, or *prototypical explanation*. Statistically (see 7.2.6) these are the most used explanatory sequences. Apart from these, we have also observed the constant use in the languages scrutinised of explanatory forms we consider specific to the professional web forums discussions, since they are not mentioned in the literature: *the reference* (hyperlinks) and *the meta-explanation* (consists in explanatory comments to an explanatory sequence). Other explanatory sequences are specific to one language rather than to all: the *self-reference* (when the locutor refers to himself/herself as a reliable source of knowledge), *ironic explanations* (jokes and puns with explanatory form whose main function is to entertain and not to transmit cognitive content), *multimodal explanation* (explanatory images), *argotic explanations*, and *rhetorical explanation* (explanatory constructions with no cognitive content) (see 7.2).

The analysis of the corpus revealed that in each language the explanatory configuration of knowledge is different and that the individual profile of each language is structured on the combination of the main explanatory structures and the specific explanatory structures. Consequently, we were able to individualise the explanatory profile of knowledge transmission in each language as follows:

English: *instructions, prototypical explanations, definitions, meta-explanations*

Spanish: *instructions, prototypical explanations, definitions, rhetorical explanations, self-reference, argotic explanations*

French: *instructions, prototypical explanations, definitions, ironic explanations, visual explanations, meta-explanations*

Romanian: *instructions, prototypical explanations, definitions, meta-explanations, self-references, visual explanations*

Catalan: *instructions, prototypical explanations, definitions, meta-explanations, argotic explanations*

One can notice that the first three explanatory elements in each profile are constant. The high rate of the *instructions* reveals that the knowledge transmitted on the professional web forums analysed is *practical* rather than theoretical. The peculiarity of each language is portrayed by the use of specific explanatory constructions.

The statistics on formation (see 7.2.6) also reveals that the sub-corpora we characterised in 5.5 as *high extended* (ES, FR) don't display a high number of explanatory sequences. On the contrary, the sub-corpora

considered in 5.5 as *low extended* (RO, CAT) contain a high number of explanatory occurrences.

Another observation consists in the different importance with which is credited a specific form of explanation in the communication in a language.. For example, we observed in our corpus that English displays an excellent construction of the prototypical explanation. In the Spanish sub-corpora one can notice the modalisation of all types of explanatory cores as well as their low extension compared with the social dimension of the communication. The French professional web forum excels in the construction of *definitions* (see the definitory structures analysed in 7.2.3.2). In the Romanian sub-corpus there prevails the use of short explanatory structures (instructions) and of implicits, while in the Catalan forum even if the explanatory sequences are brief in general, the description of actions (instructions) is extremely complex. For more statistical data on the mentioned profiles, see Chapter 7, especially the conclusions.

All these differences we mentioned could have led us into thinking that the explanation as communicational strategy for knowledge transmission on the professional web forums may be a miscellaneous phenomenon. Instead, the explanation on the professional web forum has turned out to be a quite uniform phenomenon across all the languages of the corpus. In the partial conclusions of section 7.2.6, we realised a comparative analysis between the features of the *prototypical explanation* as presented in literature and the *professional web forum explanation* whose features resulted from the corpus analysis carried out in sub-chapter 7.2. We observed then that the explanation can be described taking into account: *the enunciation, the enunciative modalities, the terminology, the descriptive and evaluative adjectives, the stages of the explanatory activity*, and finally, *the discursive strategies*.

As it results from the analysis carried out in Chapter 7, the explanatory sequence on the professional web forum has different features. In what concerns the *enunciation*, for example, it presents more deictics than the prototypical explanation, more verbal tenses and a lower use of time and space references in the text. The use of epistemic, logic, affective modalities, and *subjectivity marks* also represents a feature of the professional web forum explanation. The use of specialised lexicon, loan words or technical terms is reduced to the basics in the professional web forums explanation. The imprecision in the explanatory texts of the web is generated by the frequent use of polysemy, ambiguity and professional jargon. Irony and/or slang are also a frequent occurrence.

The explanatory sequence is constructed on the professional web forum through a very rich variety of discursive strategies not used in other contexts, such as: *definition, exemplification, analogy, quotation, explanatory reference (self-reference), description of actions, meta-explanations, rhetorical explanations, reformulation, ironic explanations, argotic explanations* and *analogy*.

The main conclusion in what concerns knowledge transmission on the professional web forums is that it is prevalingly realised through explanation. The explanatory discursive forms and strategies represent special features that individualise this explanation from its other uses in academic or research context, where the professional web forum explanation is uniform across languages. The variation of the professional web forum explanation can be observed across languages in its internal discursive configuration, each language presenting clear tendencies to use different explanatory strategies.

## 8.4 Original Contributions to the Domain

Besides the profile of the *professional web forum* as subgenre of the Internet knowledge communication, which represents our main contribution to the investigation, other secondary aspects of the research are original and innovative. In what follows, we will point out some of the original points of the current investigation. They consist in:

- a. The main topic of the investigation: the professional web forum represents one of the first genres of knowledge transmission on the Internet. Nevertheless, it has been little studied as a form of discourse. In the current investigation we have accomplished a systematic and multidisciplinary analysis and description of the professional web forum taking into account the issues concerning this topic in e-discourse and CMC, the nature of the knowledge it transmits, and its discursive features. The partial conclusions of Chapters 2 and 3 are intended to describe the *professional web forums communication* in terms of a specific type of e-discourse, which has emerged from a specific type of communicational interactions that characterises a specific group of persons: the *learning virtual communities*. At present we have no evidence that such a systematic study has been applied to this discursive genre so far.
- b. The multilingual analysis of the same discourse carried out in five languages (EN ES, FR, RO, CAT) represents, too, an innovative aspect of this research. The contrastive analysis and the punctual observations on the different discursive structures we have analysed may be the incentive for a cultural approach to the explanation as a social phenomenon differently encoded and organised across cultures.

- c. A contribution of the present study to discourse analysis is represented by the description of the *explanatory sequence* on the professional web forum. The analysis of 1,000 pages of corpus in five languages supports the idea that the *explanatory sequence* we have analysed is very different compared to the existing descriptions of the explanation as prototypical discursive sequence or the explanation in didactics, in sciences or academic research. The comparative study of its features we have carried out in section 7.2.6 represents the paradigm of a new explanatory sequence that one can observe in CMC.
- d. The multilingual study of the representations of discursive identities doesn't represent a completely new approach to the study of identities. A similar study was realised by ScaPoLine some years ago. The originality of the present investigation approach consists in the major number of languages we have worked with in a comparable corpus ( five languages), while ScaPoLine used for their research only three languages. Likewise, the reference domain of the corpora is different: our domain is the professional web forum while ScaPoLine's was scientific research articles. The languages are also different, ScaPoLine carried out their studies on NO, FI, and EN. In the case of our investigation, we have focused mainly on Romance languages and EN. Moreover, the parameters we have taken into consideration as well as the discourse we focused on are different from the studies of ScaPoLine.
- e. A last innovative element we want to mention in conclusion is represented by the approach to the explanation as communicational interaction on the professional web forums. A contemplation of the explanation within the framework of conversation analysis can highlight complex linguistic phenomena.

These are the main innovative aspects that the present investigation has brought to the fore. They indicate the quality and the measure of the contribution of this study to the discourse analysis domain.

## 8.5 Further Development of the Investigation

Since PhD research is considered a starting point in the investigation of a researcher and the subject of the current study is so vast, we can't consider that the present investigation is complete and closed. We would like to point out in this section of conclusions some further advances that could be made in the future in order to better document this domain of study.

We consider that in the future this investigation can be supported and improved as regards the following aspects:

- a) The corpus of analysis could be augmented and actualised over time in order to observe if the constant parameters of the genre we have observed during these years have registered variations and modifications.
- b) The corpus of analysis could also be contrasted with a control corpus which would represent a supplementary mechanism of validation of the conclusions of the present investigation. Since there are no multilingual or comparative corpora on the professional web forums communication, the control corpus has to be created. The principles of design used for its implementation should be different from the principles we have used for the construction of the corpus of the present analysis.
- c) The description of the *professional web forum* as subgenre of CMC knowledge communication can be completed by a study of the construction of the *title of the threads*, which may investigate the title-content relation in a thread as well as the discursive strategies involved in their construction.
- d) A multimodal approach to the professional web forum discourse can also contribute to the improvement of the description of the way knowledge is transmitted through Internet genres. In the present investigation we also make marginal references to and comments on the multimodal aspect of the communication. Our analysis has allowed us to observe that the multimodal dimension of the communication on the professional web forum is a complex phenomenon and it is differently constructed across languages.
- e) In the end, we would also like to mention that a pragmatic and rhetoric insight into the web forum communication may complete the current study and may contribute to the completion of the description of the discursive strategies the Internet users employ in order to communicate knowledge.



## 9. ANNEXES

### 9.1 Professional Web Forum Corpus. Samples


#### 9.1.1 English Sub-corpus. Sample

##### Multimedia Audio Controller

[JoAnngdl](#) Offline  
Registered User

Join Date: Jan 2006  
Posts: 3

 **Multimedia Audio Controller**


The sound is not working at all on my [Hp](#) pavillion a310a. Under device manager there is an ! on my multimedia Audio Controller. When I try to update I get a message that no software is found. How do I get my sound to work again? 



JoAnngdl  
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#2  
01-30-2006, 09:50 PM




[bookworm Online](#)   
Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002  
Location: Lancashire England  
Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JoAnngdl**  
*The sound is not working at all on my Hp pavillion a310a. Under device manager there is an ! on my multimedia Audio Controller. When I try to update I get a message that no software is found. How do I get my sound to work again?* 

Are you updating the Realtek AC'97 from HP, if so try this AC'97 driver from Realtek, <http://w3serv.realtek.com.tw/download...&Software=True>

Hope this helps 

Hope this helps 😊  
 Barbara MCP  
 Friends are  
 Gods apology  
 for relations.  
 It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software  
 Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊



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#3

02-01-2006, 09:13 PM

[JoAnngdl](#) Offline   
 Registered User

Join Date: Jan 2006  
 Posts: 3

🔍 Still not working....

Thanks for your help - I was able to download the driver, but when I try to update my  
 Multimedia Audio Controller, or my Audio [Codecs](#), I get a message that says cannot  
 install this hardware because the wizard cannot find the necessary software. Am I doing  
 something wrong?



JoAnngdl  
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#4

02-02-2006, 07:56 PM



[bookworm Online](#)   
 Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002  
 Location: Lancashire England  
 Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JoAnngdl**  
*Thanks for your help - I was able to download the driver, but when I try to update my  
 Multimedia Audio Controller, or my Audio Codecs, I get a message that says cannot  
 install this hardware because the wizard cannot find the necessary software. Am I  
 doing something wrong?*

To install this driver, just double click it, and follow the instructions, it is a self installing  
 exe file.

Hope this helps 😊  
 Barbara MCP  
 Friends are  
 Gods apology  
 for relations.  
 It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software

Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊



bookworm

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#5

02-06-2006, 09:11 PM

[JoAnngdl](#) Offline

Registered User

Join Date: Jan 2006

Posts: 3

😊 **Thanks for your help**

Thanks for your help - I tried everything you recommended - still no luck! I'm going to bring it in and see if there is something wrong with the soundcard - it won't recognize any of the downloads. It just keeps telling me that it can't locate the software when I load the download onto the [computer](#). It's also telling me there is no audio device when I look up under sounds in the control panel. Anyway - it was worth a try to try and fix it on my own!



JoAnngdl

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#6

02-07-2006, 04:00 PM



[bookworm Online](#)

Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002

Location: Lancashire England

Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JoAnngdl**

*Thanks for your help - I tried everything you recommended - still no luck! I'm going to bring it in and see if there is something wrong with the soundcard - it won't recognize any of the downloads. It just keeps telling me that it can't locate the software when I load the download onto the computer. It's also telling me there is no audio device when I look up under sounds in the control panel. Anyway - it was worth a try to try and fix it on my own!*

Download Belarc [http://www.belarc.com/free\\_download.html](http://www.belarc.com/free_download.html)

and post the results, HP do not show a model a310a but the 300 series uses two motherboards, with them can check the right driver and if Intel board you need to update the [chipset](#) as well.

Hope this helps 😊

Hope this helps 😊

Barbara MCP

Friends are

Gods apology

for relations.

It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊



bookworm

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#7

10-23-2006, 09:03 PM

[puners](#) Offline  
Registered User

Join Date: Oct 2006  
Posts: 4

**Same**

I have the something happening, did you figure out what was going on with your computer?



puners

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[Find all posts by puners](#)

#8

03-03-2007, 06:22 PM

[Jhon\\_DohDoh](#) Offline   
Registered User

Join Date: Mar 2007  
Posts: 1

**Multimedia Audio Controller**

I have an intel pentium 4 just bought it...i get no sound and !? next to the Multimedia Audio Device.I belive i have legacy audio drivers and since you know what your doing i figured id sighn up and beg for your help 😊 i do have a sound card its just not doing whut its supposed to i feel retarded....and if you need any other info about my comp please tell me where to find the data you request and i will be sure to post it quick as i will be sitting here until you post...im also running on widows xp if that helps...

*Last edited by Jhon\_DohDoh : 03-03-2007 at 06:32 PM.*



Jhon\_DohDoh

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[Find all posts by Jhon\\_DohDoh](#)

#9

03-06-2007, 08:59 PM



[bookworm Online](#)   
Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002  
Location: Lancashire England  
Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Jhon\_DohDoh**

*I have an intel pentium 4 just bought it...i get no sound and !? next to the Multimedia Audio Device.I belive i have legacy audio drivers and since you know what your doing i figured id sighn up and beg for your help 😊 i do have a sound card its just not doing whut its supposed to i feel retarded....and if you need any other info about my comp please tell me where to find the data you request and i will be sure to post it quick as i will be sitting here until you post...im also running on widows xp if that helps...*

What make and model, or get Belarc, copy and paste the report not software or win update section [http://www.belarc.com/free\\_download.html](http://www.belarc.com/free_download.html)  
hope this helps 😊

Hope this helps 😊  
Barbara MCP  
Friends are  
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for relations.  
It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊



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#10  
10-29-2008, 12:16 AM

[Delph](#) Offline   
Registered User


Join Date: Oct 2008  
Posts: 1

hi all... have the same issue myself... here's the Belarc report  
Hewlett-Packard HP Compaq nc6220 (ED082UC#ABA) F.11  
System Serial Number: CNU5390F24  
Asset Tag: CNU5390F24  
Chassis Serial Number: CNU5390F24  
would be great if you could help out!  
Delph



Delph  
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#11  
10-29-2008, 05:24 AM

[xboybogdan](#) Offline   
Registered User

Join Date: Oct 2008  
Posts: 1

hy  
I have a Gateway 6442 and i can find the audio driver 😞 the everest says that i have  
ATI SB400 - AC'97 Audio Controller PCI can anyone help me  
PS : i can't enter on gateway site i don't know why 😞



xboybogdan

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[Find all posts by xboybogdan](#)

#12

10-29-2008, 09:39 PM



[bookworm Online](#)   
Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002

Location: Lancashire England

Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Delph**  
*hi all... have the same issue myself... here's the Belarc report  
 Hewlett-Packard HP Compaq nc6220 (ED082UC#ABA) F.11  
 System Serial Number: CNU5390F24  
 Asset Tag: CNU5390F24  
 Chassis Serial Number: CNU5390F24  
 would be great if you could help out!  
 Delph*

audio driver here at HP <http://h20000.www2.hp.com/bizsupport...&swEnvOID=1093>

**Set a System Restore Point before installing just in case**

Start / All Programs / Accessories / System Tools / System Restore – click radio button

Create a restore point and follow instructions

Hope this helps 😊

Barbara MCP

Friends are

Gods apology

for relations.

It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software

Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊

 QUOTE

bookworm

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#13

10-29-2008, 09:42 PM



[bookworm Online](#)   
Sound Queen

Join Date: Sep 2002

Location: Lancashire England

Posts: 10,197

Quote:

Originally Posted by **xboybogdan**  
*hy  
 I have a Gateway 6442 and i can find the audio driver 😞 the everest says that i have  
 ATI SB400 - AC'97 Audio Controller PCI can anyone help me  
 PS : i can't enter on gateway site i don't know why 😞*

ATI SB400 is the audio adapter, do you mean the MX6442 if so go here

<http://support.gateway.com/support/d...&param=1008825>

**Set a System Restore Point before installing just in case**

Start / All Programs / Accessories / System Tools / System Restore – click radio button

Create a restore point and follow instructions

Hope this helps 😊

Barbara MCP

Friends are

Gods apology

for relations.

It's not what you know, it's who you know ( especially the members of the Software

Tips&Tricks Forum) 😊

## 9.1.2 Spanish Sub-corpus. Sample

### [Ayuda al instalar XP](#)

[Felix19Sevi](#)

Nuevo Miembro



Registrado: 01 Nov 2008

Mensajes: 2

Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:01 am **Título del mensaje:** Ayuda al instalar XP

quote

Hola me acabo de registrar; porque ya he buscado y no encuentro nada.

Bueno el problema es que un amigo me dejo el Windows Evolution V2 SP3 para instalarlo en mi pc; meto el disco lo inicio y cuando hace la copia de archivos antes de instalar desde el cd; (justo antes que salga lo de aceptar el contrato....) al copiar los archivos me sale otra pantalla que me dice que no se ha detectado ninguna disketera de CD y pregunto saben porque me tira ese error???El caso es que mi amigo y otro mas lo an instalao bien nose si sera de mi pc

[Volver arriba](#)



### [Dark Knight](#)

Yo soy el foro



Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255

Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España

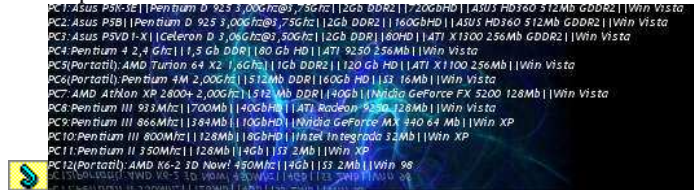
Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 12:04 am **Título del mensaje:**

quote

Pfff las versiones personalizadas de Windows son una basura, son como a ti te pasa a unos les va y a otros no y ellos ya tendran problemas ya veras.

Dejate un Windows normal es mucho mejor

Firma por Forocero:



[Volver arriba](#)



[paulo-2803](#)

Yo soy el foro

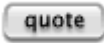


Registrado, 19 Mar 2008

Mensajes: 1175

Ubicación: Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico

Publicado: Dom Nov 02, 2008 2:28 am **Título del mensaje:**



si, lo que pasa es que los desatendidos de windows desactivan algunas opciones del pc para hacerlo mas rapido..... al igual que dark knight quedate con windows original..... saludos



[Volver arriba](#)



[Felix19Sevi](#)

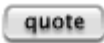
Nuevo Miembro



Registrado: 01 Nov 2008

Mensajes: 2

Publicado: Lun Nov 03, 2008 12:35 am **Título del mensaje:**



ok me quedare con el que tengo.gracias por responder 😊  
No saben si ay algun xp que meresca la pena instalar ?

[Volver arriba](#)



[paulo-2803](#)

Yo soy el foro





Registrado, 19 Mar 2008  
Mensajes: 1175  
Ubicación: Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico  
Publicado: Lun Nov 03, 2008 1:37 am **Título del mensaje:**

quote

el XP xD  
saludos



[Volver arriba](#)



**Cruz**

Forero  
●●●●●



Registrado: 30 Sep 2008  
Mensajes: 169  
Ubicación: Los Cabos, México  
Publicado: Lun Nov 03, 2008 5:37 pm **Título del mensaje:**

quote

Instala el xp normal y personalizalo de acuerdo a tus necesidades =D  
Saludos



El Tiempo es un Tesoro irremplazable, así que hay que aprovecharlo.

[Volver arriba](#)



**albertolr**

User destacando



Registrado: 03 Jul 2008

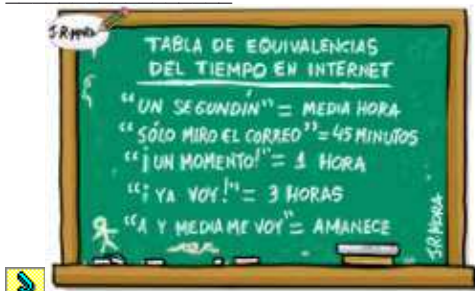
Mensajes: 400

Ubicación: Zamora.España

Publicado: Mie Nov 05, 2008 11:11 am **Título del mensaje:**

quote

prueba eu v7 sp3 lo tengo requeteprobado y no da problemas



[Volver arriba](#)



**Alvar0**

User destacando



Registrado: 23 Jun 2008

Mensajes: 379

Publicado: Mie Nov 05, 2008 11:59 am **Título del mensaje:**

quote

**Dark Knight escribió:**

Pfff las versiones personalizadas de Windows son una basura, son como a ti te pasa a unos les va y a otros no y ellos ya tendran problemas ya veras. Dejate un Windows normal es mucho mejor

Tenemos una guerra entre tu odias los desatendidos y yo los vistas jajaja.

Pues a ver, yo tengo el windows xp colossus 2 reloaded, es una version desatendida, y la tengo en sobremesa, portátil y amigos mios en sus respectivos pc's y ni un fallo hasta el momento.

Es mi experiencia con ellos, la cuestión en este tipo de cosas es probar, yo vi que me iba mejor con este tipo de S.O y no lo cambio.

Saludos.

ForoZ, con Z de ForoZ



[Volver arriba](#)



[albertolr](#)

User destacando

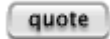


Registrado: 03 Jul 2008

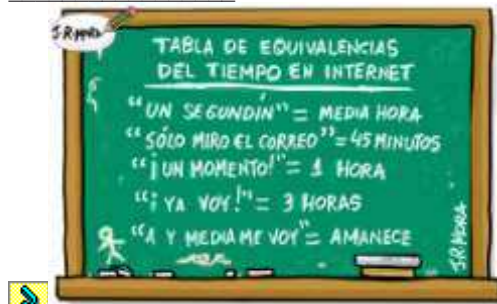
Mensajes: 400

Ubicación: Zamora.España

Publicado: Mie Nov 05, 2008 12:47 pm **Título del mensaje:**



estoy contigo alvar0



[Volver arriba](#)



[Dark Knight](#)

Yo soy el foro

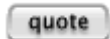


Registrado: 21 Ago 2006

Mensajes: 3255

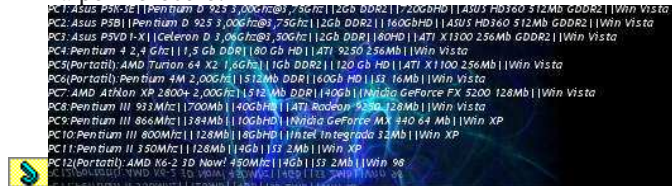
Ubicación: Cerdanyola del Valles, Cataluña, España

Publicado: Mie Nov 05, 2008 3:22 pm **Título del mensaje:**



Alguno bueno seguramente si que habra, pero la mayoría es gente que no sabe lo que hace y por eso hay 1 millon de XP tunign por la red

Firma por Forocero:



[Alvar0](#)

User destacando



Registrado: 23 Jun 2008

Mensajes: 379

Publicado: Mie Nov 05, 2008 5:33 pm **Título del mensaje:**

quote

**Dark Knight escribió:**

Alguno bueno seguramente si que habra, pero la mayoría es gente que no sabe lo que hace y por eso hay 1 millon de XP tunign por la red

Exacto, pero no bajo cualquiera que veo por ahí...Baje 2, el que uso y el UE7, despues de meses de pruebas, me quede con el que uso.

Ya digo aquí la cuestión es probar y quedarte con el que más se adapte a tus gustos.

Saludos.

ForoZ, con Z de ForoZ



[Volver arriba](#)



profile



pm



**[camelin0](#)**

Yo soy el foro



Registrado: 28 Dic 2005

Mensajes: 1569

Publicado: Vie Nov 07, 2008 12:52 am **Título del mensaje:**

quote

Disculpa la pregunta, pero estas intentando instalarlo en limpio o tratando de actualizarlo?

Tienes varias unidades de CD?

Salud/OS ☺

## 9.1.3 French Sub-corpus. Sample

### Fausse manip dans affichage et miniaturisation des icones

Posté le: 08 Mar 2008, 19:25

citer

**pégé78**

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le: 08 Mar 2008

Messages: 5

Localisation: Yvelines

Bonjour,

A la suite d'une fausse manip dans les propriétés d' affichage, afin de régler la définition de l'écran, j'ai déclenché une catastrophe.

En effet, les icônes du bureau, le tableau démarrer, tous les textes, la barre des taches ou celle de menu sont devenues ridiculement petites et totalement illisibles à la limite de l'invisible.

Je ne peux donc plus passer par "propriétés" dont la fenêtre ne mesure plus que le format d'un timbre. De même je peux accéder à affichage mais je ne suis plus du tout en situation de lire et encore moins de cliquer.

Existe t il des raccourcis clavier ou des touches de fonction qui permettent de revenir à un affichage normal.

Merci pour votre aide.

Posté le: 08 Mar 2008, 20:39

**citer**

**Bilifly**

Moderateur Secu



Inscrit le: 08 Avr 2005

Messages: 11271

Localisation: Bolshoi Booze

Bonsoir à toi et bienvenue

Apparemment tu as appliqué une résolution très grande pour te retrouver avec une

image super petite 🤖

Tu peux redémarrer en mode sans echec, désinstaller le pilote de ta carte graphique, puis relancer sous Windows normalement, pour retrouver une taille optimale, taille qui va te permettre de réinstaller le pilote de ta carte graphique.



[Forum informatique](#)

Posté le: 09 Mar 2008, 22:35

**citer**

**pégé78**

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le: 08 Mar 2008

Messages: 5

Localisation: Yvelines

Bonsoir,

Merci à Bilifly pour sa réponse qui me met sur une piste. C'est maintenant évident, j'ai du forcer la résolution au maximum. J'essaye d'accéder à la désinstallation de la carte graphique par le Bios. J'arrive donc à "Integrated Peripherals" et j'ai là 4 possibilités : Via OnChip IDE device /VIA OnChip Device et je pense que c'est là que ça se tient/ SuperIO Device/ USB Device setting.

Dans VIA OnChip Device je trouve : Azalia HDA controller/ VIA 1394 controller/ Onboard Lan Device/ Lan Boot Ram. A ce stade je ne suis plus en situation de décider si oui ou non je dois désinstaller (disable) ou non.

J'ai essayé de relancer par le cd-rom contenant les pilotes de la carte-mère mais rien n'y fait.

Je confirme que tout est réduit au plus petit pixel et qu'il ne reste de lisible que les pages internet, ainsi que les diapos. Sur les pages internet en agissant sur la molette de la souris et après appui sur la touche Ctrl j'arrive encore à lire. L'accès à Outlook express est devenu impossible tant le format est rétréci (taille d'une petite vignette pour la page). Toutes les fonctions de commandes ne sont pas plus grandes qu'un petit timbre et j'apprends de cliquer en aveugle.

Merci de me guider un peu plus loin.

Posté le: 10 Mar 2008, 00:11

[citer](#)

### Bilify

Moderateur Secu



Inscrit le: 08 Avr 2005

Messages: 11271

Localisation: Bolshoi Booze

Bonsoir

Tu as essayé le mode sans echec oui ou non ?



[Forum informatique](#)

Posté le: 10 Mar 2008, 10:56

[citer](#)

### pégé78

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le: 08 Mar 2008

Messages: 5

Localisation: Yvelines

**Bilify a écrit:**

Bonsoir

Tu as essayé le mode sans echec oui ou non ?

Bonjour,

Oui bien sûr, j'ai démarré plusieurs fois en mode sans échec. J'ai même essayé d'aller sur "exécuter " mais comme je n'y vois strictement rien je me suis abstenu d'aller plus loin. Débutant attardé, (plus de 65 ans), mes connaissances en informatique sont quand même assez limitées malgré que j'y mette beaucoup de volonté et d'intérêt.

Quand je démarre en mode sans échec, dont je comprends la finalité (en particulier pour lancer un scanner anti-virus en particulier), je me retrouve dans la même situation, le

fond noir de la page d'accueil en plus. J'ouvre la session mais je ne suis pas plus avancé...  
Mais peut être y a t il quelque chose de particulier à faire à partir du mode sans échec ?  
Merci donc de me consacrer encore un peu de temps, même si j'ai un peu peur d'en abuser.

Posté le: 10 Mar 2008, 17:22

[citer](#)

**David\_42**

Chef de gang



Inscrit le: 29 Jul 2007

Messages: 344

Localisation: Loire 42



Salut,

Avant tout, aurais tu un chipset graphique intégré à la carte mère ?  
(Bios/Advanced/Chipset Feature/VGA.../Graphics Onboard - un truc dans le genre -)

Sinon :

Je ne garantis rien mais à essayer :

Désinstalle la CG, démarre, éteint, réinstalle la CG, redémarre...sait-on jamais !

Good Luck

On a beau dire, W98 est quand même une belle merde...

Config : Core2Duo E6850@3,6 Ghz, CM Gigabyte P35 DS3, 2X1 Go Corsair Ballistix  
DDR2 PC8500, CG Zotac 8800GT 512 Mo oc à 700/1700/1000 Mhz, 2 DD Barracuda  
320 Gb Sata2, Graveur DVR112 Pioneer IDE, Boitier Antec Nine Hundred, Alim 600W  
Silver Power, Asus Silent Square Pro

Posté le: 10 Mar 2008, 20:39

[citer](#)

**pégé78**

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le: 08 Mar 2008

Messages: 5

Localisation: Yvelines



A David\_42

Bonsoir,

Oui c'est une carte graphique intégrée chipset 6150 de 128 mo. J'ai cru voir une puce qui portait le nom de VIA sur la carte-mère. Serait il possible d'extraire physiquement la C.G. et de la repositionner (précautions pour l'électricité statique au préalable). Si tel n'était pas le cas, faudrait il alors que j'envisage de formater. je sais que je vais perdre de ce fait tous les documents personnels, à moins que j'arrive encore à copier sur un disque dur externe.

Merci de m'accompagner

Posté le: 11 Mar 2008, 12:09

[citer](#)

**David\_42**

Chef de gang



Inscrit le: 29 Juil 2007

Messages: 344

Localisation: Loire 42

Ca va simplifier les choses !

Désinstalle le driver de ton chipset graphique ainsi ça va bousculer automatiquement en VGA de base (800x600 il me semble), il te restera simplement à réinstaller ton driver !

---

On a beau dire, W98 est quand même une belle merde...

Config : Core2Duo E6850@3,6 Ghz, CM Gigabyte P35 DS3, 2X1 Go Corsair Ballistix DDR2 PC8500, CG Zotac 8800GT 512 Mo oc à 700/1700/1000 Mhz, 2 DD Barracuda 320 Gb Sata2, Graveur DVR112 Pioneer IDE, Boitier Antec Nine Hundred, Alim 600W Silver Power, Asus Silent Square Pro

Posté le: 11 Mar 2008, 12:10

[citer](#)

**pégé78**

Petit delinquant



Inscrit le: 08 Mar 2008

Messages: 5

Localisation: Yvelines

Bonjour,

J'ai finalement réussi à m'en sortir, en démarrant en "mode VGA". Ensuite, panneau de configuration et paramètres cliqués " à -l'aveugle " ou plutôt en dirigeant le pointeur par analogie à l'écran d'un portable que l'on m'avait prêté. J'ai donc réussi à revenir sur la résolution native 1400x900 et donc tout est redevenu normal après un redémarrage.

Problème résolu.

Merci à ceux qui m'ont mis sur la voie

Posté le: 11 Mar 2008, 12:19

[citer](#)

**David\_42**

Chef de gang



Inscrit le: 29 Juil 2007

Messages: 344

Localisation: Loire 42

ouf, j'avais sauté un détail, désolé

Tant mieux 🍀

---

On a beau dire, W98 est quand même une belle merde...

Config : Core2Duo E6850@3,6 Ghz, CM Gigabyte P35 DS3, 2X1 Go Corsair Ballistix DDR2 PC8500, CG Zotac 8800GT 512 Mo oc à 700/1700/1000 Mhz, 2 DD Barracuda 320 Gb Sata2, Graveur DVR112 Pioneer IDE, Boitier Antec Nine Hundred, Alim 600W Silver Power, Asus Silent Square Pro



## 9.1.4 Romanian Sub-corpus. Sample

### Mozilla youtube eroare

 [adelaide33](#)

Mar 29 2009, 09:05

[3](#)

Post [#1](#)

Junior  
Group:  
Members  
Posts: 11  
Joined: 18-  
February 09  
Member No.:  
421 297

Cind dau sa se vada un clip de pe Youtube pe tot ecranul, mi se deschide o fereastra noua cu clipul respectiv.

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [msmihai](#)

Mar 29 2009, 09:15

Post [#2](#)

Active  
Member  
Group:  
Members  
Posts: 1 653  
Joined: 2-  
September 06  
From: Iasi  
Member No.:  
94 954

ce versiune de mozilla?

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY


 [adelaide33](#)

Mar 29 2009, 12:57

[3](#)

Post [#3](#)

Junior  
Group:  
Members  
Posts: 11  
Joined: 18-  
February 09  
Member No.:  
421 297

QUOTE (msmihai @ Mar 29 2009, 10:15)   
ce versiune de mozilla?

3.0.8 in romana

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [Neika](#)

Mar 29 2009, 15:18

Post [#4](#)

Active  
Member  
Group:  
Members  
Posts: 1 028  
Joined: 29-

Instalează ultima versiune a Adobe Flash Player+Shockwave și Java. Ai ceva addon-uri instalate în Firefox?


October 07  
 From: WALL-  
 E's Planet  
 Member No.:  
 241 788

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [adelaide33](#)  Mar 30 2009, 10:05  
[3](#)

Post [#5](#)

QUOTE (Neika @ Mar 29 2009, 16:18) 

Junior  
 Group: Instalează ultima versiune a Adobe Flash Player+Shockwave și Java. Ai ceva  
 Members: addon-uri instalate în Firefox?  
 Posts: 11  
 Joined: 18- February 09  
 Member No.: 421 297

La "suplimente- plugin-uri" apar 2 plugin-uri Shockwave Flash, 7.0 r19 si 10.0 r22, si Java platform SE6 UI13. Add-on-uri, adica la extensii erau multe, dar le-am dezactivat pe toate in afara de adobe DLM si java quickstarter  
 )  
 (IMG:[http://img03.picoodle.com/img/img03/3/3/30/varus/f\\_1qm\\_399348a.jpg](http://img03.picoodle.com/img/img03/3/3/30/varus/f_1qm_399348a.jpg))  
 (IMG:[http://img18.picoodle.com/img/img18/3/3/30/varus/t\\_2qm\\_af2155c.jpg](http://img18.picoodle.com/img/img18/3/3/30/varus/t_2qm_af2155c.jpg))  
 This post has been edited by **adelaide333**: Mar 30 2009, 10:19

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [Neika](#)  Mar 30 2009, 17:38

Post [#6](#)

Active  
 Member  
 Group: Ai instalat cumva versiunea 10, fără să dezinstalezi, în prealabil, versiunea 7 a  
 Members: Flash Player? Dezinstalează tot ce găsești referitor la Flash Player, ambele  
 Posts: 1 028  
 Joined: 29- October 07  
 From: WALL-  
 E's Planet  
 Member No.: 241 788

versiuni, apoi instalează doar ultima versiune (10). Găsești pe site-ul [adobe](#) un  
 uninstaller pentru așa ceva, dacă nu reușești altfel.

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [Kakashi-  
Hatake](#)  Mar 30 2009, 17:39

Post [#7](#)


Active  
 Member  
 Group: Ai incercat cu versiunea 3.1 beta3 de Mozilla? E super!  
 Members: Posts: 1 104  
 Joined: 16- September 08  
 From: Acasa  
 Member No.: 370 775

 TOP

 QUOTE  REPLY

 [crysty2k5](#)  Mar 30 2009, 17:45

Post [#8](#)

QUOTE (adelaide333 @ Mar 29 2009, 13:57) 

Banned by 3.0.8 in romana  
Moderators  
Group: Topic Firefox: <http://forum.softpedia.com/index.php?showtopic=316692>  
**Moderators**  
Posts: 16 167  
Joined: 7-  
February 07  
From: Hell  
A52  
Member No.:  
139 332



## 9.1.5 Catalan Sub-corpus. Sample

### [windows 2000](#)

□ Autor: **jordi.....** Data: dt. oct. 21, 2008 11:35 pm

Hola,

Tinc un ordinador una mica vell.

I he baixat una versió de windows 2000, el que toca per l'època.

I el numero de serie no va.

He baixat un generador de numero de serie pero no hi ha res a fer.

Que hi puc fer?

Gràcies.

**jordi.....**

[Torna a l'inici](#)

- [Informa d'aquesta entrada](#)
- [Respon citant el text de l'entrada](#)

### [Re: windows 2000](#)

□ Autor: **PellRoja** Data: dc. oct. 22, 2008 5:51 pm

Jo provaria a instal·lar un gnulinux. Si ens dius quin maquinari té ( processador, Memòria RAM, etc..) potser et podem orientar en quina seria la millor distribució de gnulinux.

Sino sempre pots provar amb ubuntu linux

<http://www.softcatala.org/wiki/Rebost:Ubuntu>

[www.informàtics.cat](http://www.informàtics.cat) Informàtica per tothom i totdon



[PellRoja](#)

**Entrades:** 1074

**Membre des de:** dl. oct. 16, 2006 11:20 am

**Ubicació:** /home/pellroja

- [Lloc web](#)

[Torna a l'inici](#)

- [Informa d'aquesta entrada](#)
- [Respon citant el text de l'entrada](#)

### [Re: windows 2000](#)

□ Autor: **jordi.....** Data: dc. oct. 22, 2008 11:33 pm

## M'INTERESA EL WINDOWS PEL SOFTWARE

*PellRoja ha escrit:* Jo provaria a instal·lar un gnulinux. Si ens dius quin maquinari té (processador, Memòria RAM, etc..) potser et podem orientar en quina seria la millor distribució de gnulinux.

Sino sempre pots provar amb ubuntu linux

<http://www.softcatala.org/wiki/Rebost:Ubuntu>

jordi.....

[Torna a l'inici](#)

- [Informa d'aquesta entrada](#)
- [Respon citant el text de l'entrada](#)

**Re: windows 2000**

□ Autor: [ferro9](#) Data: dv. oct. 24, 2008 9:53 am

*jordi..... ha escrit:* M'INTERESA EL WINDOWS PEL SOFTWARE

Si ens dius quin software necessites utilitzar en el Win2000, et podem dir quin és l'equivalent per Linux. Fins hi tot tens la possibilitat de fer corre programes Windows amb el Wine. No perdis el temps amb software del any 2000, el Linux és el SO del 2008!

[ferro9](#)

**Entrades:** 22

**Membre des de:** dt. des. 18, 2007 1:13 pm

[Torna a l'inici](#)

- [Informa d'aquesta entrada](#)
- [Respon citant el text de l'entrada](#)

**Re: windows 2000**

□ Autor: [marcbel](#) Data: dv. oct. 24, 2008 9:50 pm

*ferro9 ha escrit:*

*jordi..... ha escrit:* M'INTERESA EL WINDOWS PEL SOFTWARE

Si ens dius quin software necessites utilitzar en el Win2000, et podem dir quin és l'equivalent per Linux. Fins hi tot tens la possibilitat de fer corre programes Windows amb el Wine. No perdis el temps amb software del any 2000, el Linux és el SO del 2008!

Nois, això és el fòrum de Windows. Si s'hi fa una pregunta, no s'hi val respondre "passa't a Linux", sinó mirar de respondre de forma concreta els dubtes dels altres. Entre altres coses perquè quan nosaltres preguntem, també ens agraden les respostes concretes.

D'altra banda, i ho dic com a simple participant, demanar una llicència pirata del Windows 2000 en aquest fòrum no és el més indicat.

[marcbel](#)

**Entrades,** 204

**Membre des de:** dg. set. 03, 2006 1:49 am

**Ubicació:** Barcelona

- [Lloc web](#)

[Torna a l'inici](#)

- [Informa d'aquesta entrada](#)
- [Respon citant el text de l'entrada](#)

**Re: windows 2000**

□ Autor: [PellRoja](#) Data: ds. oct. 25, 2008 12:21 am

*marcbel ha escrit:*

*ferro9 ha escrit:*

*jordi..... ha escrit:* M'INTERESA EL WINDOWS PEL SOFTWARE

Si ens dius quin software necessites utilitzar en el Win2000, et podem dir quin és l'equivalent per Linux. Fins hi tot tens la possibilitat de fer corre programes Windows

amb el Wine. No perdis el temps amb software del any 2000, el Linux és el SO del 2008!

Nois, això és el fòrum de Windows. Si s'hi fa una pregunta, no s'hi val respondre "passa't a Linux", sinó mirar de respondre de forma concreta els dubtes dels altres. Entre altres coses perquè quan nosaltres preguntem, també ens agraden les respostes concretes.

D'altra banda, i ho dic com a simple participant, demanar una llicència pirata del Windows 2000 en aquest fòrum no és el més indicat.

tens raó marcbel, jo normalment miro de buscar la solució per windows, però si no se la solució, també miro de recomanar altres opcions que jo uso i em funcionen bé. El problema d'aquest fil és que la pregunta no és molt idonia, i diria que windows 2000 ja fa temps que no té suport, per això m' eh decantat per gnulinux que per ara a mi em funciona bé. 😊



## 9.2 Lists of Participants

### English Corpus

1. markd60
2. Ant
3. bluecob
4. MetalKnight
5. Mr Lube
6. lbadtech
7. makterna
8. keith
9. nellanayrb
10. shadow049
11. Radoman
12. shinigami7th
13. fnorth
14. hooker13
15. garberfc
16. gonefishing
17. faisj
18. bigough13
19. JoAnngdl
20. Jhon\_DohDoh
21. Delph
22. xboybogdan
23. thedon57
24. Shyoonen
25. TopFarmer
26. Elupo
27. iliketheboot
28. nubie
29. optical
30. Cribrad
31. ice\_valder00
32. srasmeni1985
33. diamondjaxx1
34. mikehartl
35. swoolgrove
36. Daeymon
37. vellox
38. ESALADUAN
39. JFutter
40. Thirteen
41. pathensley
42. DangerousNapkin
43. m\_riggs\_darling
44. blackburnman04
45. drums4life
46. Play\_The\_Odds
47. fatjack
48. satya\_461
49. Phippy
50. gabateman
51. SB-X
52. Cache
53. uberness
54. Geeeeeek
55. Inktoast
56. Arkk
57. harryhill
58. juliajothika
59. ConFounded
60. gvcole5
61. rambler
62. muniyrah
63. JK10
64. strma666
65. johnnytech
66. lewishey
67. Gazza38
68. paqman
69. pip22
70. SKULLZ1987
71. ---dp---
72. RockyTDR
73. Disk\_Contented
74. crave420fubar
75. doogie
76. LooseChippings
77. beeboy
78. Ang3L
79. snowmonkey
80. crazyhorse333
81. dufasio
82. Dizzyfish
83. Intizar
84. Jayson112
85. StaplesEZTEC
86. Dearson
87. boyNamedFoo
88. chappell
89. emklein
90. digsco
91. Azn\_tweaker
92. ultrasolve
93. klem0019
94. vision
95. MickRad
96. etherfox
97. PointlessPUNK
98. chiprock
99. mbgeek
100. dapht\_punk
101. fistrall13
102. road
103. jroy
104. switchhead
105. shinomen
106. kaamos
107. s7p9a2m4
108. Grendel
109. AsturizGomez
110. Shortass
111. vincent\_tsai
112. Magmell
113. John Litzinger
114. gaggen
115. bmlkidd
116. jb\_cyberlink
117. mcorlett
118. kkeyyankees
119. jeanluchurlbut6
120. rucapunk
121. PTooti
122. phillipcc
123. bigboi8989
124. pointless
125. ericilsamper
126. jamjam122
127. Chris2L
128. lapaverde
129. CubsFanCam
130. blacksheep10
131. wlasaili
132. vibr trolley
133. divv
134. do0odz
135. DAG
136. neonworld
137. CompTechGir1

138. DaveC2003  
139. Kyubi  
140. Irnoti

### Spanish corpus

1. wobbit  
2. jR:  
3. ruedas  
4. Dark Knight  
5. Felix19Sevi  
6. paulo-2803  
7. Cruz  
8. albertolr  
9. Alvar0  
10. camelin0  
11. acbenavides  
12. Anush  
13. itzitzu  
14. Gailen  
15. tranzorx  
16. upanichad  
17. Yaridovich  
18. mushin17  
19. itico  
20. krasso  
21. mehdysx

### French Corpus

1. pégé78  
2. Bilifly  
3. David\_42  
4. Adrienho  
5. Undertaker  
6. johnny\_colu  
mbo  
7. pat  
8. LagWire  
9. josi34  
10. Laly13  
11. R3M\$  
12. andrew656

### Romanian Corpus

1. morarvladioan  
2. Neika  
3. botelucian  
4. Razvan91  
5. crysty2k5  
6. adelaide333  
7. msmihai

141. thropida  
142. Fat and Slow  
143. mcprice09

22. maggotdrum  
mer  
23. keyama  
24. elradeon  
25. anibaljim  
26. bOrj07A  
27. .FiTi.  
28. diego22\_prw  
29. Ludi  
30. mi\_amigo  
31. rolldito  
32. Sly90  
33. josebama  
34. ElBecario  
35. xtreme  
dragon  
36. aoitocastilla  
37. JLLS\_77  
38. xD\_avid  
39. Hitman  
40. DeinT  
41. Yolika

13. einstein30  
14. libelool  
15. jason1966  
16. Domarp  
17. Crasherburn  
18. jc garnier  
19. Arto  
20. carolina  
21. kelly62280  
22. nathan0033  
23. sylvain f  
24. souriss  
25. arith73

8. Kakashi-  
Hatake  
9. ReKo  
10. alexcris  
11. Courage  
12. AndyM  
13. bula69  
14. yooman

144. MJaeson  
145. puners  
146. bookworm

42. selene-vip  
43. janethbonilla  
13  
44. usuario22  
45. Pacheco  
46. CV  
47. mtx  
48. shineline  
49. yervar  
50. Camper  
51. 93  
52. xerokul2009  
53. Toyandboy  
54. chotas33  
55. Aoracna  
56. mercadder  
57. Fran\_92  
58. Irenicus  
59. DploiD  
60. perezd  
61. rauz32  
62. omar bolly

26. vinceboy  
27. Influx  
28. Orion  
29. Aares  
30. Foxx\_V-  
tec\_Lowrey  
31. submit  
32. philgi  
33. kryss4you  
34. Austin  
35. secwineman  
36. tian  
37. laportugaise

15. Ravy  
16. bodo019  
17. LucYan03  
18. NonName  
19. vlad-doru  
20. eiffel  
21. lordsidious  
22. nedelea91



23. miron1947	63. DarkOrc	103. scub
24. dorin_2k	64. GabytzuX08	104. 1835
25. marchand	65. cristos_07	105. danctes
26. domnfane	66. Alta_	106. Evrik
27. Tortuletz	67. juGGaKNot	107. radu.coccea
28. C.F.S.	68. franti18	108. derbedeea8
29. valiflo	69. vladc	3
30. andonieandrei	70. E_manuell	109. driver-u_cj
31. >ficus	71. andreea_sorina	110. harry2007
32. Lucian94	72. dorikut	111. balasoiurare
33. onlyviu	73. GabiBan	s
34. Mikay5000	74. bluetoof	112. Cap-shoot
35. queensoft	75. bluetoof	113. frexxl
36. xeleron	76. shoot_that_flu	114. CGF
37. SmartUP	ff..	115. Blitzkrieg
38. mircea21	77. sogard83	116. #andrei
39. pg-soare	78. Zygoth	117. alexandrudi
40. andreigherghe	79. xxvirusxx	cu
41. luk4	80. cmmc	118. Kyprulez
42. JOBY	81. michelle_mim	119. geCs
PROTOSS	82. BlueMe	120. Bartolomeu
43. iulic	83. Jacques	121. asus512
44. adi4699760	84. mihai.007	122. robert-p
45. glumetu	85. mailtica	123. Nick_White
46. zerro80	86. bak1	124. lucky_asus
47. aeon	87. danielrusu	125. moby_test
48. rdanutz	88. _2bad4u_	126. [ady]
49. buggsbunny29	89. alina_ally23	127. mihaicro
50. gaboiu2u	90. robyzz	128. ChemTeach
51. gh3pard	91. Maresalul	er
52. NickRvl	92. PandaKill3r	129. mihai23378
53. websitefinder	93. mlrcea	130. buggy90
54. the_angel	94. Nostradam	131. DarkAngel
55. pdanyels	95. GogolBordello	Bv
56. Kosovo84	96. More	132. stephanatse
57. jijiman	97. gabitzu252	a
58. Manny AC	98. Littleboy	133. dobrocry
59. antinari	99. catalinux2001	134. Nero-d
60. paul18mts	100. me_danutza	135. kretzu77
61. petrescu	101. bogdanar	136. lilicrin
62. destrug	102. RoKeRu	137. cosmin_17

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1. jordi	3. ferro9	5. Andreu
2. PellRoja	4. marcel	6. Joaquim Morera

- 
- |                 |                   |                |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 7. Carles       | 55. Montse Rius   | 101. catalunya |
| 8. boigandorra  | 56. Eze           | catalana       |
| 9. jaume pep    | 57. clotet        | 102. chis      |
| 10. drfelip     | 58. Maleses       |                |
| 11. Rafel       | 59. numa          |                |
| 12. jaumet      | 60. Josep Vicenç  |                |
| 13. karlosdc    | Marín             |                |
| 14. JoanEL      | 61. dubtós        |                |
| 15. Jussà       | 62. Darkwin       |                |
| 16. KuBe        | 63. RamonRis      |                |
| 17. LluísL1     | 64. Nicolau       |                |
| 18. Visitant    | 65. c:\>          |                |
| 19. PauGNU      | 66. caomfo        |                |
| 20. Pepote      | 67. Toniher       |                |
| 21. Raimon      | 68. Español de    |                |
| 22. badia       | Espanña           |                |
| 23. Minotaure   | 69. lluisgarrotxa |                |
| 24. Mirrinyo    | 70. imma          |                |
| 25. McCagumtot  | 71. Alex          |                |
| 26. rafcli      | 72. jose martín   |                |
| 27. Ryan        | 73. knil45        |                |
| 28. xavier s    | 74. el gran       |                |
| 29. Domenec     | 75. nurieta       |                |
| 30. cubells     | 76. gornal        |                |
| 31. Leo         | 77. Tina          |                |
| 32. Albert_1940 | 78. hevima        |                |
| 33. redoot      | 79. Ismael        |                |
| 34. karine      | 80. jlopez31      |                |
| 35. martavilar  | 81. malcarada     |                |
| 36. Tinaforum   | 82. Token         |                |
| 37. Enric       | 83. ghastlyX      |                |
| 38. Rossinyol   | 84. mari          |                |
| 39. Quadtrero   | 85. Mireia        |                |
| 40. Pere        | 86. monrai        |                |
| 41. aixa        | 87. Hulot         |                |
| 42. Dimas       | 88. Antoni        |                |
| 43. Ruig        | 89. opolonio      |                |
| 44. Jacquard    | 90. jeps          |                |
| 45. Evolució    | 91. macbord       |                |
| 46. karlmcfar   | 92. laia          |                |
| 47. tino        | 93. BennyBeat     |                |
| 48. ^G          | 94. sanmoral      |                |
| 49. Albert      | 95. lluis         |                |
| 50. _BCN        | 96. Hande         |                |
| 51. Quim        | 97. llista        |                |
| 52. Moom        | 98. galderic      |                |
| 53. sweetbarna  | 99. Convidat      |                |
| 54. Josep-Lluís | 100. montgri      |                |

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