More Than Just a Good CV: Creating a Favourable First Impression in Job Interviews

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Dedication

For Amleto, Thelma and Linda, the three musketeers.
Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno.

In addition, for the coming generation who it is hoped will promote ethical communication in job interviews and throughout the workplace.
Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks go to my dear supervisor Dr Fernanda Duarte. Your buoyancy, good humour and patient guidance were invaluable to me in the writing of this thesis. It took many months of searching to find you and I was lucky to find you when I did. This research would not have been completed without you.

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Finally, a word of appreciation to the participants in this study who with tremendous grace willingly shared with me their job interviews and their thoughts.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)
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Abstract

Based on analyses of recorded real-life selection interviews in a law firm and in a government department, this study illustrates how crucial it is for job applicants to use the valuable skill of Impression Management (IM), that is, the attempt to portray a particular image by controlling the information available to others so that they will view the actor as he or she intended (Goffman, 1959; Kacmar & Carlson, 1994). By using verbal and non-verbal behaviours persuasively, job applicants can create an image of professionalism in a short period of time, structuring the interviewers’ impressions formed of the applicant in order to lead to high suitability ratings and job offers (Kacmar, Delery & Ferris, 1992; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999). Currently, there is much competition for jobs, hence applicants are faced with increasingly sophisticated selection techniques that aim to ensure only the best applicants are appointed.

This study is located within the fields of communication and selection interviewing research and is underpinned by moral and ethical issues in regard to the deployment of power and empowerment of job applicants. The necessarily communicative approach involved qualitative data collection and description i.e. Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA). Light is thrown on specific behaviours that could help applicants achieve success and it is explained why there is now much needed change in the conduct of selection interviews.

Unequal power, status and dialogue characterise the relationship between the parties involved in job interviews. The unequal dialogue may create a disadvantage for some applicants as it could prevent them from relating with interviewers on more equal terms. However, there is potential for interviewers and applicants to construct more equal interactions through their verbal behaviour. Applicants could be provided with a more thorough understanding of selection interviews, especially the interplay between language and power. It is argued that because power influences language and language influences power, applicants may empower
themselves in interviews by examining their beliefs and by adopting more powerful verbal behaviour.

In time, and with further academic inquiry, more equality in interpersonal relations in the workplace could become the norm. The hope is that this study could be a catalyst for future research on preventing misuse of power through communication in the workplace and in social life.
Chapter 1: The Role of Impression Management (IM) in Job Interviews

1.1 Introduction

When an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey (Goffman, 1959, p.4).

Following the economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s, and the over-borrowing and over-spending of the "greedy eighties," the 1990s heralded a new era of relentless restructuring and "downsizing" of workplaces in capitalist societies. Downsizing, it was argued, was part of the changes to transform moribund bureaucracies into lean, dynamic and competitive enterprises. This practice has led, amongst other things, to a dramatic decrease in full-time, permanent positions and intensified competition among job seekers. In the 2000s, the labour market remains competitive and potential employers are increasingly selective in the recruitment process. These changes have brought a "sobering cold shower to many job hunters," to quote Popovitch (2000), because "the balance of power has shifted completely in favour of employers" (p.12).

In this competitive climate, it has become critically important for job seekers to create a positive presence in selection interviews, that is, to present an impression of competence to do the job, and in particular, a positive personality. Gottesman and Mauro (1999) advise, "it is important for applicants to let their personality shine through. They need to communicate excitement and belonging, what is called presence, or charisma" (pp.3, 56). Similarly, Corfield (2003) explains that although qualifications, skills, and experience are important, the most crucial factor is "your personality and what sort of person you are." Applicants need to stress "that they have the right personality to fit into the organisation and contribute fully to the fortunes of that company. Skills can be taught and experienced gained on the job … but you cannot change your personality so easily" (p.17). It is noted by Berry
"that confident interviewees are the successful ones" (p.7) and Popovitch (2000) states how important it is to project "integrity, sincerity and a real interest in employers" (p.77).

What applicants say and how they behave during a job interview will influence the interviewer’s judgment in relation to their suitability for a given position. Hence, applicants who are skilled in Impression Management (IM), that is, in controlling the impressions they make on others in order to present themselves in a favourable light (Goffman 1959; Ralston & Kirkwood 1999), will have better chances of succeeding in a job interview. IM has been defined as the attempt to portray a particular image by controlling the information available to others so that they will view the actor as he or she intended (Goffman; Kacmar & Carlson, 1994; Schlenker, 1980; Schneider, 1981).

The consensus in the literature in the field of communication and selection interviewing is that the value of IM is the use of language and purposeful behaviours to create images of professionalism in a short period of time (Miller & Buzzanell, 1996; Parton, 1996; Ralston & Kirkwood). Specifically, applicants may elect to use verbal strategies to structure the interviewers’ impressions formed of the applicant in order to lead to favourable outcomes such as high suitability ratings and job offers (Kacmar, Delery & Ferris, 1992). Abundant advice is available aiming to help applicants prepare for job interviews. Business publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* recommend sample responses to questions, and appropriate attire that can help applicants create desirable images (see Garber, 1997; Riley, 1997).

In the last few years there emerged a voluminous literature of popular "self-help" or "how to" texts. These texts advise applicants on how to behave and how not to behave in a job interview, and they contain mostly lists of "do's and don'ts," that is, which behaviours to use and which to avoid. For example, advice for men includes "avoid cultivating a droopy moustache, as this tends to give an unintentionally gloomy appearance" and for women "steer clear of earrings that are flashy or bear a
resemblance to a mini-mobile" (Johnstone, 1997, pp.27-29). However, by memorising such lists, self-help texts may not stimulate applicants to make permanent changes in their behaviour during interviews. Although applicants may know lists of do’s and don’ts, this does not also bestow an ability to put the information into practice, especially when the suggested new behaviours are meant to replace behaviours that may have been practised for many years.

For example, if job seekers were asked whether they should or should not talk about career failures or fidget or mumble in a low voice during the interview, they would most probably say "no"; however, in an actual interview setting, they probably would not be able to put into practice the behaviours prescribed in self-help texts. In addition, applicants may rely too much on the advice provided in the texts. For example, some applicants could become distraught if they learn the recommended responses to a list of interviewers’ questions and during the interview those questions do not arise.

The information within self-help texts is often too simplistic to represent accurately the complex nature of what takes place during a selection interview. Whilst applicants might assiduously read the lists of do’s and don’ts, agree with all the bullet points, and indeed plan to put them into action at a forthcoming interview, there is a tendency to revert to "inappropriate" behaviour during the actual interview because that is what people do in stressful situations. Here it is important to draw attention to the political dimension of the job interview, in other words, the fact that applicants have less power than the interviewer. This imbalance of power can negatively influence the way an applicant speaks and behaves creating unequal dialogue which could disempower job applicants. Nevertheless, self-help texts contain scant information about the interconnection between language and power and how it affects relationships between interviewers and applicants.

What is needed is a research-based approach which acknowledges the complexities of IM and communicative competence and which encourages dialogue on equal terms with the interviewer. The present study aims to address this gap. As pointed
out by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) communicative competence is the ability to choose behaviours that are both appropriate and effective for a given situation. An individual must be able to recognise which skills are necessary in a particular situation, have those skills, and be properly motivated to use those skills. Such interpersonal competency allows one to achieve their communication goals without causing the other party to lose face.

It is important to stress that when applied to selection interviews, the notion of appropriate and effective behaviour is a relative concept in that it depends on the kind of interview context. For some jobs, applicants may be required to contribute ideas and work autonomously, as in the field of advertising, whereas a factory worker may need to follow instructions and work well under close supervision. As will be revealed in this study, a job applicant is considered to have communicative competence if they can recognise which verbal and non-verbal skills are necessary during a job interview and if they possess and utilise those skills. Furthermore, such applicants believe that it is possible to speak with interviewers on equal terms and communicate from a position of power, rather than powerlessness.

This study is distinguishable from other research in three ways: (1) The focus is on job applicants rather than interviewers, (2) Data was gathered from real-life job interviews and not simulated or "mock" job interviews, and (3) The issue of power and the interrelationship between language and power is tackled. Furthermore, verbal behaviour was analysed using the techniques of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA). The present study explores actual job interviews rather than mock interviews involving participants who are pretending to be interviewers and applicants. The main critique of studies involving mock interviews is that the behaviour of students in these settings does not accurately represent how people communicate in real-life job interviews (see Gallois, Callan & McKenzie Palmer, 1992).

In addition, the present study analyses works that have drawn attention to power differentials between interviewers and job applicants and the ethical implications of
this phenomenon. Fletcher (1992) remarks "where there is power, there is also potential for its abuse and hence for unethical behaviour that violates the rights of the individual" (p.361). Therefore, underpinning the present study is the idea that more equal dialogue between interviewer and applicant could lead to more ethical job interviews and work relationships that are characterised by equity, respect and courtesy. Here it is necessary to explain that although this research is conducted from the perspective of the job applicant, it was also recognised that as interviewers may be restricted by lack of time and financial resources this requires them to control the job interview process.

The next section explains how specific research questions have been designed to address the problem outlined above.

### 1.2 Research Problem and Questions

Based on a qualitative study that analyses real-life selection interviews, the current research investigates *communication behaviours* of job applicants (i.e. interpersonal behaviours used in IM, including verbal behaviour, body language, appearance, personality and degree of participation), to extrapolate a new model of verbal and non-verbal behaviours for successful IM. Rather than starting with an analytic model, the intention here is to discover whether a model can be developed that informs and empowers job applicants (see Evans & Gruba, 2002). This model should take into account the complexity of interaction between interviewer and applicant, the multiple layers of meaning involved in a selection interview, and the fact that selection interviews are sites of unequal power relations in which the interviewer exercises power over the applicant. In more specific terms, the study proposes the following:

a) **To investigate the extent to which IM, specifically verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours, contribute to creating a positive presence for applicants in their job interviews.**
To address the above proposition, it is discussed why it is important for applicants to present favourable impressions in relation to their personality and their competence to do the job through powerful verbal behaviour, body language and appearance, all of which play a part in creating positive presence. The need for powerful IM is explained, considering the way in which interviewers make their hiring decisions.

b) To identify the communication behaviours which most critically contribute to creating a "positive presence" for applicants.

To address the second proposition, it is demonstrated through two empirical case studies how verbal behaviour enables job applicants to create a positive presence. By providing positive statements or disclosures about their competence and personality and by using powerful paralanguage, that is, variation in voice tone, pitch and pace, applicants can increase their chances of being approved by interviewers.

As the job interview is an inherently unequal power relation there is an additional question to the two core propositions,

c) Is it possible to address the power imbalance inherent in a job interview context?

To answer this question, it is argued that although selection interviews are inevitably unequal encounters in terms of power it may be possible, with more equal dialogue and ethical practices, to ensure that power is not misused and to improve communication and relationships in job interviews. This could have implications not only for interviews but also for many other interactions in the workplace and in social life.

As explained below, a qualitative methodology was required for this study of real-life job interviews.
1.3 Methodology

Sogunro (2002) emphasises that the methodology must suit the nature of the research being undertaken. Hence, for the present study it was ideal to employ a qualitative methodology to gather data, and to analyse data from a communication perspective. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to form insights not only about the communication of job applicants but also about relationships between applicants and interviewers and how their behaviours may influence their relationships. It is widely recognised that qualitative studies can provide insights not possible using other methods of research (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Giacomini & Cook, 2000), and this is explored further in Chapter 3. However, some quantitative analysis was employed in the present study as it is argued that with a combination of methods it is possible to reject narrow analytical paradigms in preference to a breadth of information (Nau, 1995; Schmied, 1993). Therefore, in the present research verbal behaviour was analysed with the techniques of CA and ContA. In addition, ContA was used to analyse nine self-help texts that provide advice to job applicants.

This study consisted of 10 real-life selection interviews in the south of England. The vacancies were for a Transport Officer in local government and a Legal Assistant in a law firm. Medium level jobs were analysed, that is, jobs for which applicants needed some qualifications and experience as opposed to higher level jobs requiring a university degree or lower level jobs that required few formal qualifications. While this enabled comparisons between similar kinds of job interviews, a limitation of the investigation is that findings apply only to interviews for medium level jobs. Data was gathered by tape-recording real-life job interviews which included interviewers' comments and through non-participant observation. Discussions with interviewers and applicants individually after the interviews enabled me to check my own interpretations of events.

I transcribed the recordings of the interviews and interviewers' comments into word-processed transcripts and then analysed the transcripts using the techniques of
CA and ContA. CA involved listening repeatedly to what each applicant said to the interviewers and how they said it. As noted by Perakyla (1997), in CA the focus is on the way participants interact on-the-scene. Repeated listening to tape recordings of naturally occurring speech reveals how day-to-day human activities are organised. ContA was used to analyse quantitatively the interview transcripts and the self-help texts by determining the presence of certain words or concepts within them, analysing the meanings and relationships of the words and concepts, and then making inferences about the messages within the texts (see Busch et al., 2005).

Human behaviour is complex. To ensure that this study considers as many facets of it as possible an interdisciplinary approach is used when reviewing the literature. The topic of communication in selection interviews involves an understanding of the concepts, methodology and epistemology of various disciplinary fields. The fields include communication studies, selection interviewing, socio-linguistics and social psychology. This literature is important in relation to verbal and non-verbal behaviour, IM and cognition in job interviews. The present study also draws upon studies of business ethics as issues of power and empowerment are of interest. In addition, research on humour is taken into account due to the growing interest in the use of humour as a communicative tool in social interaction (see Eggins & Slade, 1997).

1.4 Definitions

Definitions adopted by researchers may not be uniform, therefore this section defines key and controversial terms to establish positions taken in this research. Other key terms are explained as they emerge throughout the study.

The terms *job interview* and *selection interview* are used interchangeably to mean an interview conducted for the purpose of hiring someone to fill a job vacancy in an organisation. A job interview is a formal face-to-face meeting between two or more people where there are clearly assigned roles of interviewer and applicant for the position. Dipboye (1992) and Howard and Ferris (1996) note that the selection
interview is used by virtually all organisations for selecting individuals for employment. They explain that as the job interview requires an interaction between two or more individuals it is inherently social in nature, utilising a dialogue to gather information about the applicant.

Real-life job interviews refer to selection interviews for actual job vacancies as opposed to mock interviews simulated for research purposes. Studies of mock interviews usually involve student participants engaged in role-playing, as opposed to real interviewers and job applicants who are interacting in the workplace.

For the purpose of this study, the term medium-level jobs denotes positions of employment within an organisation for which applicants are required to have educational qualifications and considerable experience. Higher-level jobs require an undergraduate or postgraduate degree and much experience. Lower level jobs require few or no qualifications.

"Impression management or self-presentation refers to the behaviors used by individuals to control the impressions they make on others" (Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999, p.190). To be successful in creating the desired effect on the other person it is important to use verbal and non-verbal language persuasively (Fletcher, 1989; Lewis, 1990).

In this research, verbal behaviour encompasses language and paralanguage. Language refers to written language and oral language, that is, utterances or words spoken aloud. This includes disclosures meaning applicants' statements, that is, information they volunteer to the interviewers. Paralanguage refers to elements such as loudness, pitch and timing of the voice, i.e. pauses, intonation and laughter (Tusing & Dillard, 2000).

Hence, in the present study paralanguage, meaning vocal delivery (Mino, 1996) is included under the heading of verbal behaviour. However, in the words of Siegman and Feldstein (1987), "the term non-verbal also includes the vocal features of a
message that remain after we subtract the words themselves” (p.351). Therefore, it is recognised that paralanguage could be classed as non-verbal behaviour (see Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991; Webb, 1975).

The terms body language and non-verbal behaviour are used interchangeably to indicate body movements i.e. smiling, eye contact, handshake, head nodding, mirroring, gestures and posture.

Powerful language is defined, drawing on Bradac and Street (1989/90), as a low level of pausing, high fluency, variable pitch, a relatively rapid speech rate and high volume. The speaker's short sentences contain a variety of concrete nouns and present tense verbs. In contrast, powerless language comprises high levels of vocalised pausing and disfluency, high monotony, slow rate, low volume and long, redundant sentences. According to Grob, Meyers and Schuh (1997, p.291) powerless language includes hedges such as "you know" and "sort of."

The terms positive or powerful describe communication behaviours that create a favourable impression on an interviewer. The words negative and powerless are used to describe behaviours that could create an unfavourable impression. This categorisation was formed with reference to Bradac and Street (1989/90) and Einhorn (1981).

Here is an overview of other chapters in the present study.

1.5 Overview of the Study

The current study is organised into five additional chapters. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of research conducted in the area of selection interview, particularly concerning the IM and communication behaviours of job applicants. Chapter 2 highlights several gaps in the literature, such as the need for more research on real-life job interviews as opposed to mock studies that have utilised students as participants (McFarland, Ryan & Kriska, 2002).
Another area requiring investigation is revealed in Chapter 2: ethical issues concerning interview dialogue and the unequal power relationship between interviewers and applicants. It appears now to be vital to discover ways to empower job applicants during interviews and when they commence employment and to forge more positive relationships in other workplace interactions. Writers have emphasised the need for future work environments that promote the ethical treatment of employees (Peale & Blanchard, 2000; Sudhir & Murthy, 2001) and fairer treatment of job applicants (Fletcher, 1992). It is possible that applicants who are treated unfairly by interviewers may be unwilling to accept job offers, which could lead to loss of potentially good employees. Fairer and more enjoyable interviews can make the job of managers easier and more fulfilling, as they can lead ultimately to higher staff morale, motivation, productivity and loyalty. In addition, Chapter 2 examines nine popular self-help texts to show the kinds of advice currently available to job applicants that is intended to help them prepare for selection interviews.

Chapter 3 discusses why it is essential to reflect on important ethical considerations during this research. It is explained why a government office and a law firm were chosen for this study of real-life job interviews, with a description of the data gathering process. Chapter 3 explores thoroughly the analytic techniques of CA and ContA, pointing out the advantages of these techniques and their relevance to this study.

In Chapters 4 and 5, verbal behaviour in the selection interview transcripts is analysed with CA and ContA. Excerpts from the transcripts are presented and explained in terms of their relevance to verbal behaviour of the applicants and to show how patterns have emerged in the data. A key consideration of both chapters is the interviewers' responses as interviewing is a subjective practice. Chapter 4 focuses solely on applicants’ disclosures and paralanguage whereas Chapter 5 analyses verbal and non-verbal behaviours namely personality, body language, appearance, and the amount of participation by applicants in their interviews. In Chapter 5 is a summary of what was found during data analysis in the study and
Chapter 6 concludes this investigation by discussing the findings and examining implications of the findings for empowerment of job applicants, for interactions in the workplace and in social life, and for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Establishing a "Positive Presence." Perspectives on the Job Interview and Impression Management (IM)

Employers want people to have a decisive, visionary and positive attitude, an attitude which will add value to the company (Berry, 1997, p.42).

This chapter reviews the relevant academic literature in the field of communication and selection interviews to build a theoretical foundation for the present research and map out the main issues and thematic patterns of this field of inquiry. The review of academic texts will be supplemented with a discussion of popular literature, meaning "self-help" texts that contain advice for applicants on how to prepare for job interviews. The review throws light on what is currently known and unknown about the way applicants behave in selection interviews.

The purpose of this review is to address the three fundamental research questions of the study: (1) To what extent do verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours as key components of IM contribute to creating a positive presence for applicants? (2) Which communication behaviours most critically contribute to creating this positive presence, that is, a favourable impression on the interviewer? and (3) Is it possible to address the power imbalance characteristic of job interviews? This study does not commence with a model but is a process of discovery to find out whether guidelines can be developed that inform and empower job applicants (see Evans & Gruba, 2002).

In the present research IM is regarded as a natural aspect of social behaviour which job applicants can use to positive effect; therefore it is shown how IM can be of value to them. Creating positive presence has as much to do with strength of personality as competence to do the job. In the words of Connell (2003, p.1), "becoming an effective communicator first involves being natural, being oneself, letting one's goodness shine through." Lewis (1990, p. 37) comments that creating
an image of success means "presenting yourself in a way that matches the desires and expectations of your audience. It requires the development of . . . 'presence', that special sparkle which transforms a person into a personality."

Within this study, the term communication behaviours refers to the range of interpersonal behaviours that applicants use in IM, that is, their attempt to create positive presence. Positive presence can be created through language i.e. utterances or actual words and sentences spoken aloud, with paralanguage, i.e. laughter, and pitch, tone and pace of the voice, through body language such as eye contact, and through appearance. A number of scholars in the field of communication and selection interviewing have demonstrated that the way an applicant communicates during the interview influences how the interviewer judges the applicant (Dougherty, Turban & Callender, 1994; Einhorn, 1981; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Gumperz, 1992; Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988; Tullar, 1989; Young & Kacmar, 1998). The present research builds upon existing works in this area and investigates the effect that applicants' communication has upon interviewers and which behaviours are most critical for gaining interviewers' approval.

The topic of selection interview has generated a voluminous body of literature over the past 40 years. Since Wagner's (1949) seminal review which found that interviewers are generally not adept at assessing applicants' personal characteristics, hundreds of studies have attempted to predict interviewer judgments based on applicant characteristics and behaviours. This is acknowledged by Einhorn (1981, p.217) who found that from a speech communication perspective little was known about the communicative correlates of success for applicants in selection interviews. Einhorn's ideas will be explored later in this chapter. Reviewing the literature in this field Goodall and Goodall (1982, p.122) concluded that there is a need also to examine interviewing as "a situation in which people shape each other's expectations not only about being hired, but perhaps more importantly, about what working will be like, and what it will mean." They also note that "the
important question of who gets hired for positions based on performance in employment interviews is still unanswered, but it is certainly not unanswerable.”

Harris (1989) noted that between 1982 to 1989 process-oriented research, meaning research that examined interviewer-applicant interactions during interviews, lacked a coherent theoretical framework. Studies conducted during this period investigated interviewer-applicant behaviours and applicant perceptions, and a number of significant relationships were brought to light. However, the lack of a theoretical framework made the value of the findings ambiguous. Jelf (1999, p.52) found that process-oriented research had not been driven by any particular communication theory but reflected three broad communication themes - determinants of behaviours occurring during interviews such as "selling of the company" by the recruiter (Dougherty, Turban & Callender, 1994); interview focus (Barber, Hollenbeck, Tower & Phillips, 1994); and quality-of-information effects (Highhouse & Bottrill, 1995). From this it is clear that job interviews require further investigation, focusing specifically on the kinds of impressions that job applicants are creating through their verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

Chapter 2 is structured as follows: first is a discussion concerning studies performed by other researchers in the field of communication and selection interviews. It is explained how these studies have been conducted and problems experienced. Second, to show what needs to be addressed, strengths and weaknesses of the available literature are exposed and approaches that are central to my own approach are highlighted. In the section below I discuss the purpose of the job interview and the recommendations of some academics concerning current ideas about job interviews.

2.2 The Job Interview as an Organisational Practice

Companies need to avoid being a follower of other companies, and become innovative in their management of their human resources (Rodwell, Lam & Fastenau, 2000).
The selection interview is an important and widespread interaction throughout the western world. It is noted by Blockyn (1988) that an overwhelming majority of organisations use the interview as a primary tool for selecting employees. Ralston and Kirkwood (1999) remark:

Despite its shortcomings, however, the employment interview addresses important needs of employers and co-workers of new employees. Employers hope through interviewing to gather applicant information not readily available elsewhere. (p.55).

Employers gather information from selection interviews that is not accessible from "objective" methods such as CVs, that is, curricula vitae, and from application forms and references from employers. While these kinds of documents provide valuable information to an interviewer, they reveal only partially who the applicant is and how competent they are. To gather a more accurate picture of the applicant as an individual, the interviewer needs to interact with the applicant face-to-face to obtain information conveyed by appearance, language, paralanguage and body language. Therefore, as noted by Ralston and Kirkwood (1999), employers use selection interviews to discover more about employee "fit," that is, how the individual will "assimilate" into the company, in addition to their communication skills, motivation to do the job and work-related values.

In their classic study of faculty hiring in universities Caplow and McGee (1958) found that for interviewers the most important consideration was whether the applicant was someone they could live with. Judge and Ferris (1992) comment that the selection interview is critical in establishing such person-organisation fit because it enables each party to determine if the other demonstrates congruent values and interests (see Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991). Indeed, interviewers readily declare the goal of hiring applicants who fit (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Ricklefs (1979) discusses the search for applicants with appropriate "chemistry," while Schneider (1987) remarks on the tendency of organisations to hire only the "right types," that is, people who are highly similar to themselves and current employees.
There is evidence that interviewers rely on their subjective impressions of applicants. For example, Cable and Judge (1997) examined data from 38 interviewers making authentic applicant assessments and hiring recommendations about 93 applicants. It was found that interviewers’ assessments were subjective and that their assessments were accurate. To assess person-organisation fit, interviewers compared their perceptions of applicants’ values with their organisations’ values.

Powell (1998, pp.50-60) reports that there are two very different perspectives on fit. "Reinforcing fit" entails hiring applicants who reinforce the firm’s existing strengths, whereas "extending fit" involves hiring employees who will extend the range of the firm’s strengths. To stay competitive Powell advises companies to use both approaches, that is, to select new employees to build a cohesive culture and to develop a more diverse workforce.

He further notes that in their selection strategies, organisations need to hire people with the "right" characteristics to function well in their particular environment. Moreover, the biases of selecting officials must be guarded against. Organisations can avoid bias by identifying their pivotal values and then assess these values in job applicants. Human Resources management within a company can influence the kind of fit that exists in that company. For instance, orientation sessions, management communications to employees, and employee development programs influence the kind of fit that exists in the organisation at any time. It is wise for managers to ensure there is agreement on values that are pivotal to the culture while encouraging the free exchange of ideas and differing points of view and keeping lines of communication open (Powell, 1998).

The selection interview is defined in research and training literature largely in terms of its ability to serve managerial interests. Ralston and Kirkwood (1995) point out that the scholarly and popular literature on interviewing not only reflects the well-documented managerial bias in organisational communication research (Kersten, 1986; Putnam, 1983; Putnam, Bantz, Deetz, Mumby & Van Maanen, 1993;
Trujillo, 1987) but advocates communication norms and conduct which privilege the interests of employers over those of applicants. Ralston and Kirkwood add that this imbalance violates fundamental ethical obligations of communicators and reduces the utility of interviewing for all parties. They state that as the employment interview is a gateway into organisational life, the values and communicative style of the interview may have important socialisation consequences. Hence, they "argue for transforming the employment interview so that it addresses the interests of all parties involved" (p.77).

Although interaction during the interview is of critical importance for interviewers, Kirkwood and Ralston (1999) confirm in their writings that the significance of the interview extends beyond its value to employers. They comment, "Applicants also seek information about the interviewing organization and the job in question" (p.55). They add that this information helps applicants to decide whether to pursue or accept job offers. The effects of interviewing on applicant decision-making and long-term employee/employer relations have not been emphasised enough in the literature, but it can be argued that these issues underpin the potential value of interviews. For example, Herriot (1989) remarks that the selection interview is more than a gateway to the organisation; the quality of the communication between interviewer and applicant during the interview will affect their long-term relationship.

It has been recognised by some scholars in the field that interviews are as much for helping applicants make decisions as they are for helping employers decide whom they will hire. To demonstrate the value that applicants place on selection interviews, it is asserted that applicants judge from the quality of interaction during the interview what life might be like once they are hired (Jablin, 1987; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Rynes, 1993b). Indeed, applicants are not totally passive in an interview situation. It has been demonstrated that they judge the organisation and its employees based on how they are treated by the interviewer. It is natural for them to be curious and to form impressions about the people they will be working with and the values and culture of the organisation. De Wolf (1993) argues that "If an
applicant feels treated with care and consideration, perceives he or she is treated on an equal basis, and there is mutual decision making these factors will … shape expectations about future co-operation" (p.257). Ralston and Kirkwood (1995) add that how new employees perceive employers to be fulfilling conditions of employment and other expectations created during interviews will colour the employees’ first weeks on the job and perhaps their entire tenure.

By examining how applicants communicate the present study may discover how to improve the often tension ridden interviewer-applicant relationship. To create more equal dialogue it could be worthwhile encouraging applicants to use powerful communication behaviours and for interviewers to adopt more ethical practices in interviews. Interviewers and applicants are responsible for the quality of dialogue. Kacmar (1990) notes that the behaviours of each participant will in turn influence the responses each receives. Furthermore, Kirkwood and Ralston (1999, p.71) recommend that interviewers make the interview a "mutually controlled dialogue" more typical of interaction on the job. They emphasise that because communication is a mutual, transactional process interviews need to be controlled simultaneously by interviewers and by applicants when appropriate.

Kirkwood and Ralston (1999) explain that this could take the form of equal opportunity to propose topics, raise questions, challenge answers, deciding when a topic has been adequately explored and negotiating the format of the interview: for example, unstructured dialogue versus interviewer questions followed by equal time for applicant questions. This format would be more feasible for follow-up interviews than for screening interviews. Nevertheless, interviewers should abandon the expectation that applicants will "follow their lead" in all respects. Kirkwood and Ralston (1999, p.72) point out that one benefit of inviting applicants to engage in free-flowing conversation is that it may enable "each party to get a feeling for the likely chemistry of their interaction on the job and employee-organization fit." These authors also assert that when there is more unrestricted dialogue in interviews recruitment is likely to be enhanced. Above all, both
employers and job applicants will benefit if communication in job interviews is transformed in this way.

It is commonly known that employers want to hire someone who can identify with their company's goals and who will work well with other employees. Employers are particularly interested in evidence of the applicant's competence to do the job (Howard & Ferris, 1996). For example, Raza and Carpenter (1987) found that interviewers, who completed questionnaires about themselves and applicants involved in 171 real-life selection interviews, paid a large amount of attention to the applicant's skill when making a hiring recommendation. However, during the interview, interviewers' judgments of applicants are influenced to a significant extent by their feelings, especially in relation to the personality of the applicant (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Graves, 1993; Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990). This suggests that it is important to investigate the roles that characteristics such as enthusiasm, self-confidence and assertiveness play in creating impressions of personality.

The following section explores how interviewers assess applicants and the idea that interviewers' judgments of applicants are biased, as interviewers rely substantially on their feelings to make recruitment and selection decisions.

2.3 The Subjective Nature of Job Applicant Selection

Many factors can influence the way interviewers evaluate applicants and research by Tschirgi (1972-1973) and Keenan (1977) showed that interviewers do not remain objective. Therefore, it could be essential for applicants to consider how interviewers will perceive their personality and to create rapport with interviewers. Tschirgi and Keenan found that interviewers allow their personal feelings about applicants to bias their judgment of them. In Keenan's study of initial graduate recruitment interviews, professional interviewers evaluated how much they liked each applicant on a personal level, and rated his or her intelligence. Fairly strong relationships were found between liking and overall evaluations.
There is consistent evidence in the research that when judging job applicants interviewers tend to rely upon impressionistic information about applicants rather than applicants' qualifications and work experience. Speech and behaviour of the applicant can have more influence on interviewers than the applicant's knowledge or qualifications (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Graves & Powell, 1988; Kinicki & Lockwood, 1985; Parsons & Liden, 1984; Raza & Carpenter, 1987). In addition, it has been found that interview impressions dominate all line managers' actual hiring decisions, and different impressions matter to different managers (Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990). Interviewers' decision making is therefore subjective and depends upon interviewers' personal preferences. Their hiring decisions could be affected by the way an applicant interacts with them, and whether or not they like the applicant on a personal level. Although applicants cannot control interviewers' preferences, applicants can control their own verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Therefore, the applicant’s skill as a communicator could be crucial for influencing how the applicant is perceived during a job interview.

There is further evidence that interviewer decision-making is prone to bias as interviewers can be affected by a range of variables. Nordstrom, Williams and LeBreton (1996) and Nordstrom, Hall and Bartels (1998) found that when managers operate in busy work environments they find it difficult to form correct impressions about the applicant. A study by Graves (1993) showed that if a vacancy needs to be filled quickly the interviewer could be under pressure to make a rapid decision. Graves found that interviewers often allow their moods and personal preferences to influence their judgments, and interviewers judge applicants based on their prototypes of their ideal applicant. Academic research furnishes profiles of applicants who are successful (Miller & Buzzanell, 1996) and the more closely applicants match these ideal applicant profiles and enact recommended behaviours the greater their chances of obtaining job offers (Bate & Bowker, 1997; Van Vianen & Willemsen, 1992).

Schuler, Randell, Beutell and Youngblood (1989) comment that interviewers apply the "halo" effect when they select physical attractiveness, perceived similar
personality, or high intelligence in the applicant as the reason for a favourable outcome. The interviewer may fail to use a comprehensive impression of the applicant based on knowledge, skills, abilities, and other presentations. Hartley (2003) remarks that the halo effect may distort perception. Interviewers ignore or distort any information that conflicts with their first impression of an applicant. For instance, an applicant wearing an expensive business suit and tie may be perceived as competent and confident, which may not be the fact. Hartley points out that interviewers may form pre-conceived ideas based solely on applicants' CVs. Furthermore, interviewers stereotype applicants, meaning that they typecast them. For instance, all female applicants, or all male applicants may be perceived as having similar characteristics. To reduce the possibility of bias in selection interviews Hartley suggests that interviewers should avoid hasty judgments and consider the other person's point of view.

Interviewers usually examine applicants' CVs and application forms before they conduct job interviews. It is reasonable to conclude that during the interviews, interviewers are assessing factors such as applicant personality and attitude which is information that they can gather more easily face-to-face. This suggests that how applicants behave during the interview has a crucial influence on the hiring decision. Therefore, applicants would do well to appear interested in what the interviewer has to say and to show personality characteristics such as enthusiasm and self-confidence. These qualities could create rapport and increase the possibility that the interviewer will like the applicant and want to hire him or her. Although interviewers will always be biased in their decision-making, this study investigates how applicants can consciously choose IM behaviours that could increase their chances of gaining a job. Perhaps the most important IM strategy is the ability to create a positive presence.
2.4 Creating Positive Presence: Communicative Competence and IM

It is only the shallow people who do not judge by appearance (Wilde, 2004).

Fletcher (1989) and Leary and Kowalski (1990) state that few if any situations bring IM into sharper focus than the selection interview, which has attracted a good deal of research (see Arvey & Campion, 1982). While Schlenker (1980) produced seminal work on IM in social settings and Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989) followed this with applications to organisations, few published studies have investigated the influence of applicant IM in interviews. Some of the empirical research has paid attention to the non-verbal IM strategies of job applicants rather than the verbal strategies, or has focused only on one IM tactic per study (Baron, 1986; 1989; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b). According to Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989, 1991), during the past twenty years IM theory has undergone a major transformation from focusing on behaviours such as lying and exaggeration to its current status as a general model of organisational behaviour.

There has been much debate about the influence of the initial impression and the extent to which verbal and non-verbal behaviours affect this impression. Anderson (1988) Zunin and Zunin (1972) and Lewis (1990) agree that applicants have only two to four minutes to create a positive first impression. Body language, such as eye contact, plays a significant part in creating this impression. However, not all theorists in the field are in agreement. For example, in a study of real-life job interviews, Dougherty, Turban and Callender (1994) found that other factors carried more weight, i.e. interview style, paralanguage and a favourable orientation towards job offers. They also found that if an interviewer forms a positive first impression of an applicant, it is likely that the interviewer will display more positive regard for the applicant.

As previously mentioned, interviewers form subjective impressions about applicants as they interact with them face-to-face during the interview (Gilmore &
Ferris, 1989b; Graves, 1993; Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990). Hence, for the applicant, both personality and competence are important elements in terms of influencing the interviewer's perceptions and eventual decision. Downs, Smeyak and Martin (1980) point out that to an interviewer, qualitative information is usually of more immediate interest than the content of the applicant's answers. They add that applicants may receive approval if they enhance their proficiency in the following areas. First, applicants are advised to be assertive, which means displaying a good self-assessment and a respect for the rights of others. Second, applicants need to create positive impressions in relation to past work experience and training, communication skills, their attitude and maturity, physical appearance, and preparation for the interview. Third, it is necessary to volunteer positive information and appear confident. In addition, negative features need to be downplayed by minimising weaknesses or turning them into advantages.

How the applicant communicates during the interview has a significant effect on interviewers' perceptions. In particular, it is crucial for applicants to create a positive impression on the interviewing panel from the start of the interview. There is little time in which to make a good impression and any early negative impressions may not be easy to change as the interview progresses (see Lyden & Chaney, 1997). It could be important for job applicants to be aware of this and to ensure that they take immediate responsibility for their behaviour as the interview commences.

A number of researchers in the field of communication and selection interviewing warn applicants against divulging negative information during selection interviews. Studies have shown that interviewers are looking for negative information, particularly during the first minutes of the interview. The negative information is used to judge applicants (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Constantin, 1976; Herriott & Rothwell, 1983; Hollman, 1972; Springbett, 1958; Webster, 1964). It has also been found that negative characteristics of applicants influence hiring decisions more than positive characteristics. Writers such as Fleischmann (1991) Kellerman (1989) Lewis (1990) and Rowe (1989) lend further support to the view that interviewers
rely on negative information as grounds for rejecting a job applicant rather than considering positive information as a basis for hiring an applicant.

Stewart and Cash (2005), who are academics and authors of an authoritative guide to interviewing, and Rasmussen (1984) agree that during the interview applicants must concentrate on verbal and non-verbal competencies as both appear to influence interviewer perception. It appears that applicants who have communicative competence are skilled in creating positive presence with their language, paralanguage, body language and their appearance. In addition, it has been found that competent communicators are sensitive to feedback from others, and they enact appropriate behaviours throughout an interaction (Argyle, 1986; Engler-Parish & Millar, 1989). Furthermore, "communication requires that the message sender be aware of what's going on in the mind of the message receiver so that he [sic] can adjust his [sic] message if necessary and make sure his [sic] point gets across" (Gottesman & Mauro, 1999, p.76).

It could be said that an applicant who is a skilled communicator shows a genuine interest in the interviewer and, with verbal and non-verbal skill, develops a level of rapport which makes the interview more enjoyable. Rather than passively answering questions with merely a "yes" or a "no," the skilled communicator plays an active part in the dialogue by contributing ideas and comments as people do in social conversation. Street (1986) remarks that it is to be expected that applicants would be perceived more positively when they produce communication behaviours associated with competence.

Having established the importance of creating positive presence in the early stages of the interview it is important now to examine the specific sets of communication behaviours that contribute to creating a positive impression in a prospective employer. The following sections examine the academic literature on verbal behaviour in selection interviews.
2.5 Verbal Behaviours

Interviewers sometimes ask interviewees, 'If you were offered the job, would you accept it?' I was horrified at an interviewee who responded by saying, 'Well, I want to discuss it with my wife. She may not want me to take the job, and she may think of something I haven't thought of, so I need to think about it' (Berry, 1997, p. 72).

2.5.1 Language, that is, Utterances

There is strong evidence that the applicant's choice of language plays a large part in creating impressions. For example, research has shown that interviewers regard unfavourably applicants who passively answer only "yes" or "no." Interviewers prefer applicants who are moderately verbally active, meaning applicants who contribute ideas and give detailed but relevant answers (Jablin, 1985; Jablin & McComb, 1984). In a study by Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens and Dressel (1979) recruiters rated applicants after real-life on-campus interviews and discovered that appropriate content, fluent speech, and composure contributed to a favourable hiring decision. In a series of mock interviews involving student volunteers, Riggio and Throckmorton (1988) also found that success in selection interviews depends strongly on the applicant's verbal responses, with body language playing a much lesser role.

Research confirms that interviewers prefer to hire applicants who are skilled in oral communication rather than applicants who lack such skill. Utilising data from interviews they conducted with real-life managers and from questionnaires Maes, Weldy and Icenogle (1997) found that oral communication was consistently identified as the most important competency in evaluating entry-level applicants. Employers expect applicants to demonstrate verbally their capacity for problem-solving, self-motivation, following instructions, listening, conversing and giving feedback. Gumperz (1992) analysed two real-life job-training interviews and discovered that applicants were judged largely on their verbal presentation, how they reacted to the interviewer’s queries, and how they described what they were
capable of doing. A seminal study by Young and Kacmar (1998) examined real-life job interviews in a petroleum company. They found that how applicants talked had a significant influence on interviewers' judgments of the applicants' self-confidence.

Verbal behaviour plays an essential role in IM. Therefore, it could be important for the present research to analyse the kinds of disclosures applicants provide, that is, the types of information they volunteer to interviewers. By discovering the role that disclosures play in creating impressions, valuable insights could be gained about each applicant's personality and competence, their IM strategies, and the level of rapport they create with the interviewer. Spencer (1994) comments that in everyday life self-disclosure is used actively to project oneself as normal and open, to obey social norms of reciprocity and civility, or to establish trust. Duck (1998) and West and Duck (1996) note that self-disclosure is used to manage and present impressions rather than simply reveal layers of one's personality.

Nevertheless, the present study considers the meanings of dialogue within the context of the interpersonal relationships between interviewers and applicants. In this study, individual features of language and paralanguage are not analysed in isolation but are considered in relation to the applicant's body language and appearance, and in relation to the context of the interview. Therefore, it is important also to analyse the attitudes and personalities of each participant. Duck (1998) explains that meanings are not absolute things that exist simplistically in the words, that is, meanings happen when interaction happens, between people and in a context. Therefore, I am analysing not only what applicants say to interviewers but also the reactions of interviewers' to applicants' verbal behaviour.

For instance, applicants who volunteer positive information about themselves to interviewers may create more favourable impressions than applicants who adopt the more passive role of merely agreeing with or praising the interviewer, perhaps in order to appear affable or submissive in keeping with the customary role of job applicant. Studies by Dipboye and Wiley (1978) Tullar (1989) and Kacmar, Delery and Ferris (1992) show that applicants who use self-focused IM tactics are rated
higher than applicants who use other-focused IM tactics. Self-focused tactics involve talking about oneself in a positive way, whereas other-focused tactics involve paying attention to the interviewer by giving compliments, agreeing, smiling and nodding.

While self-focused IM appears to be essential for creating a positive impression, some applicants might be more confident and skilled at promoting themselves than are other applicants. It could be important for applicants to do this in a way that makes them appear confident but also modest as boasting could give an impression of arrogance. Martinko (1991) advises that the physical setting and purpose of the interview and the power held by the interviewer may intimidate some applicants, which could limit their use of self-focused IM tactics.

Research by Kristof and Stevens (1994) and Stevens and Kristof (1995) brought to light that verbal self-promotion is prevalent among students. Studies by Ellis, West, Ryan and DeShon (2002) and McFarland, Ryan and Kriska (2002) revealed that self-promotion and ingratiation can create positive interviewer evaluations. Lyden and Chaney (1997) advise that applicants who use positive self-reporting will be granted a positive first impression. Applicants would do well then to bear in mind that a poor first impression may be difficult to alter or overcome. Research has continued in this vein as Andrews and Kacmar (2001) investigated indirect IM tactics such as boasting. In addition, Ellis and Wittenbaum (2000) examined verbal self-promotion (extolling one's own attributes) and others-promotion (i.e., extolling significant others' contributions to self-success). They found that while applicants are promoting themselves verbally, they tend to use indirect IM tactics. Further research is needed nevertheless to investigate how applicants could verbally promote themselves in a more direct but also a more modest way.

Any study of disclosures would be incomplete without analysis of the accompanying paralanguage or the constitutive elements of the sound of the voice i.e. volume, pitch, tone and pace. As will be seen below, paralanguage provides clues to the meaning of a person's words and expressions.
2.5.2 Paralanguage: Sound of the Voice - Tone, Pitch and Pace

Stressing the importance of paralanguage, Stewart and Cash (2005) argue that individuals should be responsible for and aware of the consistency between what they say, how they say it, and what they do. It is common knowledge that when interpreting the meaning of a spoken message a hearer will pay attention to the way words sound as well as to words themselves. This means that interviewers' judgments could be significantly affected by the paralanguage of the applicant. Mortensen (1972) writes that paralanguage concerns vocal intonation and cues of vocal quality i.e. pitch, rate, timbre, and volume. The term linguistic denotes what is said, whereas paralinguistic relates to how it is said. Paralanguage is significant because it reveals to the listener more information about the meaning of a spoken message. That is, while words can disguise the speaker's real intentions paralanguage and body language generally do not as they are involuntary reactions, and these aspects are hard for a person to conceal.

Of immense interest in the present study is the effect of the applicant's paralanguage on an interviewer's subjective judgments. Paralanguage could influence how an interviewer feels about an applicant, in other words whether the interviewer likes the applicant and has rapport with that person or whether they dislike the applicant and have little rapport. Research has consistently shown that paralanguage appears to influence interviewers' subjective evaluations (Buller, LePoire, Aune & Eloy, 1992). De Groot and Motowidlo (1999) found that interviewers use paralanguage to make emotional and intuitive judgments about whether or not the applicant as a future employee, will be willing to help them, co-operate with them, and accept their suggestions. Connell (2003) comments that pitch, rhythm, tempo and resonance can enhance or detract from communication. Nasality in particular draws negative perceptions. She points out that attractive, influential voices bear specific characteristics and comments that the "more resonant and calm, less monotonous, lower-pitched voice … is characteristic of more influential people" (p.2). Connell adds that their voices tend to be less shrill, less nasal, and more relaxed.
There is consensus among some researchers that how an applicant talks carries more weight than what an applicant says (DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999; Kacmar, Delery & Ferris, 1992; Kacmar & Hochwarter, 1995; Mino; Tullar, 1989). Voice pitch (Edwards, 1982), speech rate (Brown, 1980) and pauses (Scherer, 1978) have all been linked to favourability of impressions formed by listeners, hence paralanguage could affect interviewers' judgments during job interviews. Research by Dougherty, Turban and Callender (1994) and Mino (1996) indicated that voice tone, pace and pitch play an essential role in interview impressions. Nonetheless, Scherer noted that within job interviews visual cues had received more attention than paralanguage. In addition, Fatt (1999) remarks that although voice volume, rate, pitch and pronunciation have a strong effect on a listener, there is scant research on paralanguage in job interviews. The present study addresses this gap by focusing on applicant paralanguage.

More specifically, the influence of applicant paralanguage on interviewer judgments now deserves further attention because powerful and powerless paralanguage will differentiate speakers concerning status, competence and dynamism (Bradac & Street, 1989/90). For instance, variation in voice pitch is said to give the impression of dynamism, extroversion, benevolence and competence (Greene & Mathieson, 1989; Scherer, 1979). In addition, faster rates of speech are associated with perceptions of competence and extroversion (Buller, LePoire, Aune & Eloy, 1992). However, according to Scherer (1978), the greater the length of voice break or pause, the less favourable are an interviewer's ratings of the applicant. These are examples of the kinds of features that are analysed in the present study.

Anderson (1999) notes that vocal qualities are powerful elicitors of personality judgments. Consequently, the present research analyses the link between paralanguage and judgments of personality. The present study develops seminal communication research conducted in the United States of America by Mino (1996) who recommended that future studies assess how oral communication affects interviewers' assessments of personality. Mino found that it was essential for job
applicants to use good paralanguage, which she defined as appropriate pitch variation, loudness and loudness variation, pausing and phrasing, and using clear, accurate articulation when answering the interview question. She defined poor paralanguage as minimal pitch variation, minimal loudness and loudness variation, ineffective rate, pausing and phrasing, and using less distinct and accurate articulation when responding.

There is indication in the existing literature that interviewers use paralanguage to evaluate the applicant's sincerity and their level of enthusiasm. For instance, Mino (1996) found that voice pitch, loudness and rate may define an applicant's level of enthusiasm. She found in her study that good content, meaning positive disclosures, failed to impress the interviewer unless it was accompanied by good paralanguage, that is, variation in the tone, pitch and pace of the voice. Mino’s finding suggested that it is imperative for content and paralanguage to match. Furthermore, good paralanguage combined with good content may increase applicants' chances of a positive interview outcome. For example, if an applicant professes to be interested in the job it is vital for that statement to be made in an enthusiastic tone of voice.

In the words of Mino, "Vocal variety with respect to pitch, loudness, and rate represents a standard communication skill that may define an interviewee's level of enthusiasm during a response" (p.234). However, she warned that good paralanguage might camouflage poor content, meaning negative disclosures, and make a stronger impact than good content. In addition, Mino's findings showed that assertiveness, outgoingness, enthusiasm, emotional stability, analyticity, organisation, and creativity were associated with paralanguage, while sincerity and intelligence were reflected in content. Similarly, Merman and McLaughlin (1982) discovered that "strong assertive statements through voice inflection and intensity are a direct reflection of … sincerity" (p.83). Therefore, paralanguage requires further analysis to determine the role it could play in applicant IM.
The following section discusses the value of laughter and humour in the context of job interviews and why it could be important for interviewer and applicant to laugh together.

2.5.3 Laughter and Humour in Job Interviews

Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face (Hugo, 2005).

Laughter and humour could be beneficial to interviewers and to applicants. Despite this, there seems to be a need for workplace humour to be perceived more positively. Holmes and Marra (2002) comment that humour is sometimes regarded as a distraction from business. They add that "the proportion of humour in workplace interactions is dramatically less than the amount in informal friendship groups" (p.68). The possible benefits of humour and laughter in job interviews are explored below.

It has been noted in some studies that laughter could help applicants create a favourable impression of their personality. Martin and Lefcourt (1984) remark that individuals who possess a strong sense of humour are more likely to laugh in a job interview and experience positive moods and are rated by their peers as having a good sense of humour. In addition, laughter could help interviewers and applicants to understand communication in job interviews. Poyatos (1985) comments that sensitivity to the many meanings of audible and visual laughter can be of much value in the job interview. He states, "interpretation of the various forms of laughter allow one to understand what might remain untold, even to anticipate upcoming statements or reactions and respond to them in a sort of advanced hidden feedback" (p.126). He describes the paralinguistic nature of laughter as a "qualifier of verbal language" - that is to say confirming, emphasising, de-emphasising, contradicting, disguising, concealing or replacing (Poyatos, 1993, pp.62,78).

It is acknowledged in the existing literature that the presence of laughter does not always signify that humour is also present. For instance, laughter could represent
embarrassment, nervousness or ridicule. Holmes and Hay (1997) define conversational humour as "an utterance which was intended to amuse the listeners and which evoked a positive response." They add, "successful humour is a joint construction involving a complex interaction between the person intending a humorous remark and those with the potential of responding" (p.131). Holmes and Hay's definition of humour could be said to be relevant to the communication perspective taken by the current study of job interviews because they regard conversation as a social process requiring the collaboration of both speaker and listener. In addition, the present study acknowledges that humour is a subjective notion which is also culturally bound - what interviewers and applicants regard as humorous in one culture could be perceived differently by interview participants in another culture.

Laughter in response to humour during job interviews could create smoother and more harmonious dialogue and lead to interpersonal rapport, harmony and solidarity. Consalvo (1989) found that laughter was a spontaneous reassurance that those sharing humour were of like mind. Moreover, laughing together helps members of a group commit to one another for the duration of an otherwise stressful encounter. Empirical studies indicate several benefits of humour use by authority figures in the workplace. Decker (1987) found that employees who rated their supervisors as having a good sense of humour reported higher job satisfaction than employees who believed their supervisors lacked a sense of humour. Avolio, Howell and Sosik (1999) and Decker and Rotondo (2001) found that managers could enhance their overall effectiveness by using humour to enrich their communication style with members of their team. Morreall (1991, p.360) remarks that humour is a "social lubricant, allowing people to work together more effectively" and if humour is encouraged at work, creative thinking increases. There appears to be a link between humour and power which needs further investigation. It may be worth discovering if participants could use humour to minimise the effects of an imbalance in status and power, to allow more equal interaction, and to create rapport in job interviews. Holmes (2000) and Holmes and Marra (2002) point out that while humour may be used by the powerful to maintain
control, conversely humour is available to the less powerful as a socially acceptable means of challenging existing power relationships. Although humour is a tactic for gaining power in the workplace (see Alberts, 1992, p.189), research showed that humour in face-to-face social interaction reinforced feelings of solidarity and rapport in real-life mixed gender groups (Candita, 2006). Interviewers could use humour to make applicants feel at ease during the interview. It is conceivable that applicants who are relaxed will perform better than those who are anxious. Those who laugh at the interviewers' humorous remarks may be perceived as more likely to work well with their colleagues. Hence, humour and laughter might be valuable IM techniques that could enhance the applicant-interviewer relationship.

Verbal behaviour is inevitably accompanied by other communication behaviours, and to strive for accurate interpretations of applicant IM it was vital to analyse them in this study. First, is an explanation of body language, which falls into the category of non-verbal behaviour, followed by discussions about personality and appearance.

### 2.6 Body Language, Personality and Appearance

We respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and, one might almost say, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none and understood by all (Sapir, 1949).

#### 2.6.1 Body Language: Posture, Gestures, Facial Expression, Mirroring, Eye Contact, Smiling

A number of works in the field of communication and selection interviewing make clear the inescapable link between verbal and non-verbal communication in IM. For instance, Mortensen (1972) points out that communication may be interpreted more accurately if language, paralanguage and body language are analysed simultaneously:

The relative impact of verbal activity must always be interpreted within the larger context of other dimensions of communication. One should resist the temptation to
oversimplify the complexities of communication by reducing them solely to aspects of the verbal code. To respond openly to another person is to react to the total dynamic of his or her behaviour, not simply to his or her words. (pp. 206-209)

Throughout this research, the terms body language and non-verbal behaviour are used interchangeably to signify movements of the body such as hand and arm gestures, posture, and facial expression (Mehrabian, 1972; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988). Specific examples of body language include smiling, eye contact and head nodding. Imada and Hakel (1977) found that body language in simulated selection interviews had a significant effect on interview impressions and hiring decisions. Indeed, research suggests that visual cues can be valid predictors of job performance (Burnett, 1993; Motowidlo & Burnett, 1995). Exploring this theme further, Hartley (2003) suggests that interviewers take note of clusters of non-verbal signals rather than judging meanings of communication by observing only one non-verbal characteristic.

The importance of body language in job interview settings as a research theme is further explored in Section 2.11 which examines the popular literature on job interviews i.e. self-help texts.

2.6.2 Personality

There is substantial evidence that interviewer ratings of an applicant's personality are strongly associated with overall hiring decisions, suggesting that job interviews are used for the purpose of forming inferences about applicant personality (Anderson, 1992; Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell & Haddleton 1999; Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Fletcher, 1987, 1990; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Herriot, 1989; Herriott & Rothwell, 1983; Keenan, 1982; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988; Van Vianen & Van Schie, 1995; White, 1986; Young & Kacmar, 1998). It is noted by many researchers in the field that applicant personality can lead to a favourable impression without the interviewer specifically screening for it (Dipboye & Gaugler, 1993). Within the present study, personality refers to the applicant's particular personal qualities or character displayed during the interview.
A study by Fletcher (1990) showed that when applicants argued a point with the interviewer the applicant was rated as self-confident, whereas applicants who took time over answers were regarded favourably as verbally expressive. However, the extent to which applicant personality influences hiring decisions is unclear as few studies have been conducted in real-life selection interviews. Cook, Spector and Vance (2000, p.868) comment that "[personality] has been almost totally neglected, with most studies focusing on interviewers and their judgment processes rather than on characteristics of applicants." Their study of simulated and real-life job interviews showed that personality plays an important role in the early stages of the interview. They found that extraversion, meaning an outgoing and relaxed personality, was linked to more positive interview outcomes and performance, whereas anxious applicants were judged as less competent, qualified, and showing less initiative and motivation.

Indeed extraversion, assertiveness and positive disclosures about competence are believed to create powerful impressions on interviewers. Research by Raza and Carpenter (1987) discovered a significant and positive relationship between assertiveness and interview success. Interviewers rated highly those applicants who interacted with them confidently, by initiating comments and by verbally expressing their competence. In addition, Raza and Carpenter found that intelligence and likeability, that is, social skills are important for being rated as a potentially superior employee. Furthermore, Medley (1993) writes that it is essential for job applicants to display enthusiasm because it has positive effects on interviewer perception, and this was confirmed in a study by Mino (1996). Nonetheless, Fitzgerald (1982) notes that many applicants fail to enthusiastically "sell" or promote themselves.

Conger (1991) relates a story which vividly illustrates how crucial it is to display enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the first contact with prospective employers. The story goes like this:
A candidate was being recruited by a firm. At the end of a day of interviews, he had met everyone except the company's charismatic president. Up until this point, there was a clear consensus that the young man should be hired. At 5.30 p.m., he met with the president who promptly asked if he would join him with another manager for drinks. Off they went to a nearby bar at which point, the president called his wife and the wife of the manager to join them for dinner. The candidate proceeded off to dinner having yet to begin his interview with the president. Dinner ended at midnight and still no interview had been conducted. The president then asked the recruit to his home for the actual interview. The young man balked with surprise, saying he was tired and needed to return home. Needless to say, he was not offered the position. (pp.31-45)

Apart from demonstrating interviewers’ power to control job interviews, what Conger's (1991) story could be said to reveal is that employers regard applicant attitude and personality as extremely important selection criteria. By refusing to continue the interview, the applicant may have given the impression that he lacked energy, enthusiasm and a genuine interest in the job, therefore he was not hired.

2.6.3 Appearance

I am often asked whether it is possible to be overdressed for an interview. I do not think so (with the possible exception of a dinner jacket or ball gown!) (Corfield, 2003, p. 39).

In western society, it is commonly known that to make a positive impression during a job interview the applicant needs to present him or herself attractively, hence appearance plays an important part in IM. This is recognised in the field of communication and selection interviewing, with a particular emphasis on clothing. For example, Lewis (1990) remarks "in many companies employees are expected to conform to an unwritten but strictly enforced dress code. For men this usually means jackets and ties and for women short hairstyles, moderate use of make-up and plainly tailored clothing." Lewis adds, "clothing has the power to influence not only how others perceive you but also the way you regard yourself" (p.234).
In addition, research suggests that when job applicants feel good about the way they look, they also feel more confident. For example, a study of mock job interviews was conducted in a simulated corporate office by Solomon (1986). Participants were university students; some came to the interviews directly from lectures and wore casual attire, while others had time to change into business suits. Applicants who wore the interview "uniform" of suit and tie for males, or jacket and skirt for females, believed the interviewer had a higher opinion of their abilities than those wearing casual clothes. It was found that formally dressed applicants asked for a higher starting salary than applicants who were casually attired. From Solomon's findings it could be argued that applicants who were dressed formally felt more confident because they felt that their business-like image made them appear more serious about wanting the job. Consequently, they had the courage to ask for a higher starting salary.

Applicants would do well to ensure that their clothes, shoes, make-up and hairstyle actually reflect the image that they intend to portray. It has been recognised that sometimes appearance can distract the interviewer and lead to an unfavourable evaluation. A study of mock job interviews by Baron (1986) suitably illustrates this point. The study involved two women who were interviewed by male and female interviewers. Applicants altered their behaviour by either using or avoiding body language such as smiling, eye contact and leaning forward; sometimes they wore a noticeable perfume and sometimes not. When the women wore perfume and used positive body language they were rated more negatively by male, although not by female, interviewers. Baron explains that the male interviewers may have been distracted by the women's behaviour and appearance and felt less effective as interviewers. He concluded that efforts by job applicants to enhance their image can go too far, and that the best strategy for applicants to follow appears to be one of careful moderation.

There is some consensus in the field that during a job interview it is important to be perceived as "attractive," although (Fatt, 2000) remarks that judgments of "attractiveness" depend on the interviewer's perception. If an individual is regarded
as attractive, he or she is attributed with several positive characteristics i.e. likeable, friendly, intelligent, successful, and competent. Moreover, research indicates that if an interviewer considers a job applicant to be attractive the applicant is more likely to succeed in the interview (Cash, Gillen & Burns, 1977; Gilmore, Beehr & Love, 1986; Schuler, Randell, Beutell & Youngblood, 1989).

In certain contexts, appearing clean and tidy and wearing an up-to-date business suit could help to convey attractiveness. Forsythe, Drake and Cox (1985) found that job applicants who are both physically attractive and appropriately dressed, from the interviewer's perspective, have even greater chances of success in interviews. However, Dipboye, Fromkin and Wilback (1975) showed that physical attractiveness alone would not guarantee success in job interviews. Their study revealed that applicants had a greater chance of a positive interview outcome when they were similar to the interviewer in terms of attractiveness and personality. Indeed, the personality factor was sometimes more influential than the attractiveness factor. This suggests that further research is needed on the effects of personality on interviewers' judgments.

Having examined the literature on verbal and non-verbal behaviours, the next step is to explain why it is crucial for job applicants to develop their IM skills and why this study takes the expansive view of IM (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

### 2.7 Impression Management (IM) as Self-Presentation

Gilmore and Ferris (1989a) write that IM is a natural part of social life. In his classical study on IM, Goffman (1959) conducted pioneering work on face saving and ways to present oneself in the best possible light. Goffman points out that individuals display a "front," that is, a part of our personality we present to the world at large, and it is in our interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of us. It is agreed that the ability to manage one's impressions is quite valuable in contexts where either social influence or conformity is important (Lautenschlager & Flaherty, 1990).
IM is generally described as self-presentation or behaviours that individuals use to create impressions that influence other people. To be successful in creating the desired effect on the other person it is important to use verbal and non-verbal language persuasively (Fletcher, 1989; Lewis, 1990). Therefore, it is natural that to increase their chances of success job applicants will try to present themselves in a favourable light. Within the context of job interviews, IM has been described as the use of language and purposeful behaviours to create images of professionalism in a short period of time (Doolittle, 1987; Miller & Buzanell, 1996; Parton, 1996; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999).

2.7.1 Comparing Positive and Negative Views of IM

Schlenker and Weigold (1992) distinguish between the restrictive, that is, negative view of IM and the expansive or more positive view of IM. Within the current study, successful IM is regarded as a desirable skill for which applicants need to possess communicative competence or proficiency as a communicator. Therefore, it could be said that this study takes an expansive view of IM. Here I explain how various scholars view IM differently. These contrasting opinions could highlight the way IM is currently perceived in job interviews.

First, I discuss the restrictive view which recognise IM as a generally negative, often deceptive set of behaviours aimed at illicitly gaining social power and approval. Viewing IM as deceptive, hence unfair, is likely to have originated from a model popular in social psychology in the 1970s, which considered IM to be a conscious, manipulative and deceptive strategy (Rosenfeld & Giacalone, 1991). It is easy to see why the restrictive view of IM persists. Genuine self-disclosure by either party in a job interview is not advocated in the academic literature, which according to Ralston and Kirkwood (1999) and Rosenfeld and Giacalone (1991) urges applicants to promote themselves using subtle tactics. For instance, Stano and Reinsch (1982) warn applicants not to be too honest. Moreover, Anderson (1991) cautions interviewers to be aware that applicants may be intentionally biasing their
behaviours to secure a favourable outcome. It could be argued that this kind of advice does not promote trust between interviewers and applicants.

As shown later in Section 2.11, the majority of the self-help texts that I analysed contained numerous examples of acceptable replies to "difficult" interviewer questions. While this advice is regarded by many as helpful and well meaning, it could also be perceived as deceptive. In Fletcher's (1992) opinion it is acceptable to train applicants to combat anxiety and learn to assert themselves more confidently, as this will provide the interviewer with a clearer picture of what they have to offer. However, Fletcher emphasises that it is unacceptable to provide applicants with standard replies to difficult questions because this could be seen as attempting to thwart the interviewer and obscure reality. Moberg (1989) agrees that to prepare applicants for deceitful IM could violate the rights of the interviewer.

For instance, Fletcher (1992) warns:

> It is one thing to provide training and guidance to job applicants in how to present the talents they possess as effectively as possible, but quite another to coach them in strategic IM tactics that are deliberately intended to lead to favourable assessments, irrespective of their actual merits. (p.361)

Fletcher (1992) notes that not all IM occurring in selection interviews is deceptive or manipulative. Some behaviours may be manipulative whereas other behaviours may be genuine in which the applicant presents an identity that closely matches his or her self-image. He explains that IM can be perceived as a continuum of strategic behaviours the most extreme of which involves conscious deception. For instance, Popovitch (2000) reports, "Typical falsifications: The individuals don't hold the jobs described; their salaries were not as high as claimed; major difficulties with superiors are completely covered up" (p.11).

Fletcher (1992) adds that conversely, plenty of interviewers can cite examples of how job applicants have deliberately misled them. Therefore, he suggests asking a group of interviewers to examine the ethics of the advice that is available to
applicants in self-help texts. Arvey and Renz (1992) assert that manipulative behaviours such as faking and distorting information to meet the selection criteria are unfair. They emphasise that the interview process and procedures must be objective and consistent across all applicants.

In contrast to the restrictive view of IM, some researchers have put forward a different more positive perspective. The stance taken by the present study and indeed by a number of researchers is that strategic communication for IM is not simply an unavoidable aspect of interviewing, it is a guiding norm (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989a; Goffman, 1959; Lautenschlager & Flaherty, 1990; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995). Furthermore, Lewis (1990) points out that although IM is often regarded as insincere, obvious and manipulative, society could not survive more than a few hours of truth telling, and there will always be an element of insincerity in any exchange, either verbally or non-verbally. Moreover, Schlenker and Weigold (1992) comment that self-presentation is as natural a part of social interaction as cognition.

Rosenfeld (1997) agrees that perceiving IM as unfair is outdated and narrow and that a broader, expansive view of IM is now required. He explains that in the expansive view, IM is seen as a fundamental aspect of social interactions. From this perspective there is nothing nefarious or superficial about IM, it merely involves packaging information in ways designed to lead audiences to a particular conclusion. Rosenfeld explains that the ability to positively promote oneself is often a desirable attribute, both in the selection interview and later in the job.

This more expansive view fits with Gilmore and Ferris’ (1989a) insight that IM is expected and implicitly encouraged in job interviews. They point out that applicants are required to sell themselves by presenting a favourable impression to the interviewer to secure a job offer. Therefore, it is natural that applicants would want more information about IM, to learn how to create a becoming impression by highlighting their attributes. Regarding IM as a valuable skill - rather than as inherently dysfunctional - recognises that organisational success depends on the
ability to master "organisational politics." Gilmore and Ferris add that when an applicant is skilled in the use of genuine IM this could signal to the interviewer that the applicant will be capable of successfully utilising IM when needed in future job settings. Rather than viewing IM as an obstacle, it is better seeing it as a potential source of valuable information about an applicant's ability to do the job. Fletcher (1989) agrees that instead of discounting IM, selection interviews could be used to assess how good applicants are at IM.

The expansive view of IM is therefore one that opens the possibilities for the empowerment of job applicants. Hence, what is important now is to encourage interviewers and applicants to regard IM in a positive light. This may stimulate applicants to become more confident at promoting themselves during job interviews and interviewers to be more supportive and understanding towards job applicants who use IM. Rosenfeld (1997) suggests that the use of positive IM strategies could be encouraged in several ways. First, he argues that IM must be perceived as a skill and not a deficit. Second, he suggests that interviewers could be trained to be wary of manipulative IM. Third, he explains that it would be helpful to reduce the uncertainty of interview settings and increase the verifiability of applicant responses. This could be achieved by focusing on the applicant's long-term accomplishments, rather than their short-term attempts to please the interviewer.

For IM to be perceived more positively by interviewers and job applicants, research needs to investigate how more ethical IM can be practised in job interviews. Ralston and Kirkwood (1995) recommend that "examining the ethics of IM, applicants' right to information, and employers' recruitment of applicants can reveal various weaknesses of the current interview model and lead to discussion about creative alternatives" (p.88). In addition, Delery and Kacmar (1998) remark that, above all, what is important now is to move beyond simply investigating the effectiveness of IM and focus on factors that lead to their use by applicants.
2.7.2 The Power Dimension of IM

What is required is symmetrical, unconstrained communication in dialogue between job applicants and interviewers (Habermas, 1970ab, 1990).

It can be debated that presently job interviews are "one-sided" in that interviewers control the dialogue and thereby restrict the verbal contributions of their coparticipants i.e. the applicants. However, when individuals of unequal status interact, as in job interviews, the person with less power is often engaged in IM in order to create an impression of power. Hence, the type of conversation experienced socially, or between friends, in which participants are not vying for power, currently may not be possible in job interviews.

Ralston and Kirkwood (1995, p.75-79) warn that distorted communication occurs when the interests of one party are privileged and that this produces asymmetrical power relationships and false consensus. They argue that the conduct of selection interviews should weigh equally the interests of all parties involved. In so doing, participants can meet the ethical obligation to balance the interests of all parties. They add that academic texts, training materials and self-help texts that provide advice to job applicants lack depth because they do not adhere to Habermas' (1970ab;1990) model of the ideal speech situation which preserves symmetry of interaction and freedom of expression for both parties. Here are the core assumptions of Habermas' model:

1. All parties must have an equal opportunity to speak.

2. All parties must be free to advance any kind of claims, or introduce for discussion, any topics they wish. All parties must be free to question, critique or challenge claims made by other parties.

3. All parties must be free to make known their inner feelings, attitudes and motives, and thereby make their inner natures transparent.
4. All parties must have equal opportunity to regulate the communicative behaviour of the other parties.

Essentially Habermas' (1970ab; 1990) model proposes for each participant an equal opportunity to speak, to advance and examine claims, to disclose self and to exercise power. His model could be used as a model for ethical behaviour in job interviews. Furthermore, it is pointed out by Braaten (1991) that to be valid, norms for interaction must be of benefit to all people. In Braaten's words, the norms must constitute interests that "it is in everyone's interests that everyone should have" (pp.33-34). Habermas insists that consensus can only be achieved when communicative freedom and responsibility are mutually shared and asserted by all parties. That is, communicators are free to test the validity of every claim advanced by any party (see Mumby, 1988).

Mattson and Stage (2003) recommend that "a reconceptualization of interviewing practice must include redefining interviewer and interviewee roles as coparticipants in the creation of knowledge while continually emphasizing the contextualization of the interview conversation." They propose three techniques: "pausing to reflect and prepare, paying attention to context, and balancing turn taking through reciprocal participation" (p.107). Although Mattson and Stage made these recommendations for ethnographic research interviews, the recommendations could be relevant also for selection interviews. Furthermore, they point out, "balanced turn taking and reciprocal participation rather than one person dominating the talk is one of the hallmarks of conversation" (p.111).

Neil (2004) suggests that many applicants may not understand the techniques that transform an interview from an interrogation into a dialogue between equals and learning those techniques is crucial. He adds that careers clinics are currently teaching applicants for jobs in the field of law that the more they take charge of the interview, the more successful they will be.
In light of the unequal power relationship and its effect on applicant IM, communication in the job interview now requires an overhaul. To this end, Ralston and Kirkwood (1995) recommend that scholars and teachers of communication continue helping students master the challenges of interviews as they are currently conducted. Alternative ways of behaving that are more consistent with Habermas' (1970ab; 1990) ideal speech situation need to be introduced. Ralston and Kirkwood urge that texts might also pay more attention to a critique of the assumptions of Habermas' model, and suggest alternative models.

2.7.3 Cultural differences in the analysis of IM

It is important to bear in mind cultural differences between societies as verbal and non-verbal behaviour may have varied meanings in different societies. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of cultural variations when analysing IM. Cultural differences could lead to misinterpretation and misunderstandings of communication and IM. This could negatively influence an applicant’s attempt at creating positive presence. Furthermore, if an interviewer likes or dislikes a particular foreign or regional accent or behaviour this may bias the hiring decision. Tannen (2005) reports how she analysed conversation at a Thanksgiving Dinner in California in 1978. Her study highlights the problem of how cultural variations affect perception. She comments "The non-New York participants had perceived the conversation as 'New York,' and they had felt out of their element" (p.3). Southerners were perceived by New Yorkers as dumb due to their slow speech style and long pauses. The New Yorkers, who had a faster speech style, were perceived by the Southerners as rude for interrupting them. Tannen emphasises "the New Yorkers were faster relative to the others present ... but in another setting or in conversation with other people, their styles might look very different" (p.3).

Another cross-cultural problem arises from tone of voice. For some societies ups and downs in speech suggest that the speaker is not serious. However, in most Latin societies this "exaggerated" way of communicating shows that "you have your heart in the matter." Oriental societies tend to have what, from a Western perspective, can
appear to be a much more monotonous style; self-controlled, it shows respect (Trompenaars, 2000, p.75).

Having explained how scholars have considered IM, methodological considerations of the present study will now be discussed.

2.8 Methodological Considerations

Researchers have used a combination of methods to collect data from mock job interviews such as audio taping, questionnaires, role-playing and videotaping (e.g. Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Fletcher, 1987; Graves & Powell, 1988; Kacmar, Delery & Ferris, 1992; Kinicki & Lockwood, 1985; Liden, Martin & Parsons, 1993; Mino, 1996; Parsons & Liden, 1984; Raza & Carpenter, 1987; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988; Van Vianen & Van Schie, 1995).


Paper methods, which include application forms, CVs, questionnaires, and transcripts of interviews, have been popular in studies of mock and real-life job interviews. For example, real-life interviewers have analysed written information about hypothetical applicants (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Hollman, 1972). Questionnaires from business firms were analysed by Tschirgi (1972, 1973), and other research examined questionnaires completed by participants in real-life job interviews (Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell & Haddleton, 1999; Herriott & Rothwell, 1983; Keenan, 1977). Application forms for real-life job interviews were...
analysed by Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom and Griffeth (1990) and Nordstrom, Williams and LeBreton (1996). However, it is cautioned that the continued use of paper methods is probably inappropriate as it suggests limited generalisability from simulated to real-life interviewing situations (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989a; Gorman, Clover & Doherty, 1978; Raza & Carpenter, 1987).

Some researchers have gathered data with a tape-recorder. Real-life campus interviews were audio taped by DeBell, Montgomery, McCarthy and Lanthier (1998) Kristof and Stevens (1994) and Stevens and Kristof (1995). In other studies, researchers have used both audiotape and videotape to capture data (e.g. Cook, Spector & Vance, 2000; Delery & Kacmar, 1998; Dougherty, Turban & Callender, 1994; Einhorn, 1981; Ralston, 1989; Tullar, 1989; Young & Kacmar, 1998). In Ralston's study, professional recruiters studied job descriptions and applications before viewing videotaped interviews and answering questions. The advantage of capturing the voice on tape is that it can lead to greater accuracy of interpretation of the event because recordings can be played repeatedly and verified by the researcher and other individuals.

It is recognised that if participants become aware of the presence of a tape recorder their talk may not be spontaneous. Equally, if participants know that they are being filmed they may become overly conscious of their behaviour and language, making them inhibited and anxious. While a tape recorder has the potential to be intrusive it is less intrusive than a video camera as a tape recorder can be placed out of view of the participants. After the current job interviews had been recorded, participants informed me that the tape recorder was quickly forgotten as they became involved in the interview dialogue. This finding was similar to what has been reported by Goodwin (1981) Hopper, Koch and Mandelbaum (1986) and Tannen (2005).

A large proportion of the research in the field of communication and selection interviewing has involved university students participating in artificial or mock interviews. This is in contrast to studies in which real interviewers are interviewing applicants who are applying for jobs in real-life. Baron (1989) and Gilmore and
Ferris (1989a) point out that virtually all of the previous research on IM has employed students as interviewers and applicants in a laboratory context.

Having explained the kinds of methods that have been popular in the extant research, the limitations of these methods are now discussed.

2.8.1 Methodological Limitations in Existing Research

Methodological problems are encountered when research utilises paper methods and students who are participating in mock interviews. Therefore, more behavioural assessments of real-life job interviews are needed. There is a "dearth of research based on genuine, 'real-life' data drawn from actual interactions in workplace contexts" (Stubbe, 1998, p.1). Moreover, Baron (1989) DeBell, Montgomery, McCarthy and Lanthier (1998) and Harris (1989) emphasise that researchers need to study real-life interviewers, as opposed to students with no interviewing experience. The considerable advantages of studying real-life job interviews and the limitations of mock studies are now explained.

It can be argued that when conducting research on job interviews laboratory settings are relatively sterile, which minimises the transferability of research. Therefore, the literature advises researchers against using university students when they do not represent the population to which the researcher is attempting to generalise findings (Buckley & Weitzel, 1989; Eder & Buckley, 1988; Gordon, Slade & Schmitt, 1986; Ralph & Thorne, 1993; Remus, 1986). Furthermore, it is suggested that different types of applicant IM might be found in non-college populations (Kristof & Stevens, 1994).

Barr and Hitt (1986) and Bernstein Hakel and Harlan (1975) found that students when used as interviewers in an hypothetical setting, are more lenient than experienced interviewers in their evaluations. Hence, the behaviour of students in mock interviews does not accurately represent how people communicate in real-life. Indeed, studies by Doolittle (1987) and Parton (1996) confirm that real-life
interviewers evaluate speech styles differently from students, suggesting there may be differences in results obtained from laboratory and field studies.

Kacmar and Hochwarter (1995) agree that studies have been problematic as they have used fictional environments, usually universities, and fictional job seekers, who are usually college students, vying for fictional jobs. They emphasise that simulated job interviews do not reflect the power differences and inequality that occur in real-life job interviews where there is real and obvious inequality in terms of status, power and communication. Moreover, Gallois, Callan and McKenzie Palmer (1992) remark that the investigation of verbal and non-verbal dimensions of the selection interview is limited by mock settings. They add that while simulated interviews provide experimental control, they can oversimplify the complex range of variables that influence perceptions and behaviours of applicants and interviewers.

Sogunro (2002) emphasises that it is important to choose methods that suit the purpose of one's research rather than making selections based on biases. For example, a key feature of CA is for researchers to study tape recordings and transcripts of naturally occurring conversations away from the laboratory setting. These are interactions that would occur whether or not they are recorded by researchers (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Heritage & Atkinson, 1984; Hopper, Koch & Mandelbaum, 1986).

2.9 Seminal Studies in Communicative Competence and IM

A discussion of communicative competence and IM is not complete without a brief examination of influential studies by Einhorn (1981), Tullar (1989), and Young and Kacmar (1998). These researchers investigated real-life job interviews in the private sector and threw light on the communication behaviour of actual job applicants. Chapter 6 explains how the present research confirms and expands the work of Einhorn, Tullar, and Young and Kacmar. The three studies showed that oral communication affected the interviewers' final evaluations, hence verbal statements
played a crucial role in applicant IM. Moreover, differences were discovered in the behaviour of successful and unsuccessful job applicants.

As shown next, the ideas of these authors are of critical importance in addressing the two fundamental questions of the present research: (1) the extent to which verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours contribute to creating a positive presence in job interviews and (2) more specifically, which verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours most critically contribute to creating a positive presence for applicants in job interviews. Whereas the extant research is more concerned with the language of interviewers (see De Bell, Montgomery, McCarthy & Lanthier, 1998), the studies conducted by Einhorn (1981) Tullar (1989) and Young and Kacmar (1998) are valuable for the light they throw on the verbal behaviour of job applicants. Accordingly, it is worth examining them in detail, starting with the contribution made by Einhorn, a communication scholar and critical theorist.

### 2.9.1 Einhorn and Positive Impressions

Einhorn (1981) emphasises that little is known about the communicative correlates of success for applicants in selection interviews. She remarks,

> Although lists of interviewing 'do's and don'ts' are abundant, they usually treat the applicant's communication in a superficial manner. That is, although applicants are advised to wear coats and ties and not to slouch in their chairs, they are rarely advised to choose certain kinds of images, audience appeals, supporting materials, organizational patterns, styles, and deliveries. (p.217)

She continues, "Most textbooks on interviewing … concentrate more on the perspective of the interviewer than on the perspective of the interviewee." These texts combine selection interviewing with other kinds of interviews i.e. appraisal interviews that employers use to identify how to improve their employees' work, and their training needs. Einhorn adds, "Thus, the communication of interviewees … receives incomplete treatment" (p.217). The research of Einhorn shows that oral communication affects interviewers' final evaluations in real-life job interviews.
Therefore, she urges scholars to discover if her findings apply equally to other business organisations, as well as to academic and government organisations where value orientations may differ.

When conducting her study Einhorn (1981) videotaped and audio taped 14 initial selection interviews to investigate the patterns of communication of seven successful and seven unsuccessful job applicants who were college seniors applying for positions at a department store and an advertising agency. Einhorn described their language in detail and contrasted their communicative choices. To determine what phenomena to identify in the data provided by tapes and transcripts she drew upon classical rhetorical theorists such as Plato, Aristotle and Cicero because, in her view, selection interviews were clearly rhetorical acts. From books on rhetorical criticism such as Arnold (1974) and several texts on public speaking i.e. Andrews (1979), Einhorn extracted 93 behaviours that were likely to enhance effectiveness if present or diminish effectiveness if absent or inartistically used. The behaviours were then grouped into six major headings as shown in Table 2.1.

Possibly the most salient finding of Einhorn's (1981) study was that unsuccessful applicants earned better ratings before the interviews than their successful counterparts did, which suggests that how applicants communicated during the interviews affected interviewers' hiring decisions. She found that successful applicants displayed more behaviours that identified them with employers, supported arguments, organised thoughts, clarified ideas, contributed to effective delivery, and conveyed positive images. The ability of the applicant to respond concisely, answer questions fully, state personal opinions where relevant, and keep to the subject at hand, was crucial in obtaining a favourable hiring decision.

Therefore, in Einhorn's (1981) research, successful applicants were the ones who played active roles in their interviews. This dynamism helped them to establish positive identities, which were reflected in favourable responses from the interviewers. Unsuccessful applicants behaved differently as demonstrated in
Table 2.1, which shows that there were clear differences in the communication behaviours of applicants who were hired and applicants who failed the interview.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences</th>
<th>Successful Applicants</th>
<th>Unsuccessful Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with Employers</strong></td>
<td>Expressed desire to work for the organisation. Expressed career goals.</td>
<td>Did not express desire to work for the organization. Lacked well-defined career goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praised interviewers tactfully.</td>
<td>Did not praise interviewers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used language and body language to express their approval for interviewers' ideas.</td>
<td>Did not reinforce interviewers' ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasised own strengths.</td>
<td>Emphasised own weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensed what interviewers liked and disliked from cues in their questions and responded accordingly.</td>
<td>Unable to sense interviewers' cues. Answers contained extensive qualification, and little or no proof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for Arguments</strong></td>
<td>Used supporting devices to substantiate claims including explanation, comparison, statistics, testimony and personal experience.</td>
<td>Did not substantiate answers, or relied exclusively on personal experiences and explanations to back up ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used relevant humour and laughter.</td>
<td>Lack of laughter/humour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication was specific and comprehensive in questioning and answering.</td>
<td>Dealt with topics unrelated to interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Used more of allotted interview time - averaged 29.5 minutes.</td>
<td>Used less of allotted interview time - averaged 25 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talked 55% of total time.</td>
<td>Talked 37% of total time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlled interview - Initiated 56% of their comments.</td>
<td>Initiated 36% of their comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaved as active participants from start of interview.</td>
<td>Behaved as passive respondents from start of interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offered summary statements.</td>
<td>Did not use summary statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Style</strong></td>
<td>Used active and concrete language.</td>
<td>Used ambiguous terms i.e. &quot;pretty good.&quot; Prefaced remarks with &quot;I think,&quot; &quot;I feel,&quot; which made applicants appear indecisive, unassertive, lacking in confidence and competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74% of verbs were active.</td>
<td>62% verbs were active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and interesting.</td>
<td>Negative and uninteresting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anglo Saxon, monosyllabic familiar words, and some colourful terms.</td>
<td>Words were simple and lacking in variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used technical jargon.</td>
<td>Did not use technical jargon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Spoke rapidly and forcefully. Varied pace, force, volume and pitch. Articulated distinctly.</td>
<td>Spoke softly and slowly. Little vocal variety - sounded monotonous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few pauses and hesitations.</td>
<td>Long pauses vocalised with hesitations &quot;you know,&quot; &quot;uh&quot; and &quot;um.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Images Conveyed to Interviewer</strong></td>
<td>Alert, interested, enthusiastic.</td>
<td>Seemed tired and often uninterested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive – played active role.</td>
<td>Negative - played passive role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.1, which summarises Einhorn's (1981) findings, shows how successful applicants participated actively in the interview: for example, by talking about their strengths. They used positive language comprising active verbs and short sentences and positive paralanguage such as rapid speech and variety of pace, force, volume and pitch. Furthermore, successful applicants laughed whereas unsuccessful applicants did not laugh. The body language of successful applicants supported their words and paralanguage; they smiled and made eye contact. With this combination of behaviours they were able to convey a favourable impression of themselves, which contributed to their success in the interview. Einhorn's categories, as shown in Table 2.1, are an example of the kinds of communication behaviours that are investigated by the present study. However, the present study could be said to delve further than the research of Einhorn as it explores the role of language in establishing positive identities, specifically the effects of positive and negative disclosures, that is, statements that applicants provide to interviewers.

The work of Einhorn has been expanded by Tullar (1989) who noted that few studies have been done on verbal content or specific types of verbal statements that influence interviewers' impressions of an applicant's suitability for a job.

2.9.2 Tullar and Communicative Competence

If investigators are ever to get a handle on the interview process, careful study of the sequence of interview behaviours, utterance by utterance, interaction by interaction, and nonverbal behavior by nonverbal behavior must be done (Tullar, 1989, p. 977).

The value of applied psychological research on real-life job interviews by Tullar (1989) is the light that is thrown on communicative competence. Tullar noted, "Findings of Einhorn (1981) … seem to indicate that the more successful applicant would tend to dominate the interview more (at least at critical junctures) in order to make a point" (p.972). Whereas Einhorn undertook mainly content-oriented analysis, which is concerned with what is being said in a conversation, Tullar built upon Einhorn's work by examining the relational control or dominance aspect of
verbal behaviour, which is concerned with *how* it is being said. Both the relational and the content aspects of language are of interest in the present study.

Tullar (1989) used categories formulated by Bateson (1958) and Ellis (1976) that were designed to assess relational control. Bateson (1958) postulated that every message has two levels of meaning: the content aspect, which conveys information, and the relational aspect, which defines the nature of the relationship between two parties. Relational communication could serve one of three possible functions: "dominance," "equivalence" or "submission." Ellis (1976) refined Bateson's categories, breaking dominance down into dominance and structuring, leaving equivalence the same, and breaking submission down into deference and submission. Dominance includes changing a topic and talking over the interviewer's speech, that is, talking at the same time as the interviewer. Structuring occurs by expanding a previous statement or extending discussion on a topic into new areas. Equivalence is indicated by statements such as "I see" or "that's interesting." Deference contains statements that seek support, for instance, "Don't you think so"? Lastly, submissiveness includes questions such as "How should we solve this"? (Tullar, 1989, p.971).

Tullar (1989) videotaped and compared applicant communication behaviours in successful and unsuccessful initial recruiting interviews. Twenty-eight university students interviewed for jobs with seven corporate recruiters. It was found that successful interviews were approximately two-thirds as long as unsuccessful interviews, and successful applicants dominated the conversation more than unsuccessful applicants did. When interviewers attempted to structure the conversation, unsuccessful applicants tried to structure the conversation in return. Successful applicants were submissive when the interviewer dominated, and dominated when the interviewer was submissive.

Unsuccessful interviews contained significantly less interaction than successful interviews. Hence, Tullar (1989) concluded that during interviews in which they formed unfavourable judgments about the applicant, interviewers reduced the
amount of dialogue. Tullar explains, "it seems plausible that interviewers would attempt to shorten the interview somewhat after making a negative decision on an applicant (p.975). Tullar found that although unsuccessful interviews were shorter in terms of relational control, interviewers behaved about the same for both effectual and ineffectual applicants. Consistent with Tullar's findings, studies cited in Springbett (1958) Tucker and Rowe (1977) and Tullar, Mullins and Caldwell (1979) showed that often interviewers make negative decisions early in the interview.

What is interesting about Tullar's (1989) findings and seems to be worthy of further investigation, is that successful applicants seemed to possess communicative competence. They knew how to choose a behaviour that was both appropriate and effective for a given situation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). It could be said that these applicants were skilled listeners and observers, thus able to interpret interviewers' verbal and non-verbal behaviour. In Tullar's study, successful applicants may have been adept at gauging the interviewer's communication behaviours as they knew how to interact; they knew when to use dominant language and when to be submissive. They showed sensitivity to the interviewer's needs by adapting their verbal behaviour to the interviewer's style, and this may have helped applicants to create rapport and project a favourable impression of their personality.

Enthusiasm and self-confidence could also play an important role in influencing interviewers' subjective feelings about applicants, therefore it is necessary to examine the salient work of management researchers Young and Kacmar (1998). Similar to Einhorn (1981) and Tullar (1989), Young and Kacmar (1998) discovered that there were clear differences in the way successful and unsuccessful applicants interacted with interviewers. Their study exposes the connection between verbal behaviour and presenting a favourable impression of personality through IM, which could be crucial for influencing the hiring decision.
2.9.3. Young and Kacmar - Applicant IM and Personality

An awareness of the influence of verbal behaviour makes the interview a more precise selection tool (Young & Kacmar, 1998, pp. 211-218).

It appears that personality of the applicant requires further investigation. Liden, Martin and Parsons (1993) point out that much of the research on subjective factors in the job interview has focused on specific elements of IM such as dress or behaviour. Furthermore, Dipboye (1992) explains that studies on verbal behaviour and influences of verbal cues have centred on patterns, speed, or frequency of speech. However, according to Verity (2002) interviewers choose the person they like the best, which suggests that personality could have a significant influence on hiring decisions.

The present study addresses gaps in the research that were identified by the seminal work of Young and Kacmar (1998) who analysed attitudinal types of speech, focusing on applicant personality characteristics of enthusiasm and self-confidence. In addition to studies concerning personality, they remark that more research is needed on verbal behaviour. Young and Kacmar’s study showed the crucial effect of verbal behaviour on judgments of applicant personality, and subsequently interview outcomes. Their method was to tape record and video record real-life job interviews conducted as part of two different interviewer training classes in a large petroleum company. The goal was to determine whether applicants possessed the four key characteristics of effectiveness, enthusiasm, initiative and self-confidence, as without evidence of these qualities the company would not hire an applicant. Although the interviews occurred as part of interviewer training they involved real job applicants who were from a nearby college and who were all near graduation. Applicants were majors in disciplines pertinent to the company and, if found qualified, were recommended for a second interview.

Young and Kacmar (1998) discovered that applicant verbal behaviour had a significant effect on interviewers’ decisions. How applicants talked affected the way that interviewers rated the applicant's self-confidence. In turn they found that
"Interpersonal characteristics of enthusiasm, self-confidence and effectiveness had a significant influence on an interviewer's rating of an applicant's overall quality, and the ultimate hiring decision" (p.211). Moreover, their research confirms findings of a study by Keenan (1977) which discovered that interviewers rely on their feelings, rather than using objective information such as work experience and qualifications to help them make decisions about applicants.

Many factors can influence interviewers’ perceptions of personality; evaluation will depend on an interviewer's own preferences and expectations. For instance, an interviewer may feel liking and strong rapport with one applicant, but may feel neutral towards, or even dislike another applicant. However, Young and Kacmar (1998) emphasise that, similar to researchers Gilmore and Ferris (1989b), they found that applicant use of IM strategies, including self-enhancing verbal communication, influenced interviewers’ assessments regardless of the applicants’ credentials. Young and Kacmar remark:

Their results may indicate, as ours did, that the self-enhancing communication behaviors helped to create positive applicant credentials of a subjective versus objective nature. If this is indeed true, raters did not have to rely on the more objective credentials that were available, as they created their own subjective credentials to judge the applicants. (p.218)

Therefore, Young and Kacmar's (1998) research indicates that it is not merely desirable but essential for applicants to use verbal IM strategies purposely to project positive aspects of their personality, such as enthusiasm and self-confidence. They recommend that future studies continue to examine the job interview, investigating the interaction of interviewer with the applicant as well as analysing language across different organisations and interview settings. They and other researchers point out that it is extremely important to find ways to measure subjective factors such as personality, which can wield extensive influence in the interview setting (Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Graves & Karren, 1992; Ralston, 1989).
It may be crucial to consider the interrelationship of power and language in job interviews. The next section explains why the interview is an unequal encounter in terms of power, and how this can influence the way in which interviewers and applicants communicate.

2.10 The Job Interview as a Power Relationship

The more you want or need the job, the more the balance of power shifts to the employer (Amos, 2001, p.39).

The current study is conducted from the perspective of the job applicant and from the viewpoint that when there is much competition for a job vacancy the balance of power lies strongly in favour of the interviewers. Therefore, the job interview is a clear example of a power relationship where the parties are automatically positioned in a dichotomous hierarchy in which the interviewer is the powerful agent and the applicant is the powerless one. Fletcher (1992) notes that the interviewer by virtue of his or her position has the power to grant something that the applicant wants. It is also recognised that when jobs are plentiful applicants have more bargaining power than interviewers because applicants have more choice of job offers. Patmore (2003) comments that when an economy is booming with labour shortages and high labour turnover, labour is placed in "a better bargaining position" and employers are encouraged to look at ways of retaining labour and reducing recruitment and selection costs (p.14).

Accordingly, there will always be power imbalances and inequality in job interviews. The degree of power between applicants and interviewers is irrelevant because applicants have power only to refuse a job offer or to negotiate a higher salary than the one offered. It is noted that applicants do not have equal status or equal rights to discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Fishman, 1983; Harris, 1995; Ng & Bradac, 1993; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995). Furthermore, research has shown that interviewers have the power to reward or punish applicants, which affects the way applicants communicate with them (Bradac, Konsky & Elliott, 1976). Such power
imbalances arising from job status make it hard to achieve dialogue that is more equal. In addition, interviewers and applicants may use different language styles, and such differences could disempower job applicants.

Studies have found that individuals who possess power, or actual or perceived status, tend to use language differently from those who do not (Geddes, 1992; West & Zimmerman, 1983). Fairclough (1989) explains that one way that inequality is maintained is by "powerful participants controlling and constraining the verbal contributions of non-powerful participants" (p.46). For instance, some interviewers learn advanced linguistic tools which are instruments of power. This enables them to define norms for language and behaviour in interviews. Some interviewers use words that job applicants do not understand, and interviewers may ask personal and/or irrelevant questions (Blakar, 1979; Engler-Parish & Millar, 1989; Fishman, 1983). When interviewers use language in this way, job applicants could become confused and/or distressed.

The findings of Bogaers (1998) indicate that interviewers verbally exert control over applicants and that job interviews are characterised by imbalances of power and status. Bogaers examined speech patterns in four real-life job interviews by analysing "the extent to which participants use utterances to control the behavior of other participants" (p.40). She discovered that those who possess power, that is, interviewers, use language differently from those who do not, meaning job applicants. Both women and men in higher-status positions showed more dominance in their language behaviour than did lower-status participants. Hence, a person's position seems to influence his or her communicative style. Bogaers found that interviewers use interrupting as a strategy to lead the "conversation in a certain direction." Furthermore, she discovered a "sociolinguistic hierarchy" in which interviewers rank above applicants, and men rank above women (p.47).

Dominant interviewer behaviour seems to be encouraged in the literature. Employers are strongly urged to exert control to gain the respect of applicants and avoid legal problems (Herman, 1994; Smart, 1989; Stewart & Cash, 2005).
Moreover, employers are advised to exercise and guard their power to direct interviews (Hunt & Eadie, 1987). In the words of Fear (1984) "As soon as interviewees attempt to take control, interviewers must … take control themselves." When interviewers have established control, applicants "normally fall into line and become completely responsive" (pp.39, 41). According to Kirkwood and Ralston (1999), interviewers are afraid that they might ask inappropriate questions if conversation is more casual.

Here it is essential to acknowledge the interviewers’ perspective, which is discussed further in Chapter 6. Employers are often constrained by lack of time and financial resources, making it necessary for them to control the job interview process. Morgan and Smith (1996) caution, "it is imperative that the interviewer use the time wisely by maintaining control and keeping the interview on track (p.370). The present study acknowledges that interviewers need to direct the job interview. However, it can be argued that interviewers also need to ensure that job interviews are conducted ethically, i.e. that all applicants are treated courteously and receive the same fair treatment. Fletcher (1992) emphasises that many people have a horror story to tell about how they, or someone they know, have been treated badly in a job interview. He recognises that some stories may be invented, whereas others "may have grown more colourful in the telling." Nevertheless, in the majority of cases "there is more truth than one should feel comfortable about" (p.361).

Fletcher (1992) explains that applicants may be deliberately put under stress. For instance, they are kept waiting unnecessarily outside the interview room, or made to sit in a chair that is much lower than the height of the interviewer's chair, or the temperature of the interview room is too warm or very cold. Some interviewers are aggressive, putting applicants under pressure by rapidly directing questions at them or by asking personal or irrelevant questions which applicants cannot refuse to answer for fear of being penalised.

Nonetheless, putting applicants under pressure is likely to lack utility from the interviewer's point of view as it creates a negative impression of the organisation. It
is reasonable to assume that if this behaviour occurs in the job interview it could occur elsewhere in the organisation, hindering communication and harming work relationships. Applicants who have been treated disrespectfully might inform other people about their unpleasant experience thereby discouraging them from applying for future jobs with the organisation. Indeed, as noted by Rynes, Heneman and Schwab (1980), unnecessary interviewer control limits the effectiveness of the interview as a selection tool. The way applicants are treated affects their willingness to accept job offers. For example, when applicants feel obliged to answer questions that could be considered embarrassing because they are personal, the dialogue is not on equal terms. When their verbal contributions are constrained this could prevent applicants presenting themselves in a favourable manner.

The literature appears to encourage applicants to engage in submissive behaviour as it seems this is what interviewers expect and prefer rather than a more equal interaction. According to Wilson and Goodall (1991), "responsiveness and sensitivity towards interviewer control are part of the rules" (p.162). For example, applicants are told to let the interviewer direct the interview. Applicants are advised that they are often turned down because they fail to observe the rules of behaviour and not because applicants lack the relevant qualifications (Barbour et al., 1991).

Applicants are warned that it is unwise for them to interrupt the interviewer, adding that they should try to demonstrate the characteristics of the interviewer's ideal employee, that is, someone who is competent, who will work harmoniously with their colleagues, and who believes in and contributes to the goals of the organisation (Stewart & Cash, 2005). Although it is important for applicants to display these positive qualities and to show courtesy and respect to interviewers, overly submissive behaviour could prevent applicants from creating a powerful impression. Applicants need to be able to participate fully in the interview, that is, they should feel free to contribute verbally.

Inevitably, where there is power there is also potential for its abuse, and unethical behaviour that violates the rights of individuals. This raises ethical concerns which
will be discussed later in this chapter. Galbraith (1983) argues that the way selection interviews are conducted represents the misuse of power that exists in cultures of many organisations. He asserts that the exploitation of power in interviews must be counteracted. Other writers comment that part of the problem is how to convince those who use power to control others i.e. employers, to communicate in ways that are fairer (Fairclough 1995; Harvey, 1995). This could be a formidable task because within organisations those individuals who are powerful constantly reassert their power in an attempt to prevent those without power making a bid for it (Gutting, 1994).

In the context of the highly competitive marketplace of contemporary society, it is recommended that applicants present an impression of power by using positive language and project a positive attitude by emphasising their strengths and downplaying their weaknesses (Armour, 2003; Drummond, 1993; Wah, 1998). Therefore, the present study investigates applicant IM. Applicants may have better chances of counteracting the power imbalance and succeeding in job interviews if they are skilled in controlling the impressions they make on others (Goffman 1959; Ralston & Kirkwood 1999). Verbal skill is not the prerogative of interviewers. As explained next, due to the interrelationship between language and power job applicants could learn to enhance their verbal ability and adopt more powerful ways of communicating. The link between language and power is explored below.

2.10.1 The Interconnection Between Language and Power

Language is a critical tool in the negotiation of power and any individual, including those disempowered, can attain a significant voice in that negotiation. People are active agents with respect to language and power (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992, p.23).

Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew (1979) note the similarity between interview dialogue and social dialogue, in which there is always an element of power. In their words, "Seeing interviews as peculiar conversations may lead us conversely to regard conversations as peculiar kinds of interviews" (p.64). Ng and Bradac (1993)
explain that power and language are interrelated; each influencing the other. Hence, the differences in power between interviewers and applicants can affect the way they each use language. In addition, Peterson (1997) explains that the interview is "characterised by extensive verbal interaction" (p. 288). Power and language are linked, and verbal behaviour is arguably the most important tool for creating power in job interviews.

Berger (1985) Kedar (1987) and McNay (1994) explain that people are always simultaneously undergoing and exercising power, which shifts constantly in response to the behaviour of others. The consensus among scholars is that verbal skill is a tool that can be used to negotiate power in organisations (see Berger; Giles & Wiemann, 1987; Keller, 1985; Ng, 1990; Reid & Ng, 1999; Wish, D'Andrade & Goodnow, 1980). Ideologies, or ideas that make sense of the world, are expressed through language, and both change constantly. Through speech, individuals challenge language and ideologies, and through language ideologies become observable (Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew, 1979; Van Dijk, 1994).

Therefore, applicants can use language to challenge power and to alter distributions of power in the short or in the longer term. Keller (1985, p.236) points out that by choosing how to communicate and using the method which gets results for them, people have an equal opportunity to make themselves understood and to participate in sociocultural change. Furthermore, language is either a resource for those who use it with skill or a trap for those who do not. Nevertheless, anyone may learn verbal skills in order to avoid "oppressive relations of power" (Hirsch 1994, pp.217-221).

However, it is not always possible to avoid oppressive relations of power by learning powerful verbal skills. Clair (1998) explains that learning powerful language might help but "at times even the most articulate are silenced and the least articulate, based on their association with a privileged group, are granted positions from which to speak." (p.68). Certain groups may be unable to address the power imbalance through language. For instance, Clair (1997) questions not only how
dominant groups silence marginalised members of society but also how marginalized groups may privilege and abandon each other. Recognising the critical importance of language as a tool of empowerment, the present study analyses what applicants are saying to interviewers, and how they are saying it, to discover how job applicants can empower themselves through their verbal behaviour. I now show the kinds of features I am investigating in this study.

Job applicants need not be trapped in a particular language style if that style is disempowering. A crucial point made by Ng and Bradac (1993) is that although power influences language in job interviews, conversely language may be used for enacting, recreating, or subverting power. Applicants can learn powerful verbal strategies in order to interact on more equal terms with interviewers. Bradac and Street (1989/90) suggest that applicants may achieve this with the powerful language style. A powerful speaker uses a low level of pausing, high fluency, variable pitch, a relatively rapid speech rate, high volume, and short sentences containing a diverse array of nouns and present tense verbs. Hence, powerful language is terse, direct, focused and informative which makes it interesting to listen to and easy to understand. Doolittle (1987) and Parton (1996) examined powerful and powerless language styles in mock job interviews and found that the preferred language style in job interviews is labelled "powerful."

Powerful speech styles have been identified as those that employ "clear, straightforward, and economic language. In contrast, powerless speech styles rely upon intensifiers, hedges, highly formal grammar, hesitations, gestures, excessive politeness, and questioning forms" (Connell, 2003, pp.2-3; Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson & O'Barr, 1978). In addition to using a powerful speech style, Connell points out that speakers need to pay attention to their language content as "positive language is a cornerstone of effective communication. When there is an option choose the positive." Connell explains, "do not say 'I cannot disagree with you' when a more positive statement would be "You're right" (pp. 2-3). She adds that credibility and attractiveness are attributed to powerful speakers, while those who
rely on the indicators of low power are perceived as lacking in confidence, less knowledgeable and less assured.

In contrast, powerless language contains high levels of vocalised pausing and disfluency, high monotony, a slow rate and low volume. The speaker's long, redundant sentences contain tag questions or rhetorical questions, polite forms, and particularly hedges and hesitations that make the speaker appear tentative and indecisive. The following expressions are used i.e. "Well"; "I think"; "sort of"; "you know"; "kind of"; "maybe"; and "something like that." There is especially formal grammar and excessive politeness i.e. "please," "thank you," and "if I may." The speaker uses demonstrative phrases such as "over there," accompanied by pointing, upraised hands that may signify confusion. Tag questions are evident, that is, shortened questions added to a declarative sentence with rising intonation, i.e. "Doesn't it"? and "Isn't it"?, as in the statement "It's very cold outside today, isn't it"?

Powerless language also contains disclaimers such as "I assume" and "I don't know," and intensifiers i.e. "so," "very," "extremely" and "surely" (Bradac & Street, 1989/90; Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson & O'Barr, 1978; Grob; Meyers & Schuh, 1997).

A study conducted in a courtroom by Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson and O'Barr (1978) found that differences in power and status between lawyers and defendants were reflected in their language styles. It was discovered that lawyers with high social power used the powerful style, spoke in a straightforward manner and rarely used powerless language. On the contrary, uneducated defendants with low social power frequently used powerless language, hence it was concluded that the low-power form of language tends to coincide with low status.

Research suggests that to create a favourable impression, it is crucial for applicants to use powerful language. Bradac and Street (1989/90) Erickson, Lind, Allan and Johnson and O'Barr (1978) and Reid and Ng (1999) point out that powerful and powerless language styles will differentiate speakers concerning status, competence and dynamism. Powerful language creates the impression that the speaker is
competent, attractive and dynamic, whereas powerless language does not. Indeed,
Tannen (1994) advises that any expression of insecurity, for example using
powerless language, can prevent an individual’s career progression.

The need to display the preferred workplace persona leads to IM through language
choice and behaviour. Managing impressions of competence via language gives an
applicant a chance to display this persona and to succeed in the interview. Above
all, the notion of powerful language lacks definition in the literature, being
described merely as the absence of powerless language (Hosman & Siltanen, 1994;
O’Barr, 1982). Gibbons Busch and Bradac (1991) Ng and Bradac (1993) and
Thimm, Rademacher and Kruse (1995) recommend that researchers examine the
communicative effects of powerful and powerless language, and identify language
that is positively related to perception of high power. Hence, the present research
examines language styles to discover how job applicants can use language to create
an impression of power. Language could be an important tool for creating more
ethical dialogue.

2.10.2 Power Differentials - Ethical Issues

The gift of language has its potential dark side as
witnessed with Adolf Hitler and his powerful ability
to communicate. As listeners and members of
organizations, we must be on guard for such abuses
(Conger, 1991, p.45).

Fletcher (1992) announces that the academic literature on interviewing does not
appear to have investigated what is ethical in terms of behaviour in interviews and
how interviews affect participants, but this deserves attention. Neither a review
article by Harris (1989), nor a book by Eder and Ferris (1989) on the selection
interview discusses ethical aspects. Fletcher argues that it is surely important to
examine ethical issues and help make clear what is and what is not morally
acceptable behaviour for the participants. This will assist interviewers and
applicants to avoid some of the situations that cause difficulties for them.
Moreover, he adds that it is necessary to question whether the behaviour attains the
desired objectives, whether it is fair and equitable, and whether it protects the rights of the parties involved.

According to Deetz (1992), it is essential for selection interviews to be characterised by an equal opportunity to exercise power as authority relations do not lead to good decisions; what is required is openness to alternative perspectives and reasoning based on personal insights and data. Martinko (1991) urges job interview participants to be aware of how their communication affects each other. In particular, Herman (1994) comments that "interviewers should do everything in their power to avoid exercising their power" as it creates interviews that are unproductive and unethical. He explains that applicants who are put in the subordinate role end up behaving during the interview as subordinates, hence it is difficult to predict how they would relate as peers or supervisors. In his words, "Seeing applicants in the subordinate role only predicts how capable they are of "grovelling" when necessary. Unless "grovelling" is a bona fide occupational qualification, you don't learn much from playing this ego game." (p. 117)

It can be argued that selection interviews merely reflect the power differentials that operate within organisations. Perhaps employees remain powerless because they regard it as acceptable for their employers to control them? Galbraith (1983) explains that employers promote the view that it is correct behaviour for employees to submit to them. People then willingly submit to the employers, and eventually this subordination is believed to be the norm. Powerful individuals will deny having such power, which indicates that power is being misused. Ralston and Kirkwood, (1995) and Mumby (1988) remark that people typically accept different rules for communication in organisations than they do for communication in other contexts. Work and social interaction are governed by different norms.

Writers such as Lerner (1991), comment that powerless individuals need to take responsibility for their own power rather than relinquishing their power to others. He explains that some people allow themselves to be controlled by others, believing there is no alternative, and he is insistent that this submission deriving from belief
must not be ignored. Lerner explains that organisations generate and sustain powerlessness, meaning that employees are not free to act or to express themselves at work. This can be altered only by changing the world of work. Moreover, he adds that at present employers and applicants cannot achieve agreement, or meet the ethical obligations of communication.

Indeed, it seems that honesty and ethical behaviour do not feature prominently in organisational culture. The verbal skill of power holders helps them to maintain their power. On the topic of executive leadership Conger (1991) remarks:

> Language skills can be misused. For example, leaders may present information or anecdotes that make their visions appear more realistic or more appealing than they actually are. They may also use their language skills to screen out problems or to foster an illusion of control when, in reality, things are quite out of control (p. 45).

Nonetheless, it is crucial now to examine the requirements of interviewers and job applicants. Fletcher (1992) recommends that studies investigate their perceptions of what is, and is not, ethically acceptable behaviour in job interviews because clear guidelines are needed. He states that interviewers and applicants need to gain a more thorough understanding of each other's roles and they need to know what it is reasonable to expect from the other party. Fletcher adds that setting up clearer rules could remove some of the variance in behaviour that reduces the accuracy of the interview as a selection device. Areas of agreement need to be identified between the parties, and then further research and debate can be focused on those aspects of the interview where there is a clash of opinion.¹

Concerning interviewers' questions, asks Fletcher (1992): 1) on what, in ethical terms, is it reasonable to seek information? and 2) what degree of self-disclosure is it legitimate to expect of the applicant? He recommends training interviewers to

¹ In the past, employers had few legal obligations in the hiring process. However, the picture has changed considerably over the past few years in Western societies due to the emergence of a mass of anti-discrimination laws, legislation and acts, which no doubt have affected the selection process (see Popovitch, 2000, p.186).
refrain from asking questions about political or religious beliefs and similar topics. This may lead to differences of opinion that could colour interviewers’ judgments. He adds that research could be conducted in real-life interviews to ascertain what applicants regard as an invasion of privacy, but much would depend on how the applicant perceives the situation. Interviewers could also receive training concerning Equal Opportunity legislation.

For instance, little or no control, irrelevant information, and an unfavourable outcome could increase the perceived invasion of privacy and is illegal under Equal Opportunity legislation. Applicants who are more open may convey greater amounts of both unfavourable and favourable information. In addition, the interviewer is often faced with a dilemma when applicants reveal negative information. Should they be credited for their frankness, or marked down for lack of discretion? asks Fletcher (1992). This highlights the propensity of negative disclosures for creating unfavourable impressions, as mentioned earlier.

Although job interviews cannot be equal encounters, the literature suggests that it is now important to strive for more equal and ethical dialogue. As discussed earlier, when there is violation of Habermas’ (1970ab, 1990) ideal speech situation applicants are prevented from interacting on more equal terms. However, Habermas recommends that the ideal speech situation, if not fully attainable, can certainly be approached. He observes that first, participants may not communicate fully and freely because they choose not to, or because they cannot, due to the beliefs and ideas they hold about themselves. Second, those in power in an organisation may "distort" communication to prevent others from discovering or challenging the ideology of the dominant group. If applicants are to interact on more equal terms with interviewers, applicants may need to adopt a new set of beliefs as well as language skills. It is recommended by Lakoff (1976) that students learn very early that there is available a variety of linguistic and psychological styles.

It is clear that the concept of ethical communication and management needs to be more widespread. If more ethical values could be incorporated into organisational
culture, perhaps more ethical practices could be encouraged in job interviews. The consensus is that work environments are required that promote the ethical treatment of employees (Minkes, Small & Chatterjee, 1999; Peale & Blanchard, 2000; Sudhir & Murthy, 2001). One way of achieving this is for companies to become more innovative in their management of their human resources (see Rodwell, Lam & Fastenau, 2000). For instance, it is important for managers to be able to distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviour (Allinson, 1995; Pinchot, 1992). Nevertheless, ordinary, decent managers engage in questionable behaviour and many managers lack a sense of the consequences of their decisions and the ability to imagine a wide range of solutions (Werhane, 1999). In addition, managers often face situations that challenge their ability to reason morally (Weber & Wasielewski, 2001).

Some successful companies ignore the ethical dimensions of their actions (Werhane, 1999). Therefore, Peale and Blanchard (2000) suggest that organisations embrace the concept of ethical management. Offering practical advice, Peale and Blanchard recommend that organisations conduct an "ethics check" by asking whether their actions are legal and balanced, and whether the actions make employees of the company feel good about themselves (p.125). Patmore (2002) comments, "Work and employment issues are linked to broader social values and ideology. Unless there are fundamental shifts in these values vital reforms may only be superficial and subject to challenge" (p.36).

For instance, Hartley (2003) recommends purposely creating rapport by building trust, confidence and respect. He states that it is possible to develop good relationships in the workplace and even rapport with people with whom we feel no affinity. By recognising our own patterns of communication and tuning into those of other people we can overcome barriers and build trust and confidence. Hartley adds that two concepts ensure successful relationships. One concept is respect for the other, or accepting other people's points of view even though their views may be very different from our own, and the other is being natural and not trying to be someone we are not. Moreover, Hartley asserts that rapport could be achieved by
promoting the Golden Rule (Bruton, 2004), that is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" which Bruton suggests could be initiated by lecturers at the beginning of a Business Ethics course. In the words of Leibniz (2006), "the true meaning of Golden Rule is that the right way to judge more fairly is to adopt the point of view of other people" (p.92).

Communication and education could be essential for stimulating an appreciation of values and ethics. Griseri (1998) points out that ethics requires an understanding and managing of values. This is not something that can be taught via tools and techniques. However, he adds that it can be encouraged and developed, as it is essentially a voyage of self-knowledge. Values and ethics are too precious to be made technical, but they are too important to be ignored. Griseri comments, "understanding the values of members of an organization is intrinsically a two-way process - a dialogue as much as an observation" (p.14) between the manager and the employees. Maclagan (1998) explains that moral development requires moral awareness, an appreciation of context, and careful reasoning and judgment, to be exercised in an arena of dialogue. Hence, Maclagan recommends that a process of dialogue should be instituted in organisations in order to find an acceptable way forward.

Having explored the academic literature in the field of communication and selection interviewing, I now proceed to examine the kinds of advice provided for applicants in self-help texts.

2.11 Popular Literature on Selection Interviews

Counter attack with a question, preferably a humorous one: Question: "Which method of contraception do you use?" Answer: "Which one do most of your employees prefer"? (Popovitch, 2000, p.187).

Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in the number of popular, or self-help, texts offering advice to potential job applicants on how to
behave in selection interviews. This phenomenon coincides with a period of increased unemployment arising from the many instances of "restructuring, downsizing and reengineering" (Popovitch, 2000, p.12) which have been occurring in workplaces of advanced capitalist societies since the mid-1990s as globalisation processes intensify and organisations become more competitive. As a result, a growing number of people are feeling the need to prepare themselves more thoroughly for job interviews or to refresh old or forgotten interview skills as "mature candidates seeking re-employment" (Johnstone, 1997, p.5).

Popular texts on how to behave in job interviews are authored by specialists in Career Management and Human Resources, including writers such as Amos (2001), Berry (1997), Corfield (2003), Eggert (2003), Gottesman and Mauro (1999), Jay (2001), Johnstone (1997), Miller (1998), Popovitch (2000), Sutton (2000), and Verity (2002). These texts are widely available to the public in retail stores and libraries. The sections below discuss the main patterns of advice concerning verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours identified in texts by the above authors.

### 2.11.1 Advice on Verbal Communication Behaviours

Don’t rattle out streams of words like bullets from a sten-gun (Johnstone, 1997, p.33).

In several self-help texts, job applicants are informed how to use language to create a favourable impression. A number of texts advise applicants to avoid using elements of powerless language. This has been identified in research by Bradac and Street (1989/90), Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson and O'Barr (1978), and Grob, Meyers and Schuh (1997). Applicants are warned, "don't punctuate your answers with meaningless phrases." For instance, 'I think' and 'you know,' and clichés such as 'basically' in every sentence add nothing to an applicant’s responses and may even irritate the interviewer” (Johnstone, 1997, p.33). Furthermore, applicants are cautioned, "avoid using 'you know,' 'you see' or 'right?' in every sentence" (Miller, 1998, p.48).
Texts provide information on which forms of powerless paralanguage to avoid and which paralanguage will help job applicants create a powerful impression. For instance, there are warnings that it is wise to avoid mumbling, speaking too fast, that is, "gabbling," speaking in a grating voice, or in a dull monotone (Johnstone, 1997, p.33; Sutton, 2000, p.53). Moreover, readers are advised to avoid excessively long pauses and "ums" and "ers" (Corfield, 2003, p.45; Miller, 1998, pp.42-49). In keeping with scholarly texts (Greene & Mathieson, 1989), Berry (1997) stresses, "talk enthusiastically about your current role and previous jobs. The tone of your voice is a real indication of what is being said. Vary the pace and also the pitch to keep the listener interested and alert" (p.70). Furthermore, it is essential to "use a varying pitch to add interest and colour to your voice" (Johnstone, 1997; p.33).

Consistent with academic literature in the field of selection interviews and communication (see Drummond, 1993), popular texts also stress the importance of avoiding negative disclosures during the interview in order to create a positive presence (Eggert, 2003). Applicants are urged to accentuate their strengths and play down their weaknesses. Amos (2001) explains, "this doesn't mean being totally positive, but don’t dwell on failures and negative experiences, even if asked. Focus on positive elements of your personality, CV and experience" (p.40). For example, Popovitch (2000) warns, "Never disclose any negative information about yourself voluntarily" (p.11) and "Never criticise your previous or present employers" (p.94). Moreover, applicants are advised, "Do be positive, enthusiastic and interesting (Berry, 1997, p.70), "answer in positive terms" (Miller, 1998, p.45) and "always give a positive answer" (Verity, 2002, p.98).

Therefore, it is crucial for applicants to be verbally positive and to capitalise on their strengths. Corfield (2003) remarks, "Talk positively. Sound enthusiastic and keen. Maximise strengths and cover weak spots" (p.31). She points out that applicants should talk positively about previous jobs. Above all, if they can show that they have thought about the contribution that they can make and the way that the job should be done, they cannot fail to impress. Employers want to recruit people who can do the job well on their behalf and bring in fresh ideas and energy
to the task. Applicants can enhance the impression they make if they can also talk intelligently about their vision of the organisation and their role in it. However, it may be easier for some applicants to adopt Corfield’s advice than for others. Applicants who have low self-esteem may not have the confidence to promote themselves in such a way. Consequently, the information in texts appears to be aimed at people who believe in their own ability to succeed in job interviews. There could be many applicants who would need a more thorough understanding of the job interview before they could permanently adopt positive verbal behaviour.

Both Johnstone (1997) and Sutton (2000) emphasise that in the early stages of the job interview applicants are judged in many ways. Therefore, it is crucial for them to create a positive impression. Sutton warns applicants that impressions are formed within the first four minutes of the interview. He explains, "It's so important to manage every moment of your interview, particularly the critical first few minutes" (p.43). However, according to Johnstone interviewers judge applicants on how they present themselves "within the first two minutes – in some cases even less" (p.26). During this time, interviewers pay more attention to negative information than to positive information (Popovitch, 2000, p.74). This advice ties in with early academic research showing that interviewers use negative information they have gathered early in the interview to make hiring decisions (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Herriott & Rothwell, 1983, Holman, 1972; Springbett, 1958; Webster 1964). Nonetheless, the self-help texts barely touch upon this issue, and few texts actually encourage applicants to believe they could try to overcome a negative evaluation through their positive disclosures, paralanguage, and body language.

In most texts, there is a definite sense of opposition between interviewers and applicants and of dialogue that is constrained. This corresponds with the academic literature (Rosenfeld & Giacalone, 1991; Stano & Reinsch, 1982). For instance, Verity (2002) discusses "avoiding traps for the unwary" (p.97) providing examples of interviewers' questions that could mislead job applicants. Popovitch (2000) warns "times are tough and will get even tougher …. Employers are getting lean and mean. You’d better follow that path too" (p.15). Hence, he advises applicants to
"adopt some guerrilla tactics" (p.10). "Never argue or question the interviewer's views", Popovitch (2000) cautions. In addition, he tells applicants to customise their answers to suit the occasion and to use "appropriate tactics to counteract the ones interviewers use" (p.61). The importance of language content is also emphasised in popular literature. It is essential that applicants disclose only information that interviewers consider relevant. Popovitch remarks, "Never talk about your personal life or business secrets" (p.94). This is also reflected, for instance, in frequently occurring lists of questions that can be typically asked by interviewers, and how applicants should respond to the questions.

It could be argued that although applicants should show respect towards the interviewer, the advice offered by Popovitch (2000) could encourage applicants to conform to the classic stereotype of deferential job applicant, preventing them from interacting on a more equal footing with interviewers. However, while Popovitch's advice could be regarded as unethical and unhelpful it could also be said that he encourages job applicants to answer in a way that projects competence and a positive attitude.

In addition, Popovitch (2000) explains that "a myriad of laws, legislation and acts" affect the selection process and "interviewers are very limited in the questions they are allowed to ask." He points out that what are considered to be "illegal" questions "should not be used in the hiring process" (p.186). For instance, he states that applicants may be asked illegal questions concerning race, religion, national origin, marital status, handicaps, gender, number of children, and affiliations and membership of legal organisations. According to the anti-discrimination laws in some countries, certain types of questions could be illegal, and therefore need to be avoided in job interviews. Nevertheless, many interviewers continue to ask them, as reported in the academic literature (see Fletcher, 1992). Here, it is relevant to point out that the fact that interviewers may ask sensitive questions, i.e. questions about an applicant's age, highlights the inherently non-egalitarian nature of job interviews in that the two parties are automatically positioned into the roles of powerful and
powerless. This is an indication that power differentials and ethical issues in job interviews could be important areas for investigation by researchers.

While advice provided in self-help texts may be helpful to applicants, it is simplistic. The readers are expected to engage in rote learning of the various lists of "do's and don'ts," meaning advice about which behaviours applicants should use and which behaviours to avoid using. For example, Popovitch (2000, p.10) advises applicants to "record the questions and answers and play them over and over" before their interviews, while Verity (2002) states "get together with your Practice Group and ask each other difficult questions" (p.93). Furthermore, there are lists of questions for applicants to ask their interviewers and questions to avoid, although this comprises a much smaller percentage of the advice in texts. For example, Popovitch (2000) suggests that a safe question for applicants to ask potential employers is, "Are there formal training programmes available"? (p.186). In contrast, Amos (2001) advises "Never ask whether you have got the job" (p.22).

**Laughter and Humour**

Within self-help texts there is scant advice about laughter and humour, which could be considered "inappropriate" for selection interviews as they are formal encounters (see Holmes & Marra, 2002, p.68). For instance, an applicant who laughs and makes jokes may be perceived by interviewers as not taking the interview seriously. Although the possible value of humour and laughter for creating rapport in job interviews may be largely unrecognised by popular texts, it is commented in the academic literature that humour may produce positive effects in job interviews (Martin & Lefcourt 1984; Poyatos, 1985; Poyatos, 1993).

Popular texts advise applicants to create rapport with the interviewer, although it is made clear that interviewers expect applicants to behave in a particular manner. Texts seem to adopt varying stances in relation to humour and laughter and there is little advice on ways to use humour and laughter to create rapport. For instance, Berry (1997) remarks "Don't be afraid of demonstrating your sense of humour." It
is advisable to "strike up common areas of interest" and "put the interviewer at ease and compliment him/her" (p.69). In contrast, Popovitch (2000) warns "applicants should maintain a professional and formal attitude even if the interviewer is relaxed and friendly. What is appropriate behaviour for the interviewer is not usually acceptable behaviour for the applicant" (p.68). It seems that applicants are advised to adopt the stereotyped role of submissive applicant, which could emphasise the power differences between applicant and interviewer.

2.11.2 Advice on Non-verbal Communication Behaviours

It is crucial to be fully awake for your interview . . . .
Increase your energy before the interview by jumping up and down in private for a few minutes (Berry, 1997, p.29).

Consistent with trends found in the academic works reviewed in the first part of this chapter Gottesman and Mauro (1999) explain that in addition to using positive verbal behaviour, creating a favourable first impression involves body language, appearance and gestures. First, I examine the information concerning applicant appearance, followed by advice about body language and then personality.

Appearance

Stick to black or blue socks to avoid those hairy legs being seen (Berry, 1997, p.30).

Within self-help texts there is abundant advice on appearance and appropriate attire for job interviews. Nevertheless, such advice could be regarded as "common sense" in that many people know that it is important to appear clean and tidy at a job interview. In texts, appearance is considered an important strategy for creating a positive presence. Johnstone (1997, p.26) stresses the importance of "looking good" in order to create a favourable impression immediately. In the words of Sutton (2000) "interviewers make their decisions in the first four minutes of the interview, and then spend the rest of the time looking for information that supports that
decision." …. If your appearance seems to contradict what you're saying, the interviewer will be inclined to disbelieve what you say" (p.43).

Interviewers have limited information on which to base their final decision, consequently the appearance of applicants is said to have a tremendous influence on their success rate (Eggert, 2003; Gottesman & Mauro, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to "always be clean and well groomed" (Popovitch, 2000, p.54); to "shower and wear clean clothes and shoes" and even to "minimise perfume and aftershave" (Verity, 2002, p.82). Applicants are warned that "scuffed shoes, untidy hair, dirty fingernails … are standard black marks with interviewers" (Amos, 2001, p.17).

There is much detail about the importance of wearing clothes that present a businesslike image. Information provided in self-help texts ties in with research showing that applicants who look good and are appropriately dressed can increase their chances of success (e.g. Forsythe, Drake & Cox, 1985). For instance, it is recommended that applicants "choose clothes that are neat, tidy, clean and well-fitting, and preferably made from fabrics which wear well and do not crease." Moreover, it is pointed out that, "suits are still expected by most interviewers, particularly if the job is to be office-based" (Johnstone, 1997, p.28). Applicants are advised that casual sweatshirts and jeans are "not yet accepted interview dress, even though you may be wearing them once you get the job" (Miller, 1998, p.38). Hence, applicants are cautioned to "Dress appropriately for the job in question, adopting a similar style to that worn by the interviewers. For most interviews, this would usually mean formal or business attire" (Sutton, 2000, p.44).

Applicants' overall appearance is expected to be tidy and smart, that is, stylish. "A smart appearance" is advocated in the texts. Men are advised to wear "a dark suit, or at least a smart jacket and tie" and "women should dress smartly (a jacket is a good idea)." It is stated, "Plain neutral colours are safest when you want to look smart. Navy blue or medium to dark grey for suits or jackets and a soft white or ivory shirt or blouse work well for a confident, competent appearance." Shoes must
be "clean and smart" and "hair should be clean and recently cut" (Corfield, 1999, pp, 39-40).

Amos (2001) comments, "looking smart is rarely out of place" and recommends that dress should be "appropriate for the job or organisation, flattering, clean and tidy, comfortable, a reflection of your personality, and clothing that gives you confidence" (p.17). A study by Solomon (1986) showed that job applicants who wore business suits were more assertive than those dressed in casual clothes. The business suits worn by some applicants may have contributed to their feelings of self-confidence.

Displaying greater awareness of the relative nature of job interview settings, Berry (1997, p.71) advises applicants to "look your best and follow the company dress code." More specific advice is provided by Miller (1998) who remarks that "for jobs in the law, accounting and finance or industrial management, smart conventional dress is a must." However, he adds that "where creativity and individuality are rated highly, as in the media, the fashion world or advertising, conventional dress might count against you" (p.38).

As shown next, the majority of the self-help texts also discuss the role that body language plays in creating impressions.

**Body language**

*Don’t* hunch forward in your seat like a sack of potatoes (Johnstone, 1997, p.33).

Similar to the advice about appearance, much of the following advice about body language could also be perceived by many people as common knowledge. This type of advice also appears in texts in the format of lists of do's and don't's. Nonetheless, the advice corresponds with academic literature suggesting that body language has a considerable influence on interviewer perceptions of the applicant (Anderson, 1988; Lewis, 1990). For example, the consensus among writers of self-help texts is
that smiling is an essential feature of body language in a job interview context. Applicants are told to "start off the interview on a positive note by entering the room and smiling at all the interviewers present" (Corfield, 2003, p.42). In a similar vein, it is explained "smiling is a positive signal and projects warmth. Most people look better when they smile, and it will make your contacts more comfortable because you'll appear natural and confident" (Sutton, 2000, p.55).

Eye contact is another aspect of non-verbal communication that receives considerable attention in the texts. "Looking straight into somebody's eyes when he or she is talking tells the person that you are interested, are attending to what is being said and have nothing to hide" (Corfield, 2003, p.42). Sutton (2000) explains that avoiding eye contact suggests nervousness or timidity, or that the applicant is hiding information. Therefore, the recommendation is to "aim for moderate eye contact - roughly 70% of the time … this indicates sincerity and conveys the impression that you're paying attention." Nevertheless, applicants are cautioned, "how long you maintain eye contact is determined by culture, so don't be too quick to jump to conclusions" (pp.52-53).

Stressing the importance of projecting confident body language in job interviews, applicants are advised "nod when you agree" and "try to keep an interested facial expression." They are cautioned not to "lean too far back, or slouch - it looks over casual" and are warned "it's better not to fold your arms - it signals to the vast majority of people that you are unapproachable and uncomfortable" (Amos, 2001, p.20). As pointed out by Berry (1997, p.28) and Sutton (2000, p.51) crossed arms suggest a negative or defensive attitude or that the applicant is uncomfortable or unapproachable. They also advise applicants not to wave their arms about as this distracts the interviewer. Moreover, applicants are informed by Miller (1998) "Don't play with your watch or jewellery … or engage in other distracting mannerisms" (p.47).

Furthermore, the technique of mirroring can lead an interviewer to identify with the applicant, which is one of the most common reasons a person gets a job. Mirroring
involves using the same gestures as the interviewer and subtly reflecting back the interviewer's ideas by paraphrasing, that is, the applicant restates, using their own words, what the interviewer has said (Gottesman & Mauro, 1999, p.68).

Several texts comment on the need for applicants to display a positive personality, which may be achieved through a range of communication behaviours.

**Personality**

Who do they choose? At the end of the day, they choose the guy they like the best (Verity, 2002, p.53).

The significance of personality in the interview is highlighted by Corfield (2003) who states that the three main areas of interest to an employer are: (1) qualifications and skills (2) previous work experience, and (3) character or personality. Of these three areas, "the greatest importance attaches to the type of person you are." She explains what frequently happens:

Even if a candidate's educational background or previous experience is not up to those of his or her competitors, by demonstrating certain advantages involving personality or character, the candidate is successful in getting the job. (pp. 30-31)

Corfield continues, "as long as an applicant is the sort of person who will fit into the company and who enjoys his or her work, that person can easily be trained to compensate for any lack of skills or experience" (pp.30-31). This appears to be useful advice, however Corfield provides applicants with only a limited amount of guidance on how to present a positive personality.

Applicants are made aware of the type of applicant employers prefer to hire, and they are advised to use positive body language, appearance and verbal behaviour. In the words of Berry (1997):
Employers are looking for a stable, realistic, positive, visionary candidate who wants a long-term future … a candidate that will add value to the company and not one that brings all his/her baggage and problems with him/her. (p.37)

She adds that it is important to project a positive attitude because "if you are in the right frame of mind employers will be more attracted to you." Therefore, "attitude is crucial . . . and is reflected by choice of vocabulary, facial expressions, behaviour and dress sense" (p.37). Berry emphasises, "Your personality is as important as your background" and she reminds applicants to show their enthusiasm, advising them "do be positive, enthusiastic and interesting" (p.70), which they can achieve by varying the pace and pitch of the voice.

Interviewing is a subjective experience, which suggests that there is a need for applicants to portray presence, that is, charisma. Nevertheless, some applicants may be more skilled than other applicants at displaying their personality in a favourable light. Gottesman and Mauro (1999) comment that interviewers do not always realise how subjective they are being. Interviewers usually think they are hiring the applicant who is the most qualified, but the applicant they are really hiring is simply the one they like best. Hence, self-presentation and personality, or the winning way an individual presents his or her skills and qualifications, will get the applicant the job. Applicants are advised to let their personality "shine through" and to communicate "excitement and belonging, what is called presence, or charisma" (pp.3,56). This corresponds with research showing that interviewers make their hiring decisions according to how they feel about applicants on a personal level during the job interview (Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990).

It is clear that personality is a significant consideration for interviewers as applicants are informed by Sutton (2000) that psychometric tests may be used as part of the selection process. Sutton devotes a chapter to the various kinds of tests that may confront applicants. He adds that, above all, employers want to hire applicants who are calm, relaxed and confident, and he remarks:
Personality questionnaires are designed to assess … interpersonal relationships, work attitudes and values, flexibility and the way people approach their work. . . . The use of these questionnaires in selection has increased in popularity in the wake of a growing body of evidence that strongly correlates personality traits with job performance (pp.75-101).

Verity (2002) explains that there are tests that estimate not only the applicant's personality but also their verbal and numerical ability and their clerical and computing skills. Above all, it seems that personality has a crucial influence during the hiring process. Verity adds that "most tests look for middle of the road, stable, personalities." In the following comment she reveals the kinds of personality characteristics that interviewers prefer:

Personality testing does reflect mood as well as personality so . . . practise getting yourself into a calm and logical frame of mind …. Stress, anger or anxiety may show up and they are not qualities that most employers would want in an employee (pp.32-39).

While self-help texts contain advice that could be valuable to many prospective job applicants the texts are limited in various respects. These limitations are discussed in the following section.

2.11.3 Limitations of Popular Job Interview Texts

Don’t take someone else into the interview. Leave your wife, husband, partner, mum, dad, brother, sister or any other emotional crutch (for example, the dog) at home, or at least outside the building (Berry, 1997, p.73).

It is pointed out by academic critics Fletcher (1992) and Harris (1989) that the advice currently available to job applicants in self-help texts is largely unproven in terms of its effectiveness in influencing interviewer ratings. During analysis of the popular texts in the present study, four major limitations of self-help texts on job interviews became known.
First, the information contained in self-help texts is simplistic, and discussions are superficial. Whilst it cannot be denied that self-help texts provide useful commonsense advice to potential applicants, there is an obvious shortcoming that is found in most of the texts. Much of the information is basic, appearing in the format of lists of do’s and don’ts and, above all, it does not represent accurately the complexity of the interaction in selection interviews. There is a danger that applicants will remember the lists of do’s and don’ts only for the duration of the interview, or perhaps read the advice and then forget to practise it in the interview while they are under pressure. In addition, applicants may rely heavily on the advice, learning the lists of recommended responses to interviewers’ questions and becoming distressed if those questions do not occur during the interview. Furthermore, texts do not encourage applicants to question the beliefs they hold about selection interviews or their own role.

Although authors of self-help texts emphasise that applicants are required to be skilled communicators, communication behaviours are not discussed thoroughly. As noted earlier, this limitation has been recognised by communication researcher Einhorn (1981, p. 217) who remarks that, while the literature in career planning focuses exclusively on applicant behaviours in interviews, it treats communication only superficially. In particular, there is only superficial discussion of IM within self-help texts. It is acknowledged that interviewers choose the applicant they like best rather than the one who is most experienced or qualified. Texts also recognise that success in job interviews is determined by the applicant’s ability to promote him or herself, rather than by the applicant’s knowledge and experience (Berry, 1997; Corfield, 1999; Miller, 1998; Popovitch, 2000). Beyond this advice, there is limited exploration of IM; most texts do not encourage applicants to develop a more positive and long-term approach to improving their IM technique. Often applicants are told what to do, but are not encouraged to examine the reasons for their behaviour.

A second shortcoming is that advice in the self-help texts is often contradictory, and this could create uncertainty for some job applicants reading the advice. For
instance, Sutton (2000) discusses how to greet the interviewer with a handshake and warns applicants "it's best not to initiate this yourself, because it may convey a desire to dominate the interview" (p.49). Similarly, applicants are advised not to appear too keen but to wait for the interviewer to offer to shake hands (Johnstone, 1997, p.32).

In contrast, Amos (2001) urges applicants to take an entirely different approach to the greeting, that is, "say hello, and offer your hand to shake - don't wait for them to shake hands" (p.19). There is further contradictory advice. Regarding questions for applicants to ask the interviewer, Popovitch (2000) advises applicants to ask "about salary and benefits" (p.185) and provides applicants with 10 examples of questions they could use. This is different from the advice provided by Sutton (2000) who emphasises, "Don't ask about salary and benefits. These questions are best left until you receive an offer" (p.39).

Third, self-help texts fail to recognise the complexity of interaction and the multiple layers of meaning and power involved in a selection interview. While many of the claims made are consistent with findings of academic literature, key concepts such as the interrelationship between power and language and ethical communication either are ignored or are not presented thoroughly. There is scant advice explaining how unequal power between interviewer and applicant may affect their communication. Furthermore, there is little information regarding ethical issues, or how applicants could gain power with language or the benefits of more equal dialogue (See Habermas, 1970ab;1990).

The fourth limitation is that the advice in self-help texts is not currently stimulating job applicants to think about how they could adopt a more powerful role in the interview. They are not prompted to think about the advantages of engaging in more equal dialogue with interviewers, and this could limit applicants' understanding of the interview process. Applicants have less power than the interviewer, and the imbalance of power can reduce applicants' chances of creating
positive presence if they do not know how to empower themselves with communication.

The message that seems to underpin self-help texts is that applicants need to assume a passive role, aiming to "please" interviewers by adopting certain behaviours. Rarely are applicants encouraged to express their ideas and interact freely with interviewers. While Amos (2001) briefly discusses the balance of power in selection interviews and aims to encourage applicants by stating that they "do have some power," her advice lacks intensity as it does not urge applicants to act. In addition, she offers applicants no advice on which IM behaviours they could use to gain power. Amos merely adds, "after all, they need someone, and you are both available and interested - and also perhaps ideal for the job" (pp. 39-40).

Although practical and valuable in the short-term, information provided in self-help texts on selection interviewing is simplistic and superficial in that it focuses on aspects of job interviews already known to applicants, that is, on common-sense information. Much of the advice involves rote learning, rather than leading applicants to think for themselves and to reflect upon and explore ways to make permanent positive changes in their own behaviour. Some of the contradictory advice in these texts could therefore be confusing for prospective job applicants. To prevent the misuse of power and create dialogue that is more equal it could be important to encourage applicants to believe they can take a more active role in interviews. This may require co-operation from employers and interviewers, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6 when presenting conclusions to this study. More attention could be paid in popular literature on job interviews to creating a powerful impression through powerful communication, a core concept of the current research, which will also be examined in Chapter 6.

2.12 Conclusion

Having investigated the main themes and issues tackled in the academic literature on communication and selection interviewing, and in self-help texts, it is clear that
a research-based approach is needed which acknowledges the complexities of IM and communicative competence, and which promotes applicant dialogue on more equal terms with interviewers, as currently in many job interviews, applicants have less power than interviewers. The present study aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating the communication behaviours that could enable applicants to create positive presence, and increase their power. I proceed now to Chapter 3 to explain the methodology that enabled me to gather data from real-life interviews for a Transport Officer and a Legal Assistant.
Chapter 3: A Methodology for the Study of Impression Management (IM) Behaviour

3.1 Introduction

The use of real-life selection interviews, as opposed to simulated interviews, is an ideal research approach in that it gives the researcher a good sense of the complexities of the job interview, which cannot be fully appreciated when using simulated interviews. To avoid methodological problems pointed out in Chapter 2, I observed and recorded the interaction of real applicants and interviewers. I also found that this permitted a more thorough understanding of their behaviour and their needs in the job interview setting. Buckley and Weitzel (1989, p.300) emphasise that selection decisions obtained under role-enacted conditions do not generalise to interview decisions made in actual organisations. They explain that most students will behave how they believe the experimenter wants them to, hence mock interviews are a "pretend" activity. As discussed later, data in the present study was analysed with the methods of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA) as part of the broad method of CA, which is a central component of this research.

Conducted in England this study involved qualitative analysis of real-life job interviews for two positions: The first was for the job of Transport Officer in a local government office, and the second was a vacancy for a Legal Assistant to a solicitor in a law firm. Einhorn (1981), who analysed real-life job interviews in the private sector, recommended that research on applicant communication be conducted in other business settings but also in the public sector where value orientations may differ. Hence, I tape recorded 10 real-life selection interviews, all of which were 45 minutes to one hour in duration. I produced transcripts from the recordings, which included comments made by the three interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews. Then I analysed data by reading and marking transcripts while listening to the tapes. Non-participant observation enabled me to collect data on applicant
appearance and body language, and further data was collected through discussions with interviewers and applicants after the interviews had been conducted. Furthermore, with the method of ContA, I gathered data by analysing nine "how to" texts, that is, "self-help" texts that provide advice to job applicants.

Data analysis occurs in Chapters 4 and 5, which contain excerpts of CA from the job interview transcripts and interviewers' comments. Full explanation of the transcription conventions that appear in these excerpts of CA is provided in Appendix A. No real names of participants, places or organisations were used in transcripts in this study.

The first section in Chapter 3 provides the rationale for the qualitative approach adopted by this study: the second section explains the research design and methods employed, namely the methods of CA and ContA; the third section describes the two case studies showing how participants, that is, interviewers and applicants were selected, and how the sample was chosen; the fourth section discusses ethical considerations of the research.

### 3.2 Explanation and Rationale for the Qualitative Approach

It was essential to employ qualitative research methods and the communication perspective in this study in order to analyse the verbal and non-verbal communication of real-life job applicants and their relationships with interviewers. The qualitative methodology made it possible to address thoroughly the following core questions, first, "To what extent do applicants' communication behaviours help them to create a positive presence in their job interviews"? and second, "What specific communication behaviours contribute to creating this positive presence"? Moreover, as job interviews are interactions where there is unequal power it was vital to ask a third question "Is it possible to address the power imbalance inherent in a job interview context"?
Due to the complexity of human nature and the necessarily interpretive nature of this study, a qualitative approach was taken as it permitted a different type of data to be obtained. It was possible to form subjective impressions on-the-scene about the context of each interview, and about each participant. Qualitative methods enabled me to consider not only the spoken language of participants, but also their paralanguage, that is, voice tone, pace, pitch and volume, and also complex perceptions and behaviours such as motivation, self-esteem, impression management skills and metacognitive skills. As noted by Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995), the aim of qualitative research is to capture a person’s meanings and definitions of events and to understand the meaning of phenomena in context, which allows a detailed account of the phenomena under study.

Although they are fruitful methods, it was not relevant in the present research to analyse simulated, that is, mock job interviews to analyse CVs or to rely solely on a quantitative approach. Stubbe (1992) points out that "the use of quantitative methods alone often fails to adequately capture the complexities inherent in any analysis of interactional data" (p. 61). It has been argued that there should be a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach enables the researcher to obtain a range of information (Nau, 1995; Schmied, 1993).

Therefore, primarily qualitative methods were used in this study, with some quantitative analysis, that is, ContA, included as part of the CA procedure. The analytic research methods of CA and ContA are discussed in more detail in Section 3.4. Scholars remark that qualitative methods are regarded as unique because they can serve as an impetus for cultural change as the method explores dynamic systems and processes. Findings may yield fresh, new understandings that were previously unrecognised using quantitative research methods (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Gerdes & Conn, 2001; Giacomini & Cook, 2000).

Several techniques were employed that were similar to techniques used by other researchers i.e. tape recording and producing transcripts (see Einhorn, 1981). Jones
and LeBaron (2002) emphasise that an advantage of using tape recordings and transcripts is that it enables the researcher to carry out holistic analyses capable of producing arguments and conclusions that are deeply insightful. Einhorn did not use CA, although in the present research CA permitted thorough examination of the dialogue and relationships between interviewers and applicants. With CA, I was able to analyse disclosures and paralanguage in all of the responses provided by each applicant. I analysed the kinds of information that applicants were disclosing to interviewers.

In addition, because some aspects of language are quantifiable, I used ContA which helped me to discover more about the content of applicants' disclosures, that is, the kinds of information they were volunteering to interviewers. Therefore, ContA supported the essentially qualitative process used in this research, as my impressions about what was happening in each interaction were corroborated through ContA. For instance, I counted how many disclosures and categories of disclosures were used by each applicant, how many questions they asked, and how often they agreed with the interviewer. I also counted how frequently powerless language i.e. "you know" occurred in a transcript and how many words were spoken in each interview.

Due to the qualitative approach used in this study, interpretation was inevitably subjective. The reader is requested to accompany me on a journey while a number of theoretical issues are investigated and reflected upon. I have deliberately used the first person voice, that is, "I" or "me," as it enables a dialogue to be constructed and focuses the reader on the interpretive character of the research (see Aigen, 2005: Atkinson, 1990). I have tried to make transparent personal beliefs, values, and influences to allow readers to understand my position. For instance, I am deeply interested in the concepts of ethical communication in business organisations and the empowerment of people who are powerless. My own observations, over a period of several years as a public servant in local government and as an employee in two law firms, provided some insights about organisational culture, and these
insights were useful when interpreting the data. It was helpful also to draw upon my experiences as an interviewer and as a job applicant.

Analysis of context was central to the qualitative methods and communication perspective taken in this research. Therefore, it was important for communication to be interpreted against the backdrop of the context in which it was taking place, and to explore meanings that were being created at a specific moment in time. By context, I mean the setting of each interview, relationships between participants, and their attitudes and personalities.

As explained by Drisko (1997), linking data to context and providing a sense of wholeness of the situation is central to the coherence and credibility of a qualitative report. Drisko explains that to find out how interaction can be more rewarding for individuals in workplaces of the future, information is required about the way people interact at present. He adds that to examine features of language and behaviour separately, without relating them to context and the individuals taking part, provides a picture of the encounter that is incomplete. In the current study I analysed the whole of each job interview from beginning to end in order to gain a more complete picture of the interaction and participants rather than considering only segments of the interview without analysing the rest of the transcript.

A range of communication behaviours was under investigation, namely language, paralanguage, body language and appearance. Each type of behaviour was analysed against the backdrop of the relationship between interviewer and applicant, their personalities and attitudes, and comments made by the interviewers. As each job interview was a unique communicative event, it was crucial to consider meanings that participants were constructing between themselves as they talked. Above all, it was important to consider power relations between interviewers and applicants and the effect on their dialogue. I analysed each applicant's level of skill in Impression Management (IM) and communicative competence, that is, their ability to choose behaviours that could help them create positive presence. Furthermore, I was able
to assess whether or not there was rapport between participants and the effect this may have had on hiring decisions.

Exploring the impression created by a range of communication behaviours is an interpretive process that is unavoidable as complex behaviours and perceptions needed to be analysed. Being a qualitative study, my own interpretations were an essential part of data analysis. With the techniques employed, I gained insights about personality, rapport, positive presence and the nature of interpersonal relationships. Based on my observations and analysis of transcripts, it was possible to form my own impressions by asking myself the following questions:

1. What were the interviewer's feelings about the applicant on a personal level?  
   What were the applicant's feelings about the interviewer?
2. What kinds of questions were being asked and did the applicant feel at ease during the interview?
3. What was the applicant's personality? How confident did the applicant appear?
4. How competent did the applicant appear?
5. How well did the applicant use IM and create positive presence?

The questions formed the basis for a similar list of questions that I asked the interviewers after they had conducted the selection interviews. These discussions with the interviewers were most helpful as they enabled me to check my perceptions of events. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that researcher bias is always a possibility. As reducing bias is a primary consideration of any study, to follow is a discussion of the procedures that may have helped to minimise bias.

### 3.3 Minimising Bias

It was vital in the present study to recognise and to reduce personal bias as much as possible. The consensus is that qualitative inquirers need to show that their studies are credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998) and that explicitly identifying sources of potential researcher bias strengthens the credibility
of a qualitative report (Hyde, 1994; Reid, 1994). It is necessary to bear in mind that selectivity and bias create a "filter" that admits relevant data and screens out what does not seem interesting even if, with hindsight, it could have been useful. Selectivity cannot be eliminated, but researchers must be aware of how it affects the usefulness and credibility of research results (LeCompte, 2000). Hence, there is always a possibility that personal bias of the researcher could influence interpretation of results. According to Drisko (1997), bias refers to influences that impair complete or accurate sampling, data collection, data interpretation, and reporting. Nonetheless, he explains that with substantial self-reflection and self-analysis the researcher is able to perceive and interpret participants' views and to clarify unique, situation-specific events.

It was helpful to consider the advice of other researchers. For instance, Cresswell and Miller (2000) recommend that the researcher makes clear personal beliefs, values and biases that may shape the inquiry by acknowledging and describing their beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand the researcher's position. The approach taken by the present study was made clear in Chapter 1. As suggested by Hertz (1997), first I acknowledged my own biases, bearing in mind that my own experiences, attitudes and preferences could prevent me from remaining objective during data analysis. Second, it was crucial to ensure that I continually reflected on my biases throughout the study. This "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (Hertz, p.viii), also known as the process of reflexivity (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Finlay, 2002), taps into an immediate, continuing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness.

As suggested by Patton (1980), I returned to the data repeatedly to discover if all the "constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations" (p.339) used in my study made sense. Furthermore, Cresswell and Miller (2000) and Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend systematically sorting through data to find common themes by eliminating overlapping areas, relying on one's own lens, and looking for disconfirming or negative evidence by examining all of the multiple perspectives on a theme because reality is multiple and complex.
Several processes stimulated me to question my insights and arrive at a more objective analysis, which may have led to more accurate data interpretation. With the consent of all participants, the tape recorder was left switched on between each Transport Officer interview. There was sufficient time for the interviewers to discuss the applicant they had just met before the next applicant arrived. Later I was able to listen repeatedly to the interviewers' recorded comments, comparing my own impressions of applicants with the interviewers' opinions. During the interviews I recorded my personal thoughts to distinguish them carefully from other observations, such as applicants' appearance i.e. clothing and hairstyle, and body language, for instance, eye contact and posture.

In addition, my conversations with the interviewers after the interviews helped to verify my own impression of events. At these meetings I gained much valuable data as interviewers described to me their feelings about each applicant and revealed how they made their hiring decisions. It was interesting to discover what kinds of personality characteristics were preferred by the interviewers, and which communication behaviours created the most favourable impressions on them.

Nonetheless, there may be differences in the way interviewers perceive applicants, therefore interviewer bias is always a possibility. It was unknown to what extent each interviewer in the current research was influenced by his or her attitudes, preferences and past experiences. Studies have shown that different impressions matter to different managers (Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990). Additionally, interviewers are affected by their own moods and personal preferences (Graves, 1993) and busy work environments (Nordstrom, Hall & Bartels, 1998). Hartley (2003) notes that interviewers find it hard to remain objective when judging applicants.

Next, it is explained why the methods of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA) as part of the broader method of CA were essential for the analysis of data in this study.
3.4 Research Methods: Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA)

3.4.1 Conversation Analysis (CA)

CA has been defined by Nofsinger (1977) as "a research strategy in which talk is studied as a phenomenon in its own right" (p.12). Heritage and Atkinson (1984) point out that the objective of CA is to describe the procedures by which conversationalists produce their own behaviour and understand and deal with the behaviour of others. Drawing on the work of Harvey Sacks (1992), CA is an ethnomethodological approach which attempts to uncover general principles that govern the organisation of talk, in other words, the methods used by individuals for organising orderly and meaningful patterns of social interaction. Hence, CA analyses the orderliness of conversations brought about by individuals as they communicate, and researchers look for the structures that bring about that orderliness. Therefore, CA assumes that order exists in talk, that the order can be observed and described, and that it informs interaction in face-to-face experiences. Interaction is organised in sequential structures that conversationalists produce and adjust to in the evolving social encounter.

The technique used in CA is to listen simultaneously to tape recordings and analyse transcripts produced from the tape recordings (Pomerantz, 1993; Psathas 1995). I followed this technique, recording 10 real-life job interviews, transcribing the recordings into a word-processed "hard copy" and then reading and analysing the transcripts while listening to the tapes. Perakyla (1997) and Roman and Apple (1990) state that CA enables the researcher to collect materials from naturally occurring occasions of everyday interaction using audio recording equipment. They add that with CA it is possible to describe participants’ practical on-the-scene interaction. Descriptions of language and paralanguage are grounded in empirical evidence derived from repeated listening to tape recordings of naturally occurring speech, which can be replayed and verified by each new listener. This qualitative process reveals how day-to-day human activities are composed and organised.
Capturing the current job interviews on audiotape was a most reliable and less obtrusive technique for gathering verbal data compared with other techniques. Heritage and Atkinson (1984) and Psathas and Anderson (1990) explain that recordings enable the researcher to assess more accurately ways in which participants respond to and show an understanding of each other’s actions rather than relying on recollections of the interview. They point out that this is quite different from methodologies in which the researcher must intervene in the subjects' behaviour or from interviewing techniques in which verbal reports are treated as acceptable surrogates for the observation of actual behaviour. In addition, Psathas and Anderson note that by analysing naturally occurring interaction, the researcher can pursue his or her impressions and achieve systematic analyses of what is known on a subjective level and implicitly understood.

Audiotape provided a permanent record that I could play repeatedly to ensure no details were missed during analysis. As noted by Maynard (1989), and in the words of Heritage and Atkinson (1984), "the availability of a taped record enables repeated and detailed examination of particular events in interaction, which greatly enhances the range and precision of the observations that can be made" (pp. 4-5). Heritage and Atkinson explain that there is direct access to data, making data available for public scrutiny in a way that further minimises the influence of individual preconceptions. Finally, because the data are in raw form, they are reusable and can be re-examined in the light of new observations or findings. In addition, they point out that rather than studying single utterances or actions as the isolated products of individuals having particular goals, the focus is on "uncovering the social organised features of talk in context" (pp. 4-5).

As noted earlier, in the present study it was crucial to analyse dialogue in terms of the context of each interview setting and its participants. It was imperative to consider both what was said and how it was said against the backdrop of the atmosphere, that is, the prevailing tone or mood of the interview, the rapport between interviewer and applicant, and each person's personality and attitudes. Therefore, it was necessary to analyse each interview transcript from start to finish.
Goodwin and Heritage (1990) remark that in CA, utterances are understood as forms of action situated within specific contexts and designed with specific attention to those contexts. Complete conversations, hence long stretches of discourse, are analysed. Accordingly, Eggins and Slade (1997) emphasise that CA can be contrasted to research that has focused solely on short extracts of discourse. They explain that such studies have dealt with only selected features of talk, such as turn taking or points of overlap rather than looking at a conversation in its entirety.

Due to the interactive aspect of CA, which involves close scrutiny of the ongoing exchange of dialogue between speaker and hearer (Eggins & Slade, 1997), I was able to analyse the two-way exchange of information between interviewers and applicants. Furthermore, CA allowed me to consider the unique meanings that emerged out of the dialogue in the current job interviews. In addition, CA corresponded with the communication perspective that was crucial for this study. For instance, I investigated how interviewers evaluated applicants and made hiring decisions, which applicant communication behaviours were influencing interviewers' judgments, and which communication behaviours were the most critical for success in the present research (See Psathas, 1995).

A definite advantage of CA was that it allowed me to analyse language and paralanguage to discover how applicants may empower themselves with verbal behaviour. Ng (1990) points out that researchers have changed from studying passive observers to analysing how people interact in real-life and have shifted from examining powerless speech to powerful speech. Ng adds that "research on powerful speech will continue to be a confluence of research for social psychologists and sociolinguists" (p.281). The present study furthers these developments in the chosen area of real-life job-based interviews to find out how applicants can use the powerful style to create positive presence and more equal dialogue with interviewers.

It is acknowledged that there are some conditions under which CA may not be useful. For instance, where there is limited acoustics, where there is a large number
of participants, or the rate of talk is extremely fast or slow. A further criticism of CA is that a recorded conversation is not exactly the same as the conversation that took place and that transforming recordings into transcripts is another step from the interaction itself (Atkinson, 1984; Tannen, 2005). Nevertheless, CA does allow examination of people's talk and often provides a good indication of what participants usually do outside a research setting. In the words of Moerman (1988) "just as the score for a symphony does not fully represent a performance of that music, the transcript of a course of interaction does not fully represent that interaction itself" (pp.13-14). A further concern is that if participants are aware of the tape recorder their talk is not spontaneous. They might avoid discussing certain topics. However, as I explain next, I found that participants ignored the tape recorder as they became involved in the interview dialogue (see Hopper, Koch & Mandelbaum, 1986; Tannen, 2005). In addition, I show how intrusion on the interviews was minimised in the current investigation.

Here it is necessary to explain how tape recording and non-participant observation were carried out in the present study.

**Tape-Recording and Non-Participant Observation**

Collecting data by tape-recording, non-participant observation and discussions with interviewers enhanced my ability to capture important nuances in communication. These research methods enabled me to capture data that were more detailed and which provided corroborating evidence. Cresswell and Miller (2000) and qualitative researchers Giacomini and Cook (2000) comment that the narrative account is valid when the researcher relies on multiple forms of evidence rather than a single incident or data point in the study. Giacomini and Cook audiotaped and transcribed interviews and discussions among physicians, patients, and families. An observer made written records of body language. Finally, Giacomini and Cook recorded their personal interpretations of the discussions they observed. They reported that this helped to isolate personal biases and enabled them to use personal experiences as analytically useful information.
To conduct the CA for the present study a tape-recorder was placed on a shelf in a corner of the interview room, which helped to ensure that the tape-recorder was as unobtrusive as possible. My role as non-participant observer involved being present during the interviews to observe the behaviour of participants. Ethical issues and their effect on the method of this study are discussed in Section 3.5, and it is explained how intrusion on the interviews was minimised.

Taking the role of non-participant observer enabled me to operate the tape-recorder and handle the audiotapes, which helped to minimise disruption to the interviews and ensure security and confidentiality of the tapes. Recording the interviews provided a permanent record of participants' verbal behaviour and evidence of the way interviewers interacted with applicants. With the interviewers' permission, crucial evidence was also recorded from remarks they made as they talked among themselves. The interviewers' comments revealed the communication behaviours that they preferred and behaviours they disliked. This feedback allowed me to reflect more thoroughly on events and to check my own interpretation of them.

It was valuable to experience first-hand the way dialogue is used in real-life interview settings. Later, while reading interview transcripts and listening to the audiotapes I was able to draw upon my observations. Hence, insights that I formed about the meanings of participants' verbal behaviour helped me to analyse dialogue in the transcripts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that observation enables more thorough investigation because it allows the researcher to identify the most salient characteristics of the situation and problem being pursued.

In the words of Heritage and Atkinson (1984), "analysis can emerge from observation of the conduct of the participants" (p.1). In addition, Hopper, Koch and Mandelbaum (1986) emphasise, "it is important for the researcher to remain alert to interactive practices absent from audio recordings" (p.174). Therefore, non-participant observation was an essential aspect of this study as it allowed me to gather further evidence. It was helpful to experience the interaction between interviewers and applicants. I was able to simultaneously listen, observe and make
notes about body language, appearance, language, paralanguage, personality and the degree of rapport. For instance, by noting whether each participant’s body language matched his or her verbal behaviour I was able to interpret more accurately what was happening in each interview. It was possible to assess whether interviewers were reacting positively or negatively to applicants’ statements and to evaluate participants as individuals. Above all, non-participant observation allowed me to form impressions about each applicant, their IM and the kind of relationship each had with the interviewers.

In the present research, observation of body language, that is, smiling, handshake, eye contact, head nodding, mirroring, gestures and posture, was used to support my study of verbal behaviour and interviewers' perceptions of verbal behaviour. There was no scope within this study to undertake a more detailed investigation of body language. Nevertheless, my observations of body language made it possible to form more thorough interpretations of the dialogue. Richardson, Snell Dohrenwend and Klein (1965) describe observation as an important technique used in CA, helpful for eliciting non-verbal behaviour. In the present study, to minimise harm to participants, body language was observed for periods of five minutes each at the beginning, middle and end of each interview. Applicants' appearance was also noted, and this included their clothing, shoes, hair, nails, jewellery and handbag or briefcase. During the observation periods I was mindful of the advice of Hartley (2003) who recommends that when forming impressions it is important to observe clusters of body language rather than gestures in isolation. Clusters of non-verbal signals are likely to provide a more accurate indication of the meaning of words.

Categories for body language and appearance were extracted from the self-help texts that were reviewed in Chapter 2 (Amos, 2001; Berry, 1997; Corfield, 2003; Eggert, 2003; Gottesman & Mauro, 1999; Jay, 2001; Johnstone, 1997; Miller, 1998; Popovitch, 2000; Sutton, 2000; Verity, 2002). To record data during the interviews I used a checklist of features of body language and appearance. Findings were recorded by placing a tick alongside features of body language when they occurred, and by making brief written notes.
Having gathered data by tape-recording the interviews and observing the participants, the next step was to produce word-processed transcripts from the audiotapes.

**Transcription Technique**

I transcribed the audiotapes after the interviews. I was aware of my own biases and knew it was essential to keep them in mind while transcribing in order to remain as objective as humanly possible. There is a possibility that data will be transcribed inaccurately if someone other than the researcher transcribes the tapes, although it could be argued that the researcher incurs the same risk. However, an independent transcriber would not have had the advantage of observing the interviews and experiencing first-hand the way participants had behaved in this study. As I was present during the interviews I could remember how participants had behaved, and this may have helped me strive for accuracy when interpreting the data.

The transcription process involved simultaneously listening to a recording and typing what I heard on the tapes into a computer to produce a "word-processed" copy of each interview. While transcribing the tapes I analysed language and paralanguage, although this was only the first stage of analysis. After all the tapes had been transcribed I listened to them repeatedly while reading the corresponding transcripts, and this was the second stage of analysis. Therefore, within each job interview transcript, I located and analysed applicants' disclosures, that is, the kinds of statements that applicants were providing, and considered whether the interviewers could have perceived this information favourably, or unfavourably. I was able to check my interpretations during my discussions with the interviewers.

Within this study, a disclosure consisted of information that an applicant volunteered to the interviewer in response to the interviewer's question. A disclosure was defined as one or more sentences, and this included incomplete sentences or parts of a sentence. To permit a more delicate level of analysis within each unit, that is, each question and answer interaction, I counted the number of
disclosures. Then I scrutinised each disclosure to discover what types of information applicants were giving to interviewers and whether the disclosure portrayed the applicant in a positive or a negative light.

To arrive at more accurate interpretations of the dialogue, I listened to and analysed words spoken aloud and the accompanying paralanguage, that is, loudness, pitch and timing of the voice (Pittam, 1994; Tusing & Dillard, 2000). As will be seen in Chapter 4, some applicants spoke in a soft, slow monotone with little or no variation in the sound of their voices. In contrast, the voices of other applicants contained few pauses and were louder and more varied in tone, pitch and pace; these applicants also laughed often with the interviewer. As noted by Giacomini and Cook (2000), listening to such sounds provides valuable data that helps to elaborate the meaning of the spoken words. From the tone, pitch and pace of the applicant's voice I gained impressions about personality i.e. their confidence, enthusiasm and assertiveness.

Analysis of Transcripts Using CA

The unit of analysis in this study was each question and answer turn-taking interaction. That is, the beginning of the interaction commenced with a major question asked by the interviewer, and the subsequent response by the applicant marked the close of the interaction. Each major question and answer interaction was therefore classed as one unit. Occasionally boundaries of a unit were not as clear. In many instances, rather than containing a single question and a response, the unit of analysis contained further questions and responses, which were a continuation of the initial question, meaning the major question.

Ruusuvuori (2000) used a similar unit of analysis for disclosures. In her study of interviews between doctors and patients, she found, as I did, that boundaries of the interaction, or unit, were by no means strictly defined. In her study, the unit started with the doctor's question for the reason for the visit and closed at, or around, the slot where the doctor started the verbal or physical examination. It was discovered
that patients often stated their reason for the visit without waiting for the doctor's opening question. Furthermore, there were instances when patients expanded on the reason for their visit after the doctor had already started the verbal examination. Hence, in Ruusuvuori's study, the unit extracted usually consisted of at least two subsequent turns of talk, one by the doctor and the other by the patient, while the following turn by the doctor could in some cases be considered to start a new activity. The two turns of talk, together with the suggestion by the doctor to start the examination, were taken as the locus of analysis.

Several stages were employed in the analysis of transcripts in the present research. First, I counted the total number of units in each entire transcript. This technique allowed subsequent identification of the number of turn-taking units common within one major event, or interviews for one job. It also permitted some macro level, that is, large-scale comments, to be made about what generally showed up in the corpus, which provided an idea of the essence of the dialogue. This enabled contrasts to be made with the more minor elements that were found, such as questions that occurred in only one or two interviews overall, or were a variant within the sub-set of interviews for one job.

The category "Number of questions asked by Interviewer" signified every initial or major question at the start of a unit, and included follow up questions within that unit. Therefore, every question/answer response was the usual unit of analysis. Counting the number of turn taking interactions or major questions that were asked in each interview helped to identify how responses help shape the interview. It also suggested a rationale for the use of a set of topic-based interactions as one unit. Regarding macro level analysis, there was value in having the unit of analysis as each turn-taking event between interviewer and applicant, as it simplified quantification of the number of and kinds of disclosures that were made within each interaction.

Second, each interaction was analysed to discover its primary focus or function in the interview. To permit detailed and objective analysis, a categorisation system
was set up to find out what kind of information was being disclosed. Categorising the data provided a manageable way of describing the complexities of the transcribed job interviews. Disclosures were categorised according to their topic, and topic was determined by the kinds of questions being asked by the interviewers. The following categories were chosen as they concerned topics that occurred frequently throughout the transcripts. The four categories determined content: "work-related," that is information relating to the applicant's present job; "work history-related" that is, information about the applicant's previous employment; "social-related or personal" information concerning the applicant's private life; and "qualifications" which denoted education, skills, and qualifications. These are the four types of disclosure that will be analysed in Chapter 4.

To provide a greater degree of reliability concerning the findings I met the interviewers after the interviews to check the categorisation procedure. The interviewers were asked to verify that applicants' disclosures had been placed into the appropriate categories. The purpose was to ensure that my interpretations corresponded with the interviewers' interpretations. Any disagreements were resolved through discussion. Thus, both researcher and interviewers collaborated and reached consensus on the placement of disclosures into the four categories (see Alberts, Kellar-Guenther & Corman, 1996; Nevo, Nevo, & Yin, 2001).

Providing totals for each category of disclosure allowed comparisons to be made at macro level. This made it possible to find out how much of an interview tends to be about a specific category. For instance, present findings showed that the majority of disclosures related to the present work situation of applicants, followed by personal or social information. Disclosures concerning work history and qualifications were made in equal amounts.

To show how CA was conducted, here I provide examples of each of the four types of disclosure that were found in transcripts of the Legal Assistant interviews in the current study. The following examples are not intended to show results of data but are included to show how the method of CA was performed:
Work-Related Disclosure, that is, Applicant's Present Work

For instance, in relation to her present work, the law firm interviewer asked the applicant "Helen" whether in her current job she was working with computerised E-conveyancing, which involved domestic property matters being conducted via the Internet, by E-mail. Helen replied that she merely used a word-processor, adding that it was possible that other branches of her current firm used computerised E-conveyancing.

Work History-Related Disclosure, that is, Applicant's Previous Job

Concerning her past employment, the interviewer in the law firm asked the applicant "Alice" which law firm she had been working at prior to her current job. Alice replied that at the end of October she had left Harrison Jones & Co, a family matrimonial lawyer. Alice volunteered that she "didn't actually do any conveyancing" while working at Harrison Jones & Co.

Social-Related or Personal Disclosure, that is, Applicant's Private Life

The law firm interviewer asked Alice about her "personal circumstances" and whether she was married. Alice replied that she had recently married and had three children. She provided the ages of the three children and also volunteered "I don't have any problem with child care."

Qualification-Related Disclosure, that is, Applicant's Qualifications, Education and Skills

In relation to her qualifications, the law firm interviewer asked applicant "Lily" about her schooling and the exams that she had passed. Lily stated that she had passed her exams at Bretton College and Barnes Upper School. The interviewer then asked her what her exam results were and she responded "I got D in Law, English Literature I got E, and Key Skills Pass."
Each category of disclosure was then sub-categorised, and it was considered whether the information could be identified either as positive or negative, which I define in the next section. The purpose was to discover: "What was the possible effect on interviewers of the content of the disclosures, that is, how did interviewers react to different types of disclosure? Following are examples of the two types of disclosure. Again, these examples are for the purpose of showing how CA was conducted and not for presenting results of data.

**Negative Disclosure**

Within this study, a negative disclosure is a statement provided by an applicant that could create an unfavourable impression of the applicant. For instance, in the Legal Assistant interviews, Alice provided disclosures that could have given the impression she was unfit to do the work. The law firm interviewer enquired about Alice's recent illness and operation, and Alice provided a large quantity of information that could be considered negative. For instance, she stated that she became ill and had to leave her job. She underwent an operation and was then referred to a specialist. However, Alice reported that she was given medication that made her "feel a lot worse than the problem itself." Therefore, she decided she was going to stop taking the medication. Moreover, she stated that the operation was not successful and she required a further operation. Finally, in Alice's words she "waited so long for the operation that the problem fixed itself."

**Positive Disclosure**

In contrast, a positive disclosure is a statement made by the applicant that could create a favourable impression of the applicant. For instance, an applicant might volunteer the information that he or she is confident and competent to do the job. An example of a positive disclosure is provided from the Transport Officer interviews. "Liz," the successful applicant, provided a lengthy list of her positive attributes. For instance, she disclosed that she had very good communication and
networking skills. She also remarked that she was "accurate in giving information" and described herself as "assertive."

**Adjunct Information**

Moreover, it was worthwhile analysing adjunct information as this allowed me to gather insights about applicant personality. For instance, it was important to consider the questions "Did the applicant participate actively"? "Did the applicant agree with the interviewer"? and "Did the applicant initiate questions and comments"? Furthermore, it was essential to consider occasions when interviewers and applicants shared laughter.

For instance, an example of adjunct information is provided from the transcript of the interview of "Brenda," the successful applicant in the Legal Assistant interviews. On one occasion the interviewer made a humorous remark. He informed Brenda that a solicitor in another law firm was demanding an immediate response to a letter he had sent. However, the other solicitor had also reprimanded Brenda's interviewer for dictating too many letters onto audiotape, complaining that this had prevented attention being given to his letter. Both Brenda and the interviewer appreciated the humour in this situation as revealed by their hearty laughter, that is, their laughter lasted for more than three or four seconds. Hence, it is possible that there was rapport between them.

**Unit of Analysis Showing how CA was Performed**

To explain how CA was performed, here is another example from the transcript of Brenda's job interview. The start of a unit of analysis always commenced with a question from the law firm interviewer. On this occasion he asked Brenda if she handled work on clients' files by herself, that is, without help from her employer. In response, Brenda provided several positive sentences about her competence. For instance, she stated that she was able to conduct a sale transaction from start to finish and draw up a contract and transfer without any help. All of the positive
information provided by Brenda was classed as one disclosure because it related to the same topic, namely her present work. Then the interviewer informed Brenda that she would not be expected to draw up contracts on her own. However, he added that the opportunity was there for Brenda to compile a contract and to do the Legal Executive's Conveyancing Diploma or the Legal Executive's course if she wanted to. However, at the point where the interviewer asked another question on a different topic this determined the end of the unit of analysis and the beginning of the next unit of analysis. His next question related to Brenda’s past employment as it concerned the gaps in Brenda's CV when she left her current company and worked in the field of retail.

Above all, it was essential to consider whether applicants' verbal behaviour created an impression of power or of powerlessness. Powerless language, i.e. "you know" and "sort of," and paralanguage, such as frequent pauses lasting for more than four or five seconds, can be perceived as an expression of insecurity and can prevent an individual's career progression (Tannen, 1994). Moreover, research has shown that the preferred language style in job interviews is labelled "powerful" (Doolittle, 1987; Parton, 1996). Studies have found that paralanguage influences interviewers' evaluations of applicant personality (Mino, 1996). Therefore, it was crucial in the present study to analyse not only how words and sentences led to favourable or unfavourable impressions, but also to pay attention to paralanguage and how it affected interviewers' judgments. For instance, I noted where pauses occurred in the applicants' responses and the length of the pauses, which indicated the speed of the voice and pace of the interview. In addition, it was crucial to notice the tone, pitch and pace of each applicant's voice and whether the voice was loud or soft as these characteristics contributed to insights about applicants' personality.

The section below explains the analytic method of Content Analysis (ContA) which complemented CA in this research.
3.4.2 Content Analysis (ContA)

It can be said that ContA was a valuable method for analysing data in the current study of real-life job interviews. ContA was used for counting and categorising disclosures within the transcripts of the interviews. I also used ContA to analyse the content of popular "self-help" texts that provide advice to applicants and during non-participant observation to document the frequency of body language. It is explained that content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books, essays, interviews, discussions, historical documents, speeches, conversations, informal conversations, or any occurrence of communicative language. (Busch, De Maret, Flynn, Kellum, Le, Meyers et al., 2005; Krippendorff, 1980; United States General Accounting Office (GAO), 1996; Weber, 1990). For instance, Palmquist (1990) used ContA to analyse student and teacher interviews, writing journals, and classroom lectures, whereas Stemler and Bebell (1998) analysed school mission statements.

In the present research, both conceptual and relational analysis were used to analyse the transcripts of selection interviews, Busch et al. (2005) comment that traditionally content analysis has often been thought of in terms of conceptual analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. Researchers look at the occurrence of selected terms within a text or texts. Busch et al. explain that relational analysis, like conceptual analysis, begins with the identification of concepts present in a text, or set of texts. However, relational analysis seeks to go beyond presence by exploring the relationships between the concepts identified. In other words, the focus of relational analysis is to look for semantic, or meaningful, relationships. Busch et al. emphasise that individual concepts are viewed as having
no inherent meaning. Rather, meaning is a product of the relationships among concepts in a text.

In particular, ContA is relatively unobtrusive and is useful for dealing with large volumes of data. Nevertheless, the technique extends far beyond simple word frequency counts. What makes the technique particularly useful is that it relies on coding and categorising of the data (Stemler, 2001). In the words of Weber (1990), "A category is a group of words with similar meaning or connotations" (p.37). An advantage of ContA is pointed out by The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) (1996) which emphasises that with ContA a researcher can sift through data with relative ease in a systematic fashion. In addition, Harwood (2003) comments that ContA permits a detailed analysis of the content of a variety of data, including visual and verbal data. Phenomena or events can be placed into defined categories, in order to better analyse and interpret them.

In the words of Holsti (1969), ContA is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p.14). Holst’s definition allows ContA to be applied to other areas such as coding of actions observed in videotaped studies (e.g. Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). Moreover, Stemler (2001) points out that to allow for replication, the technique can only be applied to data that are durable in nature, such as audiotape or videotape, which is one reason why ContA was chosen for the present study.

With ContA, data may be analysed in relation to context and the participants, as with the method of CA. This corresponded with the communication perspective underpinning the current research. It was essential to study words and sentences not in isolation but in the context of each interview setting, and against the background of the interaction and relationships between the interview participants. Hence, for the present study it was useful to consider six questions that Krippendorff (1980) advises researchers to address in every ContA:

1) Which data are analysed?
2) How are they defined?

3) What is the population from which they are drawn?

4) What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?

5) What are the boundaries of the analysis?

6) What is the target of the inferences?

Above all, ContA was used in the current research as part of the broad method of CA because it permitted a more systematic classification of data than if CA alone had been utilised. As ContA is both qualitative and quantitative in its approach (Harwood, 2003) it blended well with CA and had many uses. For instance, ContA provided balance as it allowed me to focus on patterns and frequency of data. I scrutinised each transcript, categorising the communication behaviours and counting their frequency, a process that helped to consolidate my initial impressions and gain more thorough insights about participants and topics they were discussing. Hence, the quantitative aspect of ContA made it possible to confirm impressions that were formed while listening to the tapes and transcribing the recordings. This enabled me to arrive at my own conclusions about the personality of each participant and the relationships between interviewers and applicants.

ContA allowed me to gather evidence of patterns of verbal behaviour in the current job interview transcripts and to discover the content of nine popular self-help texts. Within the transcripts, certain aspects of language were quantified. I counted how many times applicants used powerless words i.e. you know, and how often laughter occurred. I counted how many positive or negative disclosures applicants provided and how many times powerless language and paralanguage occurred. ContA enabled me to determine the amount of active participation engaged in by each applicant. In addition, I counted the number of questions asked by the interviewer and number of words spoken by each applicant. Furthermore, ContA was most useful for examining patterns of data in the self-help texts. This permitted the investigation of how much and what kinds of advice were being provided to job
applicants. To conduct the ContA, I counted the number of sentences per topic in each of the nine texts. Evidence was gathered about what percentage of the texts was devoted to what topics.

However, a fundamental aspect of this study was the analysis of applicants' disclosures. ContA made it possible to consider the content of disclosures, that is, the types of information that applicants were divulging to interviewers. It was vital to ascertain whether interviewers perceived a particular disclosure as negative or as positive. Judgments of this kind are obviously subjective because each interviewer will judge disclosures differently. Having said that, certain types of disclosures reveal information that could be said to be clearly positive or negative. For example, a statement about illness could be classed as negative as it could suggest inability to perform work tasks. Similarly, disclosures about lack of skills and experience could signify a lack of competence. In contrast, a statement that highlights a person's skills, talents and ability to do the job could be considered positive information because it emphasises competence, and competence is what the interviewer is searching for (see Howard & Ferris, 1996).

As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, a vital component of this research was to analyse how interviewers reacted to applicants' behaviours. Whilst analysing the transcripts, I noticed that interviewers frequently mentioned that they had a "feeling" about a particular applicant, meaning how they felt about the applicant on a personal level. Some interviewers stated that they "liked" a particular applicant, therefore I noted how many times interviewers used the word liked and how often they used the word feeling. Then I identified what other words or phrases appeared next to the words liked and feeling, which enabled me to interpret different meanings that emerged out of these groupings.

Therefore, ContA as a research tool provided many advantages. In particular, ContA fitted in with other research techniques used in the present study, namely tape-recording, non-participant observation, and discussions with interviewers and applicants. As Weber (1990) points out, ContA can be useful for discovering and describing the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention.
Inferences can be made which can then be corroborated using other methods, such as interviewing participants, or observation (see Stemler, 2001). For instance, in the present study it was worthwhile employing ContA during non-participant observation. For instance, during the five minute observation periods I counted how many times specific features of body language occurred, which involved counting and categorising instances of smiling, eye contact, head nodding and posture. This enabled me to evaluate whether applicants were using certain characteristics of body language either excessively or insufficiently, and the possible impressions that this behaviour was creating on the interviewers.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research on job interviews it was crucial to be mindful of ethical factors at all stages, and now I explain how this was achieved.

3.5 Ethical Issues and Their Effect on the Method

3.5.1 Minimising Harm Before the Interview

To perform the current investigation, ethics approval was obtained from University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (2000). It was essential to consider ethical issues when designing the methodology. In the words of Kelman (1982), "there is a moral obligation to avoid actions and policies that reduce others' well-being or that inhibit their freedom to express and develop themselves, especially when one is conducting real-life interviews" (p. 41). Any type of research has the potential for some kind of harm to participants, therefore, it was important to find ways of minimising intrusion and preventing harm before, during and after the interviews.

As these were real-life job interviews, it was imperative to ensure that taking part in the study did not reduce applicants' chances of success in the interview. Throughout the study, I reflected on the question "How will my methods make me feel about myself"? and this helped to ensure that priority was always given to the comfort and rights of each participant. I tried as much as possible to minimise intrusion in
several ways. For example, pre-interview contact with the organisation and individuals made it possible for me to advise potential participants and clarify their rights, enabling participants to withdraw from the research either before the interviews, or on the day of the interviews.

Pre-interview contact involved:

- Sending customised information sheets and consent forms to all interviewers and job applicants several weeks before the interviews were conducted. Information sheets and consent forms were mailed to applicants with letters inviting them for interview.

- Meeting applicants before and after the interviews to check that they were willing to participate. The meetings took place in a separate room, without the interviewers present. I reassured applicants that it was possible to withdraw from the study yet stay in the interview. Withdrawal from the study would have no effect on the outcome of their interviews. Before the interviews, applicants were reassured by the interviewers that this research was quite separate from the interviewing panel's actions regarding selection.

- Meeting interviewers before and after the interviews to check that they were willing to participate in the research. Applicants were not present at these meetings.

- Making it verbally clear to applicants before the interview, and physically clear during the interview, that I had no part in decision-making regarding the selection process. To minimise intrusion, I made it physically clear, in terms of eye contact, seating location, posture and by remaining silent, that I was not part of the interview process.

- Requesting, before the interviews, that interviewers and researcher sign a statement confirming that applicants could, at any time, withdraw from the
study yet remain in the interview or request the withdrawal of the researcher from the interview at any time without affecting the outcome of the interview.

The main purpose of the pre-interview meetings was to minimise distress to applicants and to interviewers and to show them that I was open, honest and approachable. Hence, applicants who had agreed to a researcher being present at their job interview were not surprised to see me in the interview room. After the interviews, I met applicants again in a separate room to check that each applicant was happy to remain in the study, giving them the opportunity to withdraw at that stage if they wished preserved the rights of all applicants. In addition, all applicants and interviewers were provided with an information sheet explaining in general terms the nature of the study and what would be expected from them. Each information sheet clearly displayed the following information:

- The purpose of the study and its benefits to the understanding of job interviews. It was made clear that I would be present as a non-participant observer during the interviews, and the interviews would be tape-recorded. Applicants were reassured that my observations would have no bearing on interviewers' hiring decisions. I emphasised that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained throughout, and that the data was to become my property, to be used for my research, and was not for other purposes.

- It was explained that participation was voluntary. The interviewers conducting the job interviews supported the research in order to obtain feedback regarding the organisation's interview procedure. Beyond providing this feedback, the project was not connected to the organisations in any way.

- Applicants were informed that I would sign a statement, as would the interviewers, confirming that applicants could withdraw from the research at
any time and could request my withdrawal at any time without affecting the outcome of their interview.

- Reassurance was given that if an applicant changed his or her mind, the applicant could ask for the tape of their own interview to be erased in front of them, which I was happy to do. To gain feedback about performance in the interview, an applicant could listen to his or her own interview with me, although applicants were not allowed to listen to recordings of any other interviews. The confidentiality issue of storage of tapes and data was explained: applicants were informed that recordings and transcripts remained with me at all times, and were for my use only. The rights of applicants in this respect were also made clear to interviewers.

Another decision that it is crucial for the researcher to bear in mind is what and how much to tell participants about the point of the research. In Fletcher's (1990) study of selection interviews, the precise nature of the investigation was not explained to participants, in case it affected their responses. Therefore, I informed participants only that I wanted to learn how interviewers and applicants communicate in real-life job interviews. I did not mention that I was analysing their language, paralanguage, body language and appearance as this could have changed the way participants normally talked and behaved. Participants were informed that the general intention of the research was to examine "interviewer-applicant communication." By ensuring that the wording was general rather than specific, this reduced the possibility that applicant and interviewer responses would be biased by my observation of their behaviour. A similar technique was used by Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992, p.417) who used general wording asking patients and physicians to participate in a study of "doctor-patient communication."

Here I explain how harm was minimised in the present study.

3.5.2 The Role of Non-Participant Observer - Minimising Harm During the Interview
Observer-based research in naturalistic settings is well established for example, see Lincoln and Guba (1985), LeCompte and Preissle (1993), and Richardson, Snell Dohrenwend and Klein (1965). Naturalistic observation attempts to set up conditions that help the people being observed forget about taping and observation, therefore reducing potential discomfort to them. For instance, video cameras are hidden, and observers often either remain out of sight of participants or make it clear that they will not engage in the task at hand (Goodwin, 1981; Hopper, Koch & Mandelbaum, 1986).

Published research on communication in job interviews indicates that the inclusion of an observer is not unusual. With permission, Chew (1997) observed, taped and video recorded admission interviews for teachers in a tertiary institution. She states that although some applicants were initially surprised to see her they quickly forgot about her once the interview began. Furthermore, well-known sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1994, 2005) recorded workplace conversation in such a way that the participants forgot about her and the taping. In addition, real-life job interviews were videotaped by Kacmar and Hochwarter (1995). Applicants in their study reported that the video camera had no influence on their behaviours as they were absorbed in conversation. Examples of non-participant observation include studies of planning meetings in a hospital (Humphrey & Berrow, 2000), of communication between nurses and ancillary staff (Graff, Roberts & Thornton, 1999), and communication between librarian and library user (Radford 1998).

The purpose of non-participant observation in this study was to gain a more accurate and detailed impression of participants. However, Hall and Rist (1999) and LeCompte and Preissle (1993), researchers in the field of selection interviews and communication, found that participants may change their behaviour as result of the observation hence the need to remove stress on participants which could happen if I, as observer, were too evident during the interviews. The presence of the researcher in the interview is a factor that must be handled sensitively in order not to distress applicants. Knowing that observation can adversely affect participants, I tried to minimise such effects and accounted for this in how I established the
interview process. Non-participant observation involves the researcher taking on a detached role while participants interact, therefore I was able to avoid becoming involved in the interviews and influencing outcomes.

It was necessary to be mindful of the value of clarifying my non-participating role with all participants and ensuring that this role was preserved during the interview itself. Nevertheless, I remained aware that observation does have an effect on the situation being observed and the people who are participating. Hence, before the interviews, efforts were made to minimise the possibility of negative reactions as far as possible by making it clear to applicants that I was not involved in the selection process and that I was not an interviewer. Before their interviews, I explained to applicants that taking the role of non-participant observer meant that I had no active participation in the normal processes and decisions of the interviewers; this minimised distress and prepared applicants for the fact that I would be present in the interview room. During the interviews, I reduced negative reactions by removing myself as much as possible from the interaction. For instance, when observing body language I studied participants briefly for three five-minute periods and avoided eye contact with them.

An important aspect of establishing the observation is in how the researcher is introduced into the situation, the degree that the researcher interacts and where the researcher is positioned. Metz (1978, pp.259-261) was introduced to her participants simply as "an observing university student." In classroom research, Baker (1985) found that teachers interfered with her observations by including her in their interactions, and Goetz (1975) found that her own behaviour may have influenced students and teachers. These studies suggested the need to prevent both interviewers and applicants engaging me in the interviews. Therefore, it was critical to remain aware of my behaviour to decrease the effect of my presence. Intrusion was minimised by making it physically clear that I was not part of the interview process. I sat apart at the side of the room away from the participants and remained silent. In addition, I avoided eye contact with them, therefore applicants did not attempt to include me in the interview. As participants were focusing intently on the
interview they appeared to pay no attention to me or to the tape-recorder. In my post-interview discussions with interviewers and applicants, which were conducted separately, participants confirmed that they had not noticed the tape recorder or me. Applicants reported that they were engaged in listening to interviewers' questions and thinking of responses. Interviewers stated that they were concentrating on conducting the interviews, gathering information about applicants and evaluating them. An example of the effectiveness of this strategy is the study by Metz (1978) who sat at the back of a classroom when observing students. Metz ignored students’ attempts to get her attention, consequently the students ignored her, "thereby helping to ensure that the interactions were not uncommon" (pp.259-261).

I now discuss the two case studies that were conducted in order to address core questions of the current research.

### 3.6 The Case Studies: Selection of Participants and Sample

To locate volunteers for this study, I made initial contact with several organisations by telephone. The purpose of the research was explained, and employers who expressed an interest in participating received a detailed letter, which provided them with information on what was involved. Then I waited for employers to contact me. Expressions of interest were received from several organisations, including a department of local government that was conducting six interviews for the purpose of hiring a Transport Officer and from a law firm conducting four interviews for a Legal Assistant. The two organisations were similar in terms of management structure as in both organisations there were clearly defined lines of authority and status based on job title.

The Transport Officer position and the Legal Assistant position were chosen for this study because they were both medium-level jobs, that is, positions that required the applicant to have relevant experience and qualifications. Therefore, this study compared medium level jobs. For this research, vacancies were classified into lower, medium and higher level, although it is recognised that job classification is
not usually as clear-cut. Lower level positions were those for which applicants required few or no formal qualifications and experience. Higher-level jobs required a degree and considerable amount of experience i.e. a position for a Chief Executive.

Qualitative methods permitted me to use a sample size of 10 interviews, which ensured a more thorough analysis of data. For instance, after the interviews it was practicable to meet all of the interviewers and applicants for discussions and to contact them by telephone and by e-mail. In addition, it was possible to observe and tape-record all of the job interviews myself, and I was able to spend much time on transcription and analysis. Due to the sample size it was possible to perform an intensive analysis of communication and the relationships between interviewers and applicants. When a study involves a large number of participants, the researcher may not have sufficient resources to perform a close examination of each individual.

For instance, Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle (1990) comment that it is worthwhile undertaking intensive analysis of a few individuals, as do Kacmar and Hochwarter (1995) who undertook a field examination of demographic effects on interview outcomes. Furthermore, in a seminal study on applicant IM by Young and Kacmar (1998) it was found that the cost and time involved in conducting real-life interviews prohibited enlisting multiple organisations, or a large number of interviewers and applicants. Other researchers have used relatively small numbers of participants (e.g. Easton, 1994, Feagin, 1979; Heath & Luff, 1994; Wennerstrom, 2000). Feagin, who studied the white community in Alabama, United States of America, limited her research to a small number of participants rather than studying all generations and social classes in her local community. She argues that the sample size allowed her to examine data more closely and observe change. In a study of laughter and gender differences in mixed gender groups, Easton tape-recorded four groups each with four participants. She explains that this allowed her to include an equal number of men and women in each group and to devote more time and concentration when transcribing each recording.
Above all, it was crucial to guarantee that the purpose and method of this research was thoroughly explained to each participant before the interviews, to ensure that each person had enough information on which to base their decision to take part. In addition, after the interviews had been conducted I met each participant to ask them if they were happy to remain in the study.

3.6.1 Transport Officer Interviews in Local Government

The first study involved six interviews in local government offices in London for one vacancy for a Transport Officer. Chapters 4 and 5 contain a full analysis of the data obtained from these interviews. The interviews were conducted by two male managers and a female Human Resources Officer. It seems that personality was an important selection criterion because on the day of the interviews the Human Resources Officer provided applicants with psychometric tests that were designed to test personality. She asked them to complete the tests before their interviews. Psychometric tests are described by Verity (2002) as "a standardised way of measuring different aspects of mental processes" (p.33).

Before the interviews I gathered information about the position of Transport Officer from the statement of duties on the job description and from discussions with the three interviewers. The Transport Officer was responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of transport for handicapped schoolchildren. Duties involved daily liaison with parents and teachers and dealing with their many queries about transport arrangements. The post holder was expected to arrange transport routes at short notice and to cope with frequent telephone calls from teachers and parents enquiring about transport delays and changes to routes.

The interviewers revealed to me that they wanted to hire someone who was calm, well organised, able to work on their own initiative and pro-active, meaning someone who would take a hands-on approach and who could improve procedures and methods. The job of Transport Officer was described to me as stressful, that is, demanding, therefore it was crucial that the successful person was someone who
was able to work well under pressure. Furthermore, the successful applicant needed to have considerable experience in the field of transport, financial management skills and relevant qualifications and with a caring nature and the ability to show empathy to parents and their children.

An added bonus to the research was the fact that in the past I had worked in local government, which provided me with an insight into the way that public service organisations operate. From my own observations as a public servant some time ago, local government in the United Kingdom has a hierarchical structure that centres on job titles, and formal and bureaucratic administrative procedures. However, I found that the culture of local government could also be described as informal. In my experience of working in local government there was no rigid dress code, and employees addressed each other by their first names. A system of flexible working hours was in operation meaning that staff started and finished work each day anytime between the core hours of 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., although they were permitted to commence work no later than 10.00 am and to finish no earlier than 3.30 pm.

Each week staff completed timesheets recording the hours they had worked and submitted the timesheets to their manager. Although staff were able to vary the hours they worked each week, they were required to work at least 143 hours a month. If staff accumulated more than 143 hours they were allowed to use the extra hours to be absent from work. Some staff accumulated enough hours to be on leave for a day or several days at a time.

However, administrative procedures in local government could be described as formal and complex. Administrative matters frequently were not completed for many months due to the large amount of paperwork involved, and the need for decision making to be referred to committees and to senior officials who wielded considerable power and influence compared with other employees. However, The Equal Opportunity policy is part of public service policy in the United Kingdom as in some other countries. Regarding employment, local government actively
promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation. Nonetheless, my experience was that whilst employees lower in the hierarchy i.e. receptionists were protected from discrimination in terms of recruitment and selection, they had little actual power or influence within the organisation compared with people who were higher up, namely senior managers.

The Transport Officer interviews in this study were formal as they followed a set procedure. At the start of each interview Interviewer 1, who was the Director of the Transport Department, gave a lengthy "speech." Before his speech, he informed each applicant that he wanted to ensure that all applicants were provided with the same information about the organisation. Therefore, it can be said that he wanted applicants to perceive that they were receiving equal treatment. All six applicants were required to answer 14 questions, as shown in Appendix E. The interviewers had compiled these questions before the interviews. Therefore, all applicants answered the same questions. During the interviews, the same interviewers asked the same questions each time. It could be argued that the formal style of questioning in the Transport Officer interviews showed that the interviewers were very much in control of the interviews and the verbal contributions of applicants.

The tape recordings produced valuable data because after each interview and before the next applicant arrived the interviewers talked among themselves, discussing what they liked and disliked about the previous applicant. Hence, through their comments to each other the interviewers revealed their perceptions of each applicant and how the applicants’ communication behaviours were influencing their hiring decisions. Consequently, I learned much about which behaviours create favourable impressions and which do not. In Chapters 4 and 5 when the data is analysed, it is explained how these impressions were created and how the interviewers reacted.

After all the interviews were completed there was the opportunity for me to question the interviewers about the way they perceived each applicant’s
communication. I was careful to ensure that my questions were unbiased, in other words that the questions did not lead the interviewers to answer in a particular way. Through the recordings and during meetings with the interviewers I gathered a large quantity of data concerning the attributes of successful and unsuccessful applicants. This data was invaluable as it enabled me to strive for accuracy in my interpretations of applicants’ behaviour.

### 3.6.2 Legal Assistant Interviews in a Law Firm

The second study was conducted in a law firm in London. I recorded and observed four real-life selection interviews for the post of Legal Assistant to a solicitor, and Chapters 4 and 5 provide a detailed analysis of this data. This interview was different from the Transport Officer interviews in that there was only one interviewer who was male. Therefore, it was not possible to record any interviewer discussions as I did for the Transport Officer interviews. Nonetheless, I gathered a considerable amount of feedback about applicants during my conversations with the law firm interviewer after the interviews. The interviewer had a relaxed and informal interviewing style, that is, he did not draw up a list of questions before the interviews, preferring to ask each of the four applicants different questions. However, most of his questions related to applicants' work histories and information they had provided on their CVs. Unlike the interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews, he also asked some questions that were personal, which it could be argued were irrelevant and illegal.

From the statement of job duties and from discussions with the interviewer, I learned that the successful applicant would be dealing with conveyancing work that involved the transfer of domestic property from one owner to another. The solicitors in this firm had demanding schedules and large workloads. Consequently, their Legal Assistants had considerable autonomy and were expected to deal with queries and produce documents and correspondence on their own without guidance from the solicitors. Legal Assistants’ duties included making telephone calls to the Land Registry to conduct searches on behalf of clients and liaising with clients in person and on the telephone. Therefore, the post holder required considerable
knowledge of matters concerning the sale and purchase of houses and a talent for communicating with clients. Also required were fast and accurate keyboard skills and to be proficient at producing business documents on a computer. A calm disposition was necessary as was the ability to work under pressure.

It was an advantage that I had worked in two law firms over a period of several years as during this time I gained insights about organisational culture. I observed relationships between senior solicitors and the staff who worked for them i.e. secretaries and administrative personnel. In addition, I listened to conversations that occurred among the staff. They often discussed solicitors who worked in the firm and the partners who owned and ran the firm. In both law firms, relationships between solicitors and their staff were characterised by a power imbalance. This was apparent in the powerful language that solicitors used when delegating tasks to their staff and the responses of the secretaries and clerical staff who used the powerless language style. Similar differences in language style between powerful and powerless individuals were found in a study of courtrooms by Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson & O'Barr (1978).

In one of the firms I witnessed that solicitors frequently used their linguistic skills to maintain control over their staff, who had little autonomy. The solicitors' voices were commanding, that is, they spoke in strong, clear voices and they used "short sentences containing a diverse array of concrete nouns and present tense verbs" (Bradac & Street, 1989/90, pp. pp. 207-208). I found that the two managing partners of the firm did not collaborate with their administrative staff regarding matters that affected the staff.

Hence, it can be said that the managing partners had a somewhat autocratic leadership style as they did not consider the opinions and preferences of their employees. Furthermore, staff called the solicitors by their surnames, for instance Mr. Jones, and not their first names. In comparison, the other law firm I worked at was more relaxed, meaning informal as solicitors and employees were on first name
terms, nevertheless a definite sense of hierarchy based on job title pervaded the culture of that organisation as well.

My experience of working in law firms was that the management structures were formal and characterised by a clearly defined hierarchy in terms of job title. Therefore, it is possible that the amount of power or influence an employee possessed was determined largely by their job title. According to the organisation chart of one of the law firms that I worked at the structure was as follows. At the top of the company hierarchy were partners who managed and who owned the firm. Second in the hierarchy were qualified and experienced solicitors who were not partners. Third, were junior solicitors who were newly qualified or partly qualified and in the process of taking exams and gaining experience.

Fourth in the hierarchy were legal executives, usually qualified in their own right and who assisted the solicitors, taking on many of the duties of solicitors. Fifth were legal assistants who were personal assistants to the senior partners. Sixth were junior secretaries who worked for the junior solicitors and legal executives. Lowest in the hierarchy were administrative and accounts personnel, receptionists and filing clerks. In the law firm under current investigation, job levels were similarly clear-cut, and relationships between employees seemed to be influenced by each person's job within the firm.

Hence, there is a certain amount of formality in English law firms. In some companies the administrative staff i.e. clerks and receptionists, are expected to address senior partners and solicitors by title, that is, "Mr.," "Mrs." "Ms." or "Miss" and never by the solicitor's first name. In one law firm that I worked at, my female colleagues told me that they were discouraged from wearing trousers because the male partners of the firm considered trousers "inappropriate" attire for the office. The unspoken rule was that female employees should wear skirts or dresses. "Self-help" texts on interviewing recognise that some employers still regard it as "unacceptable" for women to wear trousers to job interviews. In the words of Sutton
(2000), "some people still find trousers unacceptable female apparel so play safe and stick to a skirt or dress" (p.45).

It is possible that this kind of formality by powerful individuals emphasises differences in status and power within organisations. Consequently, interpersonal relationships could be adversely affected. Popovitch (2000) points out that these rigidly defined relationships in a typical corporate hierarchy are "far from conducive to friendship and intimacy." In such bureaucracies are found "barriers between them and us" and an "artificial division between intellectual and physical labour" (pp.78-79).

3.7 Conclusion

Chapter 3 has provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, methods and techniques used in this study of applicant language, paralanguage, body language, appearance and personality. It was explained why the communication perspective and qualitative methods, in particular the methods of CA and ContA, were crucial for the analysis of dialogue and the power relationship between interviewers and applicants. A wide range of data was gathered from 10 real-life job interviews in a law firm and in a government office by tape recording, non-participant observation, and from discussions with interviewers and applicants. In addition, it was explained that ContA was performed on nine self-help texts to discover the kinds of advice that are currently being provided to job applicants. Having made clear the procedures used for collecting and analysing data in this research it is possible now to proceed to Chapters 4 and 5 which will extend the discussion of methodology by examining excerpts from transcripts of the 10 job interviews, and comments made by the interviewers. As will be seen in the following chapters, interviewers' comments played a vital role in the analysis enabling me to compare my own impressions with their impressions, and this may have helped me to achieve greater accuracy when interpreting data.
Chapter 4: Learning from Real-Life Job Interviews: What is Said and How it is Said

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents selected excerpts from transcripts of real-life, medium-level, office-based job interviews that were tape-recorded and observed during the studies conducted in England. The two studies referred respectively to "Case 1" (six interviews for the position for Transport Officer in local government), and "Case 2," (four interviews for an Assistant to a Solicitor at a law firm). The most illustrative quotes have been chosen. Interview transcripts can be found in the Appendices. Cases 1 and 2 were similar in that they both concerned real-life job interviews for medium-level job vacancies. Both organisations had in common their conservative cultures, formal and quite rigid administrative procedures and hierarchical management structures.

This study analysed the extent to which applicants used language, paralanguage, body language, appearance, personality, and applicants' degree of participation in the interview. Second, it was intended to discover which of these communication behaviours were most crucial for success in job interviews. A third research question asked whether it is possible to address the power imbalance inherent in a job interview context. Hence, during analysis it was important to be mindful of the unequal power and status between interviewer and applicant and how this might affect their communication and relationship. Chapter 4 analyses solely verbal behaviour, that is, language and paralanguage. Appearance, personality, body language and degree of participation will be analysed later in Chapter 5. Findings of data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 will be discussed and conclusions drawn in Chapter 6.

During the interviews in Case 1, the tape-recorder remained switched on in between each interview. After each interview had ended, the three interviewers talked
among themselves about the applicant they had just interviewed before they called
the next person into the room. Hence, I recorded interviewers' comments, which
provided me with many insights regarding the way they judged applicants. Selected
excerpts of these interviewer comments appear throughout Chapters 4 and 5, which
focus on data analysis.

As only one interviewer conducted Case 2 interviews no tape-recorded discussions
were obtained. However, through conversations that I had with him before and after
the interviews it was possible to gather further insights about the data. Interviewer
perceptions illustrated the importance of impressions and impression management
(IM) in job interviews and threw light on how and what kinds of applicant
communication behaviours influence hiring decisions. Interviewers' impressions of
applicants formed crucial evidence in this research, helping to confirm my own
interpretations and revealing insights concerning what behaviours constitute
"positive presence" and lead to interview success.

Data in Chapters 4 and 5 show what can be learned from real-life selection
interviews for medium-level jobs. For these positions the applicants required
qualifications and considerable experience as a Legal Assistant or as a Transport
Officer. Nevertheless, it is recognised that some behaviours that are adequate for
the medium level jobs in this study may not be adequate in a different context.
Interviewers' expectations of applicants could be different in relation to lower level
jobs that require few qualifications or higher level jobs that may require a university
degree. Different demands may be placed on individuals who occupy different
positions of power within organisations. They may be expected to possess certain
personality characteristics i.e. assertive, self-confident, dynamic, charismatic, with
the ability to lead, inspire and motivate others, to show respect and empathy for
others, and to gain their respect in return.

Chapter 4 is divided into three parts: the first part introduces the features of interest,
namely verbal communication behaviours and gives a general view of Cases 1 and
2. The second part analyses the data, comparing and contrasting main features of
the studies in relation to language and paralanguage. The third part presents the main findings of Chapter 4, showing patterns that emerged from data analysis.

### 4.1.1 Verbal Communication Behaviours: Language and Paralanguage

For this study, the term "verbal behaviour" signifies language and paralanguage. To ensure that my interpretations were as accurate as possible it was necessary to analyse both what was said and how it was said. Language signifies utterances or words spoken aloud or what is actually said. For instance, disclosures, or the kinds of information applicants volunteer to interviewers, and questions that are asked by applicants. In contrast, paralanguage signifies how words are spoken, that is, the loudness, pitch and timing of the voice, which includes pauses, intonation and laughter (Pittam, 1994; Scherer, 1979; Tannen, 2005; Tusing & Dillard, 2000).

Verbal communication plays an important role in job interviews. By conducting a Content Analysis on nine "self-help" texts I discovered that 71% of the advice in these texts was devoted to lists of questions that applicants could expect to be asked during their interviews and how to answer them. The majority of advice within "self-help" texts was devoted to helping applicants respond to interviewers' questions. Nine per cent of the advice concerned other verbal behaviour, such as paralanguage, while 8.9% per cent of the advice in the texts comprised examples of questions for applicants to ask interviewers. Furthermore, 6.75% of the information related to applicants' appearance, and 4.35% focused on body language. As the present study shows, the interviewers paid much attention to devising questions designed to help them select the right applicant. Therefore, perhaps it is not surprising that many self-help texts focus on supplying applicants with the "correct" responses to questions.

Data in the current job interview transcripts were examined with the analytic techniques of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA). With CA the researcher simultaneously listens to tape recordings of naturally occurring conversation, such as dialogue occurring in real-life job interviews, and then
analyses transcripts produced from the tape recordings. In the words of Heritage and Atkinson (1984), the focus is on "uncovering the social organised features of talk in context" (pp.4-5). Goodwin and Heritage (1990) point out that in CA, utterances are understood as forms of action situated within specific contexts and designed with specific attention to these contexts. Complete conversations and long stretches of discourse are analysed. I used ContA to ascertain words or concepts within the transcripts and to analyse the meanings and relationships of these words and concepts. Inferences were then made about messages within the transcripts and about participants, context, and organisational culture.

Nevertheless, patterns that emerged from the job interviews analysed in this study, which are presented in the tables in Chapter 4, were drawn from a small data set and therefore do not provide conclusive evidence of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of job applicants and interviewers. For instance, the number of disclosures and other verbal behaviour that occurred in each interview was counted as an approximate estimate of frequency. This is consistent with other researchers studying conversational data who have employed a similar sample size to that used in the present study (see Easton, 1994; Hay, 1994; Holmes & Hay, 1997). After the interviews had been conducted I met the interviewers and applicants individually. These discussions with the interviewers enabled me to categorise the data and to check my interpretations.

In this chapter there is evidence that could expand the findings of Young and Kacmar's (1998) seminal study discussed in Chapter 2. As I was investigating verbal behaviour in addition to the context of each interview and its participants, I found that it was crucial to analyse whole responses, not merely parts of a response as Young and Kacmar did. Therefore, I used different analytic methods to those of Young and Kacmar. They analysed the content of applicant's responses but as the focus of their study was the effect of applicant attitudinal speech components on interviewer attitudes, their unit of analysis was verbal statements rather than full sentences or entire responses. In their research, a verbal statement was defined as a single expression or thought. Young and Kacmar concluded, "the significant
findings from this study support existing research on the influence of verbal behaviour on interviewer evaluations of the applicant (see Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988; Tullar, 1989)” (p.218).

4.1.2 Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government

Case 1 was a study involving six real-life job interviews for the position of Transport Officer. This position has responsibility for co-ordinating mini-bus transport for handicapped children to and from home and school each day. The job is a demanding one as it involves liaising with parents, head teachers and drivers on a daily basis to ensure that handicapped children are transported safely and promptly to their destinations. Managing budgets, finance and administrative procedures is also part of the role. The interviewers told me that the person they were searching for would be someone who coped well with daily pressure, and able to deal with the inevitable queries and delays that arise when co-ordinating transport for a large number of schoolchildren with special needs. The person they intended to hire would be self-motivated, able to show empathy with parents and children, and be able to use their initiative to make decisions and take responsibility without asking for help.

The post was advertised in the local weekly newspaper. Six applicants were shortlisted; they are represented in this study by the pseudonyms "Ray," "Sam," "Dan," "Val," "Joe," and "Liz." A panel of three interviewers, two managers and a senior personnel officer, interviewed them. It can be said that the local government department employed formal interview procedures as a standard format was followed for each structured interview. The Human Resources Officer issued applicants with written psychometric tests, which applicants completed before their interviews. Furthermore, the interviewers scrutinised each applicant’s CV and application form, and applicants’ referees were contacted. A list of 14 questions was formulated before the interviews, and during the interviews each interviewer asked the same questions each time. The questions are shown in Appendix E. There was no deviation from these major questions apart from an occasional supplementary
question to prompt an applicant to give more information, hence major questions contained no variants.

4.1.3 Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm

Four real-life job interviews for the position of Legal Assistant were the focus of Case 2, which took place in a law firm. Pseudonyms "Lily," "Alice," "Helen," and "Brenda" were used instead of the real names of the shortlisted applicants who were competing for the job. The role was a busy and responsible one as the Legal Assistant was expected to ensure that procedures in the solicitors’ office ran smoothly each day. The work concerned the sale and purchase of domestic properties. Tasks included conducting Land Registry searches on behalf of clients and dealing with correspondence and telephone calls from clients about conveyancing matters, which involve the transfer of property from one owner to another. Solicitors were frequently absent from the office, either at the Law Court or viewing properties. Hence, Legal Assistants in this particular law firm had autonomy and dealt with many complex matters on their own. Assistants were expected to solve queries from clients and deal with legal documents and correspondence in the solicitors’ absence.

The Managing Partner of the firm conducted the interviews. Beforehand, I talked with him to gain an idea of the kind of person he wanted to appoint. He stated that as this was a small law firm, the Legal Assistant had to be someone who could work harmoniously with other members of the team. Furthermore, it was important that the person had a calm disposition and could cope with pressure. The successful applicant would be experienced in conveyancing matters, and be able to interact confidently with clients. In addition, he required Legal Assistants to possess fast and accurate keyboard skills, computer experience, and the ability to work alone and make decisions without asking for advice.

In contrast with Case 1, the interviewer's style of questioning was informal - he used unstructured interviews with no pre-determined questions, instead he asked
each applicant different questions. None of his questions required the applicant to solve a typical work scenario; his questions centred on each applicant's work history. Moreover, whenever there was a gap in a CV, which may have indicated a break with employment, he asked the applicant about the gap. He commenced each interview by enquiring about the applicant's present job to assess how much recent conveyancing experience the applicant had and how much contact with clients was involved, in person or on the telephone. The interviewer also wanted to know if applicants felt confident dealing with clients who were "awkward," meaning those who demanded constant attention and were hard to please. Furthermore, applicants were asked how much notice they were required to provide to their current employer before leaving their job and whether they had made plans to take a holiday. The interviewers in Case 1 also asked this question.

Chapter 2 showed that when judging job applicants, interviewers are susceptible to influence by a range of variables, including their own moods and preferences. They may have preconceptions regarding their ideal job applicant (see Bate & Bowker, 1997; Graves, 1993). Interviewers are affected by busy work environments (Nordstrom, Hall & Bartels, 1998). Work deadlines, telephone calls and meetings can cause managers to suffer stress, and this could affect the way they behave as interviewers. Hartley (2003) notes that interviewer perception may be distorted by the "halo" effect, which occurs when an applicant is attributed with a range of qualities merely because they possess one observable characteristic.

While it is common knowledge that what people say in interviews and how they say it has an effect on interviewer judgments and the hiring decision, the language and paralanguage of job applicants on interviewer perceptions has received little attention in the literature. The next part of this chapter identifies what verbal behaviours are being used by applicants and how these behaviours influence interviewer impressions and decision-making. The goal of each interaction or unit of analysis was to manage an impression of competence to do the job and to demonstrate personality characteristics such as calmness, empathy, enthusiasm,
self-confidence and positive attitude, and for this impression to be received as such by the interviewer.

First it is necessary to show how applicants' disclosures were categorised and then I present the verbal behaviours that were found in Cases 1 and 2.

4.2 Language and Paralanguage Data Analysis

4.2.1 Disclosures

What applicants say, that is the information they volunteer to the interviewer, could give either an impression of power or of powerlessness. This section analyses disclosures given by job applicants in Case 1 and Case 2 to determine how the information may have influenced interviewers' perceptions of the applicants. First, the focus is on how and what types of disclosures applicants made about their work history, present work or personal life. Excerpts from interview transcripts are provided later in the chapter. Providing totals for each category of disclosure enabled me to make comparisons at the macro-level. This made it possible to find out how much of an interview tends to be taken up with each category, as shown in Table 4.1. In all of the following tables, the letter S signifies the successful applicants (Liz and Brenda). The first step was to categorise disclosures according to topic, as shown in Table 4.1. Categories for disclosures were developed in consultation with the interviewers in Case 1 and Case 2 after the interviews had been conducted. During data analysis the interviewers willingly provided their own interpretations concerning applicants' responses, and this enabled me to check my own interpretations and ensure greater reliability of the data.
Table 4.1  Disclosures Categorised According to Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of disclosure</th>
<th>Work history</th>
<th>Present work</th>
<th>Personal/Social</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Total disclosures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1 - Transport Officer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>66.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Case 2 - Legal Assistant** |              |              |                 |                |                  |
| Applicants                |              |              |                 |                |                  |
| Brenda (S)               | 2.0          | 9.0          | 5.0             | —              | 16.0             |
| Alice                   | 6.0          | 5.0          | 6.0             | 4.0            | 21.0             |
| Lily                    | —            | 12.0         | 1.0             | 3.0            | 16.0             |
| Helen                   | 2.0          | 12.0         | 4.0             | 3.0            | 21.0             |
| **Totals**              | **10.0**     | **38.0**     | **16.0**        | **10.0**       | **74.0**         |


In Case 1, the successful applicant Liz made more job-related disclosures than unsuccessful applicants and more disclosures than any other applicant, as detailed in Table 4.1. This could indicate that her responses were detailed, focused and relevant to the job-related questions being asked. However, in Case 2, some unsuccessful applicants gave a higher percentage of work-related disclosures and made more disclosures than the successful applicant. Therefore, while it is important for applicants to give job-related information, it is not how much talking the applicant does that leads to a favourable impression. What is more influential is the quality of the disclosures, that is, whether they contain sufficient relevant detail and equally important, whether the information is negative or positive, as I show in Tables 4.2 and 4.4 to follow.
Within the present research, the terms "positive" or "powerful" are used interchangeably to describe behaviours that create an agreeable or favourable impression and the terms "negative" and "powerless" denote behaviours that create a disagreeable or unfavourable impression. In this study, each type of disclosure was classified as either positive or negative. The categorisation was formed with reference to Bradac and Street (1989/90), Einhorn (1981), Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson and O'Barr (1978), and Grob, Meyers and Schuh (1997) as detailed in Chapter 2, and the present research builds upon their findings.

How disclosures are perceived, that is, as negative or positive, depends upon the interpretation of the interviewer. Therefore, it was essential to discover their opinions when I was deciding how to categorise disclosures. When applicants give positive information about their competence and personality, this may create a favourable impression, whereas negative details could produce an unfavourable one. For example, within this study, an applicant's negative disclosure would be "I had an illness last year and was admitted to hospital." Disclosing details of an illness could give the impression that the applicant is incapable of performing their work tasks and/or might frequently be absent from work. In contrast, an example of a positive disclosure would be the applicant's statement "I am confident I can do the job." This kind of statement could give the impression that the applicant is competent to do the work and has positive personality characteristics, such as self-confidence.

In this study, negative disclosures often contained powerless language such as "you know," and powerless paralanguage such as a soft, slow monotone voice. Powerless language and paralanguage will be examined in Section 4.2.2. I was particularly interested in noting at what stage of the interview applicants made their negative statements. Although negative disclosures made at any time during a job interview could have a potentially unfavourable effect, interviewers search for negative information early, therefore it is crucial to avoid disclosing negative information at this time. The literature suggests that applicants need to ensure they create a positive impression from the start of the interview. For instance, Anderson (1988),
Lewis (1990), and Zunin and Zunin (1972) caution that applicants have only several minutes in which to create a favourable impression. A study of real-life job interviews by Springbett (1958) showed that interviewers' judgments made in the first two or three minutes of the interview strongly determine the outcome. He states that interviewers search primarily for negative information which, if found early, can exert a particularly powerful influence.

It is clear that applicants would do well to avoid negative disclosures. Webster (1964) notes that "interviewers are more influenced by unfavourable than by favourable information" (p.87). Research has confirmed that negative characteristics of applicants influence hiring decisions more than positive characteristics (see Herriott & Rothwell, 1983). Discussing this phenomenon, Kellerman (1989) remarks "negative information has a great capacity to alter already existing impressions and it is more difficult to alter a negative first impression than a positive first impression" (p.37). Hence, Fry (1991), Leeds (1992), and Wilson and Goodall (1991) advise applicants to provide only positive information and to create a desirable impression.

Drummond (1993) remarks that the most powerful attitude to project is a positive one. He points out that optimists are attractive because they can see a way forward and so create hope and meaning for others, whereas negative people have nothing to offer. Very often, when applicants are asked why they want the job they typically murmur clichés about challenge and responsibility. Drummond argues that the way to create a positive impression is to use positive language and in particular to demonstrate an ability to present a negative situation in a positive light. For example, if an applicant has been made redundant they could acknowledge this in the interview and state that this is why they are looking for work. However, the applicant could also make it clear that they will not settle for just any job, and then explain why they find the advertised position attractive.

Numbers of positive and negative disclosures in each category that were made by each job applicant are displayed in Table 4.2. In my discussions with interviewers
after the interviews they confirmed that the disclosures had been correctly
categorised, that is, based on the way they had interpreted information in the
applicants’ responses during the interviews. When examining the interview
transcripts and listening to recordings of the interviews, I found that successful
applicants gave only positive information during the first five minutes of their
interviews. In contrast, all of the unsuccessful applicants gave negative disclosures
within the first five minutes, and these negative statements concerned their present
work as detailed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Positive and Negative Disclosures According to Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of disclosure</th>
<th>Work History</th>
<th>Present Work</th>
<th>Personal/social</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Total disclosures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Case 1 - Transport Officer

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Pos. or Neg. Disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>2.0 — 6.0 7.0 2.0 — — — 17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>4.0 — 17.0 — — — 2.0 — 23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>1.0 — 2.0 4.0 1.0 1.0 — — 9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>— — 10.0 3.0 — 1.0 — — 14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>4.0 1.0 3.0 4.0 — 1.0 — — 13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1.0 — 6.0 4.0 1.0 — — — 12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>12.0 1.0 44.0 22.0 4.0 3.0 2.0 — 88.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 2 - Legal Assistant

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Pos. or Neg. Disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>2.0 0.0 7.0 2.0 4.0 1.0 0.0 0.0 16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>4.0 2.0 3.0 2.0 3.0 3.0 2.0 2.0 21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>0.0 0.0 5.0 7.0 1.0 0.0 3.0 0.0 16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>0.0 2.0 7.0 5.0 0.0 4.0 2.0 1.0 21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>6.0 4.0 22.0 16.0 8.0 8.0 7.0 3.0 74.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Work History = Previous employment. Present Work = Current job. Personal/Social =
Personal information. Qualifications = Education, skills, and examinations passed. Pos. = Positive
The majority of disclosures related to applicants' present work. Overall, unsuccessful applicants in this study made many more negative disclosures than successful applicants did. In contrast, successful applicants rarely gave any negative details about themselves, as seen in Table 4.2. Unlike the other applicants in Case 1, Liz, the successful applicant, gave many more positive disclosures concerning her present work, and she made no negative statements. Brenda, the successful applicant in Case 2, and Helen, an unsuccessful applicant, both gave the same amount of positive information concerning their present jobs, although Brenda made fewer negative disclosures than Helen did. Therefore, in contrast to other applicants, both successful applicants gave mostly positive information. The amount of detail in applicants' negative disclosures and whether interviewers supported, that is, approved of the disclosures is presented in Table 4.3. Number of interactions covered indicates the number and type of negative statements provided.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1 - Transport Officer</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Comments about present work</th>
<th>Present work: number of interactions covered</th>
<th>Personal comments</th>
<th>Personal comments: number of interactions covered</th>
<th>Did the interviewers support the disclosure?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Volunteered that he was &quot;slow.&quot;</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asked for help. Unable to meet deadlines.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S) Ray</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asked for help</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Completed two years training, but unable to progress in his current job.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Father-in-law's heart attack. Relocation. problems.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>Disliked present job. Asked for help. Experienced discrimination.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Asked only one question, about her pension.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Asked for help. Unable to keep-up-to-date. Intolerant of others.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Comments about present work</th>
<th>Present work: number of interactions covered</th>
<th>Personal comments</th>
<th>Personal comments: number of interactions covered</th>
<th>Did the interviewers support the disclosure?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>Criticised present employer</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Lacked recent experience</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Illness/ Operation</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Lacked Experience/ Competence</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Lacked competence</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Unwilling to travel. Suffered a miscarriage.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: No = interviewer did not support the applicant's disclosure. Yes = interviewer supported the disclosure and expressed empathy with the applicant. Unknown = possibly a negative evaluation. Asked for help = applicants stated that they would ask their line manager for assistance. S = Successful applicant.
Negative disclosures were generally unsupported by the interviewers, as shown in the end column of Table 4.3. Successful applicant Liz made no negative statements, in contrast to other applicants in Case 1. Although Brenda, the successful applicant in Case 2, gave a small amount of negative information, she disclosed it later in her interview. In addition, the disclosure concerned her present employer and not her own competence. The negative information had no unfavourable effect possibly because from the start of her interview Brenda gave mainly positive information. Furthermore, she and the interviewer had a level of rapport, meaning that they appeared to be in harmony with each other (Hartley, 2003) as revealed by the frequent laughter they shared. Indeed, the interviewer showed empathy, agreeing with Brenda's negative remarks about her current employer.

Next, I show how many positive and negative disclosures were made by each applicant, as stated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4  Amount of Positive and Negative Disclosures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total pos. disclosures</th>
<th>Total neg. disclosures</th>
<th>% of pos. disclosures</th>
<th>% of neg. disclosures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1 - Transport Officer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>62.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pos. = Positive. Neg. = Negative. % = Percentage. S = Successful applicant
Successful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 displayed a much higher percentage of positive disclosures than unsuccessful applicants who provided a high number of negative disclosures, as detailed in Table 4.4. Disclosures made by the successful applicant in Case 1 were 100% positive, and 81% of disclosures given by the successful applicant in Case 2, were positive. Although unsuccessful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 gave some positive disclosures, they also provided a high percentage of negative information. Unsuccessful applicants Ray in Case 1, and Helen in Case 2, each disclosed more negative than positive information.

It is commonly known that applicants are judged on their competence to do the job. The percentage of positive and negative disclosures that each applicant gave about their competence is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5  Disclosures Concerning Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pos. disclosures about competence</th>
<th>Neg. disclosures about competence</th>
<th>% of pos. disclosures</th>
<th>% of neg. disclosures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Applicants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam 9.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S) 17.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray 3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan 9.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val 6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe 5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 1 - Transport Officer

Case 2 - Legal Assistant

It could be significant that successful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 made more positive disclosures about their own competence than unsuccessful applicants did. Above all, neither of the successful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 disclosed any negative information about their competence. Unsuccessful applicants, such as Sam in Case 1 and Alice in Case 2, made more negative disclosures about their competence than other applicants did, as displayed in Table 4.5.

As unsuccessful applicants in Case 1 made many negative disclosures, the purpose of the next section is to show the kinds of negative information that they were volunteering to the interviewers. Applicants are discussed in order of the strength of their performance in the interview, starting with the weakest applicant, who, in the interviewers' opinion, was Ray. This is followed by a discussion of negative disclosures given by Val, Joe, Sam and lastly Dan. Finally, I analyse the disclosures of Liz, the successful applicant, showing how her positive disclosures may have contributed to her success.

Therefore, the next section contains excerpts of CA from the interview transcripts, and includes interviewers' comments. Full explanation of the transcription symbols is provided in Appendix A. No real names of job applicants, interviewers, or organisations such as schools, have been used in any of the following excerpts of CA. Significant parts of the excerpts, meaning recorded comments made by interviewers, and applicants' disclosures, are highlighted with bold typeface and enclosed in double quotation marks. Examples of powerless language such as "you know" are as defined by Bradac and Street (1989/90), Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson and O'Barr (1978), and Grob, Meyers and Schuh (1997). For Case 1 and Case 2, the disclosures of unsuccessful applicants are discussed first, followed by an examination of the information volunteered by successful applicants.
Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government

Unsuccessful applicants

First, I discuss two scenario type questions to show how unsuccessful applicants responded and to highlight the kinds of questions that interviewers were asking in the Transport Officer interviews. The interviewers regarded the two questions as important because they were designed to discover if applicants could make decisions by themselves. Second, I show selected excerpts from the interviews that show the kinds of information interviewers were searching for. The excerpts also demonstrate negative disclosures and the influence that these may have had on the interviewers judgments.

Applicants in the Transport Officer interviews were asked 14 questions (see Appendix E). Here I discuss Question 4 and Question 10 which required applicants to explain how they would deal with a typical work scenario. Most of the applicants provided unsatisfactory responses as they stated they would need to ask for help. Although all applicants were asked the same questions, it is necessary here to show how Ray and Val two of the unsuccessful applicants responded. It can be said that their responses highlight how they created negative impressions on the interviewers. In addition, I have used Question 4 and Question 10 as examples here because they could suggest that the interviewers asked questions that were misleading.

Question 4 was designed to find out whether applicants could act without asking for assistance from their colleagues or their manager:

Question 4:
It is 2.20 p.m. You are called by a head teacher who tells you that the transport arrangements for a particular child are not satisfactory, and she wants alternative arrangements put in place by 3.30 the same day. What questions do you think you might ask her, and who would you look to for assistance?
Question 4 may have been designed to test the applicant's level of confidence, initiative, and problem solving skills. However, it could be said that the final part of the question "who would you look to for assistance"? might deceive some applicants into thinking they were expected to ask for help. Several applicants in the Transport Officer interviews stated that they would ask for help from their line manager.

As interviewers have authority to control the interview procedure and the verbal contributions of applicants (Fairclough, 1989) and as relations of power are implicit in organisations and in the selection interview (Fletcher, 1992), it could be argued that Question 4 was intended to deceive applicants. To succeed, applicants may have given the response that they thought was the correct one, that is, the one they believed the interviewer expected. Popovitch (2000, p.100) discusses "knockout" questions that have the potential to eliminate applicants if they are not answered properly. It seems that some applicants in the Transport Officer interviews did not realise that "Who would you look to for assistance"? was a "knockout" question. It is possible that the following applicants were competent to act, but were providing the response they believed that the interviewer was expecting. On the other hand, it could be argued that their responses revealed their lack of competence.

For the Transport Officer position, the interviewers wanted to hire someone who could take full responsibility for managing situations on their own, that is, someone who could make decisions without asking for assistance. However, in the transcript of Ray's interview his language and paralanguage provide important clues showing why he did not create a positive impression. Furthermore, he did not answer Question 4 fully. His answer was vague, as he did not mention which questions he would ask the head teacher. More important, his responses indicated that he was unable to deal with the problem himself, and would ask for help. Interviewer 2 asked Ray, "If you were in there on your own, let's put it that way, what would you do"? and Ray replied "there would always be somebody in a higher position that you could ask if you were unsure," and he repeated "ask somebody higher up to make sure that it gets done."
Val's interview suggested that she did not have the attributes the interviewers were looking for, namely confidence and ability to make decisions without help. Question 4 was put to Val who also stated that she would need help from her manager. When Val disclosed "I'd have to go to my line manager" this provided the impression that she could not make decisions on her own.

There was possible further evidence, in the interview of Joe, that unsuccessful applicants were unable to act on their own. Concerning Question 4, Interviewer 2 asked Joe "And who would you look to for assistance"? Joe responded, "Well, I would report to my boss. Er, liaise with him about the situation and try and rectify it."

Later, the interviewers asked Ray and Val to solve a different scenario, namely Question 10:

Question 10:
A parent complains to you that a driver of a minibus is consistently late in picking up her daughter. What would be your line of enquiry, and how would you overcome this problem?

Ray answered, "I assume you would probably check with like your Manager, or whatever, to find out what should be done, and, if necessary, take the appropriate steps." This response was vague as Ray did not elaborate on what were the "appropriate" steps. Again Ray gave the impression he could not act without asking for help, therefore the interviewers decided that he was not competent to do the job. Ray appeared passive, as he did not initiate dialogue and he was unable to provide detailed explanations in response to questions, even when prompted. This was reflected in a comment made by Interviewer 3, "I did try to prompt him by asking him further questions, but, you know."

The interviewers clearly wanted to hire someone with the confidence and dynamism to act on their own initiative. Ray obviously created an unfavourable impression when, instead of maximising his strengths, he disclosed that he lacked confidence. In a soft, slow monotone voice that gave the impression he was tired
and lacking in energy, Ray volunteered "I suppose, at times, I'm not the most confident of people." Ray's powerless paralanguage and the disclosure that he was unconfident may have given the impression that Ray lacked dynamism and motivation, as Interviewer 2 remarked "It is difficult to imagine him leaping into action."

In contrast to Ray, it can be said that Val answered Question 10 well because she stated that she would discover the reason for the driver's lateness and find a different route for the transport. If the driver was consistently late she stated that disciplinary action would be required. However, there were frequent pauses in her response which was made in a soft, slow monotone voice, hence Val possibly gave the impression she was not enthusiastic enough about the job.

Having explained the two scenario questions that the interviewers considered to be important, I now discuss other excerpts of CA that highlight the negative disclosures of unsuccessful applicants.

For instance, Interviewer 3 recalled how she had asked Val "What do you see as the most difficult task of a Manager"? Interviewer 3 disapproved of Val's response because Val stated that she had suffered discrimination by her male team members as "some of them resented a female manager." In addition, Val made a further negative disclosure that there was "a big problem" with timesheets and travel claims. As Val did not provide an accurate answer, Interviewer 3 prompted her by asking "What do you personally see as the most difficult task of being a manager"? It could be argued that this question led applicants to give negative information as it implied that being a manager involved difficult tasks. Val answered that as she was a new employee and did not "know the system," and because she was a female manager, some staff would take advantage of her situation. Consequently, Val's answer may have given the impression that she lacked self-confidence.

As the next excerpt from the interviewers' conversation shows, they laughed when they recalled Val's response. In lines 140 and 143 the interviewers repeated what
Val had said, showing that they paid close attention to her negative disclosure "the men drivers wouldn't like me you know." Val's responses demonstrate how important it was for applicants to show they were interested and that they had some knowledge of the job. It seems that Val had not prepared sufficiently for her interview as she was unaware that the Transport Department consisted mainly of female employees. Val knew little about the Transport Officer position, and this created an unfavourable impression as it suggested that she had not prepared for her interview. The interviewers remarked to me that as Val had not made an effort to search for information about the job, she was not interested in it.

The next excerpt shows a discussion between the three Interviewers which occurred immediately after Val's interview. The excerpt highlights how the interviewers reacted to Val’s remarks:

140 INTERVIEWER 3 (p x 3) I asked her "What is the most difficult task in being a manager"? The resentment of a female, and trying to pull the wool over my eyes (laugh). Yes.

141 INTERVIEWER 2 Oh well yes, I mean, we had reverse equality there, didn't we!?

142 INTERVIEWER 3 [(laugh) I mean, when we

143 INTERVIEWER 2 [(asked about the driver she said "the men drivers wouldn't like me you know."]

144 INTERVIEWER 1 Yes, it didn't occur to her that a lot of,=/

145 INTERVIEWER 2 /=all our drivers are ladies, and 95% of our escorts are ladies as well!

It became clear that the interviewers expected applicants to provide detailed and accurate responses. Lines 101 and 102 of the following excerpt from a discussion between Interviewer 1 and Interviewer 3 shows that they both tried to prompt Val to give more information, but she did not take their cue and expand her answers. Therefore, they decided that although "her personality and manner is in fact one of her strengths, how she answered the questions was a weakness." The comment by Interviewer 1 in line 102 suggests how important it is for applicants to be knowledgeable about the job for which they are applying. Applicants should come
to the interview fully prepared to enable them to volunteer information without much prompting from the interviewers:

101 INTERVIEWER 3 I kept trying to prompt her though but she. I was trying to expand my question, but she wouldn't answer it.

102 INTERVIEWER 1 Yes, I mean, um, I tried, but with some though it's difficult. I like to ask supplementaries to try and draw people out, but on the other hand you don't like to. It's very easy to actually tell them what it is you want them to tell you.

There was more evidence in the interviewers' comments that it was most important for applicants to prepare for the interview and appear interested in the job. Moreover, applicants were expected to have a considerable amount of experience for the post of Transport Officer. The next excerpt shows a discussion between the three interviewers as they compared unsuccessful applicants Sam and Val. This was at the point when they were comparing applicants after all of the interviews had been conducted.

As seen in lines 129 and 131, Interviewer 3 disapproved of Val because she asked only one question. Rather than enquiring about the job, Val asked a question concerning transferral of her pension scheme. As she asked no questions about the work, she did not appear to have a genuine interest in the job. Line 132 shows that Interviewer 2 was impressed that Sam had thought about the job and had prepared for the interview, possibly because he had asked questions about the job. Lines 137 and 138 show that because Sam was interested, experienced and well prepared, the interviewers regarded him as a stronger applicant than Val:

129 INTERVIEWER 3 He was giving fuller answers, but, I mean, I HATE it when people don't come with any questions prepared. mm mm mm

130 INTERVIEWER 1 mm mm mm

131 INTERVIEWER 3 They MUST have questions.

132 INTERVIEWER 2 Yes, well, on that basis, I mean, he'd thought about it, and the other thing=/

133 INTERVIEWER 1 /=He had, he had prepared quite well (loudly)

134 INTERVIEWER 3 [He was prepared, he was prepared.

135 INTERVIEWER 2 =he'd got, he'd got experience, which she hadn't
Although Val's application form impressed the interviewers, her performance during the interview did not. This could suggest how crucial it is to express competence and enthusiasm during interviews as when deciding whom to hire, interviewers appear to rely on the subjective information they gather from applicants face-to-face. The interviewers were not impressed that Val responded passively to their questions without initiating any comments of her own. Her responses suggested that she had not researched the job and knew little about the work, therefore, she was unable to discuss it in detail with the interviewers. The excerpt below shows Interviewers 1 and 2 discussing Val and deciding which applicants would be placed on the short list. The excerpt is illustrative of how important it is for applicants to be active, rather than passive. Again this suggests that applicants need to enthusiastically show that they have a thorough understanding of the job:

Therefore, interviewers expect applicants to ask relevant questions, and they take an unfavourable view of applicants who do not as these applicants seem unprepared and may appear to lack genuine interest in the vacancy. "Self-help" texts advise applicants to "be clearly interested in the company" (Amos, 2001, p.40). Similarly, Popovitch (2000) reminds applicants that people who express a "real interest in employers, are the ones who get jobs" (p.77). "Self-help" texts comment that
questions that show an interest in the organisation and its plans for the future are a good idea as are questions about training opportunities. They warn that negative questions, such as those that concern the risk of redundancy, should be avoided. Applicants are advised to ask a maximum of three questions (Sutton, 2000) at the end of the interview but are warned not to prolong the interview by asking too many questions (see Amos, 2001; Corfield, 2003; Popovitch, 2000).

The following excerpt from Joe's interview makes clear that interviewers prefer to hire applicants who can keep up-to-date with information. When asked by Interviewer 1 "How would you keep yourself up-to-date on legal and technical developments affecting the job"?, Joe gave a response that was vague: he was unable to say how he would locate information. Therefore, in line 56 Interviewer 1 prompted Joe to provide a more detailed answer. In line 57, Joe gave another vague answer, and in line 58 Interviewer 2 interrupted Joe with a question in order to prompt him again. As seen in line 59, Joe admitted he did not know which sources to use. In line 60, the interviewer tried once more to prompt Joe. Nevertheless, despite repeated prompting Joe was unable to give a more precise answer, as shown in line 61:

56 INTERVIEWER 1 How would you DO that?
57 JOE: I think it’s about getting the relevant information. Obviously, you have to be able to get all the relevant information from the right source, um, say that you=/
58 INTERVIEWER 1 /=Have you any idea of the sort of sources you have in mind?
59 JOE: =No (p x 5 )
60 INTERVIEWER 1 I was thinking, you know, the trade press for example. Um, are there any other sources you can, that come to mind, so that you could keep up-to-date, besides reading things in the trade press?
61 JOE: Um, I suppose it would be the, the, the resources that are available to me, um, within the job, will point me in the direction to get the necessary information that I need.

Consequently, Interviewer 1 was unimpressed because Joe gave weak answers. He commented to the other interviewers that compared to other applicants Joe's
"answers were not strong." Interviewer 1 added, "His answers to questions were only 'so so'. His answers to the questions to be honest were not any better than those of Sam." Hence, by failing to give a detailed answer, that is, by not stating which sources he would use to gather information, Joe seemed to create a negative impression. Joe gave the impression that he had not thought about the requirements of the job. He appeared to be unaware that for the role of Transport Officer it was crucial to keep up-to-date with current events and legislation. Therefore, he may have seemed inexperienced and unprepared.

The interview with Sam demonstrated the significance of providing positive information, asking positive questions, and avoiding disclosures that could be perceived negatively. Sam gave seven negative disclosures about his work, some of which he provided within the first five minutes of his interview. When asked if he had any weaknesses he described himself as "slightly slow," repeating these words three times. In addition, Sam's interview shows that interviewers were sensitive to any kind of negative information as they scrutinised questions and words they regarded as negative. For instance, Sam informed the interviewer "I was talking to the secretary the other day and she said that, er, in this post you might be expected to take a certain amount of grief from the parents, schools, and what have you"? Interviewer 2 replied, "I think I'd quibble with the words 'certain amount'. You’re going to get 'grief'. That’s part of the job."

The next excerpt showing a conversation between the three interviewers shows how Sam's negative question about "grief" attracted their attention and appeared to create an unfavourable impression. The fact that Sam asked the question gave them the impression that he was unable to cope with pressure, as evident in lines 177 and 180. Interviewer 3 expressed concern that Sam had asked the question about "grief" which Interviewer 2 interpreted to mean "stress." Furthermore, in line 181, Interviewer 2 pointed out that before the interview Sam "had been told it was a stressful job," therefore Sam had asked a question that was perceived as irrelevant:

177 INTERVIEWER 3: I was a bit worried about the question he asked about grief.
Furthermore, the interview of Dan, the strongest of the unsuccessful applicants, revealed how interviewers paid attention to negative information. This highlights the need for applicants to give positive disclosures. Particularly important was the ability to "network," that is, to create and maintain good work relationships. Although Dan stated that he was good at "networking," some of his responses gave the opposite impression. He explained that he had no future with his present company despite undergoing training. Dan volunteered "having just completed an 18 month, almost two year course with the group that I was with I was hoping to make a future there, but that has not come to fruition unfortunately, and I am getting very frustrated." After Dan's interview, Interviewer 1 who seemed concerned about Dan's negative disclosure, stated "It is the case, isn’t it, that the company have not got a place for him at the end of his training"?

In addition, the transcript of Dan's interview showed that Dan expressed dissatisfaction with his current employer when he remarked, "I'm a great believer in providing service," adding "I get very frustrated at times when we don't provide it." Dan's final remark "I can't get the impetus from above to put that right" gave the impression that he was not supported by senior management. Therefore, it seems that Dan did not have good work relationships with people in his current workplace. During my discussions with the interviewers they confirmed that this negative disclosure provided by Dan had created an unfavourable impression on them.

Dan's interview also showed that interviewers do not appreciate it when applicants talk too much or disclose irrelevant information. Although Dan gave several positive disclosures that displayed his experience and competence, the interviewers remarked to me that they thought his responses were repetitive and contained irrelevant detail. Immediately after the interviews, Interviewer 1 commented "I really only wrote down the things that he said which I felt were relevant to the kind of answer I was expecting." This could indicate that the interviewer thought Dan's
answers were too long. Dan also disclosed much negative personal information. On one occasion he showed a lack of communicative competence because he did not take up the opportunity to ask questions as invited by the interviewer. He spoke rapidly without pausing, and his incessant talking prevented the interviewers from contributing to the dialogue. After he had finished talking, a rather irritated Interviewer 2 queried, "Right, well, do you want to ask us anything"?

The next excerpt shows a discussion between the three interviewers concerning Dan. The excerpt demonstrates how necessary it was for applicants to give concise, relevant responses and to ensure that they permitted the interview dialogue to be a two-way conversation. In job interviews, both the applicant and the interviewer should have equal opportunity to contribute verbally. However, it is possible that Interviewer 1 was annoyed that Dan did not allow him or the other interviewers to speak because he remarked that Dan was "nervous" and "rather difficult to get a word in edgeways." On a more positive note, it can be seen in lines 178 and 179 that Interviewers 1 and 3 agreed that Dan "did answer the questions fully."

Moreover, Interviewer 1 concluded that Dan was competent as after the interview he remarked "I have no doubt that he could do the job." Nevertheless, although he was competent, as will be seen in Chapter 5, Dan's verbal behaviour may have created unfavourable impressions of his personality:

175 INTERVIEWER 1  Go on to the next one then.
176 INTERVIEWER 2  Dan?
177 INTERVIEWER 1  Yes, he was rather difficult to get a word in edgeways. He reminded me very much of the manager of the bus company. Once you start him off you can’t get a word in edgeways, and the more nervous (p x 3), when I think, I know I do the same. If I’m nervous, I talk more.
178 INTERVIEWER 3  He did answer the questions fully though, didn’t he?
179 INTERVIEWER 1  Oh, he did!

However, Dan’s interview highlighted that it is essential for applicants to express the ability to interact confidently with others, to share information and to maintain work relationships. The following comment made by Interviewer 1 about Dan shows that it is possible that interviewers evaluate networking skills during job
interviews. When forming their impressions, interviewers could pay specific attention to the level of rapport the applicant establishes with them. Furthermore, as seen in the next excerpt Interviewer 1 was impressed that Dan knew how to locate information as he remarked "That’s one of the things I judge, people who understand about networking." Dan related well with the interviewers, that is, he seemed relaxed, confident and enthusiastic. He also had considerable knowledge of the job, and above all, he knew how to gain information and keep up-to-date with legislation. Hence, through his confident verbal interaction with the interviewers, Dan demonstrated his networking skills:

189 INTERVIEWER 1 He answered the questions on legal and technical developments well, and knew about the trade press publications, and knew about talking to colleagues and other individuals to get information. That’s one of the things I judge, people who understand about networking, without necessarily using the jargon word networking, but knew that you talk to head teachers, you talk to colleagues, er you made friends with key people, and understand how to operate in an organisation.

Successful applicant - Liz

The mainly positive responses provided by Liz, the successful applicant, were in direct contrast to the large amount of negative disclosures provided by unsuccessful applicants. Liz's interview revealed how crucial it is to be experienced, knowledgeable and competent and to give positive answers that are detailed and relevant. Liz had recent experience in the field of transport, hence her skills and knowledge were up-to-date, which may have helped her to confidently display a thorough understanding of the duties of the post of Transport Officer. As an example of the kinds of disclosures that Liz provided, Interviewer 2 asked her, "What are your key strengths and how can they help you in the post"? Liz replied "I feel that my key strengths are being able to communicate" and she mentioned that she would communicate with "assessment team, welfare service, health services, schools, teachers." In addition, when asked about her weaknesses, Liz remarked, "I don’t think I have any weaknesses. I know it is saying that I’m perfect but." Her
modest attitude may have ensured that Liz was perceived most favourably by the interviewers.

The following excerpt from Liz's interview shows how important it was for applicants to promote their competence and personality through positive and detailed responses. It can be seen in the excerpt that Liz provided positive statements about herself, whereas some unsuccessful applicants i.e. Sam and Ray had described themselves in a negative way. Liz emphasised only her strengths and mentioned no weaknesses. For emphasis, she occasionally repeated information and gave examples to illustrate her capability. These kinds of positive statements about her competence and positive personal qualities appeared throughout her interview. Certainly I gained the impression that she was self-confident, enthusiastic and competent to do the job, and the interviewers remarked to me that they also formed the same impression about Liz:

13 LIZ: I think you have to be quick in assessing the situation, be able to understand what route is available, whether you need a new route. So, you have to have a quick assessment level I think, be flexible, adaptable to situations, accurate with information. And I think I’m accurate in giving the information to the contractors, because you have to understand that contractors are outside bodies who are actually merely carrying out operations on your behalf, and I think I’m that. I’m very accurate in giving information to them. Um. I’m assertive.

Liz displayed attributes that may have helped her to create a most positive image. She expressed a willingness to learn and empathy for other people. Furthermore, she was able to establish rapport with the interviewer. There is evidence of this in the next excerpt from her interview. First, Liz mentioned that she was willing to undertake further study and training. This indicated that she was enthusiastic and interested in the job. Then she stated that she was keen to ensure that training was provided for the minibus drivers and escorts, which gave the impression that she was considerate of the needs of others. The interruption by the interviewer in line 173 and the overlapping speech suggested that the dialogue was lively and that
there was rapport between Liz and the interviewer. Overlap occurs when one person’s contribution overlaps with the contribution made by another person. It can signify amusement, rapport, enthusiasm, and interest in the talk of others (Holmes, 2000; Tannen, 2005). After the interview, Interviewer 1 commented that he was impressed by Liz’s attitude, for instance, her interest and enthusiasm for the job:

172 LIZ I am very much interested in um pursuing a course, a certificate in XX, if the opportunity arises, um, which I think is er, is a course um sponsored by the XX
173 INTERVIEWER 1: [I understand?=/
174 LIZ: /=that’s right
= and, er, I’d be very much interested in that um, and any any other courses or opportunities that are available, y’know, um, to do with manual handling, and and, as I have emphasised, anything that will help our drivers and escorts in performing their tasks.

Accordingly, it can be said that Liz’s verbal behaviour demonstrated why she was successful. In my discussions with the interviewers, they commented that they were impressed by her positive disclosures through which she highlighted her strengths. Therefore, it seems that verbal behaviour was the most critical requirement for displaying the level of competence and the kind of personality the interviewers preferred. They made it clear to me that they wanted to hire someone who would contribute to the role and the organisation and who was innovative, adaptable and thorough, that is, a person who paid attention to detail.

Above all, Liz played an active part in the interview, showing initiative and interest by explaining how she would develop the role of Transport Officer. She convinced the interviewers that she would be an asset to their organisation. Moreover, when the interviewers were deciding whom to place on the short list Interviewer 1 remarked to the other two interviewers, "It was quite clear from her answers that she knew perfectly well how to do the job. She is a very strong candidate indeed." Interviewer 1 continued "I was just going to praise her further in terms of various answers she gave." Furthermore, Interviewer 1 commented to his colleagues, "She had ideas of how she wanted to develop the job, didn’t she”? Interviewer 2 was in agreement and replied "She’s got the qualities, she would receive the new things,
she would contribute." Interviewer 1 was clearly impressed by Liz's competence as he added, "And, of course, the emphasis she was putting on procedure etcetera."

Powerful verbal behaviour in a job interview is crucial, as is an active approach, namely the ability to contribute ideas and take a "hands-on" approach to the work. This is demonstrated in the next excerpt from Liz's interview. Liz's competence was recognised by Interviewer 2 who described her as a "very able candidate." He was also impressed by her verbal skill stating "she can explain things extremely well." Both Interviewers 1 and 2 regarded Liz as "articulate," and it is clear that the interviewers were in agreement about Liz as there was much overlapping speech, as shown by the square brackets. Therefore, it can be reasoned that Liz's verbal skills, her understanding of the job and her enthusiasm helped her to display "positive presence," showing both her competence and personality in a positive light:

272 INTERVIEWER 1: I’m sure she could do the job.
273 INTERVIEWER 2: Very um, able candidate, but also she is very, um, she, she can explain things [extremely well.
274 INTERVIEWER 1: [She’s articulate.
275 INTERVIEWER 2: Very articulate, and er, [she’s a thinker.
276 INTERVIEWER 3: [She seems to be very pro-active about things which are happening.
277 INTERVIEWER 2: She’s a, she’s a thinker, yeah, um.

A comment made by Interviewer 2 about Liz revealed the importance of verbal skill, particularly the need for applicants to explain why they should be offered the position rather than merely listing their attributes. Interviewer 2 stated "it’s not a question of somebody saying 'I am the greatest', it’s somebody who can actually explain WHY they’re the greatest." For example, applicants should support any claims of competence by providing examples from their past or present work and by describing how they can contribute to the job. Liz convinced the interviewers that they should hire her by showing that she had a thorough knowledge of the job and that she had the type of personality they were looking for. Moreover, Liz provided many examples and detailed explanations of her achievements which supported the claims she was making.
Next, I analyse disclosures made by job applicants Lily, Alice, Helen and Brenda who applied for the post of Legal Assistant in a law firm. Unlike the discussions that occurred after each interview among the three interviewers in Case 1, there were no similar discussions during Case 2 as there was only one interviewer. However, I was able to talk with the law firm interviewer to discover his perceptions of each applicant after the interviews had taken place.

Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm

Unsuccessful applicants

The interviewer was looking for evidence that applicants were competent to deal with conveyancing work concerning the sale and purchase of domestic properties. Most of his questions focused on applicants' past and present experience. The interviewer appeared to be searching for negative information on their CVs and then questioning them about it during the interviews. He had the power to probe for information and fully utilised that power as I will show later. First, I discuss the negative disclosures of Lily, Alice and Helen, explaining how their statements may have created unfavourable impressions. This is followed by analysis of the disclosures of Brenda, the successful applicant, who made more positive work-related disclosures than other applicants did, as shown earlier in Table 4.2.

Lily's interview made clear the importance of initiating comments, providing detailed rather than brief responses, and giving positive disclosures. The interview with Lily also revealed that applicants were required to have considerable experience and knowledge of the vacancy for which they were applying. Lily was the applicant whom the interviewer considered the weakest of the four applicants, possibly because of her lack of experience. She was employed as a junior legal assistant in personal injury work, therefore she had little conveyancing experience. It was evident that Lily's present position carried no responsibility. Her job involved a large amount of keyboard and computer work, hence, she rarely met
clients face-to-face. The interviewer wanted to employ someone who was experienced in liaising with clients.

Lily expressed dissatisfaction with her current work, and she spoke in a soft, slow voice which made her appear unenthusiastic. The interviewer had to prompt Lily to talk as she gave brief replies and she did not initiate comments. She lacked knowledge and experience of conveyancing work, therefore she was unable to discuss it with the interviewer. Lengthy pauses characterised the dialogue, hence it was not spontaneous, that is, the dialogue did not flow easily. Lily did not discuss her previous jobs or show how her past achievements related to the current job vacancy. Although she gave five positive disclosures about her present job, Lily also made seven negative disclosures, which outweighed the favourable effect of the positive information. The large quantity of negative information that she provided obviously did not impress the interviewer.

The interview with Alice revealed that it is crucial for applicants to ensure that early in the interview they volunteer information that shows them in a favourable light, particularly in relation to their experience and knowledge. Alice was an office manager who had legal experience. She had some knowledge of conveyancing although recently she had not been working in a law firm. Within the first 30 seconds of her interview Alice revealed her lack of experience, which created an unfavourable impression on the interviewer as he revealed to me after the interviews had been conducted. The interviewer preferred to hire someone with recent conveyancing experience. Alice disclosed that she worked for a matrimonial solicitor, and when discussing her previous job she added, "I didn't actually do any conveyancing." It could be argued that there was no need for Alice to give the interviewer this information as he did not ask her to provide it.

Although she made some positive comments about her past employment Alice also disclosed a large amount of negative detail about her past work. In addition, she mentioned that she was not qualified as a Legal Assistant. Concerning her present job, Alice gave two negative disclosures and only three positive ones, as I
demonstrated in Table 4.2. However, the unfavourable effect of her negative disclosures appeared to outweigh the favourable effect of her positive information.

The next excerpt is part of a lengthy excerpt of dialogue between Alice and the interviewer in which she discussed her recent illness. The interviewer noticed details on Alice's CV about an illness and an operation, and then he questioned Alice about it. The excerpt from her interview shows that Alice volunteered negative information that may have prompted disapproval from the interviewer. She disclosed much detail about her medication, her referral to a specialist, and the fact that she underwent an operation that had "gone slightly wrong."

Alice added that she waited a long while for a second operation, which eventually she did not need. Then she reported how she had eased herself gently back into work after her illness. In line 150 she stated that she preferred full time work, which may have suggested that to Alice full-time work, and not legal work, was the most important consideration. Above all, her disclosure in line 154 "I am actually working in a restaurant at the moment part-time" highlighted her lack of current legal experience. The interviewer later revealed to me that Alice's negative disclosures about her illness and lack of legal experience created an unfavourable impression.

144 ALICE and I'd waited so long for the operation that the problem fixed itself (laugh). Sounds strange, but yeah.
145 INTERVIEWER yeah.
146 ALICE Yeah. So, what I did, January I just took a part-time um couple of hours an an evening, just to make sure, you know, that I was okay. I wanted to get back into work, just, really before committing myself to anyone else, just to make sure that everything was okay, and I've been absolutely fine since January. So
147 INTERVIEWER Right.
148 ALICE that's why I'm now back in the market, so to speak, [(laugh)]
149 INTERVIEWER [looking for, 150 ALICE looking for full time, 151 INTERVIEWER something full time. 152 ALICE yeah. 153 INTERVIEWER Yeah, er, so
I am actually working in a restaurant at the moment, part-time.

Hence, Alice may have volunteered more information than was necessary, leading the interviewer to conclude that she was still in poor health and might be absent from work in the future. This raises the issue of whether or not it was ethical for the interviewer to ask Alice about her health as his questions may have caused Alice harm. The evidence from Alice's interview could indicate that it is crucial for interviewers to avoid asking personal questions that may distress applicants. As she was talking, Alice gave frequent gasps and brief laughs, which could suggest that she was embarrassed or distressed. Furthermore, the need for applicants to provide positive rather than negative information was highlighted once again.

Another excerpt from Alice's interview further demonstrates how crucial it was for applicants to express genuine interest in the job of Legal Assistant. The following disclosure made Alice appear hesitant and unenthusiastic; it seems she had no real desire for the job. After her illness Alice had recovered and intended to return to full time work. However, she gave the impression that she was not interested in the position but needed to work solely for financial reasons. She may have emphasised that she wanted full time rather than part time work as full time employment provided more money. The words "full time" appear three times in the excerpt. The excerpt is illustrative of Alice's inability to project a positive impression through her disclosures. The excerpt also contains powerless words such as "I mean" "really" and "you know," some repetition at the beginning of line 164, and pauses, which added to the impression of hesitancy (Bradac & Street, 1989/90; Grob, Meyers & Schuh, 1997):

159 INTERVIEWER: Right, um, but have you spoken, have you spoken to them at all since, you know, in terms of going back into [full time employment?]

160 ALICE: [No, because it was only part-time]

161 INTERVIEWER: Oh right.

162 ALICE: [and I want full-time.]
During Helen's interview it became evident that for the post of Legal Assistant the interviewer valued the qualities of enthusiasm, motivation and dedication to the job. Again it was clear there was a need for giving positive information. The transcripts of interviewers' comments showed that Helen failed to create a positive impression. Through her negative statements she appeared to lack genuine interest in the position. She provided twelve negative disclosures, five of which concerned her present work. In addition, Helen seemed to be unable to solve problems on her own. For instance, she told how her present employer dictated instructions "word-for-word" onto audiotape, which Helen said she found "comforting." Helen had worked in local government for many years, although at the time of the interview she was a Legal Assistant. She mentioned her lack of conveyancing experience and lack of responsibility in her present and past jobs, therefore she did not create a positive impression.

In one instance during Helen's interview, she and the interviewer clearly had a clash of opinions. Helen had been offered a job in Bradford, however, in her view Bradford was too far away and she was unwilling to make the journey. The interviewer promptly contradicted Helen, informing her that she lived near Bradford. It was clear from the interviewer's tone of voice and his question in line 17 of the next excerpt that he was not impressed with Helen's lack of motivation. After the interviews, he revealed to me that he perceived her in a negative light. It seems that Helen had given the interviewer the impression that she was lazy and unwilling to make any effort to travel to work each day. He thought Helen lacked dynamism, enthusiasm and initiative and had no interest in the job. Although she chatted easily with the interviewer, the excerpt below shows how Helen's verbal behaviour may have led to her failure in the interview. She lacked enthusiasm for
the work, appearing more interested in where to park her car, as shown in lines 20, 22, 24 and 26:

16 HELEN Um, and they've more or less offered me a job in Bradford, in her Bradford office, but I wasn't sure that I really wanted to go further afield to Bradford. I live in Carlingford um.

17 INTERVIEWER (p x 3) Is Carlingford not effectively half way, er?

18 HELEN I think it's easier to [get to Hampton than it is to get to Bradford

19 INTERVIEWER [Hampton or probably easier to get to, yes

20 HELEN and there's no parking

21 INTERVIEWER Yeah.

22 HELEN in Bradford. I think you can park in a multi storey

23 INTERVIEWER Yeah um.

24 HELEN (p x 5) so effectively I'd I'd be worse off as well.

25 INTERVIEWER Yeah.

26 HELEN I'd have to pay for, it's lovely in um Drayfield because they have their own car park.

As the next excerpt suggests, the interviewer appeared to be searching for negative information during Helen's interview. He focused on gaps in Helen's CV that showed times when she was unemployed. Clearly this factor caused him concern and led him to prompt her for further information. He questioned Helen about a gap in her employment of approximately 12 months and Helen replied that she had been out of work because she was pregnant and suffered a miscarriage. Line 80 of the excerpt suggests that before the interview Helen had not considered the need to mention her miscarriage during the interview as she was unable to remember how long she had been away from work. She may have felt uncomfortable mentioning the fact that she had lost a baby. However, as the interviewer had asked the question Helen was unable to avoid providing this negative personal disclosure:

77 INTERVIEWER (p x 21) Now, we've got a gap for maternity shown on on your CV for leaving, and then a baby?

78 HELEN Yeah, I left because I was pregnant, but unfortunately lost the baby.

79 INTERVIEWER Right.
So, I was off for about, oh, I don't know, it wasn't quite a year, oh, might have been, might have been a year.

Again, this raises the question of the unethical use of power by the interviewer: Was it necessary for the interviewer to ask about the gap in Helen's CV? This could suggest some bias against people who are unemployed although it is unethical to exclude the unemployed when making hiring decisions. Some interviewers may be under the false impression that because someone is employed, they know how to do the job. As the law firm interviewer remarked, employers may feel that the unemployed lack motivation, are unaccustomed to routine and do not genuinely want to work.

Successful applicant - Brenda

Finally, I discuss Brenda, the successful applicant, who, at the time of the interview, was employed as a Legal Assistant to a conveyancing solicitor. As confirmed by the interviewer, Brenda's interview contains many examples of the attributes that applicants should display if they want to create a favourable impression and increase their chances of succeeding in interviews. Brenda was self-motivated, competent, enthusiastic, cheerful, and she showed empathy to clients. In addition, her knowledge and skills were up-to-date, and this would have enabled her to speak confidently and positively about her job and to highlight her strengths.

She provided much positive information and promoted a favourable image of herself through her disclosures, often repeating statements for emphasis. She supplied 13 positive disclosures, most of which related to her competence to do the work, and only three negative disclosures. Seven positive disclosures concerned her present job, and two positive disclosures related to her previous employment. As shown earlier in Table 4.2, Brenda made more positive disclosures about her past and present work than any other applicant did, and this factor seemed to contribute to her success in the interview.
Brenda gave the impression that she coped well with pressure, and the interviewer could not fail to be impressed by her dedication. She worked for "XX" who, according to Brenda, was a difficult employer who was easily agitated and had temper tantrums. The transcript of Brenda's interview revealed the effect of power differentials that operate in some law firms. XX was clearly in a position of power compared with his Legal Assistant and seemed to take advantage of the fact. For instance, Brenda recalled that "the previous Assistant was on Valium; she could not work through stress" because XX was "constantly throwing tempers, throwing files around." Although she found conveyancing work enjoyable and worked well with her colleagues, there was evidence in her transcript showing that she was no longer willing to tolerate her employer's negative behaviour.

Brenda provided the negative disclosure that, similar to the previous Legal Assistant, she also had been unwell due to stress, apparently caused by the tantrums of XX. As shown in the following excerpt from her interview, she remarked that XX treated his employees badly, which was behaviour that Brenda regarded as "not healthy." Nevertheless, Brenda's negative disclosures did not appear to cause an unfavourable impression. There may have been several reasons for this.

First, Brenda’s interview transcript showed that she and the interviewer had rapport. This is shown in the next excerpt by their overlapping speech in lines 104 and 105, and by the way they frequently laughed together. Second, the interviewer told me that he empathised with Brenda as he knew XX in a professional capacity and had heard about his explosive temper. Third, the majority of Brenda's other disclosures were positive, which seemed to outweigh the unfavourable effects of her negative statements. For instance, in line 106 Brenda showed that she was conscientious when she made the positive disclosure, "I don't mind doing hard work:"

```
104 BRENDA I actually had a week off with stress last year, because I got
105 INTERVIEWER [mm
106 BRENDA you know, so ill with it. Um, so I don't mind doing
   hard work and putting my my time and effort into it,
```
but it's how he's how he treats the staff as well. It's, you know, it's not healthy

107 INTERVIEWER Yeah.
108 BRENDA in my opinion.
109 INTERVIEWER Yeah.

Nevertheless, Brenda was adept at emphasising her own competence and resilience. She remarked "a lot of people have found it hard to work for him" adding "I've been the only one who has stuck it long enough to work for him." Then she reported how XX relied heavily on her to run the office. She stated that real estate agents were "constantly on the phone chasing" but XX would not speak to them, and then inhaled audibly as she stated "I'm left to answer most things, so." This comment and the sound she produced when inhaling suggested that Brenda was exasperated because XX would not answer any telephone calls from the agents.

Therefore, the interview with Brenda made clear the importance of expressing competence to do the job. Brenda gave the impression that, due to her skills in conveyancing, she was in demand by solicitors because she was an experienced and competent Legal Assistant. For instance, she explained that when she applied for her present job with XX she was unsuccessful at the interview. Although he had initially rejected Brenda in favour of someone else, some weeks later XX telephoned Brenda to persuade her to work for him as his new Legal Assistant was unable to cope with the work. Brenda reported how the rather frenzied XX begged her "Can you help, I'll give you whatever you want, come and work for me"?

Brenda emphasised the fact that XX begged her to work for him by adding "He rang up out of the blue saying "help, you know, what do you want"? So, I went back."

Further evidence from the transcript of Brenda's interview shows how she managed to portray her competence in a favourable light. She continued her story explaining that when she became pregnant she requested to be allowed to work part-time, but XX would not agree. Consequently, she left the firm, explaining to the interviewer "they wouldn't take me back on a part-time basis, so I totally left." Some months later, XX contacted Brenda. She laughed as she recalled, "I was doing retail, and
then XX begged me to come back (laugh), on any terms I wanted (laugh)" From this disclosure, the law firm interviewer possibly gained the impression that Brenda's skills and experience were sought after by other employers, hence she would also be an asset to his firm.

There is strong evidence in this study that interviewers pay close attention to what applicants say, that is, the content of their disclosures. Excerpts from Cases 1 and 2 have shown that negative statements attract the attention of the interviewers and may lead them to make unfavourable judgments about job applicants. Unsuccessful applicants gave a larger number of negative disclosures from the start of their interviews which created unfavourable impressions that were hard for applicants to change.

In contrast, successful applicants gave a high proportion of positive information in the first five minutes of their interviews and made no negative disclosures during that time. Therefore, the data strongly suggests that positive statements provided early in the interview could help job applicants to create a positive image. Successful applicants provided actual examples to support their claims and showed, through their detailed and relevant responses, that they had prepared for the interview and were co-operating with interviewers by giving them the information they needed to make a hiring decision.

Next it is important to examine how applicants used powerless language and paralanguage, as described in Chapter 2 (Bradac & Street, 1989/90; Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson & O'Barr, 1978; Grob, Meyers & Schuh, 1997).

4.2.2 Powerless Language and Paralanguage

Excerpts from the interview transcripts in this study showed that unsuccessful applicants often used powerless paralanguage in addition to negative disclosures. This combination of verbal behaviours seemed to create unfavourable impressions. In contrast, successful applicants used powerful paralanguage and disclosures. To discover the influence of powerless language and paralanguage, I counted the
number of times powerless words and phrases appeared in each applicant's
transcript, for instance, "I assume," "sort of," "You know (what I mean)" and "or
something like that" (see Grob, Meyers & Schuh, 1997, p. 291). I also counted the
number of times powerless paralanguage interrupted speech fluency i.e. lengthy
pauses, gasping and sighing (Bradac & Street, 1989/90, pp. 207-208), as shown in
Table 4.6. To corroborate data interpretation, I found it helpful to listen repeatedly
to the tape recordings of each job interview.
Table 4.6 Powerless Language and Paralanguage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of powerless words and phrases i.e. &quot;you know&quot; and &quot;sort of&quot;</th>
<th>Frequency of powerless paralanguage i.e. gasps, sighs, and lengthy pauses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of powerless language and paralanguage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>279.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>296.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>94.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
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<td>21.0</td>
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<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>558.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>598.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 1 - Transport Officer

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Frequency of powerless words and phrases i.e. &quot;you know&quot; and &quot;sort of&quot;</th>
<th>Frequency of powerless paralanguage i.e. gasps, sighs, and lengthy pauses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of powerless language and paralanguage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>279.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>296.0</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>61.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>558.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>598.0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 2 - Legal Assistant

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Frequency of powerless words and phrases i.e. &quot;you know&quot; and &quot;sort of&quot;</th>
<th>Frequency of powerless paralanguage i.e. gasps, sighs, and lengthy pauses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of powerless language and paralanguage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
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<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>135.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>156.0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Powerless paralanguage = gasps, sighs, inaudible speech, soft, slow, monotone voice, and lengthy pauses. Powerless words and phrases = i.e. "You know" "sort of" and "or something like that." S = Successful applicant.

Liz, the successful applicant in Case 1, displayed no powerless paralanguage, as shown in Table 4.6. Brenda, the successful applicant in Case 2 displayed only a little powerless paralanguage. She sighed twice when she was discussing her volatile employer, which could suggest that she felt wearied by his attitude. However, apart from this, all of Brenda's paralanguage was powerful. The voices of Liz and Brenda were consistently strong and clear, that is, their words were audible, their voices were loud enough to be heard, and there was variation in the pitch, tone and pace. It is important for applicants to use a pleasing tone and to vary the pace and pitch of the voice to keep the listener interested and alert (see Berry, 1997; Johnstone, 1997; Sutton, 1997). The successful applicants were indeed interesting to listen to. Their voices helped them to project an image of enthusiasm and
confidence. Hence, Liz and Brenda both used paralanguage that may have helped them to create positive impressions.

In direct contrast, all unsuccessful applicants in Cases 1 and 2, except Dan, spoke in soft, slow, monotone voices that lacked variation in tone and pitch. As explained later, Dan’s speech was high-pitched and rapid, and he did not pause. The unsuccessful applicants with monotone voices gasped frequently, and their speech contained lengthy pauses which slowed the pace of the voice. Some of these applicants did not speak clearly, therefore their voices were inaudible or low in volume. Due to their paralanguage, unsuccessful applicants appeared to be nervous and lacking in dynamism, interest and confidence, and this attracted negative comments from the interviewers. "Self-help” texts point out that applicants should speak at a normal, controlled pace. Nervousness can affect speech causing many people to mumble, that is, speak too softly, or they may speak too fast, or gabble, that is, talk incoherently. Often they hesitate and leave long gaps between words (see Corfield, 2003; Miller, 1998).

Powerless words and phrases, such as you know and sort of were used in varying amounts by all applicants in Cases 1 and 2, including the successful applicants, as shown in Table 4.6. This may have reflected applicants' subordinate status and lack of power in the interview compared with the interviewers. What it could also suggest is that powerless words have a relatively minor influence on impressions, compared with the effect created by paralanguage and disclosures. The paralanguage of unsuccessful applicants was powerless. In contrast, successful applicants used powerful paralanguage, therefore their paralanguage may have played a significant role in creating favourable impressions.
Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government

Unsuccessful applicants

The interview of the weakest applicant, Ray, was regarded as a "waste of time" by Interviewer 1 as Ray's powerless paralanguage created a negative impression. The interviewers' comments demonstrated how important it was for applicants to appear confident by speaking in a strong, clear voice with no pauses. Interviewer 3 disliked the sound of Ray's monotone voice as she commented, "And he was another one who spoke in a monotone, wasn't he"?

Similarly the interviews with Val and Joe made clear the need for disclosing information in a strong, clear voice to give an impression of confidence. Val's soft voice lacked volume and often could not be heard at all. Furthermore, there was no variation in the tone or pitch of her voice. The pace of her voice was made slower by her frequent sighs, gasps and pauses that lasted four seconds or longer. This powerless paralanguage gave the impression that Val lacked enthusiasm and energy. Joe also had a soft voice which frequently could not be heard at all, hence he appeared to lack conviction about what he was saying.

Sam's interview revealed the importance of attributes such as appearing relaxed and confident and giving relevant responses to interviewers' questions. Transcripts of the interviewers' comments reveal that they took a negative view of Sam as he used powerless language excessively, which made him appear nervous and unconfident. The data revealed that Sam repeatedly used "you know" (six times in one sentence). Furthermore, Interviewer 1 commented that Sam "kept saying you know, you know, you know" and, as shown later, Interviewers 2 and 3 also remarked that Sam constantly said "you know." Moreover, because of this, Interviewer 2 judged Sam as "terribly nervous." However, Interviewer 1 reasoned that Sam, and other applicants, might have used powerless words and phrases due to the pressure of undergoing a selection interview. I noticed that often Sam's responses were not relevant to what the interviewers were asking. In lines 164 and 166 of the following discussion between Interviewers 1 and 2, there is an indication that Sam did not
answer the interviewers' questions as thoroughly as expected, preferring to talk about "his own things" as shown in lines 164 and 166. The interviewers' conversation illustrates how Sam created an unfavourable impression:

164 INTERVIEWER 2: He was much better when he was talking about what he wanted to talk about rather than what we wanted to talk about. He was terribly nervous at first and I stopped counting after 50 'you knows'.

165 INTERVIEWER 1: But he stopped doing it, but a lot of them stopped. Once he relaxed a bit he became more articulate=/

166 INTERVIEWER 2: /=Once he was talking about his own things.

The next excerpt shows a discussion that occurred between the interviewers after the interview of Sam. Their conversation makes clear the significance of attributes such as avoiding the use of powerless words and phrases and speaking in a strong, clear voice with variation in the tone, pitch and pace. Variation in the voice could help to maintain the interviewer's attention, as it can make the applicant appear more alert and enthusiastic. As shown in the excerpt, Interviewer 3 concluded that Sam was "quite nervous" due to his constant use of "you know." As seen in Line 172, Interviewer 3 "didn't think he was very sparkly" and decided that Sam was "a bit bland." It seems that Sam's soft, slow "monotone" voice was to blame for this unfavourable perception as his voice "never went up or down" as noticed by Interviewers 2 and 3 in lines 174 and 175. The excerpt below illustrates how Sam failed to create a positive impression:

168 INTERVIEWER 3: I thought he was quite nervous. He kept going "you know, you know, you know."

169 INTERVIEWER 1: But he managed to relax later on. Um of course he he one doesn’t, he has not changed job a lot. He might not have done a lot of job interviews.

170 INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah.

171 INTERVIEWER 1: He has been doing the same job since.

172 INTERVIEWER 3: I didn’t think he was very sparkly ( p x 2) I thought he was a bit bland actually.

173 INTERVIEWER 2: Well, yeah, um actually um.

174 INTERVIEWER 3: He spoke in a monotone, his voice never went up or down.

175 INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah, slightly monotone.
Hence, the data reveal some important clues to explain why Sam did not create a positive impression. Transcripts of the interviewers' comments confirm that due to his soft, slow monotone voice Sam failed to project the essential attribute of enthusiasm, which appears to contribute to success in job interviews. For example, Interviewer 2 commented, "he was flat. Even when he got animated, he was flat." Interviewer 3 agreed "Yeah, I mean, if someone doesn’t project enthusiasm it doesn’t make it very interesting for the interviewer."

The interview with Dan highlighted how essential it was for applicants to create an impression of reliability and trustworthiness by speaking in a voice that was not too fast. Moreover, it was necessary to speak clearly and give detailed but precise responses that were not too long. Dan's responses were lengthy and contained much repetition. Although he appeared interested in the job due to occasional variation in the tone and pitch of his voice, for the most part he spoke rapidly in a high-pitched voice. He spoke too quickly without pausing and did not speak clearly, therefore he often "mumbled" and his words were not easy for the interviewers to understand. As Dan spoke quickly compared with other applicants, this may have given the interviewers the impression that he was "shifty" or cunning and hiding information.

When discussing Dan, the interviewers' comments to each other revealed that they took a negative view of Dan because he talked too much. This prevented the interviewers from contributing to the dialogue. Although the interviewers agreed that they "liked" Dan, their comments suggested that they perceived him as unreliable. For instance, Interviewer 2 said he had the "feeling" that Dan "may not stick" and would be "up and off before long," in other words he would not be willing to remain in the job for long. In my discussions with them after Dan's interview, they confirmed that they thought Dan would be unreliable and was perhaps hiding information.
Successful applicant

In contrast to other applicants, Liz the successful applicant used powerful language and paralanguage. She spoke in a strong, clear voice with few pauses and she laughed at the interviewer's humorous remarks, which I discuss later in the chapter. During the interview of Liz, it became clear that applicants needed to appear confident, alert, cheerful and enthusiastic, and Liz projected this impression through her paralanguage. She varied the tone, pitch and pace of her voice, frequently putting emphasis on words to highlight the impact of her positive disclosures. Therefore, her paralanguage matched her disclosures, which is essential in order to appear credible. Liz paused only occasionally, and each pause lasted no more than two seconds in duration, therefore the pace of her voice was neither too rapid nor too slow. At times, Liz did use powerless words such as "you know," but this seems to be a characteristic of the verbal behaviour of all applicants, whether successful or unsuccessful. However, as shown earlier, unsuccessful applicants created negative impressions by using powerless words to excess.

In discussions that I had with the interviewers they confirmed that because Liz sounded alert and interested in the job, they were interested in her. They liked Liz's voice as it was strong and could be clearly heard, hence she sounded confident. Furthermore, they confirmed that the variation in her voice helped to maintain their attention. Therefore, Liz's paralanguage was powerful in the sense that it corresponded with her positive statements thus creating a positive impression on the interviewers.

Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm

Unsuccessful applicants

In the transcript of Lily's interview there was evidence that it was crucial for applicants to play an active role in the interview by giving detailed responses and by initiating comments. It was vital to appear confident, knowledgeable about the
job, and to be interested in what the interviewer was saying. Lily, who was the weakest applicant, spoke in a very soft voice with little variation in pitch, tone and pace; at times, her voice was barely audible. As noted by Gottesman and Mauro (1999), this can give the listener the impression that the speaker is not particularly interested in what he or she is saying. The pace of Lily's interview was slow, mainly because she did not interact with the interviewer by initiating comments and her responses were brief often consisting of one sentence, or merely a "yes" or a "no" response.

In a discussion I had with the interviewer he remarked that as Lily gave short responses he was forced to think of additional questions, and this created a negative impression as he perceived that she lacked confidence (see Popovitch, 2000). Lily's interview was characterised by lengthy pauses that were often 20 and 30 seconds in duration. The pauses occurred between the end of Lily's response and the interviewer's next question. As her interview progressed it became clear that Lily was inexperienced as she was unable to discuss the position in detail. As she initiated few comments and gave the impression that she was not interested in the dialogue, she did not create a positive image of herself. However, some applicants may be intimidated by the job interview setting, and it is possible that Lily was nervous, which may have affected the way she interacted with the interviewer.

It became apparent during Alice's interview that it was necessary to appear comfortable, that is, relaxed, when talking with the interviewer, in addition to appearing confident to do the work. However, Alice's disclosures were marred by powerless language, which projected the opposite image. She repeatedly used words and phrases such as "just," "you know," "really," and "so to speak," which reduced the power of her positive statements and gave the impression that she was unconfident. As stated earlier, all applicants in this study used powerless words and phrases therefore this could merely reflect the language style that all applicants use, although it was noticeable that some applicants such as Alice used powerless words excessively which created an unfavourable impression.
In addition, Alice's voice was soft and frequently inaudible, becoming quieter as she finished a sentence, and her laughter was brief, suggesting that she was nervous. She paused and gasped at regular intervals, therefore her speech did not flow smoothly, and this made her appear nervous. Her paralanguage gave the impression that she was embarrassed or anxious about her negative disclosures, namely discussing her illness and needing to work for the money. Later, the interviewer remarked to me that he suspected that Alice was not genuinely interested in the job because she stated that she needed to work full-time. He remarked that Alice's hesitant manner of speaking conveyed a lack of confidence and anxiety, hence he did not regard her as someone who would be able to liaise confidently with clients. However, perhaps the personal questions he put to Alice may have contributed somewhat to her anxiety.

The importance of appearing enthusiastic and motivated became apparent during the interview of Helen. It became evident that interviewers sometimes use their power unnecessarily. At one point in Helen's interview there was a lengthy pause of 21 seconds before the interviewer asked his next question. Therefore, he kept Helen waiting for a long time, and she may have felt uncomfortable as this emphasised the difference in power and status between them. Lewis (1990) comments "forcing a person to wait automatically makes you more important than they are" (p. 200).

This may have prevented Helen and the interviewer developing any rapport, which seems to be vital for a successful interview outcome. However, Helen may have appeared unenthusiastic due to her paralanguage. She did not speak clearly, therefore, what she said was hard to understand. Her voice was often inaudible as her sentences started strong but they lost volume and clarity giving the impression that she was not enthusiastic (see Gottesman & Mauro, 1999). Indeed, the interviewer gained the impression that Helen was not genuinely interested in the job.
Successful applicant

In contrast, Brenda's disclosures impressed the interviewer as they were accompanied by paralanguage which added credibility to her words (see Mino, 1996). Her voice was clear and audible throughout her interview, and she rarely paused, hence the pace of her voice was rapid but not too fast. In addition, rather than speaking in a slow monotone as many of the unsuccessful applicants did, Brenda occasionally emphasised words to add impact to what she was saying. Variety in the sound of her voice made her appear alert, enthusiastic, motivated and confident. Such positive attributes undoubtedly helped Brenda to create a favourable impression and helped to ensure that she was offered the position of Transport Officer.

There was strong evidence in the transcripts of interviewers' comments that powerless language and paralanguage created negative impressions. Powerful paralanguage in particular appeared to be crucial for creating favourable impressions and for contributing to successful interview outcomes. Interviewers made negative comments about applicants who used powerless words and phrases, those who had soft, slow monotone voices, and applicants with rapid voices. Therefore, to increase their chances of succeeding in job interviews, the data suggests that it could be critical for applicants to ensure that their positive disclosures are accompanied by powerful paralanguage, that is, they would do well to display enthusiasm, interest and confidence by varying the pitch, tone and pace of the voice. Applicants who had strong, clear voices with few pauses were those who impressed the interviewers.

One element of paralanguage that could play a significant role in job interviews is laughter, as explained next.
4.2.3 Laughter

First, I show how much laughter was used by applicants, and then I present excerpts from the job interview transcripts to show how applicants laughed and interacted with their interviewers. Although interviewers made no comments about laughter, it may have had an effect on the amount of rapport between themselves and applicants and could have influenced the hiring decision. Laughter has received little attention in the context of job interviews although Poyatos (1993) describes laughter as a "qualifier of verbal language" that is to say "confirming, emphasising, de-emphasising, contradicting, disguising, concealing or replacing" (pp. 62-78). Furthermore, Poyatos (1985) points out that sensitivity to the many meanings of laughter can be valuable in the job interview, enabling participants to interpret each other's verbal messages more accurately.

In this study it can be said that there were two types of laughter. The first type was applicant laughter in response to an interviewer's comment. On occasions, laughter overlapped, that is, applicant and interviewer laughed at the same time, which, in this research, suggested a level of rapport. The second kind of laughter was "laughing speech," that is, the applicant laughed while speaking, that is, during his or her response. Laughing speech was often accompanied by a smile. This may have suggested that the applicant was nervous or embarrassed about making a disclosure, or it may have suggested that he or she was making a humorous comment, or that the applicant was merely feeling happy and relaxed.

Hence, it is recognised that there are various forms of laughter (Poyatos, 1985) which can occur for a variety of reasons. Laughter needs to be interpreted in context, in relation to disclosures and body language and in relation to other paralanguage. My interpretations were based on the tone and length of the laughter and where in the applicant's response the laughter occurred, that is, at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence. Findings concerning laughter are shown in Table 4.7.
Table 4.7  Amount of Laughter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1 - Transport Officer</th>
<th>Laughter in response to Interviewer</th>
<th>Laughing speech</th>
<th>Total laughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>28.0</td>
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<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</th>
<th>Laughter in response to Interviewer</th>
<th>Laughing speech</th>
<th>Total laughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Laughter in response to interviewer = Laughter in response to and immediately after interviewer's comment. Laughing speech = Laughter by applicant while speaking, or at the end of applicant's response. S = Successful applicant.

Comparing applicants for Case 1, Table 4.7 shows that Liz, the successful applicant, displayed more laughing speech than other applicants did. She and Sam displayed the most laughter, but as explained later, Sam's laughter did not sound as hearty or strong as the laughter of Liz. Unsuccessful applicants Dan and Val laughed less than other applicants. Joe exhibited much laughter in response to the interviewer, which made Joe seem nervous. Ray did not laugh at all which made him seem too serious. These interpretations were confirmed by the interviewers after the interviews.

Brenda, the successful applicant in Case 2 exhibited the most laughter, and she displayed more laughter as a response to the interviewer than other applicants did. She also used a large amount of laughing speech. In contrast, Lily displayed the
least amount of laughter. Alice used more laughing speech than other applicants did, whereas the majority of Helen's laughter was in response to the interviewers' comments. As shown later, the laughter of unsuccessful applicants Helen and Alice was different from the laughter exhibited by Brenda.

As noted earlier, the Case 1 interviews were more formal and structured in terms of questions asked, whereas the Case 2 interviews were more casual, meaning informal in comparison. In Case 2, the interviewer did not draw up a list of questions before the interview. Consequently, the dialogue was more casual, and the interviewer in Case 2 may have made more humorous remarks than the Case 1 interviewers did. This could suggest that in the Case 2 interviews more opportunities arose for the successful applicant to laugh with the interviewer.

**Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

Comments made to me by the interviewers in Case 1 about unsuccessful applicants indicated that laughter could be an important factor for success. Their remarks suggested that they preferred to hire an applicant who laughed when the interviewers made humorous comments and who therefore appeared to be enjoying the conversation. Interviewer 3 commented to me that Ray seemed "serious" as he did not respond to the interviewers' humorous remarks. In contrast, Dan laughed in response to the interviewers' jokes, which may have been to his advantage as Interviewer 3 remarked that she "liked" him. There was evidence in the interview transcripts that Val laughed less than Dan, and Interviewer 2 commented to me that Val seemed to "lack a sense of humour." In contrast, during Joe's interview it was clear that most of his laughter was in response to the interviewer, but his laughter was loud and brief and not hearty, that is, it lasted for no more than one second in duration. This may have given the impression that Joe was unsure of what he was saying or perhaps trying too hard to create rapport.
Sam's interview revealed that it was necessary for applicants to laugh in a way that suggested they were genuinely enjoying conversing with the interviewers. The transcript of Sam’s interview showed that he responded with laughter to the interviewers' comments almost as much as he used laughing speech. However, his laughter gave the impression that he was nervous rather than confident and comfortable with the dialogue. Although Sam laughed more than other applicants did, his laughter was brief and not hearty or strong. He often laughed before responding to a question and in the middle of a sentence; this made him seem hesitant about the information he was volunteering. Furthermore, his laughter was accompanied by powerless language: for instance, "well, I mean" which was usually preceded and followed by powerless paralanguage, such as a lengthy pause. Indeed, after the interview, Interviewer 3 confirmed that Sam's laughter created a negative impression on her. She stated that she perceived Sam as "quite nervous."

Nevertheless, not all of the unsuccessful applicants created negative impressions with their laughter. The data reveals clues to explain why Dan managed to create a favourable impression. The interviewers informed me that they considered Dan to be the strongest of the unsuccessful applicants. In particular, they said they liked his sense of humour. Prior to using humour as shown in the next excerpt, Dan had informed the interviewers that, in his current job, he always asked questions if he did not understand how to perform a task. He stated "If I don't understand it I ask. It might be something quite fundamental e.g. How does that door handle work"? As shown in the next excerpt from Dan’s interview, this prompted the comment by Interviewer 2 in line 62, "I don't know how the door handle works!" In lines 63 and 65 Dan mimicked the interviewer's words, which could suggest he was trying to create rapport.

As they were discussing door handles, Interviewer 1 then pointed to a door in the interview room and remarked "that leads to waste disposal." Dan's subsequent response in line 65 prompted laughter from Interviewer 1 in line 66. The following excerpt provides evidence that with humour and laughter Dan managed to create
rapport and a positive impression on the interviewers. By sharing humour, Dan appeared relaxed, confident and seemed to be enjoying the interview:

61 INTERVIEWER 1 Right, well, do you want to ask us anything?
62 INTERVIEWER 2 I don't know how the door handle works!
    (Laugh)
63 DAN: He doesn't know how the door handle works!
    (Laugh)
64 INTERVIEWER 1 That leads to waste disposal; you don't have to go through there.
65 DAN: Oh, I don't wanna go through there. That would interest my wife!
66 INTERVIEWER 1 (Laugh)

The interview of Liz, the successful applicant, demonstrated the importance of creating rapport through laughing speech, hence this could be a useful IM technique for job applicants. Her frequent use of laughing speech possibly helped Liz to present as relaxed, confident, cheerful, and enthusiastic. She laughed as she spoke, which suggested that she was comfortable interacting with the interviewers. Throughout her interview, Liz’s laughter in response to the interviewer and her laughing speech often lasted for three seconds or more, therefore it was hearty, giving the impression that she was genuinely enjoying the humour. The rapport between Liz and the interviewers was evident when her laughter overlapped with theirs. This is shown by square brackets in lines 159 and 160, and in lines 165 and 166. She interrupted the interviewer, as seen in lines 162 and 163, and in line 165 remarked that her answer would be "a lengthy one," which suggests that she was enthusiastic and confident about answering the question. The excerpt illustrates how Liz's laughter helped her to produce a positive impression with laughter:

159 LIZ: Sorry, can you repeat [that? (laughing speech)]
160 INTERVIEWER 3: [sorry, (laughing speech) my hand crossed my mouth while I was saying it.
    (laughing speech)
161 LIZ: Define the term "equality"=/
162 INTERVIEWER 3: /= "equality," yes
163 LIZ: =and, how would you ensure the principles were put into practice while delivering the service?
165 LIZ: Right, um. This is going to be a lengthy one, but bear with me (laughing speech) [Um and

166 INTERVIEWERS 1 & 3 [(laugh x 1)
167 INTERVIEWER 1: Sure.

Therefore, in the Transport Officer interviews there were differences in the laughter of successful and unsuccessful applicants. Similar patterns concerning laughter were identified in the interviews for a Legal Assistant.

Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm

The interviewer in the Legal Assistant interviews remarked to me that some applicants seemed "too serious" or "anxious." Thus the interviewer's remarks highlighted how important it was for applicants to laugh and for their laughter to add to the impression that applicants were relaxed, confident and genuinely enjoying the interview. Interviews of the unsuccessful applicants Lily, Alice and Helen revealed the significance of laughing with the interviewer to create rapport. Remarks made to me by the interviewer confirmed that these applicants did not create positive impressions as they did not laugh much in response to his humorous comments. The data showed that interviews of unsuccessful applicants contained very little laughter in comparison with the successful applicant Brenda.

As I demonstrated in Table 4.7, unsuccessful applicant Lily laughed very little compared with other applicants in Case 2. In addition, Alice reacted hardly at all in response to the interviewer's humour. Although Alice used more laughing speech than other applicants did, her laughing speech was not hearty, that is, it was brief, hence she sounded unconfident and unsure of what she was saying. In contrast, Helen responded considerably more to the interviewer's remarks and jokes, and used less laughing speech than Alice. However, Helen often laughed "inappropriately," meaning that her laughter was not relevant to the interviewer's comments. When considered in the context of her negative disclosures, Helen's laughter could have contributed to the impression that she was not taking the interview seriously.
Successful applicant

The interview with Brenda the successful applicant suggested that it was important for applicants to express a genuine appreciation of the interviewer's humour. The interviewer stated to me that he took a positive view of Brenda due to the way she laughed with him when he made a humorous remark. He thought she seemed happy, friendly, and easygoing, attributes that he preferred in his employees. As noted earlier, the most noticeable feature of Brenda's laughter was that it sounded hearty or strong, that is, the laughter often lasted for three seconds or more. In one instance, Brenda's laugh lasted for six seconds. Therefore, she appeared to be enjoying the interview and to possess a sense of humour.

In the following excerpt from her interview, her hearty laughter and comment in line 78 indicated that Brenda was enjoying the dialogue. In addition, lines 75 to 78 show overlapping laughter and speech, indicating that there was rapport. The dialogue between Brenda and the interviewer reveals why Brenda managed to create a positive impression. The excerpt illustrates why the interviewer remarked to me that he liked Brenda's "happy, outgoing manner" and why she was the kind of applicant he wanted to hire.

75 INTERVIEWER: Um, as I say, I've got a similar sort of case load to, er, XX, um, and I'm not brilliant at answering local agents' calls, [but he is!]
76 BRENDA [laughs x 3]
77 INTERVIEWER [laughs x 2]
78 BRENDA [laughs x 3] Fair enough. At least you're honest! (laughs x 3)

Another example from Brenda's interview shows how she used hearty laughter, as opposed to the brief laughter exhibited by unsuccessful applicants. The interviewer recalled how he had been reprimanded by a solicitor at another law firm as he had not replied to the solicitor's letter. Consequently, to ensure that he received a prompt reply to his letter, the solicitor instructed the interviewer to dictate only a small amount of correspondence onto audiotape. Brenda seemed to be enjoying the
interviewer's story as she laughed after he had finished relating it, and then she
joined in the dialogue with the remark "I can imagine them" in line 144. In lines
142 and 143 their laughter overlapped, which again could suggest that there was
rapport. The next excerpt therefore shows how Brenda created a favourable
impression by responding to the interviewer's humorous comments:

137 INTERVIEWER I have, myself, just been told off by a Senior Partner
of Taylor, Marlow & Briggs, because, um, for putting
too much on a tape, instead of doing a short tape
138 BRENDA (laugh)
139 INTERVIEWER so I could give priority to the letter I had to do to
HIM!
140 BRENDA (laughs x 2)
141 INTERVIEWER So, er yes, a few choice words were exchanged there.
142 BRENDA [(laughs x 4)
143 INTERVIEWER [(laughs x 3)
144 BRENDA I can imagine them.
145 INTERVIEWER (laugh)

There was further evidence that Brenda and the interviewer were on the same
wavelength, that is, they had rapport. The interviewer asked Brenda if she was
available to commence work in August, as it was intended that the current Legal
Assistant would provide an induction programme for the new employee. Hence, it
was arranged that before she left the firm to have a baby in August, the current
Legal Assistant would explain the duties of the job to the new Legal Assistant. The
following excerpt from Brenda's interview shows that there was a play on the word
"induction" in line 249, which could mean either induction into the job or induction
in terms of giving birth. The exchange of laughter by the interviewer and Brenda in
lines 251 to 253 shows that they had both clearly understood the joke, and this
created rapport. The excerpt shows that Brenda appeared to share the same sense of
humour as the interviewer, and this created a positive impression. Later, the
interviewer confirmed to me that he enjoyed interviewing Brenda because of her
apparent sense of humour:

249 INTERVIEWER The only reason I asked about it is the August, is the
month of August, which um as I say, Margaret will be
Interviewers' comments from Case 1 and Case 2 revealed that they appreciated applicants who laughed, particularly when showing appreciation of the interviewers' humour. Therefore, laughter could be a most important factor for creating rapport in job interviews. In this study, successful applicants laughed more than unsuccessful applicants did, which suggests that their laughter helped to produce successful interview outcomes. Laughter in response to interviewers' comments and laughing speech both appeared to create rapport. While laughing speech may have contributed to impressions of self-confidence and enthusiasm in some applicants and nervousness in other applicants, responding with laughter to the interviewer's humour could have suggested that applicants shared a sense of humour similar to the interviewers' humour, which created rapport. It is possible that laughter that produces impressions of confidence, enthusiasm and a sense of humour could therefore create positive impressions in job interviews.

### 4.3 Main Findings of Chapter 4

Findings of this study showed that in medium-level, office-based job interviews some applicants were more skilled at verbally expressing their competence than others were. Some made themselves more powerless than necessary by using negative disclosures and powerless paralanguage, which created unfavourable impressions of their competence and personality. Unsuccessful applicants gave a large quantity of negative disclosures and made few positive statements. For instance, most of the unsuccessful applicants gave the impression that they were unable to act on their own initiative. Interviewers made unfavourable comments about applicants who talked about themselves in a negative way.
Within the first five minutes of their interviews unsuccessful applicants made many negative statements about their past and present work. Findings therefore suggest it is crucial for applicants to avoid giving negative statements early in the interview, at which time interviewers search for negative information and use it to screen applicants. It could be especially important for applicants to refrain from giving negative disclosures about their current work, and to avoid volunteering personal information unless asked. Interviewers seemed particularly sensitive to verbal irregularities. For instance, some applicants used powerless words and phrases i.e. "you know," to excess, which attracted negative comments from the interviewers.

In addition, unsuccessful applicants used powerless paralanguage, which created a particularly negative reaction in the interviewers. They showed disapproval when applicants "spoke in a monotone," that is when their voices were soft, slow and "flat" as there was no variation in the tone, pitch or pace. Such applicants appeared tired and unenthusiastic. The interviewers concluded that these applicants were "dull" and "bland," and they did not sound excited about the job. However, applicants who spoke rapidly without pausing also created a negative impression as this prevented the interviewers from contributing to the dialogue. Furthermore, unsuccessful applicants rarely laughed with the interviewers, and when they did laugh, they appeared nervous and uncertain.

If applicants give negative information about themselves and do not vary the pitch, tone and pace of their voices, this could reinforce their powerlessness in the job interview. Ragan and Hopper (1981) observe that communicators with lower status use more tentative, less powerful talk than higher status communicators, and such talk "reflects, enacts, and preserves this power differential" (p.100). In the present study, the verbal behaviour of unsuccessful applicants may have prevented them from interacting on more equal terms with their interviewers. Applicants' powerless language may have emphasised differences in power, status and dialogue between the applicants and their interviewers who used powerful language during the interviews. For example, the interviewers controlled the interview through language in that they had the power to pose questions. In the Transport Officer interviews it
was observed that the interviewers phrased questions in ways that suited their own needs with the consequence that some of these questions - whether intentionally or unintentionally - were misleading to applicants, or caused distress to them. For instance, unsuccessful applicant Alice was made to feel uncomfortable when the interviewer asked about her marital status. In addition, Helen was prompted to make an unnecessary disclosure about her pregnancy and miscarriage.

As a further example of how interviewers used powerful language to control the interview process, the law firm interviewer’s speech was characterised by long pauses hence long periods of silence which forced applicants such as Lily to wait a considerable length of time in between each question. It can be argued that such behaviour was a demonstration of power over the applicants (see Lewis 1990) as the interviewer clearly had the power to control the use of time during the interview.

The above examples indicate that interviewers used powerful language when interacting with applicants which it can be argued reflected and maintained the unequal relationship of power. However, it was observed that when interviewers talked among themselves their language suggested no power differentials as they were talking on equal terms with each other.

Findings showed that it was crucial for applicants to demonstrate communicative competence. Both of the successful applicants in this study remained alert and listened carefully to questions, giving relevant and detailed responses. They knew when to agree with the interviewer and when to initiate comments and questions of their own. In particular, verbal skill of the applicant was a most important consideration for interviewers when deciding whom to hire. For instance, it was remarked by Interviewer 2 that the successful applicant in the Transport Officer interviews was proficient at expressing herself verbally.

Moreover, it was suggested in the findings that applicants could present themselves more favourably if they ensure that from early in the interview all their disclosures
are positive and are focused on work-related issues. From the start of their interviews, both successful applicants disclosed only positive information and continued in this way, providing little or no negative information about themselves. Successful applicants talked about their strengths, rather than weaknesses, although they did this with modesty, not boastfulness. Their focused and relevant responses indicated that they were interested in the job and had prepared for the interview. Successful applicants managed to convince the interviewers that they would be an asset to the organisation if hired, and achieved this by expressing their competence.

For example, both successful applicants gave actual examples showing that they were able to make decisions and solve problems on their own. The successful applicant in the Transport Officer interviews discussed how she would contribute ideas, improve administrative procedures and make financial savings. In the Legal Assistant interviews, the successful applicant implied that her expertise in conveyancing matters was sought after by employers in the legal field, and she reported how she ran the office single-handed. Above all, both successful applicants expressed empathy concerning the needs of their work colleagues and the needs of customers.

In addition, the data could suggest that if applicants use sufficient positive verbal behaviour from the start of the interview and establish rapport with the interviewer, this could counteract the unfavourable influence of negative information. This demonstrates how critical positive information may be for creating a favourable image. Although the successful applicant in the Legal Assistant interviews made some negative disclosures about her volatile employer this information had no detrimental effect, possibly because most of her disclosures were positive. Furthermore, she and the interviewer often laughed together, and he remarked that he "liked" her.

Nevertheless, to receive a favourable evaluation the current interviews showed that it is crucial for positive disclosures to be accompanied by powerful paralanguage. Successful applicants used only powerful paralanguage, which distinguished them
from unsuccessful applicants who used powerless paralanguage. Successful applicants had strong, clear voices with variety in the tone, pitch and pace which made them appear self-confident, alert and interested in the job. Consequently, the interviewers remained interested in them. Furthermore, successful applicants enjoyed a greater level of rapport with the interviewers than unsuccessful applicants did, possibly because successful applicants laughed more and appeared cheerful. They gave the impression they were comfortable conversing with the interviewers.

Indeed, findings reveal that it may be advantageous for applicants to laugh and share humour with their interviewers as this could be an important method of creating rapport and more equal dialogue. It is possible that humour and laughter minimise the power differences between interviewer and applicant enabling them to interact on more equal terms. In addition, applicants who laugh as they speak and respond with laughter to the interviewer's comments may appear friendlier and more relaxed, creating a positive impression. The applicant might be perceived as a happy person with a sense of humour who would be co-operative and therefore easy to work with on a daily basis.

The data also revealed that interviewers judged applicants subjectively, based on how they felt about applicants on a personal level, because interviewers often mentioned the word "feelings" when discussing the applicants. Interviewers' judgments were based on their own interpretations, therefore their judgments were not objective. Research confirms that interviewers judge applicants subjectively during interviews (Young & Kacmar, 1998). Furthermore, interviewers' judgments are variable, hence an interviewer judging the same applicant on two different days could arrive at different conclusions each time which highlights the unreliability of interviews. Present data suggests that interviewers' subjective judgments may have significantly influenced hiring decisions. Certainly it was shown that interviewers may have been influenced by the amount of laughter and rapport they encountered with each applicant. Needless to say they formed favourable impressions of applicants who were competent, but in addition they appeared to prefer to hire applicants who were enthusiastic, empathic and self-confident.
Chapter 4 has therefore demonstrated that successful applicants created favourable impressions of their competence through their verbal behaviour, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not. Through my discussions with the interviewers in this study, and from interviewers’ comments recorded during the Transport Officer interviews, I obtained evidence that interviewers judged applicants according to what they said and how they said it. Interviewers made adverse remarks about applicants who used powerless verbal behaviour. In contrast, successful applicants, who used powerful verbal behaviour, received positive evaluations. Therefore, positive disclosures and powerful paralanguage could have a favourable effect on interviewer impressions and hiring decisions. Nevertheless, a study of communication behaviours would be incomplete without investigating applicant personality, body language, appearance and degree of participation. Each type of behaviour plays a part in IM, hence the behaviours will now be analysed in Chapter 5. The analysis in Chapter 5 will consider positive personality characteristics, especially those of enthusiasm, self-confidence and empathy, to discover their role in creating impressions of applicants, and their influence on hiring decisions.
Chapter 5: Managing Impressions in Real-Life Job Interviews: The Importance of Appearance, Personality and Body Language

5.1 Introduction

Having analysed the role of verbal behaviours in Chapter 4, this chapter focuses more specifically on the role of non-verbal behaviours in impression management (IM), in particular, the applicant’s appearance, body language and personality. Chapter 5 ascertains the role of these features in creating a positive or negative impression on the interviewers. As personality can be revealed through verbal and non-verbal behaviour, I consider how applicants revealed aspects of personality through their disclosures and paralanguage and through the way they participated in the interview. This is accomplished through further examination of the job interview transcripts obtained in the two case studies. Case 1 comprised six interviews for the position of Transport Officer in local government, and Case 2 involved four interviews for the post of Legal Assistant in a law firm.

Chapter 5 also contains excerpts from the transcripts showing remarks that were made by the three interviewers in Case 1 as they talked among themselves in between each interview. The interviewers' responses show how they reacted to each of the applicants because interviewing is a subjective practice. Interviewers' comments revealed whether an applicant was creating a positive or a negative impression on the interviewers during the interview. No recorded comments were obtained from the interviewer in Case 2 as he was the sole interviewer. Transcription symbols used in all of the following excerpts of CA are explained in Appendix A.

As mentioned earlier, patterns that emerged from the job interviews and presented in the following tables were drawn from a small data set and do not provide conclusive evidence of the communication behaviours of job applicants and
interviewers. For instance, the amount of body language found in each interview was regarded as an approximate estimate of frequency. Other researchers studying conversational data have used a small sample size and similar methods of interpreting and presenting data (see Easton, 1994; Hay, 1994; Holmes & Hay, 1997). After the present interviews had been conducted I talked with the interviewers and applicants individually. Discussions with the interviewers enabled me to categorise the data and to check my interpretations.

5.1.1 Role of Communicative Behaviour for IM

In Chapter 2, it was noted that IM could be viewed as a natural aspect of social life that individuals engage in either consciously or unconsciously and that communication plays a vital role in IM. Goffman (1959) points out that individuals display a front, that is, a part of our personality we present to the world at large, and it is in our interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of us. IM is the method by which individuals yield this "front" to the world. Lewis (1990) regards IM simply as an expression of a natural desire to communicate successfully and that to be successful in IM, verbal and non-verbal language must be used persuasively in order to create the desired effect on the other person. Concerning job interviews, the consensus is that IM is valuable because language and purposeful behaviours are used to create images of professionalism in a short period of time (Doolittle, 1987; Fletcher, 1989; Miller & Buzzanell, 1996; Parton, 1996; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999). For an applicant to employ the range of communication behaviours for successful IM within job interviews denotes "communicative competence," which Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) describe as the ability to choose behaviours that are both appropriate and effective for a given situation.

Chapter 5 is divided into four parts. The first part analyses applicant appearance. The second part analyses applicant personality, and the third part analyses body language of applicants. In the fourth part, I discuss the role that applicants' communication behaviours played in creating impressions during Case 1 and Case
2, and I present the main findings of data analysis in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Findings of Chapters 4 and 5 will be discussed and conclusions for this study will be provided in Chapter 6.

5.2 Communicative Competence for Impressions

Data Analysis

Communicative competence is much more than mechanically practising powerful language and paralanguage. It is equally as important for the applicant to be sensitive to the interviewer's communication style, to know which communication behaviours will create a powerful impression and to use those behaviours during the interview as and when the need arises. Similar to social conversation, a two-way exchange of information is essential in job interviews. Both parties require an equal opportunity to contribute to the dialogue. Interviewers expect applicants to play an active part in the dialogue by initiating comments and contributing ideas rather than passively answering questions with a "yes" or a "no." Therefore, it is not only polite but also practical for applicants to listen carefully to questions to enable them to provide the detailed and relevant responses that interviewers expect. Applicants need to appear genuinely interested and to respond to interviewers to allow a level of rapport to develop. For instance, an applicant might laugh at the interviewer's humorous remarks or encourage the interviewer by nodding his or her head and saying "yes," "right" or "mm."

Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that communicative competence is a subjective notion. During a job interview, interviewers frequently make their decisions based on how they feel about applicants. An applicant who questions the interviewer's viewpoint and asserts his or her opinion may be judged by an interviewer as arrogant and create an unfavourable impression. However, the same applicant interacting with a different interviewer could be perceived by that interviewer as dynamic, assertive and able to contribute ideas. This raises questions about the possibility of "objectivity" in selection procedures, and this study indicated that the perceptions of the interviewers varied in both Case 1 and Case 2. Given the
unreliability of selection interviews and their subjective nature, and as much as the interviewers may strive for "objectivity" in their choice of the person for the job, IM is an essential technique that job candidates would do well to develop. As will be seen in this chapter, the successful applicants were the ones who managed to shape a favourable impression on the interviewers.

To follow is the analysis of excerpts from transcripts of Case 1 and Case 2 and comments made by three interviewers during Case 1. I formed my own interpretations while I was a non-participant observer of the 10 job interviews by listening to tape recordings of the interviews, by reading the interview transcripts, by consulting the brief notes that I made while observing, and through discussions with the interviewers. The interviewers' tape-recorded comments showed how they reacted to applicants, hence these recordings enabled me to check my own impressions.

Both studies are analysed as follows. First, I discuss the weakest applicant or the person that the interviewers said they were least likely to hire; second, I analyse applicants that were perceived to perform slightly better than the first group; and finally, I present the successful applicant the one the interviewers chose to hire. Appearance, personality, body language, and degree of participation in the interviews are now examined in turn, as essential elements of IM in selection interviews. Appearance could be a crucial aspect of IM in interviews as people can choose what clothes to wear and how to wear them to create an impact on others. Before analysing the kinds of impressions applicants created through their appearance and how interviewers perceived those applicants, I explain briefly how applicants are expected to present themselves in interviews.

5.2.1 Appearance

Ensure that the heels are not too high. If your shoes are new, break them in beforehand, otherwise you might find yourself leaving the room with a funny walk! (Berry, 1997, p.31).
There appears to be an unwritten code for appearance in different jobs. Interviewers prefer a certain look that matches the image of their organisation. Clean, neat, conservative but fashionable clothes convey an image of professionalism which is desirable for the company, especially business organisations. For the medium level office-based jobs under investigation in this study, interviewers expected applicants to look clean and tidy and to wear clothing that projected a businesslike image, i.e. a business suit. As it is widely accepted that appearance may influence interviewers' perceptions, many people attempt to appear tidy and businesslike if they are attending an office-based interview. A professional image is crucial as it creates the perception that the applicant understands what is appropriate in the workplace. Lewis (1990) reports that a Chief Executive once told him "Unless people are prepared to take time and trouble over the way they look, I'll never believe they are going to spend time and effort on the work they do for us" (p.231).

"Self-help" texts are unanimous in stating that interviewers expect applicants for office-based jobs to present a well-groomed, clean and businesslike appearance. Hence, interviewers may have pre-conceived notions of how the successful applicant will look, and applicants who do not conform to this expected image could put themselves at a disadvantage. It is agreed that clothes should be well fitting, neatly pressed, and conservative but fashionable. Both men and women are expected to wear suits. Male applicants are advised to wear a navy blue or dark grey business suit, white long sleeved shirt and an expensive, conservative-looking silk tie. The colour of socks and shoes should match.

Females are advised also to wear a navy or grey suit, the skirt worn not more than one inch above the knee. Shoes should be low heeled and in good condition, hair tidy and stylish, and make up subtle (Amos, 2001; Berry, 1997; Corfield, 2003; Gottesman & Mauro, 1999; Johnstone, 1997; Miller, 1998; Popovitch, 2000; Sutton, 2000). Berry comments that it is necessary to dress in line with the company's image and applicants are advised to check before the interview. Hence, while a navy business suit could be worn for a job interview in a bank or a law firm,
more colourful and casual clothing may be expected for jobs in advertising or the media, for example.

In this study, interviewers judged how clean and tidy applicants were. They scrutinised hairstyle, and they noted whether clothing and shoes were co-ordinated in terms of style and colour. My impressions of applicants' appearance were formed as I observed applicants at the beginning of each interview. Later I had consultations with the interviewers in Case 1 and Case 2 to discover their opinions about appearance and to gain their assistance in categorising data in the tables in this study. Furthermore, I obtained interviewers' comments regarding appearance during the recording of Case 1. Findings concerning applicant appearance are presented in Table 5.1. Positive behaviours are indicated by the abbreviation "pos." whereas negative behaviours are shown by the abbreviation "neg." in Table 5.1 and all other tables in this chapter.
Table 5.1  Applicant Appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Ray</th>
<th>Val</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Liz (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1 - Transport Officer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tights</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Neg.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total pos. features</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tights</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Pos.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total pos. features</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pos. = Positive or favourable appearance. Neg. = Negative or unfavourable appearance. S = Successful applicant

Totals for each column in Table 5.1 show the number of positive features of appearance of each applicant. For successful applicants, all categories of their appearance were positive. Liz displayed eight positive features of appearance, and Brenda displayed seven positive features. Hence, by appearing clean, tidy and businesslike, Liz and Brenda possibly conformed to the expectations of the interviewers for these office-based interviews, whereas other applicants did not. Unsuccessful applicants often exhibited several negative characteristics, such as
untidy hair or clothing that was mismatched or creased. As shown later, in Case 1, Ray who scored zero was ridiculed by the interviewers, and Sam scored only one point, seemingly because the interviewers disapproved of the colour of his shoes. In Case 2, Helen was the applicant with the most untidy appearance managing only a low score of three, while Alice scored five, and Lily, who was reasonably well presented, scored six.

Comments made by interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews and the Legal Assistant interviews suggest that to be successful it could be essential for applicants to appear clean, tidy and businesslike.

**Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

From the interviewers' comments, it was clear that appearance played a critical role in creating a positive impression. In particular, appearance could affect impressions of not only competence but also personality. According to Hayes (1991, p.51) "a person's appearance can provide the listener or observer with messages about personality, status and interpersonal attitudes." Interestingly, in the particular context of the current study, it seems that providing a positive impression through appearance is applicable to both women and men. Val did not manage to create a positive impression, and her problem was linked more specifically to tidiness. Although she wore a business suit, her clothes were not pressed and her hair looked dishevelled. Hence, she did not look tidy, or well groomed, and this created a negative impression as Interviewer 3 remarked that Val "looked scruffy."

During Ray's interview, it became clear that a positive appearance was essential. However, Ray's attire did not create a favourable impression on the interviewers. After he left the interview room the interviewers ridiculed him. In particular, Interviewer 2 called Ray "a geek," that is, a dull or socially inept person, because of his appearance. The interviewers joked about Ray's clothing which clashed and was
considerably old-fashioned; he wore a light green shiny suit with beige shoes and white socks. He also had long untidy hair. The excerpt below from a conversation between Interviewers 2 and 3 illustrates why Ray was unable to create a positive impression:

87 INTERVIEWER 3 And where did he get those SHOES from and that SUIT!
88 INTERVIEWER 2: And the SOCKS!
(All three interviewers laugh)
89 INTERVIEWER 3 I mean, he's only a year older than I am, and I would NOT consider wearing shoes like THAT.
90 INTERVIEWER 2: A geek!
91 INTERVIEWER 3 He is 31!

Comments about the appearance of other unsuccessful applicants Joe, Sam and Dan showed that interviewers noticed both negative and positive aspects of appearance. These impressions may have influenced the hiring decision. The interviewers remarked how "well presented" Joe looked as his tie, shirt and socks were colour co-ordinated. Hence, they formed a favourable impression of Joe due to the way he was dressed. However, Sam created a less positive image as Interviewer 2 remembered Sam "with the brown shoes," adding "his shoes did not match his suit." In addition, the interviewers remarked that Dan's suit looked creased and shabby, and his nails were not clean.

Successful applicant

In contrast, the professional image presented by successful applicant Liz may have contributed to her success in the interview. She looked business-like, displaying an image that corresponded closely with current expectations of how applicants should dress for an office-based job interview. Liz presented as clean and tidy. She dressed conservatively in a crisp navy blue skirt and jacket with a white blouse and low-heeled navy blue court shoes. Her hair was clean and worn in a tidy style; she wore subtle make up, small gold earrings and carried a slim black briefcase.
Applicants for the Legal Assistant position were scrutinised by the interviewer in much the same way.

**Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

The interviews of unsuccessful applicants Lily, Alice and Helen demonstrated the importance of presenting the right image through clothing, hairstyle and personal grooming. Similar to Case 1, one or two features may have spoiled the appearance of unsuccessful applicants hence creating negative impressions on the interviewer. Although Lily was dressed in a crisp business suit, she wore showy dangling silver earrings. Many English law firms have a formal culture, and employees are expected to dress conservatively. The interviewer disapproved of the earrings remarking that he considered them "inappropriate for the office." I noticed that Alice's face looked shiny and her hair was unwashed. In the interviewer's words, "she looked rather untidy" therefore Alice created an unfavourable impression on the interviewer due to her appearance. In self-help texts on selection interviewing it is pointed out that "clean, tidy hair is essential" (Berry, 1997, p.31). Although applicants are expected to wear suits for office-based job interviews, Helen wore a skirt, blouse and cardigan, which may have prompted the interviewer to conclude that she "was not serious about the job." Alice, Lily, and Brenda the successful applicant, all wore conservative but fashionable trouser suits. It could be that their clothing conformed more to the interviewer's expectations.

**Successful applicant**

It can be suggested that the appearance of successful applicant, Brenda, most possibly contributed to her success. Her attire seemed appropriate to the position for which she was applying. She wore a crisp, dark blue trouser suit, well-polished low-heeled black shoes, a simple gold necklace, and carried a black briefcase. Her make-up and jewellery were subtle, her nails manicured, and her hair was clean,
tidy and stylish. Hence, Brenda looked businesslike, conforming to the standard of
dress anticipated by the interviewer who commented that Brenda "looked very
smart."

It was clear from the findings that the interviewers paid much attention to each
applicant’s appearance. Applicants were expected to appear well groomed and to
dress formally in business suits. Appearance seemed to influence interviewers'
judgments in both the Transport Officer interviews and the Legal Assistant
interviews. In particular, interviewers made comments that showed they were not
impressed by clothing and shoes that were unfashionable or mismatched or by
untidy hairstyles. Both successful applicants presented a positive image of
themselves as they were clean and tidy, and they wore dark-coloured business suits.
They achieved higher scores than other applicants, as shown in Table 5.1, that is, all
aspects of their appearance were positive, therefore their appearance could have
been linked to their interview success.

5.2.2 Personality

It happens again and again; even if a candidate's
educational background or previous experience is
not up to those of his or her competitors, by
demonstrating certain advantages involving
personality or character, the candidate is successful
in getting the job (Corfield, 2003, pp.30-31).

Personality is probably the most important feature of IM within the context of the
job interview. Personality is revealed through verbal and non-verbal behaviour.
Here I discuss the effect of verbal behaviour in IM. Later I will discuss the role of
body language in shaping impressions about personality. Verbal behaviour
concerns the types of disclosures an applicant provides during their interview which
influence impressions of personality. It is essential for applicants to give an
impression of activity as opposed to passivity. For example, positive disclosures or
statements suggest confidence, dynamism, ability to make decisions, and that the
applicant is outgoing and assertive. Chapter 4 showed that disclosures that create an
impression of competence are also essential for interview success.
As detailed in Chapter 4, impressions of applicant personality can be influenced by paralanguage which relates to loudness, pitch and timing of the voice and includes pauses, emphasis, intonation and laughter (Pittam, 1994; Tannen, 2005; Tusing & Dillard, 2000). In the present study, it was observed that unsuccessful applicants did not make an appropriate use of paralanguage; that is, they often spoke in a soft, slow monotone voice with little variation in pitch, tone and pace. This created the impression that they lacked dynamism and confidence. In contrast, from the interviewers' perspective, successful applicants who had strong clear voices with no hesitations appeared self-confident and competent, which are much sought after attributes in job applicants. Therefore, it was clear that paralanguage had a considerable impact on perceptions of personality.

Another important way in which applicants revealed information about their personality was through disclosures, that is, information they volunteered about themselves. Sometimes applicants openly described themselves as "self-confident" or "assertive," while at other times interviewers said they "read between the lines" and drew conclusions about personality from the way applicants responded to questions.

Applicants' disclosures containing positive information relating to personality are shown in Table 5.2.
Table 5.2  Evidence of Applicant Personality in Disclosures and Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive characteristics of personality</th>
<th>Self confident</th>
<th>Enthusiastic/expressed interested in job</th>
<th>Flexible and calm nature</th>
<th>Conscientious</th>
<th>Asked questions and verbally encouraged interviewer</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>119.0</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 1 - Transport Officer

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Self confident</th>
<th>Enthusiastic/expressed interested in job</th>
<th>Flexible and calm nature</th>
<th>Conscientious</th>
<th>Asked questions and verbally encouraged interviewer</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>119.0</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 2 - Legal Assistant

Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Self confident</th>
<th>Enthusiastic/expressed interested in job</th>
<th>Flexible and calm nature</th>
<th>Conscientious</th>
<th>Asked questions and verbally encouraged interviewer</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.0</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. % = Percentage of positive personality characteristics in disclosures. S = Successful applicant

Both of the successful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 displayed higher percentages of positive personality characteristics than any of the unsuccessful applicants, as can be seen in Table 5.2. Successful applicants in Cases 1 and 2 were more self-confident, enthusiastic and conscientious. They were competent communicators as they asked only one or two relevant questions, and did not display any particular characteristic to excess.

As might be expected, for each category of disclosure the successful applicant Liz in Case 1 displayed more self-confidence, more enthusiasm for the job and seemed to be more conscientious than other applicants. Although unsuccessful applicant Joe provided more encouragement and asked more questions than Liz, he may have asked too many questions and prolonged his interview unnecessarily. Dan exhibited
a more easygoing nature than Liz. However, as explained later, Dan may have appeared too easygoing. Sam seemed nervous, and Ray, Val and Joe appeared much less confident than other applicants.

Brenda, the successful applicant in Case 2, did not express interest in the job as frequently as Lily and Alice, however she demonstrated a flexible and easygoing nature and appeared to be much more self-confident than other applicants were. In addition, Brenda encouraged the interviewer and asked more questions than Lily and Alice did. However, Table 5.2 also shows that unsuccessful applicant Helen asked more questions than any applicant in Case 2, prolonging her interview beyond the time at which the interviewer intended to finish. As I show later, this possibly created a negative impression.

**Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

Before the interviews, each applicant was asked to complete a psychometric test for testing personality. This highlights the importance that interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews placed on selecting an applicant with the "right personality." Interviewer 1 wanted to wait for the results of the tests before deciding whom to hire, which, it could be argued, is further evidence that personality was a significant consideration. The excerpt below, from a conversation between the interviewers is illustrative of the importance of applicant personality on hiring decisions:

208 INTERVIEWER 1 So, therefore, I would have said that on the basis of the interviews, and, I mean, I don’t know if we can make up our mind until we’ve had the psychometric testing, I think I would probably consider Liz as the strongest candidate.

209 INTERVIEWER 2 Interviewer 3 the same?

210 INTERVIEWER 3 Yeah.

211 INTERVIEWER 1 I’m not sure whether I’m under the right impression until I see the psychometric test.

212 INTERVIEWER 3 that’s just the impression that I got.

213 INTERVIEWER 1 Oh that’s fine that.
You're not trying to summarise our joint views, this is your view is it?

Let's just deal with the references now. Obviously we can’t make up our minds until, in case we get any surprises from the psychometric tests.

Further remarks made during Case 1 by Interviewer 1 showed that he had positive opinion of psychometric tests as he stated, "When I have used them before they have worked out well." Then he gave an example of a time when he had successfully used psychometric testing to hire individuals for a management team. The following comment by Interviewer 1 reveals the importance that he placed on personality when deciding whom to hire, particularly applicants' ability to work harmoniously with other team members:

This guy was sufficiently potentially difficult to work with, that I felt I needed to go into the psychometric testing with the others. Because this chap was so mercurial and creative, I thought to myself we can't have somebody else like him in the team. And in actual fact I managed to get a team that I was happy with, and functioned very well, and that's when I came to believe in it.

The interviewers' comments showed that concerning hiring decisions applicants’ personality was as influential as their competence. The following comment by Interviewer 1 shows how three of the unsuccessful applicants in Case 1, Ray, Val and Joe, were judged in terms of their personality and competence. For instance, it was concluded that although Joe had the personality, he did not have competence:

Then, the other chap, you know with the green suit on obviously didn’t have either. Val I don’t really think had either. Er, and the chap we saw today Joe had the personality, but he didn’t convince me that he would do the job well.

There was further evidence in comments made by the interviewers' that personality was a crucial factor in relation to hiring decisions. In the next excerpt from Case 1 the interviewers were judging the personalities of Sam and Val and how well they
displayed their competence by answering questions. It was especially important to appear personable, that is, congenial. Interviewers 1 and 2 concluded that although Sam had answered questions more thoroughly than Val, he was not as "personable" as Val. In addition, the excerpt shows that interviewers' judgments were clearly subjective, based on their feelings. For instance, in line 126 Interviewer 1 described how he "had the feeling" that Val's "personality and manner" was her strength. The interviewer remembered that Val had actually discussed her positive personality characteristics. Evidence of this appears in the interviewer’s remark "she said that, and that’s a strength," in line 126:

122 INTERVIEWER 1 He did make more of a thrash at answering the questions, actually.
123 INTERVIEWER 3 Yeah.
124 INTERVIEWER 1 He didn't come across as so (p x 2) personable.
125 INTERVIEWER 3 I mean, once he got going he
126 INTERVIEWER 1 [(loudly) I felt she revealed a strength in terms of. You had the feeling with her that her personality and manner is in fact one of her strengths. And I mean she said that, and that's a strength. How she answered the questions was a weakness.

By talking with interviewers and listening to their recorded comments, it was possible to ascertain which personality characteristics of applicants impressed interviewers most of all. It is "taken for granted" that during the interview job applicants are expected to show that they work well, that is, harmoniously with other people, often as a member of a team. The interviewers informed me that, for the post of Transport Officer, they wanted to hire someone who was friendly and understanding and who could show empathy as the role involved liaising with parents and handicapped children. They added that the successful applicant would be self-motivated and able to make decisions without asking for help from their manager. Therefore, it was essential for applicants to present positive personality traits such as enthusiasm and self-confidence, which wield extensive influence in job interviews (see Medley, 1993; Young & Kacmar, 1998).

The interview with Ray made clear the importance of attributes such as confidence, dynamism and ability to make decisions without help. The transcripts of the
interviewers’ comments reveal that the interviewers took a negative view of Ray’s personality, concluding that he would not be able to cope with the demands of the job. The data reveals some important clues to explain why Ray did not manage to create a positive impression. As shown in Chapter 4, Ray revealed that he would ask his line manager for assistance. This negative disclosure would have created the impression that Ray was not self-resourceful. In addition, Ray volunteered that he lacked self-confidence. Therefore, Ray was not perceived to have the kind of personality the interviewers required for the role of Transport Officer. The excerpt below, from a conversation between the interviewers following the interview with Ray is illustrative of Ray’s inability to create a positive impression during the interview:

85 INTERVIEWER 1: Yes, I mean, the job that we're offering is not the job for him.
86 INTERVIEWER 2: I know, I mean, looking over his shoulder for help all the time, and that's absolutely NOT what we require.

Val’s interview revealed that it was important for applicants to demonstrate a capacity for empathy towards other people and an enthusiasm for the job. The data indicates that the reason why Val was considered to be personable was that she disclosed that she had the quality of empathy. Indeed, the interviewers regarded empathy as crucial for the role of Transport Officer. For example, Val described herself as calm and "quite patient with people," giving the impression that she was confident interacting with and helping other people. However, Val’s responses contained frequent pauses and sighs that slowed the pace of her voice, making her seem tired and unenthusiastic from the perspective of the interviewers. The excerpt below is illustrative of the way Val may have given a positive impression by discussing her ability to show empathy. However, she possibly gave a negative impression with her paralanguage which suggested a lack of enthusiasm for the job:

18 INTERVIEWER 2: What about qualities?
19 VAL: Um (p x 2) (sighs) I'm (p x 2) I quite like working (p x 2) in a busy environment. Um, I'm quite patient with people (p x 2) and I know I've often been asked to deal with difficult people because people say that I
am, I'm able to relate to them and can keep things calm and on an even level, which I think helps, especially when you are dealing with people who have got special needs, with parents that are upset, and things are not going well.

The same pattern was observed with another unsuccessful applicant, Joe, who did not manage to create a favourable impression of his personality. When asked how he would overcome a situation concerning a driver who was consistently late, Joe conveyed the impression that he was inflexible and intolerant towards his work colleagues, as shown in lines 88 and 90 of the following excerpt from his interview:

88 JOE: If for some reason that the driver is going to be late then obviously I must communicate with him that this is not something I would tolerate. If they cannot do the job effectively then obviously he would be replaced.

89 INTERVIEWER 3: What if it was a member of our own staff who was consistently late, and even though you had spoken to him, he was still being late?

90 JOE: What goes for one goes for all, um. Obviously, you have a job to do, and you cannot tolerate, um, people who have an easygoing attitude to their job.

Consequently, Interviewer 2 formed a negative impression of Joe as shown in the following excerpt from the transcripts of interviewers' comments. Again, there was evidence that the interviewers' judgments were subjective as Interviewer 2 stated he had the "feeling" that Joe was short-tempered and quick to find fault with others. Interviewer 2 revealed his concern that Joe was intolerant when he commented "I don't think he suffers fools gladly" that is, Joe was unforgiving and had no patience with work colleagues who made mistakes. Therefore, the comments of Interviewer 2 showed how important it was for applicants to be flexible and tolerant. The next excerpt confirms that Joe did not impress Interviewer 2 as Joe did not appear to possess empathy. As shown later, empathy was an essential characteristic for someone performing the role of Transport Officer:
I’ve got a feeling that um his tolerance was probably a bit raw, he would probably go straight down one of the contractor's throats. I don’t think he suffers fools gladly.

Sam's interview provided more evidence that personality and competence were equally salient selection criteria. To create positive impressions in these areas it was crucial to give detailed and relevant responses, to speak in a strong, clear voice with few pauses and to minimise the use of powerless words and phrases. Sam's vague responses lacked detail, and he described himself as "slightly slow," perhaps giving the impression that he lacked competence and confidence. Hence, Interviewer 1 concluded that Sam gave "moderate answers" and Sam's personality was "not extraordinary." Furthermore, Sam spoke in a soft, slow monotone voice and repeatedly said "you know." Accordingly, the interviewers gained the impression that he was "nervous" and "a bit bland," and they complained that he did not "project enthusiasm." The following excerpt from a discussion between the interviewers is evidence that Sam did not project a positive impression of his personality:

I thought he gave moderate answers, and, personality wise he was not extraordinary.

He came good on his own ground, but not on any other, once he started asking his questions.

He was slightly above the average er level of the people we interviewed in answering the questions, but, I mean, nowhere near the best um (p x 2) and his personality didn’t come through very strongly.

The interview with Dan showed that interviewers scrutinised disclosures and from them made inferences about an applicant's personality. In particular, it could be important for applicants to provide statements that project an image that the applicant is reliable and conscientious. Although Dan appeared to be competent, some doubts were expressed about his personality. This may have been because he talked very fast, creating the impression that he was "slick," over-confident and possibly unreliable. It can be suggested that Dan's cheeky, cheerful and outspoken nature may have caused the interviewers to perceive him as a "Jack the Lad,"
meaning a young man who is self-assured, carefree and brash. His flirtatious manner is evident in the exchange below, in which Dan makes a comment in a soft and seductive-sounding tone, which ends with his hearty laughter:

17 INTERVIEWER 2 And the sting in the tail, what about weaknesses?
18 DAN: Um, (soft voice tone) beautiful women, of course. (Laughs x 5).

However, while Dan impressed the interviewers with his knowledge and experience, his rapid speech and rambling answers possibly gave the impression he was hiding information, generating feelings of suspicion among the interviewers. Line 180 shows that Interviewer 2 gained the impression that Dan "may not stick," and because of "something he said" he had the feeling that Dan "could well be up and off before long." Line 184 in the excerpt below highlights the subjective way in which interviewers judge applicants. The events observed in the interview with Dan could confirm that interviewers paid close attention to verbal behaviour they perceived as negative, and used this information to screen applicants (see Kellerman, 1989; Springbett, 1958). Moreover, Interviewer 1 was concerned about checking Dan's references. Although Dan had recently completed almost two years of training with his present company, there was no job available for him there:

180 INTERVIEWER 2 I put down "may not stick." Somewhere along the line I picked up that he could well be up and off before along. It was something he said at the sort of end of the
181 INTERVIEWER 1 I haven’t looked at the references or anything, but it is the case, isn’t it, that the company has not got a place for him at the end of his training?
182 INTERVIEWER 2 Yeah.
183 INTERVIEWER 1 Which, you know, I wish I knew why that was, and whether there will be any proof in the references I don’t know, I haven’t seen them yet.
184 INTERVIEWER 2 It was just er just a feeling I had.

Evidence was found in Dan's interview that "displaying too much ability" can be a problem. The following discussion between Interviewers 1 and 3 suggests that Dan might have done too much talking, as shown in line 203. Dan's rapid speech and
playful comments may have contributed to the impression that he was "glib" or artful, therefore his personality was "a bit of a question mark" according to Interviewer 1. Nevertheless, Dan appeared to fulfil the selection criteria in terms of competence and personality, as shown in line 204:

202 INTERVIEWER 1 I think Dan displayed the ability.
203 INTERVIEWER 3 too much!
204 INTERVIEWER 1 yeah, and personality a bit of a question mark there, but he had one. I think he met both. I’d put him on the short short list.

Then, Interviewer 1 voiced concern that there was no reference from Dan’s current employer, a bus company. Therefore, the following excerpt shows that interviewers remember information that is negative or unusual or out of the norm, and this could confirm the view that interviewers search for negative information (see Fleischmann, 1991; Lewis, 1990). Moreover, there are conventions for selection interviews, and information that deviates from these conventions is viewed in a negative light by interviewers who use it to screen job applicants. As Interviewers 1 and 3 continued to evaluate Dan their comments revealed the importance of being able to present credible references:

215 INTERVIEWER 1 I am slightly surprised that there isn’t a reference from the bus company for Dan, because if he is not being accommodated by them, you would be expecting them to be supportive in giving him
216 INTERVIEWER 3 One of the candidates put that his first reference was not to be contacted.

However, Dan made a favourable impression on Interviewer 3, the female personnel officer, who said "I liked him," which suggests that she judged Dan according to her feelings. Nevertheless, line 92 of the next excerpt indicates that Interviewer 1 was not quite as impressed with Dan and had suspicions about him. Interviewer 1 was keen to know why Dan was leaving his present job. Then Interviewer 2 mentioned that the references would be checked, which again highlights the considerable attention that interviewers give to references from employers. It is possible that Dan was not hired as he had no reference from his
current employer. This may have given the impression that Dan was disliked by people at his firm, causing the interviewers to have doubts about Dan's personality, especially as Dan had disclosed that in his current job his decisions were not supported by senior managers. The following discussion between the three interviewers shows how they judged Dan:

87 INTERVIEWER 3  Tell you what though, he knew what the job was about.
88 INTERVIEWER 1  [Oh yes!
89 INTERVIEWER 2  [Tomorrow; he could sit down and do it tomorrow. A "Jack the Lad."
90 INTERVIEWER 3  I liked him.
91 INTERVIEWER 2  I wonder why? Well, you only said that because he had a weakness for beautiful women, and you fell for it.
92 INTERVIEWER 1  I wonder why he is leaving his present job? (p x 7)
93 INTERVIEWER 2  Well, we will look at all the references. I mean, job-wise he could walk in tomorrow. He had a grasp of every single question.

Successful applicant

Research confirms that interviewers prefer applicants who demonstrate self-confidence, assertiveness, enthusiasm and extraversion (Cook, Spector & Vance, 2000; Medley, 1993; Raza and Carpenter, 1987; Young & Kacmar, 1998). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that interviewers formed favourable conclusions about Liz, the successful applicant in the Transport Officer interviews. When she was asked "What are your key strengths and how can they help you in the post"? Liz did very well with her positive disclosures, describing herself as "assertive," "able to communicate with the right type of people"; "flexible" and "adaptable to situations"; "quick in assessing the situation" and "accurate with information."

The following excerpt from Liz's interview shows that above all, Liz conveyed to the interviewers that she had the quality of empathy, which was one of the requirements for the job. The interviewers liked Liz's apparent ability to be
compassionate. Her statement "I feel that I’ve got this quality" is an example of the way Liz verbally promoted her personality throughout the interview. In her own words:

13 LIZ I'm assertive. I’m also understanding to the parents needs and the schools needs. You have to have in this post a certain amount of empathy. At the same time you can be understanding to the needs of the parents, the school and the child, foremost the child. Um, and I feel that I’ve got this quality, this strength that I’m able to do the job.

Indeed, it could be argued that although the interviewers regarded both Liz and Dan as competent, it seems they hired Liz because they preferred her personality. For instance, she emphasised how important it was for a Transport Officer to show empathy and concern for the needs of parents, children and teachers. In contrast, Interviewer 1 noted that Dan was "more oriented towards the cost of doing things." Interviewer 1 explained that Liz was "more towards needs compared to him," meaning that Liz and Dan were different in that Liz regarded the needs of people as more important than financial aspects of the job.

Furthermore, Interviewer 1 said that he was impressed by the significance that Liz gave to the "human relations side of the post." The interviewers' remarks about Liz highlighted how essential it was to demonstrate attributes such as congeniality and empathy in addition to expressing competence. Interviewer 3 stated "I liked her," possibly because Liz "came across in a very personable and sympathetic way" as commented by Interviewer 1 who also remarked "on the other hand, it was quite clear from her answers that she knew perfectly well how to do the job."

Therefore, the data shows that personality could be of critical importance for IM in job interviews. Psychometric testing used in Case 1 suggested that employers were intent on hiring a person with the "right personality." Interviewers in this study paid as much attention to personality as they did to the applicant's competence to do the job. There was compelling evidence that interviewers assessed applicants subjectively, that is, based on their feelings about applicants. Interviewers' hiring
decisions were significantly influenced by how much they "liked" an applicant, and applicant verbal behaviour played a crucial role in projecting a positive personality.

The type of person the interviewers wanted to hire for the post of Transport Officer required the following characteristics: confident, outgoing, dynamic, enthusiastic, assertive, motivated, decisive, friendly, and able to empathise. It was important for applicants to give an impression of activity, rather than passivity, and to create good rapport with the interviewer, which successful applicants achieved through their verbal skills. However, successful applicants were not overly confident, enthusiastic or talkative. Indeed, applicants who talked too much may have created negative impressions.

Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm

Unsuccessful applicants

The four interviews in the law firm were conducted by the Managing Partner. He informed me that the person he wanted to hire would be experienced in conveyancing work and would be confident enough to deal with client queries on her own. The successful applicant required the ability to stay calm under pressure and work harmoniously with other members of the team. Unlike the interviewers in Case 1, the interviewer made no comments during the interviews. However, after the interviews had been conducted I obtained valuable insights during discussions with him. During the selection interviews, the interviewer's questions focused primarily on each applicant's work history and present work, although when making the hiring decision he gave considerable attention to whether or not he "liked" the applicant on a personal level. Therefore, it appears that personality had a significant influence on his hiring decision. Earlier, in Table 5.2, it was shown that the way applicants made disclosures and asked questions may have given particular impressions of their personality.
There was strong evidence in the interview of Lily, the weakest applicant in Case 2, that the attributes of competence and positive personality were equally critical for success in job interviews. Lily took a passive role in the interview. She was not outgoing and did not interact with the interviewer or initiate comments, and she was unable to expand her answers to show a detailed knowledge of the work. However, Lily seemed confident about her career intentions and her achievements thus far. Later the interviewer remarked that although she did not demonstrate the required level of experience and competence, he thought Lily was "calm and sensible" and believed that she would work well under pressure. He took a favourable view of her personality and thought that she would work harmoniously with her colleagues and would therefore "blend in" with other Legal Assistants in the team. Nevertheless, Lily was not hired as, in the interviewer's opinion, she was not competent. Lily had been working in a junior role in the legal field and had no experience in conveyancing work. Therefore, she was unaccustomed to answering complex queries from clients concerning the property matters. In the interviewer's opinion, Lily would be unable to work on her own without supervision, and due to her inexperience, she may have found it hard to deal with "difficult" clients.

The interview with Alice revealed how the positive attributes of reliability and conscientiousness could be emphasised through disclosures. The following excerpt from her interview also shows that it was vital for paralanguage to match the applicant's statements. Alice's soft, slow voice, indicated by the five second pause at the beginning of line 198, could have suggested to the interviewer that she was hesitant about conveyancing work. Consequently, the favourable effect of Alice's disclosure may have been counteracted by her paralanguage:

198 ALICE (p x 5) and I'm not the kind of person to, to run off and leave a job half finished if, if I know there's stuff that's urgent that needs doing. I'm not one of these people that say, "Okay, I'm sorry, it's five o'clock" (p x 2)

199 INTERVIEWER mm

200 ALICE "I have to go"

201 INTERVIEWER right.

202 ALICE "it's my time to leave that," you know.
During Helen's interview it became clear that the ability to work well under pressure was a desirable quality for the position of Legal Assistant. Helen managed to portray that she stayed calm under pressure as indicated in the next excerpt. The interviewer asked her how she would cope with clients and a boss who "panicked," that is who became flustered. Helen's laughter, her question in line 389, and her reply in line 393 gave the impression that faced with the situation, she would cope well. The overlapping speech and laughter indicates that there was a certain amount of rapport. The excerpt from Helen’s interview shows how, on this occasion, Helen may have created a positive impression of her personality through her disclosures:

388 INTERVIEWER Um, how do you think you would deal with having to control panicky clients, as well as a panicky boss? [laughs x 2]

389 HELEN [laughs x 2] It depends what sort of panicking he does. I mean, does he fly off the handle at his staff, or does he just [fly off the handle?]

390 INTERVIEWER [No, no, he just sits in a corner and swears (laughs x 4)]

391 HELEN does he? (laugh)

392 INTERVIEWER [laughs x 3]

393 HELEN [does he? I think they all do that though. No, I don't worry about that, mm.

However, for Helen, rapport was no guarantee of interview success. She may have tried too hard to create rapport. My own interpretation was that she appeared too casual and may have asked too many questions, which created a negative impression. Later the interviewer confided to me that he thought Helen was not genuinely interested in the job. Although she interacted well with the interviewer Helen may have been unsuccessful in the interview due to her other disclosures, analysed in Chapter 4, which led to the perception that she disliked taking on extra responsibility and work tasks. Helen gave the impression that she preferred a job that was nearer to her home and that she could not be bothered to drive more than a short distance to work. She discussed where she would park her car and the cost of parking her car rather than talking about the job.
Successful applicant

The interview with Brenda the successful applicant provided evidence that it was essential to display an ability to be kind and helpful to clients and to manage difficult ones. Unsuccessful applicants did not express these positive qualities. Brenda made more positive personality-related statements than the other three applicants who were vying for the post of Legal Assistant, as detailed in Table 5.2. She presented as lively, self-confident and cheerful, and this helped her to develop rapport with the interviewer. Her attitude undoubtedly contributed to her success as the interviewer remarked that he "liked her attitude and cheerful personality." It became clear that Brenda could empathise with clients, as seen in the following excerpt which illustrates how she created a favourable impression on the interviewer through her positive statements:

61 INTERVIEWER Yeah, (p x 18), um. Dealing with clients, awkward ones, how do you?
62 BRENDA Constantly (laugh). We get quite a few irate customers, or clients I should say. And, um, if I can't help them I will say "Well, I'll get XX to give you a call back" or something, you know. If it's out of our hands we try and help as much as possible, but at the end of the day some things we can't help on
63 INTERVIEWER uh huh.
64 BRENDA Um, just try and help as much as possible. That's all you can do really is to be helpful, so.

Therefore, the excerpts show that personality could be the most important feature of IM within the context of the job interview. Moreover, the interviewers in Case 1 employed psychometric testing, which suggested that personality was a very important consideration for them. Verbal behaviour helped applicants to display their personality. The data can be said to throw light on the way different facets of personality are portrayed through applicants' disclosures. Positive disclosures suggested empathy, confidence, enthusiasm, dynamism, ability to make decisions and an outgoing nature. The interviewers' comments revealed that it was crucial for applicants to display competence through their disclosures as well as a positive personality, and it was essential to appear active rather than passive. However,
some applicants, i.e. Dan in Case 1 and Helen in Case 2, may have talked too much and appeared too enthusiastic. Successful applicants were competent communicators as they knew how to use verbal behaviour to project their personality in a way that would be perceived favourably by the interviewers.

Language and paralanguage are not the only channels through which applicants convey impressions of personality to interviewers. To form a more complete assessment of verbal behaviour it is necessary to explore the link between body language and personality, as body language plays a crucial role in IM.

5.2.3 Body Language

Verbal behaviour is naturally accompanied by non-verbal messages. Accordingly, here it is vital to analyse the impressions applicants were creating through their body language. Certain types of body language suggest certain types of personality. Thus, in this section I show how body language contributes to shaping impressions of personality. In Chapter 4 it was explained that unsuccessful applicants in Case 1 and Case 2 used negative verbal behaviour. In Chapter 5, I now explain how negative statements and paralanguage were accompanied by mostly negative body language. Such body language may have reinforced the unfavourable impact of negative verbal behaviour, creating a negative impression on the interviewers.

I noticed that, occasionally, unsuccessful applicants made positive statements but the potentially favourable effects were often neutralised by their body language. That is, negative non-verbal behaviour contradicted the messages provided by positive verbal behaviour, and this may have led the interviewers to doubt or disbelieve what some applicants were saying. In contrast, successful applicants displayed language and body language that "matched," that is, it corresponded, hence the messages they conveyed to the interviewer were credible. This could have been a reason why successful applicants created favourable impressions of their personality.
A common saying is that "actions speak louder than words" and interviewers' comments indicated that when judging applicants, interviewers relied on their subjective "feelings." It is possible that the interviewers in this study were simultaneously giving their attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages, either at a conscious or an unconscious level of interpretation. Non-verbal signals provide clues about the meaning of verbal messages as they are transmitted, and it is important that the two correspond. To properly understand a speaker's messages, it is important to pay attention to verbal and non-verbal signals at the same time (see Hayes, 1991).²

The self-help texts presented in Chapter 2 helped to provide definitions of applicant body language for the present research. The consensus is that applicants can be perceived more favourably if they maintain an interested facial expression, by smiling, nodding their heads and making eye contact. The categories of body language are displayed in Table 5.3, which provides data I gathered during discussions with interviewers and while observing applicants during their interviews.

Table 5.3  Applicant Body Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1 - Transport Officer</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Ray</th>
<th>Val</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Liz (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total pos. behaviours</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Brenda (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total pos. behaviours</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Successful applicants seemed to display more positive body language than any of the unsuccessful applicants did, as shown by the totals in each column of Table 5.3. In Case 1, the successful applicant Liz displayed only positive body language, therefore she scored seven. In contrast, Ray, Val and Sam displayed few positive features of body language compared with other applicants in Case 1. For instance, Ray displayed only one positive feature. Although Joe and Dan exhibited more positive features, they also displayed some negative ones. Body language may have
influenced interviewer perceptions of personality as Joe and Dan received more positive comments from the interviewers about their personality than Ray, Val and Sam did. Nevertheless, the interviewers had qualms about Joe and Dan due to their verbal behaviour. As shown earlier, Joe was regarded as intolerant, and Dan was considered too talkative and possibly unreliable.

Unsuccessful applicant Lily in Case 2 exhibited more negative than positive features of body language, as seen in Table 5.3. Although Alice and Helen used more positive features than Lily, they also displayed negative ones, which may have contributed to unfavourable impressions of personality. Brenda, the successful applicant, exhibited mainly positive body language. She did not mirror the interviewer's body language, however this may have had little or no negative impact. Mirroring is a simple technique where one person mimics or mirrors another's body language and verbal language. It usually helps two people to feel comfortable with each other (Amos, 2001; Gottesman & Mauro, 1999).

First, I show the kinds of body language used by each applicant in Case 1.

**Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

While observing interviews of the unsuccessful applicants and from listening to interviewers' comments, I ascertained that negative body language may have had an unfavourable effect on interviewers' perceptions. Unsuccessful applicants in Case 1 displayed more negative body language than the successful applicants, who used more positive behaviours. As discussed earlier, the interviewers perceived Ray as passive, and Val was perceived as bland and uninterested; their body language may have contributed to these perceptions. Ray and Val both had stiff postures and serious facial expressions, and they did not smile, therefore they appeared anxious. They did not nod their heads to encourage the interviewer or use occasional hand gestures to make a point, hence they seemed dull and unenthusiastic. To appear
confident and interested in the job it is necessary to sit upright and to smile during an interview, showing interest through facial expression. Moreover, it is necessary for applicants to show encouragement by nodding when they agree with interviewers (see Amos, 2001).

As noted earlier, Interviewer 2 formed the idea that Joe was intolerant and perhaps aggressive because of his disclosures. Joe's body language may have added to this negative impression. He did not seem to be taking the interview seriously as he leaned back in his chair, which made him appear too casual, that is, overly relaxed. This can be perceived as defensive behaviour (see Amos, 2001; Berry, 1997; Corfield, 2003). Furthermore, Joe's body language suggested that he was feeling anxious, possibly as he was unable to provide detailed replies to the interviewers' questions. Joe exhibited several behaviours that made him appear nervous and which may have distracted the interviewer and led to a negative evaluation. For instance, Joe grinned continuously. He also had what the interviewers stated was a habit that they found distracting, namely fiddling with his wedding ring. Such habits can make the interviewer impatient and irritable (Johnstone, 1997). Joe also made frequent gestures with his hands, suggesting that he was unconfident about what he was saying. Too much gesticulation can be distracting and signals anxiety (see Corfield, 2003).

I noticed that other unsuccessful applicants, namely Sam and Dan, also displayed negative body language. The interviewers' assessed Sam as "nervous" possibly because of his constant grin and the way he frequently touched his face and gestured wildly with his hands, which may have distracted the interviewers (see Corfield, 2003). Instead of maintaining eye contact with the interviewers, for the most part Sam was glancing around the room, out of the window or at the wall, which gave the impression he was anxious and/or perhaps dishonest (Berry, 1997). However, it is possible that Sam felt anxious purely because he was being interviewed, as many applicants do during job interviews. Interviewer 2 said he had the "feeling" that Dan "could well be up and off before long," and Dan's body language may have played a part in this evaluation. Although Dan's smile and his
animated facial expression and head nodding made him appear interested and alert, his rapid speech, frequent hand gestures, and "fidgeting" or inability to keep still, made him appear restless and unreliable.

**Successful applicant**

I observed that the body language of Liz the successful applicant was different from that of unsuccessful applicants. Her body language was positive and matched her positive verbal statements, which ensured that the interviewers believed what she was saying. This may have played a significant part in ensuring that she was hired for the job of Transport Officer. Liz's posture was upright but relaxed, and she seemed to be interested in the job and in the interviewers as she leaned forward slightly while speaking and made eye contact with them. Moreover, she seemed friendly and relaxed as her arms and legs remained uncrossed, she had a cheerful facial expression and smiled and nodded her head to encourage the interviewers. Smiling and head nodding shows the interviewer that the applicant is on the interviewer's wavelength (see Gottesman & Mauro, 1999 Sutton, 2000) which could help to create rapport.

Throughout her interview Liz clasped her hands either in her lap or around her knees, which made her appear calm and in control (Corfield, 2003). Occasionally she used her hands to illustrate a point she was making, but she used no gesture excessively. Liz often mirrored the body language of the interviewers by nodding her head or by smiling when they did. Gottesman and Mauro (1999) note that mirroring, that is, using the same gestures as the interviewer, can lead an interviewer to identify with the applicant, which is one of the most common reasons a person gets a job. At the end of the interview, Liz shook the hand of Interviewer 1, which gave the impression she was positive, co-operative and businesslike (Sutton, 2000). It seems that Liz succeeded in the interview as her powerful body language supported the messages she was communicating through her positive statements and strong, clear voice. As her verbal and non-verbal behaviours
matched, she appeared alert, focused and happy to be present at the interview, which helped Liz to create a positive rapport with the interviewers.

To conclude, in Case 1, successful and unsuccessful applicants used different body language. Unsuccessful applicants used mainly negative body language that reinforced the impact of their negative verbal messages and diminished the favourable effect of the scant positive information they gave. Consequently, negative body language may have contributed to unfavourable impressions of personality. Unsuccessful applicants were often perceived as nervous, unconfident, uninterested and passive. In contrast, the body language of the successful applicant strengthened the favourable impact of her detailed, relevant and positive responses. Therefore, her positive body language matched her positive verbal behaviour, helping to show her personality in a most favourable light. She appeared competent, self-assured, and assertive enough to perform the role, deeply interested in the job, and most important for the role of Transport Officer, the successful applicant expressed empathy with teachers, and with parents and their children.

**Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

While observing the body language of unsuccessful applicants (Lily, Alice and Helen) in Case 2, I formed the impression that it was important for applicants to smile, make eye contact, and to eliminate the use of gestures and mannerisms that might annoy the interviewer. The negative body language of unsuccessful applicants may have caused the interviewer to perceive them unfavourably. Lily, the weakest applicant, did not appear relaxed because she rarely smiled and made no facial expressions. Hence, she seemed anxious and not confident about what she was saying (see Amos, 2001; Corfield, 2003). In addition, Lily exhibited passive behaviour, nodding her head constantly in agreement with the interviewer, and she did not initiate any comments. Lily's negative body language may have contributed to the interviewer’s assessment that Lily lacked the confidence and experience necessary to perform the role of Legal Assistant.
Alice displayed gestures that are described in popular self-help texts as "negative." She rarely smiled, and throughout the interview she held a large envelope against her chest, creating a barrier between her and the interviewer. This may have suggested to the interviewer that Alice had a negative or defensive attitude. It is important for applicants to avoid physical barriers between themselves and interviewers as applicants may be perceived as "unapproachable and uncomfortable" (see Amos, 2001, p.20; Sutton, 2000, p.52). Furthermore, Alice lacked animation, that is, she rarely moved or nodded her head to encourage the interviewer, and she rarely gesticulated to emphasise any points she was making. Her body language may have contributed to the interviewer's impression that Alice was "anxious," "unconfident," and "rather tense."

Helen's interview also showed that, to create a positive impression, it was important for applicants not to fidget or display mannerisms that may annoy and distract the interviewer (Popovitch, 2000). The interviewer stated that he noticed that Helen fidgeted, that is, she moved around constantly. For instance, she seemed to be continually scratching her head and crossing and uncrossing her arms and legs, which made her look "nervous, uncomfortable and fidgety" (Amos, 2001, p.20). In addition, she pursed her lips tightly, which is a sign of displeasure (Sutton, 2000). Therefore, present findings suggest that Helen's nervous mannerisms and irritating habits diverted the attention of the interviewer and generated impatience and irritability (see Johnstone, 1997).

In particular, Helen avoided eye contact with the interviewer, which might have been why the interviewer remarked that Helen lacked interest in the job. Furthermore, she may have been perceived as dishonest. It is crucial to look at the interviewer as looking straight into somebody's eyes when he or she is talking gives an impression of honesty and interest. However, Helen stared at the wall or out of the window, which can be seen as defensive body language. Avoiding eye contact could have given the impression that she was wary of the interviewer's questions and was hiding information (see Berry, 1997).
In addition, Helen would shut her eyes for a second or two in what is known as the "eye block" gesture, which suggested that she was not interested in what the interviewer is saying (Sutton 2000, pp. 52-53). Sutton advises that although avoidance of eye contact could indicate that the applicant is nervous and timid, the interviewer will still interpret it in a negative way. However, it is possible that the interviewer's body language influenced Helen's behaviour somewhat. I noticed that the law firm interviewer made little eye contact with the unsuccessful applicants. He seemed to be continually reading the documents that were in front of him on his desk. In a discussion that I had with Helen after her interview she confided that she found his lack of eye contact "unnerving."

Successful applicant

In contrast, successful applicant Brenda created a favourable impression as her positive body language matched her positive verbal behaviour. Hence, Brenda created a favourable impression. The interviewer remarked that Brenda was cheerful and animated, and she seemed interested and focused on the interview. She shook the interviewer's hand before the interview, and she smiled and made more eye contact than the other applicants did. Furthermore, she showed she was interested through her facial expression and by occasionally using gestures and leaning forward when making a point (Amos, 2001; Corfield, 2003, 44-47). Brenda nodded her head in agreement and tilted her head on one side, therefore she appeared to be listening carefully to the interviewer and showing an interest in what he was saying. The interviewer made more eye contact with Brenda than he did with other applicants.

It became clear as I observed Brenda that she appeared confident and alert because she kept an upright posture, although not a rigid posture. Furthermore, Brenda's legs and arms were uncrossed, and she rested her hands on her chair throughout the interview, giving the impression that she was calm and composed. Occasionally she nodded her head, which encouraged the interviewer to speak, hence she appeared interested in what the interviewer was saying. Due to her cheerful facial expression
and smile. Brenda appeared very friendly, relaxed and confident in the presence of
the interviewer, whereas some of the other applicants seemed tense and
unconfident. The interviewer later remarked that he "liked" Brenda, therefore she
had obviously created rapport with him. Her positive body language may have
played a considerable part in creating this rapport.

Findings of this study revealed a link between positive body language and
favourable interviewer assessments of applicant personality. The large amount of
positive non-verbal behaviour exhibited by successful applicants reinforced their
positive verbal messages. This behaviour possibly helped to ensure their success.
These applicants may have seemed more credible, confident, trustworthy and more
interested in the job as their language and body language "matched." In contrast,
unsuccessful applicants, whose negative verbal behaviour was accompanied by
much negative body language, appeared passive, unenthusiastic, nervous, and
perhaps dishonest. In addition, their negative body language may have distracted
and irritated the interviewers, adding to the negative evaluations of their
personality.

5.2.4 Degree of Participation in Selection Interviews

There was evidence in the findings of the current research that the amount of
participation by the applicant also contributed to shape impressions. Either a
positive or a negative effect could be created depending on what kinds of strategies
are used by the applicant. For example, in this study augmentation involves
expanding or increasing a disclosure by talking about and giving examples of
achievements. I have used the term agreement to signify that the applicant agreed
with or acknowledged the interviewer using three or more words, such as "yes,
that's right." It is possible for both augmentation and agreement to have either a
positive or a negative effect on the interviewer. That is, a moderate amount of
augmentation could assist an applicant to appear competent if the applicant explains
in detail how they have solved a problem. However, excessive augmentation could
create a response that is too long, which, as noted by Popovitch (2000), could create an unfavourable impression.

Similarly, while occasional agreement could give the impression of flexibility and desire to create rapport, excessive agreement might lead the interviewer to perceive the applicant as passive or a sycophant. In the same vein, asking one or two relevant questions could be perceived as a sign of interest, whereas asking more than three or four questions could suggest that the applicant is nervous, or has not conducted sufficient research about the vacancy and the organisation. Amos (2001) Popovitch (2000) and Sutton (2000, p.38) warn that occasionally applicants may panic and ask "ridiculous" questions, therefore it is advisable that they do not ask about anything they should already know. Applicants who ask too many questions may be perceived as lacking respect for the interviewer's time. Hence, a maximum of three questions may be asked, although applicants need to be careful not to prolong the interview beyond the stage at which the interviewer wishes to finish.

The extent to which applicants used augmentation and agreement and the number of questions they asked is presented in Table 5.4.
Table 5.4  Degree and Type of Participation by Applicant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Augmentation</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Number of questions asked by applicant</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of active participation by applicant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1 - Transport Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2 - Legal Assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (S)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Augmentation = Expanding or increasing a statement or disclosure. Agreement = An acknowledgement comprising three words or more i.e. "Right, that's fine, yes." S = Successful applicant.

Unsuccessful applicants Joe and Sam in Case 1 had a much higher level of participation than other applicants in Case 1, as demonstrated in Table 5.4. They both asked too many questions. Compared with other applicants, Ray, Val and Dan had very low levels of participation as none of them used augmentation. Interviews of Ray, Val and Joe were shorter than other interviews as their responses lacked detail and actual examples to illustrate their competence. Successful applicant Liz had a participation level that could be considered medium as it was neither too high or too low. In Case 2, unsuccessful applicant Helen participated much more than other applicants. She asked more questions, showed more agreement with the interviewer and more augmentation. Alice participated less than Helen but more than Lily who contributed very little to the dialogue. In comparison with the other
The degree of participation by applicants and by interviewers is shown in Table 5.5. This is indicated by the total number of words spoken in each interview, the number of words spoken by interviewer and by applicant, and the number of questions asked by the interviewer. It is shown the amount of verbal interaction that occurred in each interview and whether the interviewer or the applicant contributed more verbally. Table 5.5 can be said to provide an estimate of the length of each interview, which could throw light on the nature of the relationship between participants i.e. whether or not there was any rapport and applicants' communication style.
Table 5.5 Degree of Participation by Interviewer and Applicant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total words in interview - suggests length of interview</th>
<th>Questions asked by interviewer (s)</th>
<th>Words spoken By interviewer (s)</th>
<th>Words spoken by applicant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>2,771.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>1,771.0</td>
<td>1,000.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>3,372.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1,702.0</td>
<td>1,670.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>3,923.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>2,144.0</td>
<td>1,779.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>6,227.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3,601.0</td>
<td>2,626.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>7,278.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>1,348.0</td>
<td>5,930.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (S)</td>
<td>7,819.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>2,395.0</td>
<td>5,424.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case 1 - Transport Officer**

|                      |                                                        |                                   |                                |                           |
| **Applicants**       |                                                        |                                   |                                |                           |
| Lily                 | 3,594.0                                                | 21.0                              | 2,678.0                        | 916.0                     |
| Alice                | 3,967.0                                                | 21.0                              | 2,031.0                        | 1,936.0                   |
| Helen                | 5,751.0                                                | 30.0                              | 3,914.0                        | 1,837.0                   |
| Brenda (S)           | 4,593.0                                                | 21.0                              | 2,873.0                        | 1,720.0                   |

Weaker applicants had shorter interviews, as seen in Table 5.5. The weakest applicants, Ray in Case 1 and Lily in Case 2, had the shortest interviews and talked far less than other applicants. Successful applicants, Liz and Brenda, had comparatively long interviews, although they gave higher quality responses and were more competent communicators than Dan and Helen, unsuccessful applicants who also had long interviews. Liz and Brenda exhibited positive disclosures and paralanguage whereas Dan and Helen often did not.

Regarding Case 1, Liz and Dan both had longer interviews, and they talked more than other applicants. Liz's interview contained 7,819 words whereas Dan's was 7,278 words. The difference was the responses of unsuccessful applicant Dan contained superfluous detail, whereas Liz's responses were relevant to the interviewers' questions, and she gave many examples to illustrate her competence and experience. Sam's interview was long, however the interviewers did most of the talking, whereas Dan's interview was long because he talked more than they did.
In Case 2, Brenda and Helen had longer interviews than other applicants. Successful applicant Brenda gave concise and accurate responses to the interviewer's questions, and she laughed at his humorous remarks, therefore they appeared to share humour and a level of rapport. Helen asked many irrelevant questions, and this prolonged her interview unnecessarily. Helen's interview comprised 5,751 words, and Brenda's interview contained 4,593 words, which could suggest that Brenda, the successful applicant was a competent communicator as she knew when to initiate dialogue and when to listen.

The amount of dialogue in each interview was determined to some extent by the number of turn-taking interactions, or major questions, asked by the interviewers. Hence, the column marked "Questions asked by interviewers(s)" signifies every major question, including questions that followed on from the major question. As explained in Chapter 3, every question/answer response is the usual unit of analysis in this study. Nonetheless, a frequent occurrence was that within the boundaries of an interaction there was not merely one question and one response, but a series of responses and minor questions that continued from the major question.

It is possible that weaker applicants had shorter interviews because these applicants behaved passively. They did not augment their responses with relevant examples to display their knowledge and experience. Therefore, the dialogue was constrained, and it did not flow freely as there was no two-way exchange of information and ideas. As I demonstrate next, the successful applicants, who had longer interviews, were active and verbally proficient in augmenting their responses and encouraging the interviewers with supportive comments and signs of agreement. It is possible that successful interviews were longer as interviewer and applicant contributed freely to the dialogue with questions and comments.
Case 1 - Transport Officer in Local Government

Unsuccessful applicants

In Case 1, the interviews of unsuccessful applicants Ray, Val, Joe, Sam and Dan, demonstrated how essential it was for applicants to use the right amount of augmentation, agreement and questions. Transcripts of the interviewers' comments revealed that interviewers took a negative view of applicants whose responses contained very little augmentation as the responses were not sufficiently detailed. As explained in Chapter 4, responses were either unfocused and vague as in the interview of Sam, lengthy and rambling as in Dan's interview, or brief as in the interview of Ray whose short and obscure answers caused Interviewer 3 to comment, "I did try to prompt him by asking him further questions." Ray answered in a way that gave the impression he lacked knowledge and experience relevant to the post of Transport Officer. Therefore, Ray did not create a positive impression because he was unable to augment, that is, to expand his answers. Furthermore, he rarely showed any agreement with the interviewers as he was not participating fully in the dialogue.

Val's interview highlighted how necessary it was for applicants to express interest in the job by asking relevant questions and for applicants to augment their responses, showing how they would add value to the role of Transport Officer by contributing their own ideas. Again, interviewers' comments showed that they were not impressed by Val as her brief and vague answers indicated that she lacked knowledge of the work. In addition, she rarely acknowledged what the interviewers were saying by expressing agreement. In the words of Interviewer 2, although Val's "application form was quite interesting and comprehensive. She didn’t add anything to that." Then Interviewer 3 remarked, "I kept trying to prompt her. I was trying to expand my question but she wouldn't answer it," and Interviewer 1 complained "she didn’t have any questions." Hence, Val created a negative impression because she did not take an active role by using augmentation, agreement or questions.
The interview of Joe showed that interviewers expected applicants to give accurate and detailed replies and to ask only relevant questions. As Joe was unable to answer many of the interviewers' questions, Interviewer 1 remarked that Joe's "answers were not strong." Furthermore, Joe may have seemed overly compliant and agreeable as he constantly used the words "that's fine," "sure" and "right." He may have asked too many questions many of which revealed his lack of knowledge of the work of a Transport Officer. Hence, Joe was unable to participate fully as it seems he had not prepared adequately for his interview.

Sam's interview revealed that interviewers took a negative view of applicants who failed to answer the questions, that is, who did not provide accurate replies. Interviewer 2 noted "He was much better when he was talking about what he wanted to talk about, rather than what we wanted to talk about." The interviewers commented to me that Sam was not perceived as a competent communicator because he did not provide the kinds of responses that the interviewers wanted and due to the questions he asked. Sam's many questions created a negative impression on the interviewers. For example, one question showed that he was concerned that the job of Transport Officer was stressful. Interviewer 3 commented "I was a bit worried about the question he asked about grief." In addition, Sam frequently repeated the word "right" whenever the interviewers finished speaking hence they remarked to me that he appeared too agreeable and rather passive.

The interview with Dan demonstrated that he did not create a positive impression as he may have used excessive augmentation. Although he had considerable knowledge of the work, Dan's responses were long and repetitious, and he spoke rapidly causing Interviewer 1 to remark that Dan was "rather difficult to get a word in edgeways." The interviewers stated that Dan had shown little sensitivity towards them as he did not allow them to contribute to the dialogue. Dan talked more than any other applicant did, as shown in Table 5.5. Consequently, Dan rarely expressed agreement with the interviewers as he did most of the talking.
Successful applicant

In contrast, there was a large amount of augmentation in the interview of Liz the successful applicant. This finding could suggest that it was important for applicants to expand their responses. Liz projected a positive image as she was adept at providing examples, expressing ideas and explaining how she would solve problems. She was confident at explaining how she would save money for the organisation and how she would improve procedures. The interviewers’ comments revealed how impressed they were with Liz’s verbal skills and her active participation in the interview. Interviewer 2 noted "she can explain things extremely well." Interviewer 3 described her as "pro-active," and Interviewer 2 gained the impression that Liz was "a thinker."

The following excerpt from a conversation between Liz and Interviewer 1 demonstrates one of the many occasions when she used augmentation to favourable effect. Her experience and knowledge of the field of transport became apparent as she showed that she knew how to run a cost-effective service. Liz gave an example of how she had solved a problem concerning a transport route which reduced financial costs in her current job. As line 114 shows, she emphasised her competence when she stated "I have found a solution to this" and proceeded to describe what she had achieved. She showed that she was financially astute by explaining how she had been able to cut costs, as seen in lines 118, 120 and 122. Interviewer 1 seemed to be impressed and in agreement with Liz as indicated in lines 117, 119 and 121. Therefore, the next excerpt illustrates how Liz created a positive impression through augmentation:

114 LIZ: I have found a solution to this by liaising with Salford, and what I have done is that, where necessary, um, I have used existing transport that Salford is using, coming into St. Mark’s School . . . .

117 INTERVIEWER 1: Yes

118 LIZ: and diverting that route through Adwick and Leadenham areas. Therefore, I am only responsible for part of the cost,

119 INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah
LIZ: and cutting down on what would have been. If I had to get a tail lift, it would be £18 a day.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yes okay (softly).

LIZ: but, I think because of cost implications, it has been necessary to do it like that.

Agreement could be useful as a method of creating rapport with interviewers. As shown in Chapter 4, rapport can also be achieved through paralanguage i.e. laughter, and by participating actively, that is, by initiating comments. The interview with Liz suggests that agreement could be used occasionally to create favourable impressions. Agreement could suggest that applicants possess similar opinions to their interviewers and are interested in hearing interviewers’ opinions. The data revealed important clues showing how Liz managed to create rapport and create a positive impression through agreement as she conversed with Interviewer 1. As seen in the next excerpt of dialogue between Liz and Interviewer 1, Liz’s emphatic and repeated agreement overlaps the interviewer’s words, indicated by the square brackets. This could suggest that she and the interviewer were in accord with each other. Therefore, it is possible that agreement helped Liz to project a positive image:

INTERVIEWER 1: As you were saying earlier in the interview, the human relations side of the post is so important.

LIZ: [yes, yes

INTERVIEWER 1: and if you can get all the admin. computerised

LIZ: [yes

INTERVIEWER 1: [you’re not, in inverted commas, "wasting your [time"] doing that

LIZ: [yes, I think that [what

INTERVIEWER 1: [mm

It can be said that Liz, the successful applicant in Case 1, was adept at knowing what kinds of questions to ask and when and how to use augmentation and agreement. In discussions with the interviewers, they confirmed to me that Liz had communicative competence whereas many of the unsuccessful applicants did not. In contrast, unsuccessful applicants in Case 1 displayed either too much or too little augmentation, that is, either they provided an excessive amount of detail or they
provided insufficient detail in their responses. Some unsuccessful applicants asked questions that displayed their lack of competence and their lack of knowledge of the job of Transport Officer and the government department that was conducting the interviews. Neither did unsuccessful applicants express agreement with their interviewers, which suggested that these applicants were passive. It could be that their lack of communicative competence led to unfavourable hiring decisions.

**Case 2 - Legal Assistant in a Law Firm**

**Unsuccessful applicants**

What Lily's interview shows is that with augmentation it may be possible for job applicants to increase their chances of success. It can be said that Lily was the most passive participant in the law firm interviews as she did not augment, or expand, her responses, instead giving brief, one-line answers. Neither did she encourage the interviewer by initiating comments or agreement, and she asked only one question. Therefore, Lily's interview was shorter than the three other interviews in Case 2. It was obvious that the interviewer wanted Lily to provide more information as he continuously prompted her to expand her answers. Nevertheless, the interviewer remarked to me that Lily’s brief responses created an unfavourable impression on him. It is preferable for applicants to provide detailed replies rather than just "yes" or "no." If applicants give very short answers this forces the interviewer to ask additional questions and the fluidity of the conversation disappears. The frequent pauses make the interview sound like an "interrogation" (see Corfield, 2003; Miller, 1998; Popovitch, 2000, p.51).

What transpired was that the interviewer asked Lily 30 questions, which was high compared with the 21 questions that he asked each other applicant, as shown in Table 5.5. The following excerpts from Lily's interview show two questions that were asked by the interviewer. The excerpts demonstrate how Lily’s brief responses forced the interviewer to pause for 21 seconds in the first instance and 30 seconds the second time to allow himself time to think of additional questions to ask Lily.
However, these extremely long pauses could also reflect the power of the interviewer in comparison with the applicant’s lack of power. As shown in the excerpts, the interviewer could be said to be demonstrating his authority as on each occasion Lily had to wait a considerable length of time before the interviewer asked his questions. It could be argued that the interviewer considered it acceptable to make Lily wait because, in his opinion, he was more important than she was (See Lewis, 1990):

59 INTERVIEWER Yeah (p x 21). So, you stayed at Barnes school to do your exams?

71 INTERVIEWER (p x 30). Um, right you are learning touch-typing at 42 words per minute and you've got into the diploma course?

The interview with Alice also made clear that although it was useful to show agreement with the interviewer, it was essential for applicants to use augmentation. By expanding their responses with relevant detail applicants were more likely to appear knowledgeable and succeed in the interview. Although Alice agreed with the interviewer she used very little augmentation as only one or two instances of it occurred in her transcript. This may have contributed to her failure in the interview. Her interview was short, mainly because her answers were brief and lacked detail, and she asked few questions. While she did use agreement, as shown in the next excerpt from her interview, she also provided negative disclosures about herself, as shown in Chapter 4. This finding suggests that while agreement could help to create favourable impressions, if positive disclosures and augmentation are not also present then agreement alone is not enough to ensure success in a job interview. The transcript of her interview shows how Alice’s response in line 246 and her hearty laughter may suggest that she was trying to create rapport:

243 INTERVIEWER (p x 4) right, now, um, I have mentioned our hours, nine to five thirty. Lunch generally works on an hour with rota.

244 ALICE Yeah.

245 INTERVIEWER We have twenty days holiday a year and close a week at Christmas.

246 ALICE Oh lovely. (laughs x 2.) That's a luxury. (laughs x 3).
The interview with Helen showed that excessive participation by job applicants possibly created a negative impression. Helen used more augmentation and asked more questions than other applicants did, hence it seemed that she was making too much effort to create rapport with the interviewer. In addition, she may have used agreement excessively as shown in line 150. Many of Helen’s questions did not relate to the actual job. An example of the kinds of questions she asked is provided in line 142 of the next excerpt. The question "Is there still a George Grand & Co. in other places then"? forced the interviewer to explain about his organisation. It could be argued that Helen's question was irrelevant and distracting as it diverted the interviewer’s attention from discussing the vacancy for a Legal Assistant:

142 HELEN Is there still a George Grand & Co. in other places then, or is it?
143 INTERVIEWER There isn't any more. No, um, the practices were separated, so this was Smith Grand, the other was Bellham Grand.
144 HELEN mm
145 INTERVIEWER (soft laugh) Um, and we've been going great guns here for the last couple of years.
146 HELEN [mm
147 INTERVIEWER [Um, but, er, anyway, um, most of the staff here have been here 10 plus years
148 HELEN mm
149 INTERVIEWER [so we must be doing something right there.
150 HELEN [(soft voice) so you've obviously got that right.

The data contains further vital clues to explain why Helen did not create a positive impression. Helen’s interview was longer than any other interview in Case 2 because in contrast to other applicants who asked fewer questions, Helen asked 10 questions, which prompted the interviewer to talk. Consequently, her interview extended beyond the allotted time. By prolonging the interview, I gained the impression that Helen may have annoyed the interviewer. Later, he confirmed that my impression was correct. Therefore, it was essential for applicants to avoid asking irrelevant and numerous questions, as these expanded the interview unnecessarily. The following excerpt from the end of Helen’s interview highlights how crucial it was to show respect for the interviewer’s time. It was critical to be
sensitive to the interviewer’s verbal and non-verbal behaviour and for applicants to adapt their communication accordingly.

As can be seen in lines 404 and 406 of the next excerpt from Helen’s interview, the interviewer attempted to close the interview by stating "I will aim to be in touch very shortly." It was clear that he did not want to answer any more questions and intended to finish, as shown in lines 408 and 410. However, Helen ignored these hints and proceeded to ask further questions as indicated in line 413. She continued asking questions until the interviewer exclaimed "Right, okay!" in a tone of voice that suggested he had heard enough. Indeed, later he remarked to me that he was annoyed as it was not easy to finish the interview due to Helen’s persistent questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>404</td>
<td>Yeah, okay, right, well, I will aim to be in touch very shortly.</td>
<td>Uh huh.</td>
<td>Um, as soon as we have got all the interviewing finished, and take things from there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lovely. Oh, just one=/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406</td>
<td>/=if you think of any questions, Sorry, you've just thought of one.</td>
<td>=(laugh) thought of one, yeah, um.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>407</td>
<td>I was going to say don't hesitate to give me a ring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>408</td>
<td>I was just going to ask, do the assistants work all in one office, or?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Successful applicant

In contrast, I noticed that Brenda, the successful applicant, asked only five questions and all were relevant to the job, which implied that she was interested in the work. For instance, she asked the interviewer, "I don't know what sort of length of tapes you do? This referred to the amount of dictation that the solicitors recorded onto audiotape which was later transcribed by the Legal Assistants. Chapter 4 showed that interviewers made negative remarks about applicants who asked no questions. Therefore, the data suggests that applicants would do well to ask two or three relevant questions at the interview to show that they are interested
in the job. Although Brenda rarely used augmentation, she ensured that all of her responses were relevant, that is, all of her answers met the interviewer's requirements. For instance, she disclosed that her current work involved both domestic and commercial conveyancing, which satisfied the selection criteria.

In addition, the interview of Brenda showed that agreement could be important for creating favourable impressions of personality. Brenda frequently agreed with the interviewer, who remarked that he liked Brenda's personality. In the next excerpt from a discussion between Brenda and the interviewer, it can be seen how she played an active part in the interview by making positive encouraging statements and by laughing heartily. The link between laughter and perceptions of personality was explored in Chapter 4. By appearing to enjoy the interview she may have created rapport with the interviewer. Therefore, the excerpt illustrates how agreement may have helped to show Brenda’s personality in a favourable light:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWER</th>
<th>Um, (p x 3), we believe that we are paying rather better than most firms in town.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86 BRENDA</td>
<td>Believe me, you do (laughs x 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 INTERVIEWER</td>
<td>Uh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 BRENDA</td>
<td>Believe me, you do (laughs x 4.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, the data for Case 1 and Case 2 revealed that unsuccessful applicants created negative impressions as their participation levels were either high or low, that is they talked excessively, or not enough. Nevertheless, the data indicates that passive behaviour, that is, failing to participate, could have a more detrimental effect on interviewers’ judgments than excessive participation does. A passive applicant might be perceived as unenthusiastic, unconfident, incompetent and lacking in the necessary verbal skills to express themselves. In this study, interviewers preferred applicants who made an effort to interact with them. Such applicants appeared more enthusiastic and interested than passive applicants who did not participate. It is possible that "active" applicants were perceived as more dynamic and therefore more likely to contribute as employees.
Unsuccessful applicants in Case 1 and Case 2 engaged in behaviour that could have led to their failure in the interviews. Their lack of communicative competence may have created unfavourable impressions of their competence and personality. For instance, the interviewers seemed to disapprove of these applicants when they used excessive agreement and augmentation and when they asked negative, irrelevant, and abundant questions. Furthermore, the responses of unsuccessful applicants were brief and vague, hence they required frequent prompting by the interviewers. In addition, unsuccessful applicants did not provide the information that the interviewers expected to hear. Neither did these applicants augment their responses to verify their claims of competence. There was evidence that detailed but relevant responses are essential for success in job interviews. Interviewers remarked that they liked applicants who had thought about the job and who had the verbal skills to explain how they would contribute ideas. Hence, applicants would do well to ensure they provide responses that satisfy the interviewers’ requirements.

Nonetheless, while the data shows that high levels of interaction can create a good impression, it seems to be the quality, rather than the quantity, of participation that determines whether an applicant is successful or not. It could be said that interviewers and successful applicants enjoyed dialogue that was high in quality. Successful applicants created positive impressions as they utilised augmentation, agreement, and questions in a manner that enhanced their communication. They were able to gauge the amount of participation that was required at any stage of the interview. They talked neither too much nor too little, they knew what kind of answer was required, when to speak, when to listen and how much to say. Furthermore, there was evidence in the transcripts that interviewers formed positive opinions of applicants who were competent communicators, and they confirmed this when I talked with them after the interviews had been conducted.

When analysing the transcripts I became aware that successful applicants varied in the amount of augmentation they used, possibly because the interviewers in Case 1 and Case 2 had slightly different styles of questioning. Due to the different types of questions asked in Case 1 and Case 2, Liz who was offered the job of Transport
Officer was required to provide more detailed responses than Brenda who obtained the Legal Assistant job. Nevertheless, what both successful applicants had in common was their positive, strong, accurate responses that provided exactly what was being asked of them and which emphasised their competence and positive personality.

The types and quantity of communication behaviours that were displayed by each applicant are presented now in Table 5.6, and I explain the link to applicants' interview outcomes.

**5.2.5 Communication Behaviours and Interview Outcomes**

Total amounts of positive behaviours displayed by each applicant are shown in Table 5.6. The table is an indication of which behaviours were most critical for success in the interviews in this study and which behaviours were less critical but nonetheless may have contributed to a successful outcome.
Table 5.6  Positive and Negative Communication Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Ray</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Val</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Liz (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1 - Transport Officer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Behaviours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total positive behaviours</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Case 2 - Legal Assistant** |     |     |     |     |     |        |
| Applicants              | Lily | Alice | Helen | Brenda (S) |     |        |
| Disclosures about Personality | Neg. | Pos. | Pos. | Pos.   |     |        |
| **Total positive behaviours** | 1  | 2   | 2   | 2   | 6   |        |

*Note.* Neg. = Negative behaviours. Pos. = Positive behaviours. Paralanguage = Laughter, and pitch, tone and pace of the voice. Disclosures = Applicants’ statements. Body Language = i.e. eye contact, smiling, posture, gestures. Participation in interview = i.e. augmentation, agreement, asking questions. Negative Appearance = Applicant was untidy and/or did not wear a suit. Positive Appearance = Applicant was clean, tidy and businesslike and wore a suit. S = Successful applicant.
Unsuccessful applicants Ray, Sam and Val were the weakest applicants in Case 1. They exhibited few positive characteristics, as demonstrated in Table 5.6. Joe and Dan managed to score two each, meaning that they displayed a larger quantity of positive behaviours than Ray, Sam and Val. In contrast to other applicants, successful applicant Liz achieved a score of six as all of her behaviours were positive.

The interview of Dan emphasised that for successful IM to occur and to increase their chances of success during interviews applicants need to ensure that all of their behaviours are positive. As Table 5.6 shows, Dan was strong in the area of disclosures, but all of his other behaviours were weak, including his paralanguage, body language and appearance and the way he interacted with the interviewers. While findings show that positive statements about competence and personality are critical for success, Dan's interview showed that if used alone positive disclosures might not guarantee success.

Similarly, for Case 2, it is shown that unsuccessful applicants Lily, Alice and Helen had much lower scores, meaning they exhibited fewer positive behaviours, than Brenda, the successful applicant, who achieved six. Therefore, Table 5.6 highlights the differences in the communication behaviours of successful and unsuccessful applicants. In this study, successful applicants were obviously competent communicators who were using the kinds of verbal and non-verbal behaviours that led to success, whereas unsuccessful applicants were not.

It can be seen in Table 5.6 that unsuccessful applicants used a mixture of positive and negative behaviours, whereas successful applicants Liz and Brenda used only positive behaviours. Therefore, positive behaviours could play a significant role in creating powerful impressions. This finding could suggest that if applicants use only positive behaviours, as the successful applicants did, they may increase their chances of success in job interviews. What the data also reveals is that negative behaviour, in any quantity, could create a negative impression that leads to failure in the interview. An important finding was that nearly all of the unsuccessful
applicants used negative paralanguage and provided negative disclosures, in particular, they were unable to express competence to do the job. As shown in Chapter 4, the majority of the interviewers' unfavourable comments related to negative verbal behaviours. This indicates that negative verbal behaviour in particular attracted the interviewers’ attention, negatively influencing their perceptions and ultimately the hiring decision.

To conclude this presentation of the evidence for this research it is important here to highlight the main findings of data analysis performed in Chapters 4 and 5. Discussion of these findings will occur in Chapter 6.

5.3 Main Findings of Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 provided evidence of the way interviewers reacted to job applicants in Case 1 and Case 2. Findings showed it was crucial for applicants to use all of their communication behaviours to demonstrate their competence to do the work and a positive personality. Nevertheless, verbal behaviour in particular appeared to play a significant role in creating positive presence. An important finding was that interviewers appeared to give equal weighting to both personality and competence when making hiring decisions. Although competence and personality are equally important selection criteria, personality could be the attribute that determines the interview outcome when interviewers are choosing between competent applicants. Interviewer perceptions and expectations were similar in both Cases 1 and 2. After they had selected applicants who had proved that they were knowledgeable and experienced enough to do the job, personality was the component that determined interviewers' hiring decisions.

Hence, personality is such a crucial influence to the extent that if interviewers are choosing between two competent job applicants, interviewers are more likely to hire the person whose personality they prefer. The reason could be that interviewers' feelings play a critical role in decision-making, which appears to be largely subjective. There was evidence to suggest that interviewers hired the
applicants they liked most of all, or the one for whom they felt more positive. Applicants who demonstrated the attributes of confidence, enthusiasm, cheerfulness and empathy possibly appeared more likeable and managed to create feelings of rapport with their interviewers. In my discussions with them the interviewers confirmed that personality had played a critical role in influencing their choice and they admitted that "gut feeling" that is, their own interpretations, helped them to reach a decision.

**Unsuccessful applicants**

Here, I describe the differences that were found in the behaviours of successful and unsuccessful applicants in this study. First, I present the behaviours of the unsuccessful applicants who lacked communicative competence and therefore created unfavourable impressions. They were unable to choose communication behaviours that were relevant for their selection interview. Furthermore, they seemed to have poor listening skills, and they were insensitive to cues from the interviewer. When the interviewer wanted to end the interview, some unsuccessful applicants asked extra questions that prolonged the interview. They were passive, that is, they rarely acknowledged the interviewers' comments or initiated comments of their own, and they made little effort to create rapport. Above all, unsuccessful applicants provided many negative statements about themselves and gave vague responses that lacked sufficient relevant information. Their negative behaviours are summarised as follows:

1. Provided negative disclosures early in the interview, that is, within the first five minutes.
2. Failed to discuss their competence to do the job and/or did not provide examples that illustrated their knowledge and experience.
3. Powerless paralanguage, in particular a soft, slow monotone voice; applicants did not laugh.
4. Negative appearance, that is, creased, mismatched or unfashionable clothes and shoes. For instance, they did not wear business suits and had untidy hairstyles.

5. Negative personality; they did not express empathy, confidence, or enthusiasm.

6. Negative body language; they rarely smiled or made eye contact with the interviewer.

Each of the six points is amplified below.

During the first five minutes of their interviews, unsuccessful applicants volunteered negative information and continued making negative statements throughout, as Chapter 4 showed. Findings suggest that any types of negative statement made during the early stages of the interview could adversely affect the hiring decision. Unsuccessful applicants emphasised their weaknesses, and not their strengths, describing themselves as unconfident and slow, for example. Consequently, the interviewers made negative remarks about such applicants, perceiving them as incompetent. The interviewers were less supportive of negative disclosures about the applicant's personal life than they were about work-related negative disclosures. Perhaps applicants could reduce the chances of receiving a negative evaluation if they talk more about the job and less about their personal life.

Early negative information may have created a lasting unfavourable impression on the interviewers that was difficult for applicants to change. For instance, some unsuccessful applicants provided positive information later in their interviews, however this seemed to have little favourable effect. It seems that the interviewers had already formed negative judgments based on the negative details provided earlier. The importance of avoiding negative disclosures has been well documented (see Fleischmann 1991; Kellerman, 1989), and present findings are consistent with other research showing that interviewers search for negative information and use it to eliminate applicants (Springbett, 1958). Nonetheless, in contrast to other research, the present study showed that one or two negative disclosures might not
lead to unfavourable assessments if certain conditions are present, i.e. if the applicant provides much positive information especially from the start of the interview, and if the interviewer "likes" the applicant, that is, if interviewer and applicant have rapport.

It was observed that in the Transport Officer interviews, unsuccessful applicants failed to discuss their competence to perform work tasks or provide examples of problems they had solved. They had scant knowledge of the vacancies for which they were being interviewed, and this in particular prompted negative interviewer remarks. This could suggest that applicants had not conducted sufficient research about the job or the organisation before the interview and that they were inexperienced in the field of transport. Some unsuccessful applicants appeared to lack drive, initiative and the ability to make decisions on their own when they stated, for example, that they would seek help from their line manager. In a similar vein, applicants for the post of Legal Assistant talked about their lack of experience, without discussing how they would counteract the deficiency.

Paralanguage, that is, the tone, pitch and pace of the voice, affected interviewers' impressions of applicants' personality. Indeed, paralanguage could have more of an influence on interviewer judgments than has been recognised in the literature. In particular, powerless paralanguage was found to create a negative impression of personality. Comments made by interviewers during the Transport Officer interviews revealed that they were not impressed by soft, frequently inaudible, slow, monotone voices, which made applicants appear tired and unenthusiastic. In the words of Interviewer 3, "if someone doesn’t project enthusiasm it doesn’t make it very interesting for the interviewer."

Gasps and sighs punctuated the speech of unsuccessful applicants. Their laughter was brief, not hearty, hence these applicants were judged as unconfident, nervous, unenthusiastic, and lacking in dynamism. In contrast, the rapid speech of one unsuccessful applicant, Dan, could have created the impression that he was nervous and unreliable. However, it could be argued that rapid speech can make a speaker
appear alert, therefore it might be less damaging in an interview than a slow, monotone voice. Nevertheless, such assessments depend upon the interviewer's own interpretation.

In terms of physical appearance, unsuccessful applicants did not look clean, tidy or businesslike. Interviewers' comments showed that they took a negative view of applicants who were unkempt or badly dressed. Several negative features ruined their overall presentation, i.e. untidy hair or unpolished shoes, therefore unsuccessful applicants did not conform to interviewers' expectations for attire for an office based job interview. In addition, unsuccessful applicants were not relaxed, confident or enthusiastic, therefore they did not display their personality in a favourable light. Furthermore, they did not discuss the quality of empathy or express concern for clients or colleagues, although this does not signify that they were incapable of showing empathy and concern.

All of the unsuccessful applicants exhibited negative body language. Many had serious facial expressions; they rarely smiled, and they avoided eye contact with the interviewers. Some job applicants displayed gestures that the interviewers may have found irritating, i.e. constant head scratching or gesturing wildly with their hands. Such gestures distract the interviewer and almost certainly mean the interviewer will miss or ignore the applicant's important verbal statements (see Johnstone, 1997; Miller, 1998; Popovitch, 2000; Sutton, 2000).

As body language is linked with personality, unsuccessful applicants may have created negative impressions of their personality with their body language. In the present study, interviewers undoubtedly gathered clues about personality while listening to the way applicants described themselves. At the same time, interviewers may have scrutinised applicants' body language to obtain clues about personality and to verify any claims applicants made about their personality. For instance, someone who claims to be confident but who slouches in their chair, avoids eye contact and does not smile is unlikely to convince an interviewer they are confident.
Successful applicants

In contrast, by using positive behaviours, successful applicants in both Case 1 and Case 2 created quite different impressions. The successful applicants could be said to be competent communicators. Both were flexible in their communication. It seems that they monitored the interviewers' verbal and non-verbal signals and then adapted their own behaviours to produce positive impressions on the interviewers. They were both skilled listeners, knowing when to respond and how much to say, when to agree and when to ask relevant questions.

Although successful applicants provided only positive information about themselves to the interviewer, they did this with modesty, that is, they did not boast. In interviews that involved successful applicants the dialogue was lively, that is, neither participant paused for lengthy periods. Interviewers and applicants seemed to be in accord as they often agreed with each other and their speech overlapped. Each party contributed to the dialogue, in other words the interviews were two-way conversations. Neither applicant nor interviewer talked too much or too little. Consequently, successful interviews were a reasonable length, not too long or too short.

Findings of the present study showed that successful applicants created positive presence, that is, an impression of competence to do the job, and what is also known as charisma, or in the words of Gottesman and Mauro (1999), "letting one's personality shine through by communicating excitement and belonging" (pp.3, 56). Successful applicants in this study displayed the following positive behaviours, which present findings suggest helped them to create positive presence:

Here are the positive behaviours that were employed by successful applicants:

1. Provided only positive information from the start of the interview and no negative information.
2. Emphasised competence to do the job; provided examples that illustrated their competence.
3. Powerful paralanguage; they possessed strong, clear voices with no hesitations and they laughed with the interviewers.
4. Positive appearance; they wore a business suit and looked clean and tidy.
5. Positive personality; they displayed empathy, enthusiasm, confidence.
6. Positive body language; they smiled, made eye contact, and used head nodding.

These six positive behaviours are elaborated below.

Verbal behaviour played a large part in creating positive presence for successful applicants. Indeed, comments made during the Transport Officer interviews by Interviewers 1 and 2 revealed that they preferred applicants whom they regarded as "articulate." Successful applicants provided only positive information from the start of the interview; they avoided disclosing negative information at any time. They promoted themselves through their many positive disclosures, highlighting their capacity to do the work, and their enthusiastic and confident personalities. In addition, their responses were thorough. They provided many examples of their competence. For instance, they emphasised how their achievements in their past and present jobs would enable them to contribute to the roles of Transport Officer and Legal Assistant. Moreover, they provided examples of problems they had solved and projects they had managed. It can be said that successful applicants answered the interviewers' questions accurately, meaning that their responses met the interviewer's requirements, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not.

It was noticeable that successful applicants spoke in strong, clear voices with few pauses, which enabled dialogue to proceed smoothly, with no hesitation. There was variety in the tone, pitch and pace of the applicants' voices which made the applicants appear alert and enthusiastic. This may have helped to maintain the interviewers' attention and make the interview more enjoyable for the interviewer as interviewers had revealed that they disliked slow, monotone voices. Successful applicants appeared to enjoy the interaction. They showed their appreciation of the
interviewers' jokes and comments by laughing heartily with the interviewers, and this had a most favourable impact as it appeared to create rapport. Successful applicants seemed to possess a sense of humour, and this may have suggested to the interviewers that they would work harmoniously as members of a team. Indeed, laughter could be an underrated IM tactic for creating rapport in job interviews, as I explain in Chapter 6.

In addition, successful applicants were dressed in crisp business suits, in keeping with interviewers' expectations, and they presented a generally positive appearance in all other respects. These applicants displayed the personality attributes that interviewers seemed to prefer, that is, they appeared enthusiastic, self-confident, self-motivated, friendly and relaxed. The interviewers remarked to me that they were impressed that successful applicants discussed empathy and helpfulness towards other people, particularly clients.

Furthermore, the interviewers commented that they gained the impression that these applicants would be sympathetic to clients' needs and would co-operate with their future work colleagues. In the present research, applicants who expressed empathy or concern for clients or colleagues seemed to stimulate more positive feelings in the interviewers than applicants who did not express empathy. To be liked by others, it is crucial to possess genuine respect and courtesy for them and to develop the kind of personality that flows outward to others in kindness and helpfulness (see Chopra, 2002; Peale, 1996).

There was evidence in the current data that the positive body language of successful applicants may have helped them to create positive impressions of their personality, i.e. self-confidence, enthusiasm, and honesty. Successful applicants smiled, made eye contact and nodded their heads or tilted their heads on one side, suggesting that they were attentive and listening carefully to the interviewer. Both applicants had an upright but not a stiff posture, and both of them shook hands with the interviewer. Occasionally they gestured or leaned forward to make a point. No nervous mannerisms were exhibited, i.e. constantly touching jewellery, hair or the
face. Moreover, by keeping their hands still successful applicants managed to convey impressions of calmness and composure, which could have had a favourable effect on their interviewers.

This research highlighted considerable differences in the communication behaviours of successful and unsuccessful applicants. Displaying negative behaviours, especially negative verbal behaviour, created an unfavourable impression, which may have contributed to failure in the interview. However, when all of the applicant's behaviours were positive, this appeared to create positive presence and lead to success. Successful applicants may have created positive presence because their verbal and non-verbal behaviours corresponded or matched. The data suggests that positive presence is created with a variety of positive behaviours. It is achieved with positive disclosures about competence supported by powerful paralanguage and body language, in addition to a tidy, businesslike appearance, and active participation in the interview.

Nevertheless, the crucial difference between successful and unsuccessful applicants was that successful applicants made many positive statements and provided little or no negative disclosures. They also used paralanguage that enhanced their disclosures, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not. Interviewers relied mainly on disclosures and paralanguage when making decisions about the personality and competence of applicants. Interviewers’ comments showed that they listened carefully to what applicants said, and how they said it. Consequently, it is possible that verbal behaviour had a significant effect on interviewers’ judgments.

Therefore, data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 showed that a range of applicant communication behaviours contributed to positive presence. Furthermore, verbal behaviour could have played a crucial role in IM. Successful applicants exhibited more positive behaviours than unsuccessful applicants did, and they seemed to experience more rapport, and possibly more equal dialogue in their interviews than unsuccessful applicants did. Interviewers judged applicants according to how they felt about them on a personal level, and interviewers paid equal attention to
personality as to competence. Therefore, assessments of personality appeared to have a most important influence on hiring decisions.

Chapter 6 will now discuss the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 and present conclusions for this research. Several issues are discussed. It is explained how job applicants could empower themselves with specific communication behaviours. In addition, I explore whether it is possible to create more equal and more ethical communication in job interviews. It is shown how the findings of this study contribute to new guidelines concerning IM for behaviour in selection interviews. The guidelines are new as they incorporate the concept of powerful communication.
Chapter 6: Conclusion: Creating Positive Presence

The vibrant meaning of the term, interview, has faded over the years. It has been relegated to mean a systematic and formulated way of asking questions of another person. Yet, 'inter,' which means with each other, together, between, or mutual, and 'view,' which means to look and consider, deserve further attention (Clair, 2003, p.xii).

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the investigation of the importance of applicant Impression Management (IM) within the context of the job interview. The "expansive view" of IM (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992) has been taken in the present research, meaning that developing communication behaviours for the purpose of IM is not simply an unavoidable aspect of interviewing, but it should be a guiding norm (Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995). Therefore, job applicants should purposively "sell" themselves both in the selection interview and later in the job (see Rosenfeld, 1997).

The first research task addressed by the present study was to investigate the extent to which applicant communication behaviours - verbal behaviour, body language, and appearance - create positive presence, that is, favourable impressions of personality and competence. The second question was concerned with identifying which behaviours were the most crucial for applicants to use during a job interview. However, during the data analysis phase, a third research question emerged, namely, "How can the power balance be addressed in job interviews"? It became evident throughout this study that the unequal power and status between interviewer and applicant may have influenced the way they communicated, which raised important questions about ethical communication.

This chapter is divided into three parts: First, a summary of essential themes of earlier chapters is provided. Second, the core research questions are examined in light of findings of the research, and these findings are compared with those of the academic literature in the field of interview selection and communication. The third
part of the chapter examines contributions that the present study makes to the body of knowledge in this field. In this section, limitations of the study are acknowledged, and recommendations are made for further research.

Chapter 1 introduced the research, explaining that in the 2000s the labour market remains competitive and potential employers are increasingly selective in the recruitment process. It was noted that according to existing research on job interviews, applicants who are skilled in IM will have better chances of succeeding in a job interview. In view of this, it was proposed to investigate the verbal and non-verbal communication of applicants, and how they utilised IM to create powerful impressions on interviewers. Three core research questions were posed to explore these issues. My interest in ethical issues and empowerment in the context of the selection process was also made clear. It was explained that rather than starting with an analytic model, this study was a process of discovery to find out whether guidelines could be developed that inform and empower job applicants.

In Chapter 2, I explored the existing theoretical perspectives on the job interview and IM. I found that empirical research in the field had focused more on non-verbal IM strategies used by applicants than verbal strategies, and in some instances only one IM tactic had been analysed per study (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b). It became evident that studies were needed on the behaviour of applicants in real-life job interviews, as opposed to mock, that is, simulated job interviews. Although there was abundant literature on selection interviewing, I found that a research-based approach was needed which acknowledged the complexities of IM and communicative competence, and which encouraged more equal dialogue in interviews.

Chapter 2 also discussed the job interview as a power relationship, and the possibility that applicants could utilise verbal skill to overcome the inequality inherent in that context. Furthermore, it was shown that while the popular literature, meaning self-help texts, provided some valuable advice for applicants it was possible that the readers were not encouraged to think for themselves and make
permanent changes in their behaviour during interviews. It was discovered that the majority of self-help texts merely promoted rote learning of lists of do's and don'ts.

The methodology used in this study was presented in Chapter 3. It was noted that qualitative methods and a communicative approach were essential for analysing dialogue between interviewers and job applicants in real-life. I explained that data were gathered from 10 job interviews in the United Kingdom for a Transport Officer (Case 1) and for a Legal Assistant (Case 2). The data was collected by non-participant observation and by tape-recording. The techniques of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Content Analysis (ContA) were explained in detail.

In Chapter 4, I analysed applicants’ disclosures and paralanguage in the 10 interview transcripts. Marked differences were found in the verbal behaviour of applicants and the data suggested that verbal behaviour could have a significant effect on interviewers’ impressions. It was found that unsuccessful applicants provided more negative disclosures than successful applicants did and they made these statements early in their interviews. They also used powerless paralanguage i.e. a soft, slow monotone voice, which attracted unfavourable comments from the interviewers. In contrast, successful applicants exhibited a large amount of powerful verbal behaviour namely positive disclosures and strong, clear voices with few pauses. Furthermore, it was found that successful applicants laughed with the interviewers and seemed to enjoy rapport. They also initiated comments and provided detailed responses containing many examples that highlighted their competence, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not. An essential aspect of data interpretation in both Chapters 4 and 5 was to consider the interviewers’ opinions of applicants. Comments made by the interviewers’ revealed that they judged applicants subjectively, that is, based on how much they "liked" or "disliked" them on a personal level.

In Chapter 5 I examined the findings related to non-verbal communication behaviours used in IM, namely personality, body language and appearance of job applicants. As personality is revealed through verbal behaviour, I also analysed
disclosures and paralanguage in relation to perceptions of personality. It was revealed that perceptions of personality were as influential as perceptions of competence when interviewers made hiring decisions.

In Chapter 5, I also summarised the findings of data in this study. It was explained that successful applicants communicated differently compared with unsuccessful applicants. I also noted that successful applicants used a larger quantity of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviours than unsuccessful applicants did. This finding, in addition to the interviewers’ comments, provided evidence that a range of positive behaviours, particularly positive verbal behaviour, were essential for success in job interviews.

Based on findings of Case 1 and Case 2, the three core research questions are now addressed more thoroughly, in order to conclude the thesis:

1. How do verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours create a positive presence?
2. What are the communication behaviours that create a "positive presence"?
3. How can the power imbalance be addressed in job interviews?

### 6.2 How Do Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Behaviours Create a Positive Presence?

The chap we saw today had the personality, but he didn’t convince me that he would do the job well. (Interviewer 1; Transport Officer position).

Strong evidence was found in the Transport Officer interviews and in the Legal Assistant interviews to support the claim that it is critical to create a positive presence in job interviews. Findings indicated that to create positive presence it was essential for applicants to display behaviours such as positive language, paralanguage, body language, appearance, and personality – in short, powerful
communication. Therefore, it was found that communicative competence is essential for a successful job interview.

The interpersonal competency exhibited by successful applicants enabled them to achieve their communication goals without causing interviewers to lose face (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). For instance, successful applicants were sensitive to the interviewer's communication style, as they knew when to talk and when to listen. By listening carefully, they could gauge the type of response the interviewer wanted and provide a more accurate answer. Successful applicants were also able to select and use verbal behaviours that were relevant to their situation i.e. the ability to explain why they should be hired. Moreover, their verbal skills enabled them to show their competence and personality in a favourable light. From the start of their interviews the two successful applicants participated actively in their interviews. They talked about their work achievements and they expressed a positive personality by demonstrating enthusiasm, self-confidence and empathy towards other people.

Due to their powerful verbal behaviour and body language and their tidy businesslike appearance and active participation, successful applicants were perceived favourably by the interviewers in terms of personality and competence. Above all, there was consistency between successful applicants’ verbal and non-verbal behaviour, which made their communication seem more credible (see Stewart & Cash, 2005). They rarely gave negative disclosures and they volunteered a large amount of positive information. Their paralanguage was powerful; their voices were strong, clear and contained few pauses. Moreover, the gestures and body movements of successful applicants portrayed enthusiasm and confidence, which undoubtedly contributed to positive presence. In both studies, successful applicants smiled, nodded their heads and made eye contact with the interviewers. These applicants appeared alert and enthusiastic by maintaining an upright posture, although they appeared relaxed.
A clean, tidy appearance was necessary for creating a positive presence. Both successful applicants looked businesslike, as expected for an office-based interview. Appearance is possibly not the most important factor, but the interviewers may have judged applicants’ level of interest in the job and how well they would fit into the organisation based on how much attention applicants had given to appearance. For office-based positions, a person who is tidy and wears a business suit may create the impression they care about the way they are perceived. Therefore, an interviewer might infer that the applicant would give similar attention to their work tasks, colleagues and customers.

The crucial importance of appearance is reflected in the fact that from early in their interviews unsuccessful applicants in this study displayed a high proportion of negative behaviours i.e. an untidy appearance and negative verbal behaviour. Interviewers made more comments about negative characteristics than about positive characteristics of applicants, and it can be said that negative information attracted the interviewers’ attention more than positive behaviour did. For instance, Interviewer 2 described unsuccessful applicant Ray as a "geek" due to his mismatched clothing. Interviewer 3 remarked that Sam was "a bit bland" due to his slow, monotone voice and Interviewer 2 noticed that Sam’s brown shoes did not match his suit. Therefore, it can be argued that a dishevelled applicant who professes to be competent and confident is unlikely to convince an interviewer as findings showed that negative appearance seemed to reduce applicants' chances of success.

Indeed, it could be said that lack of communicative competence and a range of negative behaviours contributed to the failure of unsuccessful applicants in the present research. In contrast with successful applicants, most of these applicants were untidy in appearance, and they used a large quantity of negative verbal behaviour and body language. For instance, they rarely laughed with or encouraged the interviewers, and their voices were soft and slow. Furthermore they did not expand their responses by providing examples of their experience in order to show their competence. Consequently, their passive attitudes and lack of engagement
made them appear uninterested and unconfident. Many applicants avoided eye contact with the interviewers, had stiff postures, serious facial expressions and exhibited nervous mannerisms. As they did not seem to be enjoying the interaction, they were unable to create rapport.

The conclusion to draw from the data was that by employing a wide range of powerful communication behaviours early in their interviews i.e. within the first few minutes, successful applicants managed to create positive presence and ensured a successful interview outcome. This supports the assumption that impressions are created within a few minutes, or even seconds, of the interview. Hence, there is only a short time in which to create a favourable image, and it is not easy to alter a negative impression once it has been formed. It is possible therefore to contend that if applicants consciously use a variety of positive behaviours and avoid negative ones in the initial stages of the interview, they could improve their IM and favourably influence the outcomes of job interviews.

6.3 Which Communication Behaviours are Most Critical to Create a Positive Presence?

I thought he was quite nervous. He kept going "you know, you know, you know" (Interviewer 3; Transport Officer position).

There was strong evidence in this study that verbal behaviours are more critical for creating positive presence in job interviews than non-verbal ones. Findings revealed that interviewers paid much attention to what was said and how it was said. They relied on verbal behaviour to provide them with clues about an applicant's personality and competence, both of which were the main influences on decision-making. In general, the behaviours I found to be most crucial to create a positive impression are: positive disclosures, applicant’s personality, acknowledgement of empathy, and powerful paralanguage. The relevance of each of these findings is discussed below.
Findings suggest that applicants would do well to consider carefully the kinds of information they are divulging to interviewers, ensuring that their early disclosures are positive. Unsuccessful applicants provided negative statements within the first five minutes of the interview, and this created an immediate unfavourable impression that may have been hard for the applicants to change. Negative disclosures had a detrimental effect. There was evidence of this in the Transport Officer interviews. For instance, after the interview of Ray, the interviewers mentioned to me that because Ray had stated that he was not confident, this was one reason why they regarded Ray as unsuitable for the job. In addition, similar to other unsuccessful applicants, Ray gave the impression that he was unable to make decisions without asking his line manager for help.

By contrast, successful applicants talked about themselves in a positive way from the start and continued in this vein. Brenda, successful applicant in the law firm interviews, verbally conveyed the impression that her skills were in demand in the legal field and that her employer trusted her to perform tasks in his absence. Successful applicant Liz made numerous positive statements, informing the interviewers that with her communication skills she was adept at maintaining work relationships. Moreover, she played a full part in the interview discussing how she would implement her ideas for developing the role of Transport Officer, and she provided several examples of her achievements to support the claims she was making. Interviewer 3 was impressed by Liz because she showed that she had thought carefully about ways to improve the job.

Findings show that positive verbal behaviour had a favourable effect on interviewers’ judgments. Interviewer 2 remarked on Liz’s excellent verbal skills. He explained to the other interviewers that Liz had not merely informed them that she could do the job, she was also able to provide reasons why she should be hired. Furthermore, Interviewer 2 described Liz as "articulate." The data revealed that interviewers expected full explanations in answer to their questions, and successful applicants in this study obliged by providing detailed and relevant responses.
Interviewers’ perceptions of the applicant’s personality were found to have a critical effect on hiring decisions. As might be expected, present data showed that when deciding whom to hire the interviewers looked first for evidence of applicants’ competence. However, findings revealed that when interviewers were faced with applicants of equal competence and were choosing whom to appoint, personality was clearly a most significant influence on the hiring decision. There was confirmation that personality and competence were equally important selection criteria as Interviewer 1 remarked that Liz was not only personable and sympathetic but she also knew how to do the work. Successful applicants were able to demonstrate the required competence and personality for the job thus convincing the interviewers that they would be an asset to the organisation if they were hired. Strong evidence was found that successful applicants possessed the required verbal skill for displaying both their competence and personality in a favourable light. In particular, successful applicants appeared competent, enthusiastic, self-confident, and seemed to possess empathy.

I found that it was essential for applicants to verbally demonstrate the attribute of empathy. In other words, successful applicants were skilled at showing they were caring, understanding and helpful to other people. In the Legal Assistant interviews successful applicant Brenda stated that she was helpful to clients. Similarly, Liz emphasised, for example, that she understood the needs of parents. Interviewer 1 praised Liz for mentioning how important it was to be considerate and helpful to teachers, parents and children. In contrast, none of the unsuccessful applicants commented on the importance of showing empathy. Joe in the Transport Officer interviews gave the opposite impression, stating that he would not tolerate work colleagues who were incompetent. Interviewer 2 decided that Joe lacked empathy and flexibility. Therefore, Joe did not have the type of personality that the interviewers were seeking.

Present data revealed that paralanguage could be a major influence on interviewers' impressions of personality, more than previously recognised in the academic literature. It can be argued that interviewers in this study relied on paralanguage to
gather clues about the meaning of applicants’ statements and to make judgments about applicants’ enthusiasm and self-confidence. In particular, I found that the voices of successful applicants were different from the voices of unsuccessful applicants. Successful applicants’ voices were varied in tone, pitch and pace and contained few pauses. Their voices were strong and clear, and these applicants spoke at a moderate pace, that is, neither too slow nor too fast. Successful applicants managed to sound enthusiastic and self-confident, and their hearty laughter suggested that they were friendly, relaxed, and possessed a sense of humour. Interviewers in this study indicated that they preferred applicants to display such positive qualities. Therefore, findings suggest that interviewers’ judgments were favourably affected by the powerful paralanguage of successful applicants.

In contrast, unsuccessful applicants appeared dull and unenthusiastic due to their frequent pausing and soft, slow monotone voices. Clearly this did not impress the interviewers. There was recorded evidence that, when discussing Sam after his interview for the Transport Officer position, Interviewer 3 remarked on the lack of variation in Sam's voice, suggesting that interviewers lose interest when applicants do not project enthusiasm. This study showed that an unfavourable impression is also created when applicants use rapid speech that prevents interviewers from contributing to the dialogue. For instance, unsuccessful applicant Dan spoke rapidly without pausing, although he provided many positive disclosures. Findings therefore suggest that without powerful paralanguage, applicants are unlikely to succeed in the interview, even if their disclosures are positive. It could be argued that the potentially favourable effect of a positive statement could be considerably weakened if matching powerful paralanguage does not support the statement. For instance, interviewers would be unlikely to believe an applicant who declares in a dull, monotone voice that he or she is interested in the job.

I found that, on the other hand, successful applicants appeared more plausible because their communication behaviours matched, in other words, their powerful paralanguage was consistent with their positive disclosures. The interviewers
remarked to me that they enjoyed talking with the successful applicant Liz. They concluded that she was keen to do the work as the sound of her voice gave them the impression that Liz was interested and enthusiastic. No doubt the variation in tone, pitch and pace of her voice helped Liz to maintain the interviewers' attention and interest. Both successful applicants in this study responded with laughter to the interviewers' humorous remarks, hence they appeared to be enjoying the interaction. Moreover, findings suggest that when applicants and interviewers laugh together and share humour this creates rapport. Laughter may have created the impression that the applicants were relaxed, friendly, had a sense of humour, and would co-operate with their work colleagues. Certainly, successful applicants laughed much more than unsuccessful applicants did, therefore laughter and displaying what the interviewers perceived as a sense of humour seemed to favourably influence the interviewers' judgments.

In order to address the second question, it can be said that as the chief component of job interviews is dialogue, it is perhaps not surprising that this study showed that verbal behaviour plays a crucial role in creating positive presence. Above all, successful applicants did not volunteer any negative information and provided only positive statements from the start of the interview. They also ensured that their positive statements were accompanied by powerful paralanguage − that is, they spoke in a strong, clear voice with few pauses. Findings also showed that applicant personality had a more critical influence on hiring decisions than has been acknowledged in the past, and paralanguage in particular seemed to influence judgments of personality. In addition, applicants who discussed their capacity for empathy and projected confidence and who were able to demonstrate enthusiasm through their paralanguage performed very well in the interview. Findings also indicated that favourable impressions may also be produced if applicants laugh and share humour with the interviewers when the opportunity arises.
6.4 How Can the Power Imbalance be Addressed in Job Interviews?

The more you want or need the job, the more the balance of power shifts to the employer (Amos, 2001, p.39).

Power imbalance emerged as an important theme in both case studies. Most interviewers and applicants in this study behaved in ways that promoted inequality. Their verbal behaviour matched the stereotypes of submissive applicant behaviour and dominant interviewer behaviour that are encouraged in the literature. During this research, it became evident that the unequal power between participants might have affected their dialogue and their relationship. In particular, it could be argued that the imbalance of power had a negative influence on the way applicants responded to questions.

As noted in Chapter 2, power affects language. In other words, interviewers in this study possessed more power than applicants did; hence they had control over the way in which language was used. Therefore it can be argued that the interviewers influenced the kinds of disclosures that applicants were providing. Current data revealed that sometimes interviewers used what could be considered "trick" questions that may have deceived the applicants. For instance, applicants in the Transport Officer interviews were asked whom they would approach for assistance. Due to the way the question was phrased, most applicants, thinking that they were expected to seek help replied that they would ask their line manager for assistance. Regrettably, such responses created negative impressions on the interviewers who informed me that they preferred to hire someone who was capable of making decisions without help.

It could be argued that some of the questions asked by the law firm interviewer indicated that he was exerting control needlessly. For example, in Case 2, the interviewer asked Alice if she was married and had children possibly in order to discover if she was able to devote her attention to the job. However, it could be argued that as the question related to Alice’s private life it had little relevance to her
capability to do the job. In addition, the interviewer asked Alice about her illness, which may have upset her. It could also be said that his questions prompted Alice to provide negative disclosures which diminished her chances of creating a favourable impression. When I spoke with Alice after her interview she confided that she regarded the interviewer’s questions as "inappropriate."

Findings suggest that to address the power imbalance in job interviews there is a need for interview dialogue to be more equal and for job interviews to be conducted more ethically. This might be achieved if interviewers examine how they currently use language and ensure that the questions they ask are relevant and do not confuse or cause distress to applicants. However, much depends on how applicants perceive interviewers’ questions as a question that upsets one applicant may not cause distress to another applicant. Additionally, this raises the idea of whether interviewers should allow applicants more freedom to contribute to the dialogue, to ensure they are not constrained by interviewers’ questions. On the other hand, it can be argued that it is fairer to ask applicants the same questions to ensure that they have equal opportunity regarding their responses.

Nevertheless, there was compelling evidence in the present data that unsuccessful applicants were responsible for reducing their own sense of power in the interview and their opportunities for creating positive presence and achieving success. It can be suggested that this was because unsuccessful applicants used powerless language and paralanguage (Bradac & Street, 1989/90). With their powerless verbal behaviour unsuccessful applicants created unequal dialogue, which maintained the power imbalance between themselves and interviewers who used powerful language. Therefore, it appears that unsuccessful applicants in this study did not know how to use verbal skill to gain power and interact on more equal terms with the interviewers.

For instance, findings showed that in addition to using powerless paralanguage, unsuccessful applicants did not contribute to the dialogue by initiating comments or state how they would contribute to the job and develop it. Unsuccessful applicants
merely replied to interviewers' questions without initiating any questions or comments of their own. Lily, an unsuccessful applicant, for example, provided brief one-line responses, constantly agreed with the interviewer and rarely initiated any comments: this behaviour may have reinforced her subordinate status in the interview compared with the powerful status of her interviewer.

In contrast, successful applicants, who avoided the submissive behaviour mentioned earlier, may have helped to promote equality in their interviews. Their dialogue with the interviewers, however, was not on entirely equal terms because interviewers controlled the interviews. It was clear nevertheless that successful applicants created a more equal encounter by adopting the same language style as that used by their interviewers, namely powerful language, which shifted the power imbalance in the applicants’ favour. Successful applicants initiated comments and contributed to the dialogue without being prompted. Their powerful language style comprised a low level of pausing, high fluency, variable pitch, a relatively rapid speech rate, high volume and short sentences. As their powerful language was terse, direct, focused and informative it was interesting to listen to and easy to understand (see Bradac & Street, 1989/90).

In view of these findings, it can be said that successful applicants in the present study increased their power through their verbal behaviour, which may have enabled them to reject powerlessness (see Lerner, 1991). Applicants in the present research appeared powerful in the sense that interviewers perceived them as competent, self-confident and enthusiastic about the job. Successful applicants also seemed to have more rapport with their interviewers than unsuccessful applicants did. Consequently, findings are encouraging as they suggest that by adopting more powerful verbal strategies applicants may create positive presence and experience more satisfying dialogue and interview outcomes. Present data therefore suggests that IM can be a potential source of power for less powerful individuals such as job applicants (see Rosenfeld, Giacalone & Riordan, 1996).
Selection interviews will always be unequal encounters in terms of power. However, what I have found is that with new, more equal and ethical ways of communicating it may be possible to address the power imbalance in job interviews. With the knowledge that power fluctuates and can be changed with powerful language, job applicants could become more powerful. Data suggests that this could be achieved if applicants take responsibility for their verbal behaviour and their own sense of power, and if interviewers avoid unnecessary control, ensuring that language is not used as a means of control. This will be discussed in more detail later, in Section 6.7.4, when I explain how present findings could be used to empower people during job interviews, in other workplace interactions and in social life.

6.5 Implications of the Study for Theory and Contributions to Knowledge

In this study, light was thrown on several issues that have received little attention in the selection and communication literature thus far. First, as the study involved real-life job interviews, findings reflect what is currently happening in the workplace. Second, verbal behaviour, meaning disclosures and paralanguage, had the most critical effect on interviewers' judgments. Interviewers scrutinised negative verbal information, especially negative disclosures that were provided early in the interview, and I found that it was essential for applicants to provide early positive disclosures. Consequently, present findings make it possible to expand definitions of powerful and powerless language. In addition, I explain how my findings build on the research of Einhorn (1981) Tullar (1989) and Young and Kacmar (1998).

Third, I found that interviewers' judgments were influenced by how they felt about applicants on a personal level. Interviewers’ judgments of applicant personality had a crucial effect on their hiring decisions. As already pointed out, interviewers’ hiring decisions were influenced more by the personality of an applicant than by the applicant’s credentials. Enthusiasm, confidence and the ability to show empathy
were vital for success in the current job interviews. Fourth, the effects of power differentials on interview dialogue became known, which emphasised the need for more ethical communication. Last, I discovered that there was limited advice for job applicants in self-help texts. The advice in these texts did not stimulate applicants to adopt more permanent positive changes in their interview behaviour. These issues are further explored below.

6.5.1 Real-Life Job Interviews vs. Mock Job Interviews

The literature review revealed a need for more behavioural assessments of real-life job interviews (DeBell, Montgomery, McCarthy & Lanthier, 1998; Harris, 1989). By approaching this gap, the present study has revealed how applicants and interviewers interact in real-life situations. Studies involving mock interviews have produced valuable findings, although mock studies do not involve real interviewers, applicants or job vacancies.

Simulated interviews clearly do not represent what happens in selection interviews in actual organisations, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn from data analysis. In real-life interviews a complex range of variables influences the perceptions and behaviours of applicants and interviewers, which cannot be replicated in mock interviews (see Gallois, Callan & McKenzie Palmer, 1992). The use of real-life interviews, as opposed to mock interviews, was therefore a positive contribution to the field of selection interviews, as this reflected more accurately what has been happening in the workplace.

6.5.2 Competent Communicators and Their Verbal Skills

This study has brought to light the crucial importance of verbal behaviour in applicant IM, indicating that positive disclosures and paralanguage were critical elements for creating positive presence. For instance, interviewers remarked that the successful applicants who communicated in this way were "thinkers" who were "able," "articulate" and "pro-active." In addition, it is possible that successful
applicants’ powerful verbal behaviour enabled them to experience more equal conversation and more rapport with interviewers than their unsuccessful counterparts did. I found that negative disclosures and paralanguage, more than any other communication behaviour, attracted unfavourable comments from interviewers. In particular, they disliked soft, slow monotone voices, which suggested a lack of enthusiasm. Therefore, present findings support other research showing that interviewers prefer to hire applicants who are skilled verbally, rather than applicants who are not (e.g. Ralston, 1989; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988; Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997).

Present research drew attention to how crucial it was for applicants to use positive verbal behaviour and to avoid negative verbal behaviour during the first five minutes of the interview. Therefore, findings support early research showing that interviewers actively search for negative information, especially at the start of the job interview, and they use this information to screen applicants (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Constantin, 1976; Herriott & Rothwell, 1983; Holman, 1972; Springbett, 1958).

Present findings also support the views of Fleischmann (1991) Kellerman (1989) Lewis (1990) and Rowe (1989) as the current data shows that interviewers pay more attention to negative than to positive information when making hiring decisions. It must be recognised nevertheless that the types of questions that interviewers ask can elicit negative disclosures, which is different to an uninvited disclosure. I found that it is critical for applicants to listen carefully to interviewers' questions, and for applicants to respond verbally in ways that promote a positive rather than a negative image of themselves, even if the interviewers' questions concern negative or difficult topics. Additionally, it could be advantageous if applicants promote themselves verbally in a modest, rather than a boastful, way to avoid appearing arrogant.

Nonetheless, I found that negative information does not always have an unfavourable effect on the hiring decision. Sometimes there are exceptions, namely
if interviewers like the applicant’s personality and if the applicant provides early positive information. I noticed that although Brenda, who was offered the job of Legal Assistant, criticised her current employer the interviewer expressed sympathy towards her. She provided many positive statements at the start of her interview and disclosed negative details only later in her interview, which supports the finding that to create favourable impressions it is critical to provide early positive information. Furthermore, the interviewer told me that he liked Brenda’s personality, which indicates that his evaluations were subjective. This finding highlights the considerable influence that applicant personality had upon interviewers’ judgments in this study.

Furthermore, I found that paralanguage had a crucial influence on perceptions of personality, powerless paralanguage in particular created an unfavourable impression (see Hayes, 1991). Unsuccessful applicants who spoke in a soft, slow monotone were judged by the interviewers as nervous, dull, bland, unenthusiastic and lacking in confidence. Present findings therefore support the research of Mino (1996) whose study showed that paralanguage may define an applicant’s level of enthusiasm, assertiveness, outgoingness, emotional stability, organisation, creativity and their analytic capability. Nevertheless, Mino did not examine the effect of laughter and its link with humour and interviewer impressions of applicant personality.

The current data also suggests that humour and laughter may help to create rapport between interviewers and applicants, that is, a feeling of being connected to each other (see Hartley, 2003). There was also indication in the data that humour may have minimised power differences, encouraging more equal dialogue and rapport between participants. Both of the successful applicants laughed in response to the interviewers’ humorous comments, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not. Consequently, successful applicants may have been perceived as likeable types who could work harmoniously with their work colleagues and communicate with customers. Therefore, laughter and sharing humour with the interviewer could assist job applicants to create positive presence during selection interviews. A study
by Candita (2006) found that the predominant function of humour is to amuse and maintain rapport, and humour may help to promote feelings of solidarity.

6.5.3 New Definitions of Powerful and Powerless Language

The present research has thrown light on the importance of powerful disclosures and paralanguage. This permits the terms powerful language and powerless language to be expanded within the context of selection interviews. A particular contribution made by this study is to expand the term powerful language which has lacked definition in the literature. For instance, powerful language has been described merely as "the relative absence of the features of the powerless style" (see Hosman & Siltanen, 1994, p.287). Although seminal research has categorised language styles according to separate components of verbal behaviour – that is, phrases such as "you know" or paralanguage such as low volume, other studies have not analysed disclosures in the same manner that the present study has (see Bradac & Street, 1989/90; Erickson, Lind, Allan, Johnson & O'Barr, 1978; Grob, Meyers & Schuh, 1997).

Present findings suggest that within the area of job interviews, disclosures and communicative competence could be included in the new expanded definitions of powerful and powerless language. Hence, the new definitions go beyond other definitions. Powerful language can assist applicants to create favourable impressions, whereas powerless language has the opposite effect. There was strong evidence in this study that interviewers paid much attention to the content of applicants' disclosures. The positive and negative statements volunteered by applicants influenced the kinds of impressions they created on interviewers.

Accordingly, based on current data, the new term powerless language could include negative disclosures and the term powerful language could include positive disclosures. Furthermore, this investigation showed that it was vital for applicants to know when and how to interact verbally with the interviewer. Both successful applicants in this study knew when to talk and when to remain silent. Therefore, it
is equally important to ensure that communicative competence is incorporated into the new definition of powerful language. Hence, the new definition of powerful language includes positive statements that applicants make about themselves during job interviews in addition to positive paralanguage. Applicants who use powerful language are competent communicators in that they know, for example, when to speak and when to refrain from speaking. The new definition of powerless language includes negative statements that applicants volunteer to interviewers and applicants’ use of negative paralanguage. Powerless language involves lack of communicative competence in the sense that powerless language may involve, for example, interrupting the interviewer, providing lengthy, vague responses or responses that lack relevant detail.

**6.5.4 Expanding the Research of Einhorn (1981) Tullar (1989) and Young and Kacmar (1998)**

Not only does the current study support the seminal work of Einhorn (1981) and Tullar (1989), as detailed in Chapter 2, but it can be said also to expand their research. In the present study, it was possible to investigate a different type of data. I analysed a range of behaviours and found differences in the way successful and unsuccessful applicants communicated, as Einhorn did. However, the present study analysed verbal behaviour more extensively than was possible in Einhorn's research. For instance, with the analytic methods of CA and ContA, I discovered that disclosures and paralanguage were the most critical IM factors for applicants. Einhorn’s work does not throw light on the importance of personality characteristics, the subjective nature of interviewer decision making, or the effects of power differentials between interviewers and applicants as present findings did. Furthermore, Einhorn did not conduct ContA on self-help texts to discover what kinds of advice are currently available to applicants.

Present findings also develop those of Tullar (1989) by showing that it is the quality and not the quantity of verbal behaviour that differentiates successful and unsuccessful applicants. In Tullar's study, successful interviews were longer than
unsuccessful ones, and successful applicants dominated the conversation more than unsuccessful ones did. In contrast to Tullar, I found that some unsuccessful applicants had long interviews because they talked excessively and asked many irrelevant questions which prolonged their interviews beyond the allotted time. Therefore, their interviews were long, but the quality of their responses was poor. In the present research, as in Tullar's study, successful applicants had longer interviews compared with the interviews of other applicants. However, I found that successful applicants provided higher quality responses that were more positive, detailed and concise than responses provided by unsuccessful applicants.

Present data expands the research of Tullar (1989) in another way. I found that the length of interviews, applicants' verbal contributions, and the quality of their communication was determined by how many interviewers were participating, how they asked questions and how they managed the interview. Prior to the Transport Officer interviews, the three interviewers compiled a list of questions. The questions could be described as open questions as they commenced with "what," "why" or "how," and some questions required applicants to imagine a typical work scenario and state how they would solve a problem. Accordingly, the interviewers expected detailed explanations, and these open questions enabled applicants to provide more elaborate responses (see Hayes, 1991, p.79). The dialogue was a two-way conversation as each party contributed information. Therefore, it can be said that open questions allowed applicants to display their competence and personality and to interact more fully with the interviewers.

In contrast, the Legal Assistant interviews were conducted by one interviewer who talked more than each of the four applicants did. His style of interviewing could be described as informal and spontaneous as he used unstructured interviews. Each applicant was asked different questions. Many of the interviewer’s questions could be defined as closed questions. For instance, they began with "Do you"? Consequently, this restricted the applicants’ responses; they replied either "yes" or "no," or provided short answers. It is possible that closed questions prevented
applicants from providing detailed responses. Consequently, they were restricted in terms of displaying their competence and personality in the most favourable way.

Current findings support the seminal work of Young and Kacmar (1998) which showed that powerful verbal IM strategies helped applicants to create positive credentials of a subjective versus objective nature. Present findings can also expand the work of Young and Kacmar as they analysed only the verbal statements of applicants. The present study goes beyond their work as it includes also the role of paralanguage such as laughter in job interviews.

Indeed, I found that paralanguage had a considerable impact on impressions of personality. Soft, slow monotone voices were largely to blame when applicants were judged as unenthusiastic, dull or nervous. In contrast, successful applicants in this study appeared enthusiastic, self-confident and relaxed due to their strong, clear voices with few pauses and because they responded to the interviewers’ remarks with laughter. Powerful paralanguage gave the impression that they were enjoying the interaction with their interviewers. Hence, there was considerable evidence in this study that powerful paralanguage is an important component of IM enabling successful applicants to show their personality in a most favourable light. I also identified a connection between powerful paralanguage and positive characteristics such as enthusiasm and self-confidence, what could be called subjective factors. These qualities had a profound effect on interviewers' perceptions of applicants, and consequently on hiring decisions. Next, I explain how findings concerning these areas could expand the existing literature in the field of selection interviews and communication.

6.5.5 Displaying a positive personality: Enthusiasm, Self-confidence and Empathy

While it is commonly known that interviewers expect applicants to discuss their competence during job interviews, present findings show that, equally, they expect applicants to project a positive personality. There was strong evidence that when
choosing between two equally competent applicants interviewers hired the person whose personality they preferred. For instance, although Liz and Dan were both competent, Liz was offered the job of Transport Officer because the interviewers liked her personality. There may have been several reasons why Dan failed the interview.

First, Dan gave the impression that he was unreliable; his rapid speech and playful comments made him appear "glib," that is, artful. Accordingly, Interviewer 1 stated that he had doubts about Dan’s personality. Second, Interviewer 2 remarked that, if appointed to the post of Transport Officer, he had the feeling that Dan would not remain in the job for a long time. Third, it was discovered that there was no reference for Dan from his employer, which again fuelled the interviewers’ concerns about Dan’s personality. A similar situation arose in the Legal Assistant interviews. Brenda and Helen were both competent Legal Assistants but the interviewer chose Brenda as he believed that Helen lacked enthusiasm for the job.

There was further evidence in the present data that evaluations of personality were an important consideration for interviewers. In the Transport Officer interviews, applicants completed psychometric tests, hence it is conceivable that the three interviewers were striving to be as objective as possible when judging personality. Such tests can help to offset any prejudices or subjectivity an interviewer might have. There is support in this study for the proposition that interviewers do not remain objective when judging applicants. Interviewers’ judgments were influenced by their feelings about each applicant’s personality. I found that how interviewers felt about applicants on a personal level had a crucial effect on hiring decisions.

Therefore, the interviewers’ comments revealed that their decision-making was subjective and influenced by their feelings, which seemed to be determined mainly by what applicants said, and how they said it. However, it was clear that applicants needed to use powerful non-verbal behaviour, as well as verbal behaviour, to display a positive personality. In his comments to me after the interviews, the law firm interviewer stated that he had judged applicants according to his feelings about
them. There was recorded evidence that the three interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews were also influenced by their feelings. They commented that they liked the successful applicants. In my discussions with interviewers they all confirmed that successful applicants had displayed the kinds of personality characteristics and attitudes they preferred.

This study found that successful applicants managed to consistently project themselves as positive, enthusiastic, confident and empathic; they also volunteered only positive disclosures about their personality. Hence, current data supports the findings of Cook, Spector and Vance (2000) who found that personality plays an important role in the early stages of the interview. There is strong evidence in the present research that because successful applicants were enthusiastic, confident and expressed a capacity for empathy they were able to create rapport with the interviewers and engender positive feelings in the interviewers. Therefore, I found that applicants who display positive personal qualities can increase their chances of successful interview outcomes.

Moreover, present findings support research showing that for some interviewers, speech and behaviour of the applicant can have more influence on interviewer decision-making than the applicant's qualifications and experience (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989b; Graves, 1993; Kinicki, Lockwood, Hom & Griffeth, 1990). Before the current interviews were conducted interviewers read applicants' CVs to ascertain their skills and experience and to gather details about competence. It can be argued that more information about personality is obtained by talking with applicants face-to-face than by perusing their CVs. Therefore, during the interviews in this study, interviewers were paying particular attention to each applicant’s speech and behaviour in order to evaluate personality. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that hiring decisions are affected by how much choice interviewers have in terms of applicants, which is determined by how many applicants apply for a particular job and the quality of applicants, that is, their suitability for the job. The type of job interview i.e. for lower, medium or higher-level positions, may also influence hiring decisions.
In the present study, interviewers' comments revealed that to be rated as a potentially superior employee, applicants were required to display likeability, meaning social skills (see Raza & Carpenter, 1987). I found that through their disclosures successful applicants demonstrated confidence in their own opinions and abilities, while remaining polite and respectful to the interviewers. Furthermore, the interviewers commented that it was crucial for applicants to appear willing and energetic. Interviewers stated that they were not interested in applicants who failed to project enthusiasm. In addition, I found that positive verbal behaviour played a vital role in conveying an impression of likeability to the interviewers. Successful applicants sounded enthusiastic due to their positive statements and variation in the tone, pitch and pace of their voices. Furthermore, the successful applicants actually discussed how important it was to be self-confident, assertive, helpful, and to show empathy, whereas unsuccessful applicants did not.

Findings of this study contribute further to the body of knowledge as few studies seem to have investigated the expression of empathy in job interviews. From the data there emerged the question of the need to verbally demonstrate empathy, and show a caring and considerate attitude to work colleagues and customers. Both successful applicants stated that it was essential to be helpful and to show empathy, and this created favourable impressions on the interviewers. Possessing the ability to feel empathy towards others was an important requirement in the current interviews as the roles of Transport Officer and Legal Assistant could be described as demanding jobs. Both roles required constant liaison with a range of external organisations and customers, and the interviewers remarked that they wanted to appoint people who could deal calmly andcompetently with customers’ queries.

For instance, the Transport Officer vacancy was required to be filled by someone who could liaise and empathise with parents, their children and with teachers and provide a consistently high quality transport service that satisfied all parties. Similarly, for the Legal Assistant vacancy, the interviewer preferred to employ a person who had a patient, helpful and caring attitude towards clients who were buying and selling property, which can be an arduous process. Therefore, present
data indicated that it is important for applicants to find opportunities to show sensitivity to the feelings of other people, consideration, and graciousness (see Connell, 2003). While it is recognised that different interviewers may look for different personality characteristics, it could be said that empathy is a desirable quality in most jobs. However, it could be argued that empathy could be more important for some jobs than for other jobs. For instance, a job that requires much customer contact could require more empathy than factory work involving the operation of machinery.

Furthermore, I found a significant link between body language and impressions of personality in this study. Successful applicants showed enthusiasm, self-confidence and attentiveness non-verbally, through their facial expressions, eye contact, smiling, and by leaning forwards. Their hands and feet were still, therefore they appeared calm and composed. The powerful body language of successful applicants therefore matched their positive statements and powerful paralanguage. Unsuccessful applicants often slouched in their chairs or had a stiff posture. They rarely smiled, frequently avoided eye contact with the interviewers, and displayed nervous mannerisms such as fiddling with jewellery, which made the applicants seem unconfident, distracted and indifferent. The interviewers confirmed that powerless body language led to the perception that some applicants were nervous, unconfident and unenthusiastic.

Next, I discuss how this research has drawn attention to the asymmetrical power relations in job interviews and the significant effects that power imbalances have upon verbal behaviour. While this has the potential to put job applicants at a disadvantage, I found that it might be possible for interviewers and applicants to counteract the negative effects by promoting more ethical dialogue.

6.5.6 Power Changes Language and Language Changes Power: The Need for Ethical Job Interviews
Present findings suggest that selection interviews need to be more ethical encounters. Ethical interviews are those in which interviewers treat applicants honourably and with courtesy. In particular, the data suggests a need for more equal and ethical dialogue in job interviews. Out of this data has emerged the idea that, through their dialogue, both interviewers and applicants could help to make interviews more ethical and possibly less stressful and more fruitful encounters for themselves.

This could be achieved by promoting the use of more equal dialogue between interviewers and applicants. Interviewers could prevent the misuse of power, meaning that they could avoid exerting control unnecessarily through language or any other means. Interviewers could ensure they treat applicants courteously, and applicants could be encouraged to take responsibility for their own verbal behaviour. As selection interviews are widespread in business perhaps they could become catalysts for more ethical communication in the workplace. Undoubtedly some organisations currently practise ethical management, however, the consensus is that increasing importance should be placed on ethical and socially responsible attitudes towards business. Work environments should endeavour to promote the ethical treatment of employees their fulfilment and freedom (see Minkes, Small & Chatterjee, 1999; Morris, 1997; Sudhir & Murthy, 2001).

Various ethical issues became known during this study, especially concerning the relationship between language and power that underpins job interviews. Such power imbalances may have adversely affected the verbal behaviour of participants. Selection interviews will always be unequal encounters in terms of power and language because of the differences in status and role between interviewers and applicants. This imbalance was evident in the current study. For instance, interviewers controlled the interviews, and all applicants were obliged to follow the interviewers' line of questioning. Here it is necessary to point out that in the present study many factors could have influenced the way applicants responded to questions. For example, the types of questions applicants were asked, the time constraints imposed by the interview process, the stressful nature of job interviews,
and the attitudes of the interviewers. Other influences may have included the applicants' level of knowledge and experience, personality and communication skills.

However, present findings suggest that unethical questions and other instances of misuse of power could harm job applicants and prevent them from creating favourable impressions. It is noted that when applicants are forced to communicate from a "one-down" position they cannot demonstrate communication skills needed in the job (see Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999). For instance, during the interviews for the Legal Assistant positions some applicants may have felt that their ability to contribute verbally was limited by the interviewer's questions, which applicants regarded as personal and irrelevant. Indeed, both Alice and Helen remarked to me after the interview that they were annoyed by the interviewer's questions. Therefore, he may have caused these applicants confusion and distress and possibly prompted them to disclose too much negative information. He questioned Alice about her illness and her marital status. In addition, he asked Helen about a gap in her CV which prompted Helen to disclose that she had been pregnant and had suffered a miscarriage.

I also found that the law firm interviewer avoided eye contact with the applicants as he appeared to be continually reading documents that were on his desk. Unsuccessful applicant Helen informed me that she found his behaviour distracting and annoying. The interviewer may have avoided eye contact because he was nervous or inexperienced at conducting selection interviews or because he had not prepared sufficiently for the interview and was pondering which questions to ask the applicants. Moreover, it is possible that the hiring decision made by the law firm interviewer was biased as he was the sole interviewer and he did not carry out psychometric testing. It could thus be argued that the Legal Assistant interviews were not conducted in an ethical manner.

The data revealed other events that demonstrated disrespect to applicants and highlighted the power imbalance in interviews. It was observed that the interviewers ridiculed applicants in between the interviews, perhaps to justify their
decision not to hire, and this is when differences in power between participants became clear. For example, interviewers in the Transport Officer interviews mocked the suit, socks and shoes of Ray, an unsuccessful applicant, and they remarked on his lack of interviewing skills. In addition, the interviewers related in a patronising manner several stories about applicants they had interviewed for other jobs. They found fault with those applicants, usually mocking their appearance or behaviour. Consequently, the interviewers' comments revealed a definite sense of "us and them" in other words differentiation due to status which highlighted applicants' lack of power in the interview setting.

It appears that the Transport Officer interviews were conducted in a more ethical manner. Interviewer 1 mentioned to all applicants that to be fair to them he was providing all of them with the same information at the start of each interview. It seems that the three interviewers aimed to be as objective as possible when judging personality as they used psychometric testing. Moreover, the interviewers asked all six applicants the same questions, and no personal questions were asked i.e. questions that related to marital status or health. One of the interviewers was a Senior Human Resources Officer and was experienced in selection interviewing. In addition, the interviewers were following Equal Opportunity guidelines for interviewing. The Equal Opportunity policy is part of employment policy in the United Kingdom and in other countries. Therefore, regarding employment, the local government organisation in this study actively promoted equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

In studies of this type, it is important to acknowledge the interviewers' perspective, and to recognise the constraints under which interviewers may have been operating during the current research. The process of interviewing applicants is costly in terms of time and money. Interviewers in this study remarked that they wanted to fill their vacancies as soon as possible. Therefore, it can be argued that it was essential for the interviewers to maintain control during the present interviews. They achieved this by limiting the amount of time they allowed for each interview.
and by controlling the dialogue. However, I found that it could be in the interests of some employers to ask themselves, among other questions, whether or not they actually treated all applicants equally and with courtesy or whether their claims of fairness to all applicants were merely "lip service." As previously noted job interviews currently serve the interests of employers rather than catering for the needs of applicants (Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995).

This study shows that although interviewers may need to direct the interview, it is crucial to ensure that job applicants are treated with respect and are allowed more opportunities to contribute verbally. For instance, the data showed that although unsuccessful applicants provided many negative disclosures, the interviewers did not ask applicants to explain why they had provided the negative information. When applicants make negative statements, interviewers could probe for the reasons for the disclosure. This raises the question of what is appropriate probing? To dig deeper into a personal matter could make matters worse but to use a form of meta-communication could allow for further insight. Thus interviewers would need to ensure they probe tactfully in a way that minimises harm to applicants. For instance, "You stated that you found it hard to be punctual in your previous job. This sounds like a rather negative thing to disclose about yourself. Can you tell me why you shared this information, and how you would overcome the problem if you are offered this job"?

Interviewers could promote more ethical communication by examining their own verbal behaviour and ensuring that it does not negatively impact on the interview dialogue. This would prevent misunderstandings, provide applicants with more opportunities to create favourable impressions, and ensure that their communication is unambiguous. Applicants might feel less restricted in terms of what to say, and what not to say, and above all be reassured that the interview is being conducted ethically.

During this study it became evident that it is not only applicants who can use IM to create positive impressions. Interviewers could use IM to present a favourable
image of themselves and their organisation to potential new employees. This would help to ensure that job applicants perceive the organisation in a favourable light, which in turn could create more cordial long-term relationships between successful applicants and employers. If interviewers treat all applicants courteously and ensure that the interview is a pleasant experience for them it is possible that successful applicants who become employees might commence work with a favourable impression of their new employer and colleagues. Due to the supportive environment employees may adapt more quickly to their new environment and work tasks.

There was evidence in the current research that applicants were upset when the law firm interviewer asked them irrelevant and illegal questions. Furthermore, it could be argued that a trick question was asked during the Transport Officer interviews prompting most of the applicants to disclose negative information. By conducting job interviews more ethically, interviewers could ensure that successful applicants stay motivated, have high morale and remain loyal. This could produce financial benefits for companies. Work relationships that are based on respect and harmony may lead to an increase in productivity and lower levels of labour turnover, which reduces the need for the expensive recruitment process. On the other hand, unsuccessful applicants who are treated well may be more motivated to apply for jobs with the same organisation in the future. Above all, unsuccessful applicants who leave the interview room with a positive memory of the experience may report this to their colleagues, friends and family, providing free favourable publicity for the organisation and enhancing its public image. Consequently, this could lead to an increase in demand for the organisation's products or services.

It can be argued that currently many selection interviews are a reflection of the inequality that permeates organisational culture. However, there was evidence in the data that the inequality could be changed through verbal behaviour, which enables people to challenge ideologies. In other words, power may change language, but with language there is the potential to change power. For instance, this study showed that interviewers used the powerful language style and asked
questions which enabled them to control the interviews and the way applicants responded. Successful applicants in this study also used powerful language, and it could be argued that this helped them to create more equal dialogue with their interviewers. It is thus clear that job applicants could alter the power imbalance and empower themselves with their own powerful language, as the successful applicants in this study did.

Moreover, a most important aspect of creating a positive impression was powerful body language. By ensuring that their powerful language matched their powerful body language, successful applicants in this study presented an overall impression of power and credibility. In contrast, unsuccessful applicants reduced their ability to appear powerful and credible by using powerless body language and negative verbal behaviour.

### 6.5.7 What managers could learn from present findings and how findings contribute to the study of management.

The findings of this research are relevant to managers in a number of ways. The most significant contribution is the stress placed on power relations in interview settings and their ethical implications. The job interviews observed were characterised by unequal power and language which may have prevented some applicants from displaying positive presence and communicating on equal terms with their interviewers. As noted earlier, questions were asked by interviewers, and in some instances these questions may have violated the rights of applicants. There was no opportunity for more equal dialogue because interviewers controlled the interview through language. With a more thorough understanding of the job interview from the applicant’s perspective managers will be able to re-evaluate communication in job interviews. Fairer and more enjoyable interviews can make the job of managers easier and more fulfilling, as they can lead ultimately to higher staff morale, motivation, productivity and loyalty.

The study also raises awareness in managers of the way in which they make hiring decisions and what communication behaviours influence their decisions. With this
knowledge managers could become more self-aware and reflexive, being able to monitor and question their own communication skills and assessment of applicants. As seen earlier, findings suggested that interviewers are influenced more by their own feelings and preferences. While in the first instance interviewers search for evidence of competence to do the job, their final decision may be influenced by whether or not they like the applicant on a personal level.

It was noted that interviewers are influenced considerably by the way in which applicants disclose information and that interviewers tend to pay particular attention to negative information. Present findings suggest that many managers may be too hasty in their search for negative information without providing applicants with a chance to redeem themselves during the interview. Paralanguage such as sound of the voice has been found to have also a significant effect on interviewers’ impressions. Indeed, interviewers could make the incorrect assumption that someone with a soft, slow speech style is incompetent.

This thesis further contributes to the study of management in the sense that its findings could be the catalyst for research that explores how to create fairer job interviews and work environments that promote the ethical treatment of employees (see Sudhir & Murthy, 2001). Selection interviews need to be characterised by a more equitable and ethical exercise of power as relations based on authoritarian attitudes do not lead to good decisions. What is required is openness to alternative perspectives and reasoning based on personal insights and data (see Deetz, 1992). Therefore, future studies in management could explore how interviewers can avoid abuse of power (see Herman, 1994) as this leads to interviews that are unethical and unproductive.

It is important for managers to ask themselves whether their behaviour in interviews attains the desired objectives; whether it is fair and equitable, and whether it protects the rights of the parties involved (see Fletcher, 1992). If applicants are put in the subordinate role they end up behaving during the interview as subordinates; hence it is difficult to predict how they would relate as peers or
supervisors in real-life situations. Indeed, as noted by Rynes, Heneman and Schwab (1980), unnecessary interviewer control limits the effectiveness of the interview as a selection tool. The way applicants are treated may affect their willingness to accept job offers which may lead to loss of potentially good employees.

The present study shows that responsibility lies with both interviewers and applicants for creating more equal dialogue. Present findings have revealed how applicants can embrace the concept of IM and speak with more power.

6.5.8 Self-Help Texts Provide Short-Term Solutions

One of the lessons that can be learned from this study is that in order to empower themselves in interview settings, job applicants need to have available to them a more thorough understanding of power and ethical issues than is currently provided in self-help texts on interviewing. There was evidence that the kind of information currently being supplied to applicants in self-help texts is not meeting applicants' needs as well as it could be. Therefore, findings could provide applicants with a more thorough understanding of job interviews than is available to them in such texts. Although popular literature offers advice that is designed to help applicants take part in interviews as they are currently conducted, it could be argued that self-help texts fail to address the complexity of interaction and the multiple layers of meaning and power involved in a selection interview. I found that scant attention is paid to the imbalance of power that operates between interviewers and applicants during interviews.

In self-help texts the issue of "power" is not commonly discussed, except indirectly. Therefore, applicants might not question how the power relationship affects their own dialogue, or how they can empower themselves by interacting with interviewers on more equal terms. For instance, in these texts applicants are not encouraged to strive for an equal opportunity to speak, to advance and examine claims, to disclose personal information, or to exercise power. A more direct assessment of power would have advantages in raising awareness about how power is characterised and played out in the interview, both negatively and positively.
Present data showed that unsuccessful applicants displayed powerless verbal and non-verbal behaviour which disempowered them and contributed to their failure to obtain a job offer. Therefore, applicants require more information about the strong connection between language and power and how it affects their interaction. It is my view that applicants could learn how to influence interview dialogue and bring about more equal encounters.

Such advice is generally not provided in self-help texts, which contain abundant lists of do's and don'ts for applicants to memorise as they prepare for their job interviews. For example, "Don't ask questions until the end when the interviewer invites you to do so." Although self-help texts are a useful point at which to start searching for information about job interviews, it could be argued that they are a short-term solution as applicants are not stimulated to make more permanent changes in their behaviour. In many of the texts that I analysed, there was superficial advice concerning applicants' communication. Interviewers were portrayed as the more powerful party and applicants as the less powerful party. Therefore, it seems that applicants are provided with lists of do's and don'ts in order to match interviewers' stereotype of the ideal job applicant.

It has been shown that the findings of the present study can contribute to theory in the field of selection interviews and communication and be also of practical value to job applicants and to interviewers through education and training. It is also important nevertheless to acknowledge the limitations of the current research.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

It can be said that this study has two main limitations. The first one relates to the search to find volunteers to participate in the study. The second stems from the fact that body language might not have been thoroughly explored as it was not the main focus of the research; it was tackled mainly to lend further support to this study of applicant communication and interviewers' perceptions of communication. A sample of 10 real-life selection interviews was collected from a law firm and a
government office. Under ideal research conditions, a larger sample of interviews could have been gathered. It was explained earlier that this study focused on medium level jobs for which applicants needed qualifications and experience. This was in contrast to higher-level jobs requiring a university degree or lower level jobs that may require few formal qualifications. Hence, it can be said that findings cannot be generalised to other kinds of organisations, job levels and interview settings. In order to counter this criticism, I note this was a qualitative study, and its aim was not generalisability. Findings show how some applicants behave in a certain interview situation; the same applicants might behave differently under different circumstances (see Tannen, 1991).

A more thorough investigation of body language could have been performed with a video-recorder, which enables tapes to be played and re-played during data analysis, instead of relying on memory and notes. However, it must be taken into account that the video recorder may have inhibited the way some participants behaved and affected interview outcomes. Most importantly, applicants and interviewers in the current study stated a definite preference for audio recording as opposed to video recording.

### 6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

#### 6.7.1 Misuse of Power in Job Interviews

Findings of this study suggest that there could be value in examining ways to prevent the misuse of power and to promote more equal interaction in real-life job interviews. In brief, here are some questions that could be explored in further research:

1. What are the clues of power imbalance in job interviews?
2. Is there resistance to power and what are the resistance strategies?
3. Do power shifts occur in job interviews?
4. How does power shift between interviewer and applicant?
5. How can more equal dialogue be encouraged between interviewers and applicants?
6. Can job interviews become more democratic instruments of employment selection?
7. What are the implications of power use/abuse in job interviews for the interviewed, and for the organisation?

To produce clear guidelines, it could be worthwhile discovering the views of interviewers and applicants regarding what is and what is not ethically acceptable behaviour in the interview. Having identified areas of agreement, further research could concentrate on aspects on which there is disagreement (see Fletcher, 1992).

In addition, as interviewers form impressions within the first two to three minutes of a job interview and as the present study has shown that early impressions are crucial for creating positive presence it would be worthwhile for future studies to expand the work of Goffman (1959), focusing for example on the role of handshake and early communicative greeting.

6.7.2 Applicants’ understanding of the images they present

Furthermore, the present study has thrown light on ways in which applicants who want to succeed in job interviews can empower themselves with communication behaviours, with self-belief, and with a more thorough understanding of the power relationship. In this chapter, training guidelines have been set out for more empowering communication to help applicants who desire success to achieve success. However, it would be valuable for future research to investigate applicants’ understanding of the images they present to interviewers and whether applicants are in control of their image during job interviews.³

³ It must be considered that in some cases it is not in the applicant’s interest to succeed in a job interview. For example, a person may be forced to apply for jobs in which they have no interest purely to enable them to obtain unemployment benefits.
6.7.3 Comparing Job interviews

Data in this study was collected from medium-level job interviews in a private law firm and a local government office. However, as there is a diversity of selection interview contexts, the dialogue in interviews and the interview process may vary according to job level, that is, whether the job is lower, medium or higher level. It could also vary according to the type of organisation. For instance, broadly speaking, in the private sector, business owners concentrate on making a financial profit, whereas public sector goals could be oriented more to community service. The private and public sectors may each attract individuals with contrasting ideals and values and perhaps different personalities. In addition, local government offices and national government organisations may differ, and workplace culture could vary between small, medium and large organisations.

 Accordingly, data could be gathered from real-life job interviews across the private and public sectors for positions at low, medium and high levels. This would enable findings to be generalised to a variety of organisations, interview settings and jobs, ranging from the job of cleaner to that of Chief Executive, for example. For the medium level positions in this study, interviewers wanted to hire people who were self-motivated and who could work without constant supervision. Nevertheless, interviewers may look for different qualities when interviewing applicants for higher or lower level vacancies. Such research conducted on real-life job interviews could help job applicants to tailor their IM to the needs of specific types of interviews and organisations.

Another possible area for further investigation is the value of humour and laughter in job interviews which has received little attention to date.

6.7.4 The Role of Humour in the Empowerment of Job Applicants

Present data showed a link between humour and rapport, and possibly interview outcomes, as successful applicants used more humour and laughter than unsuccessful applicants did. In addition, applicants who laughed in response to the
interviewers’ comments may have created favourable impressions of their personality. The role of humour in interviews is currently unexplored. What could be fruitful would be to investigate how interview participants perceive humour and how they are affected by it.

Furthermore, it would be worth analysing if humorous rapport during job interviews helps to promote harmonious work relationships in the long term. Nonetheless, while it is common knowledge that a sense of humour can be a social asset, in some organisations employers may disapprove of humour, regarding it as a distraction from business (Holmes & Marra, 2002). On the other hand, humour could be beneficial at work as it has been shown to aid communication in the workplace (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). It may be worthwhile for studies to investigate more fully the benefits of humour and laughter in job interviews and in other workplace interactions.

Moreover, present data suggested there could be a link between humour and power, which requires further analysis. Currently job interviews are formal interactions, and the dialogue is restricted by power differentials. Future studies could analyse the role of humour as an equalising factor, namely, its potential for minimising differences in power and status and making interviews less structured and formal occasions in which there is more equal dialogue. Interviewers could learn to use humour positively i.e. to promote a feeling of rapport and equality and put applicants at ease. In addition, it would be worthwhile analysing how job applicants could employ humour to empower themselves. Holmes and Marra (2002) explain that while some powerful people may use humour to maintain control, conversely humour can be a resource for the less powerful as a socially acceptable means of challenging existing power relationships.

As a further recommendation, from present findings I propose a set of principles which can be called the Powerful Communication Guidelines (PCG), which could generate a useful approach to selection interviews and can be used for education and training purposes.
The PCG that emerged from the findings of the study can be described as a set of guidelines that enable interviewers and applicants to address the power imbalance in job interviews. An essential principle of the PCG is the concept of more equal dialogue which invites interview participants to take responsibility for their verbal behaviour. A central feature of PCG training is the expanded definition of powerful language that emerged from the findings. Powerful language is the use of positive disclosures and paralanguage, and communicative competence. Applicants could learn how to project positive presence and empower themselves with powerful paralanguage and positive disclosures from the start of the interview and by avoiding negative disclosures. Applicants would use language to change the power imbalance in their favour, enabling them to communicate on more equal terms with interviewers who use the powerful style. If applicants continue to use the powerless style, it may not be easy for them to achieve more equal conversations with interviewers.

The PCG stimulates participants to think differently about dialogue within job interviews, their own roles, and the way interviews are conducted. The PCG encourages the belief that there is an alternative to the unequal dialogue that is currently the norm in many interviews. Through ideas promoted within the PCG, first it is crucial to inform interviewers and applicants of the benefits of more equal interviews. Then they would be invited to objectively examine how they interact with each other and to challenge the perceptions each may currently have about their own roles. In addition, they could examine how cultural differences affect communication.

The possible benefits deriving from interviews that are more equal and more ethical could be discussed among interviewers and applicants. As interviewers are potential job applicants, and applicants are potential interviewers, the PCG encourages them to learn to appreciate each other's roles, whilst providing training that could assist them personally and in their careers. A research-based approach that promotes
understanding of the interview transaction will help interviewers and applicants to understand the various constraints they are both operating under.

The guidelines could be put into practice through face-to-face instruction. For example, the PCG could be applied by educators within a training institute, by trainers in the workplace, by lecturers in universities and in colleges, by teachers in schools, and by Human Resources departments. Teachers and careers counsellors in schools could use the PCG to prepare teenagers for their first job interview. Providing this kind of training in the final year of school, or earlier, may help to encourage young people to practise ethical communication throughout their working lives. Training for interviewers and applicants could be both theoretical in terms of promoting understanding and examining beliefs, and more practical, by acting out powerful behaviours through role-play for example. The role-play could be video recorded and replayed to students who could analyse and learn from their interactions with each other.

Training offered by the PCG could assist people on a more personal level, not only in selection interviews. PCG could be used to improve self-esteem, motivation and interpersonal communication skills. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the PCG could be incorporated into training for the long-term unemployed that is currently provided in Job Centres, or PCG training could be conducted as a separate course. In addition, homeless people might also benefit from training, which would be conducted in Day Centres for the homeless. This training would be geared towards preventing social exclusion and helping people to live more independently. In these circumstances it would be essential for training to be delivered in language that is easy for them to understand, to ensure that the training meets their specific needs.

Through the PCG, it is crucial for educators and trainers to explain to employers and to job applicants how power influences language and how language has the potential to alter power imbalances. It could be pointed out that individuals evaluate each other in terms of power and that variations in language can strongly affect these judgments. The focus will be on preventing the misuse of power and
promoting more equal dialogue and ethical conduct in job interviews. For instance, the differences between “good,” that is, ethical interview dialogue, and "bad," meaning unethical dialogue, would need to be demonstrated. More specifically, to enhance the job interview experience, it is essential for educators to discuss values such as respect, courtesy and honesty.

The PCG also highlights the importance of more equal exchange of dialogue and sharing of information where both parties have freedom to speak and express their opinions. With training offered by the PCG interviewers could persuade applicants to express their views openly, and applicants would do this in a respectful way. In such a setting, interviewers would be encouraged to be more flexible. For instance, interviewers would learn not to feel threatened if applicants expressed opinions that were different from their own opinions. Instead, interviewers would be persuaded to bear in mind that such applicants might be innovative, confident and able to develop the job and make a contribution to the company. Furthermore, educators would portray IM as normal behaviour in job interviews to ensure that IM is perceived in a positive light by applicants and especially by interviewers.

Furthermore, through the PCG it could be explained to job applicants that they can address the imbalance of power through systematic training in powerful communication. Fear of selection interviews could prevent some people from changing their job, even if they are bored with their current work. Educators and trainers in the field of selection interviewing and communication could contribute to the process of empowerment of job applicants by ensuring that applicants recognise and believe in their own ability to talk with interviewers on more equal terms.

Insecure job applicants need to be encouraged to see their own role more positively and understand that they can use their verbal skills for IM. Therefore, an essential

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4 The notion of communication apprehension has been discussed by McCroskey (1984), who defines it as "an individual’s level of fear and anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person" (p.78). McCroskey (1979) found that some people preferred not to switch jobs even if the job was not to their liking because they were so afraid of interviewing. See also Ayres, Keereetawep, Chen & Edwards (1998).
aspect of the PCG would be to provide training to increase their self-esteem as insecure applicants would need support in examining their current beliefs and adopting more empowering ones. For example, it could be pointed out that selection interviews perform an essential role in business and in the national economy. In addition, these applicants could be encouraged to perceive PCG training as advantageous in relation to planning their own careers and for their own personal development.

Ideas within the PCG promote the concept of permanent positive change in the communication of interviewers and of applicants, in contrast to the short-term solutions offered by self-help texts. Nevertheless, it is recognised that self-help texts can be most useful as they are easily accessible and easy to use. Above all, the PCG offers evidence-based training that enables applicants to make informed decisions. They arrive at their own understanding and take responsibility for their language choices rather than being passive recipients of advice found in self-help texts, perhaps following the advice and not always questioning it.

Moreover, the PCG offers much more than just training and education in verbal and non-verbal behaviours. The guidelines offer also an enhanced awareness of interviews as they deal with applicants at a metacognitive level. This allows applicants to devise and develop responses that are appropriate to them, responses that they "own" based on increased knowledge and understanding of the interview process and beliefs about their own behaviour. For example, the decision to disclose positive information concerns not only language choice, but also motivation, self-esteem, IM skills and metacognitive skills.

6.8 Conclusion

Getting a job entails "more than just a good CV." My research indicates that it is crucial for applicants to create positive presence during interviews, that is, to show their personality and competence in the most favourable light. In order to achieve positive presence applicants must simultaneously employ a range of behaviours
which include the verbal strategies of powerful language and paralanguage, combined with powerful body language and a positive appearance. Most importantly, the study indicates that job applicants could empower themselves with a more thorough understanding of the processes involved in the job interview, as well as practical skills for IM. Surely, it is desirable to be verbally proficient during a job interview, but it is important to bear in mind that non-verbal communication behaviours, meaning body language and appearance, also influence the interviewer’s judgment.

It became clear in the course of this research that a better understanding of the processes involved in the job interview will help applicants to identify behaviours that can potentially create a positive presence in interview settings. Interviewers’ judgments are subjective, and their hiring decisions are influenced by their feelings that is, how much they like or dislike the applicant. While competence is no doubt a vital consideration, interviewers’ hiring decisions are significantly influenced by how they perceive the applicant’s personality. Interviewers have a tendency to select applicants who have the personality traits that signal that they will be productive and effective and that they will be able to work well with all members of the team. Increased awareness of interaction in job interviews may enable applicants to develop the required skills to ”let their personality shine through”; to project positive attributes such as confidence, enthusiasm, and empathy and to make positive statements about their competence to do the job.

The findings of this study also provide some valuable insights on how to address the unequal power relationship between interviewers and interviewees. Evidence was found that from the start of their job interviews applicants would do well to choose powerful verbal communication, that is, positive disclosures and powerful paralanguage. As language and power are closely intertwined, applicants can increase their sense of power in the interview by providing positive statements about their competence and personality and by avoiding negative disclosures. At the same time, applicants can manage to appear more powerful by working on their paralanguage, by ensuring their voices are strong and clear with few pauses, and
that the tone, pitch and pace of the voice vary from time to time. There was also indication that humour and laughter can help to foster more equal relationships in job interviews, although further research in this area is required.

As more theoretical and practical knowledge about the job interview process is made available through academic inquiry, perhaps there will be a more equal dialogue between interviewers and applicants. In the current economic climate there is much competition among job seekers, and potential employers are increasingly selective in the recruitment process. Therefore, it is crucial for trainers and educators to encourage in job applicants the belief that they can be active participants in the interview process and can take responsibility for their own sense of power. It is true that interviewers may operate under various constraints and need to exercise some control during job interviews. However, if there is less control by interviewers i.e. if they avoid asking questions that are personal and irrelevant, they could allow job interviews to become more equal and more pleasant encounters for themselves and for applicants.

Findings also suggest that interviewers should allow applicants more freedom to initiate dialogue and to contribute ideas. In interviews in which there was more equal and ethical dialogue applicants seemed to feel freer to disclose information about themselves without fear of being penalised. As awareness of these processes grows, interviewers may not be inclined to judge applicants hastily and unfavourably by the negative information they disclose early in the interview, but may diplomatically ask applicants to clarify their negative statements. This would enable interviewers to strive for more objectivity in their assessments of candidates and provide applicants with more opportunities to create positive presence during the interview. In addition, as more interviewers understand how crucial it is to communicate with job applicants in a more balanced manner, the practice of ethical communication could spread to organisations, leading to improvements in workplace communication and culture. Workplace relationships would then be characterised by trust and respect. Employers and employees could share
information and ideas, and would be able to freely express their opinions in a tactful and constructive manner.

If this can be accomplished, and employers are made aware of the advantages that such improvements in communication could bring them, more equality in interpersonal relations in the workplace could, in time, become the norm. This would help to ensure that courtesy, respect and ethical treatment of employees become part of organisational cultures. Ethical communication and management are worthy goals for which to strive, considering that the greatest asset of a company is indeed its people.
List of References


Appendix A

Transcription Symbols appearing in the Excerpts of CA

The transcription conventions for the present research are based on the system devised by Gail Jefferson and now well established in conversation analysis (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974, p. 731-734), with some modifications. Techniques and symbols are revised and symbols added or dropped as relevant. Line numbers are provided in all the excerpts to aid reference to specific areas of the text. Text in bold typeface and enclosed in double quotation marks signifies interviewer’s comments or applicant’s disclosures. No real names of applicants, interviewers, or organisations have been used in any of the excerpts in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XX or pseudonym</td>
<td>Indicates a person, town or object. Used to preserve anonymity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p x 2)</td>
<td>Letter &quot;p&quot; followed by number indicates pause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Pause for up to two seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laugh)</td>
<td>A comma indicates a short intake of breath during the utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laughs x 2)</td>
<td>Laughter for up to one second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Laughing speech)</td>
<td>Laughter for up to two seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>Indicates that speaker is laughing whilst talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>]</td>
<td>Left brackets between lines indicate overlapping speech. The point of overlap is indicated with brackets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/=</td>
<td>If someone’s speech follows another’s directly then latching is signalled, e.g. indicates point at which next speaker interrupts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/=</td>
<td>Speech continues from an earlier line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITALS</td>
<td>Capitals indicate emphatic stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Indicates exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Question mark indicates rising or question intonation, not necessarily a grammatical question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((? ?))</td>
<td>Question marks inside double brackets indicate transcription is impossible, unintelligible word or phrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(soft voice)</td>
<td>Comments or paralinguistic features. These are transcribed when they relate strongly to verbal interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B  Transcript - Interview of Ray

Transport Officer job - Unsuccessful Applicant Ray

*Tape commences*

1 INTERVIEWER 1: Right well as I say my name's Interviewer 1 and I'm the XX Manager and Interviewer 2 here is the XX Manager and XX is the Personnel Officer. XX over here is carrying out an academic study on job interviews.

2 RAY: Yeah.

3 INTERVIEWER 1: So she will take no part in the interview, and in fact neither the organisation nor any of the four of us as participants in the interview will be identified in the study report.

4 RAY: Yeah.

5 INTERVIEWER 1: Super. Fine. Well the interview format then is that er each of us will ask you some questions er we will take notes. Obviously if you want to take any notes feel free um, and you will obviously need to ask us questions later on in the interview. Um, I'd like by way of introduction just to give you a bit of background to the job. Er it's part of the XX Agency, um and this team of people has a number of functions. We provide socially necessary bus services, which are not provided commercially, we administer a number of concession fare schemes. Er we give financial and professional support to community transport. We provide socially necessary bus services, um and the other transport through, for example through a bus enquiry line, and through publicity, and we monitor rail services and make representations ((? ? )). We work to enhance the quality of public transport for example using bus lanes. Er we manage the organisation's vehicle fleet and deal with various safety issues, and last but not least we organise and manage mainstream education transport and special needs education transport, which is what the job interview is about, that's home to school transport and college transport, so you can see that the XX does cover quite a wide field of activity. Now if you just have a look at the organisation chart which will enable you to see where the job we are seeking to fill fits in. If you look at the bottom left hand corner you will see there that the post of Transport Officer is one of three that report to Interviewer 2 here who is the XX Manager, and Interviewer 2 in turn reports to me as XX Manager and I report to an Assistant Director in the department. Em now there is
one important matter that I'm mentioning to all the candidates and that is the organisation is embarking on something which is called the partnership strategy, and this will involve a number of things across the organisation. They will be forming partnerships with other organisations for service delivery, some services will be devolved to other local authorities. They will be encouraging employing more management by us. They will be withdrawing from some non-core services. They will be contracting out of services and transferring the staff accordingly and there will be market testing of services to see if providing them in-house is the best value way of doing it. Now the last of those, the fleet management functions within XX are intended to be made freestanding and exposed to market testing, so as Interviewer 2 here is the XX Manager and will be involved in that process, the reporting arrangements of the post we are filling as shown there are likely to change and er possibly the job description may may change as well. Obviously the whole of the XX, like any other part of the organisation, could be affected by other aspects of the partnership strategy, we don't know at this early stage but er I I do want all the candidates to have that background. Okay, well Interviewer 2 will now ask you some questions, I'll ask questions, then Interviewer 3 and we'll take it from there. Okay? Interviewer 2 would you like to?

6 INTERVIEWER 2: Can I take that off you, you look as though you're worried about what to do with it.

7 RAY: Yeah, thank you.

8 INTERVIEWER 2: Okay. Um, you've obviously read the job description, you've filled in the form adequately. Can you define the role of the post as you understand it, to me?

9 RAY: (dull, monotone voice) Um, it seems the main criteria I understand is liaising with people and organising the transport for special needs children to and from schools in vehicles that are um roadworthy and everything else, making sure it all runs to time, and as as problems arise then um sort those out accordingly.

10 INTERVIEWER 2: that's liaising with?

11 RAY: Parents, schools, other people in the organisation, um education welfare officers, anyone in that er line.

12 INTERVIEWER 2: What are your key strengths that you'd bring to the post, how would you see them?

13 RAY: (monotone voice) Um I think I've got a mature attitude (p x 2). I like to think I
am a very organisational (p x 2) sort of (p x 2) person um. I like to do things in a methodical fashion and then I know I've done it, um obviously needs arise where you do tend to (p x 2) have to jump about a bit but (p x 2) I do think that organisational things tasks are one of my key strengths.

14 INTERVIEWER 2: What about weaknesses?
15 RAY: (sounds lethargic) (p x 2) Um (p x 4) I suppose at times I'm not the most confident of people but (p x 2) whether that's ( p x 2) a weakness in this sort of sphere I don't know but

16 INTERVIEWER 2: Okay, let me now set you a scenario. It is 2.20 pm. You are called on the 'phone by a head teacher who tells you that the transport arrangements for a particular child are not satisfactory. She wants alternative arrangements put in place by 3.30 the same day. What questions do you think you might ask her and who would you look to for assistance?
17 RAY: Um (p x 2). I would ask her exactly what the problems are, to try and identify what you are trying to sort out. Um obviously if you are fairly new to the job you would need to ask other persons in the team to find out exactly how you might resolve it, um and basically go from there.

18 INTERVIEWER 2: If you were in there on your own, let's put it that way um what would you do?
19 RAY: Just see (p x 2) there would always be somebody in a higher position that you could ask if you were unsure, um and obviously make some 'phone calls and ask questions of people. Um and if you are drawing a blank then try and (p x 2) say ask somebody higher up to make sure that it gets done.

20 INTERVIEWER 2: Okay, Interviewer 1.
21 INTERVIEWER 1: Thanks. If you were the XX Officer how would you keep yourself up-to-date on legal and technical developments relevant to the job?
22 RAY: Is there sort of like a publication or something that comes out (p x 2) you know with up-to-date legal things or um, I don't know er

23 INTERVIEWER 1: Yes yes there is, is the answer (smiling). Yes.
24 RAY: Um so obviously you could take the on board reading from that, um any newspapers articles or whatever (p x 2) may be (p x 2) pertinent to it (p x 5)

25 INTERVIEWER 1: Anything else you can think of, of how you would keep up-to-date?
26 RAY: The Police or something might be an informed source of information.
INTERVIEWER 1: Yes I really think you’ve got a point there that contacts is a useful way of keeping up-to-date. Right um, the organisation does face a very difficult financial situation over the next few years. If you were the Transport Officer, how could you make a contribution to tackling that problem?

RAY: Um in my previous job where I did some buying as part of my training I did sort of obviously check periodically the prices to make sure you’re getting good value for money. So if there's alternative sources of transport whatever um you know you can save money on it's worth looking at to see if savings can be made for, you know, seat belts and things like that, which I think is if you apply for an alternative source at a more economic rate then obviously it needs to be looked at.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yes. Are there any aspects other than (p x 2) you know checking on sourcing, alternative sourcing. Are there any other ways of paying attention to (p x 1) costs?

RAY: Just make sure you don't waste money in one direction or

INTERVIEWER 1: (quietly) Righty ho. Could you then please describe to me a situation in your career in which you have been put under pressure, and how you went about coping with that pressure?

RAY: Yeah um. One scenario is once when the Managing Director was on holiday and I was doing a large job at=/

INTERVIEWER 1: /=Yes these things usually happen when the boss is on holiday yeah

RAY: =And we were doing a partitioning job. You've got double glazed window units with um integral blinds like you've got actually in your or Reception.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh I know the area that you mean yes.

RAY: Um (p x 2) we had ordered them all and what somebody didn't tell the manufacturer was these big units were like two metres high. They were actually going about two metres off the floor. So we went to install them and of course the actual blind control was about 10 foot in the air. This was on the Friday afternoon. So I got in touch with the manufacturers and they managed to get somebody down over the weekend um and sorted them out, and sort of like by Monday morning we were back up and running.

INTERVIEWER 1: Right um, presumably I mean that was a a particularly difficult situation you were in there. I mean from reading your application form it appears that the job you were in was quite pressurised really on
a day-to-day basis, and um how do you personally cope with job pressure?

38 RAY: As I say, I tend to try and deal with things in a logical fashion and try and sort of do one thing at a time if you can, and decide really if you've got three things to do what the most sort of priority. Try and do that first, put it to one side and do the next thing.

39 INTERVIEWER 1: Right, Okay. Interviewer 3 do you want to ask some er questions?

40 INTERVIEWER 3: I've got some Personnel type questions. Although you won't be directly managing a group of staff, they will be managed by Interviewer 1, you will actually have daily supervision of the bus drivers and escorts, so in relation to that, what do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager?

41 RAY: Um I suppose probably if someone has done something that they shouldn't do, you know getting the message across that they shouldn't have done it, or you know this is a different way of doing things. Um (p x 2) just er getting the message across in a clear fashion ((? ? )).

42 INTERVIEWER 3: Er a parent complains to you that a driver of a minibus is consistently late in picking up her daughter. What would be your line of enquiry and how would you overcome this problem?

43 RAY: (p x 3) I suppose you'd have to talk to the driver and find his (p x 2) side of the story as well and make sure it's consistent with what you're being told. Um (p x 2) then I assume you would probably check with like your manager, or whatever, to find out what should be done and if necessary take the appropriate steps.

44 INTERVIEWER 3: What if your manager was not there, what would you do?

45 RAY: Talk to the driver myself and find out as I say what's gone on um (p x 2) and then sort of (p x 2) take the appropriate action.

46 INTERVIEWER 3: Okay, what would you think was appropriate action. Say he was late?

47 RAY: If it was established that he had been late then I'd sort of reprimand him whatever and say I would have to then mention it to the manager once they returned, you know it could be passed (p x 2) upwards.

48 INTERVIEWER 3: Could you define the term "equality" and how would you ensure the principles were put into practice while delivering the service?

49 RAY: (p x 4) Equality I suppose means equal for all people be it sort of on race, religion, um disability, just try and make sure that everybody is treated fairly.
50 INTERVIEWER 3: Okay, how would you ensure then that say the minibus drivers and the escorts and the contractors were following the same principles?

51 RAY: (p x 4) I would obviously need to talk to (p x 2) them all and find out whether they have all got the same views and nobody holds any sort of um (p x 2) views that wouldn't fit in with that general

52 INTERVIEWER 3: Okay, would you make them aware of what what was in our policies?

53 RAY: Yeah, yeah that's true.

54 INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

55 INTERVIEWER 1: Right well I think we've probably come to the point then where I'll ask you is there anything else you want to tell us, or are there any questions you would like to ask us?

56 RAY: Um how many people basically is there sort of basically in a team, I mean?

57 INTERVIEWER 1: Well er let's count count them, it's about 11 or 12, I say "about" because some of them are part-time posts. So let's see there's 11 full time posts and there's three part-time posts, and that forms the transport ((? ?)) plus the drivers and escorts. Um Interviewer 2 do you know how many drivers and escorts we have?

58 INTERVIEWER 2: 31.

59 RAY: How many sort of like schools are you dealing with, you know, pupils?

60 INTERVIEWER 2: Well there's about 900 pupils. The provision of transport is about on a par with one of the larger taxi firms. Well the maximum you've got coming into a school is 16 in one vehicle, so if you can do a very simple sum, say the average is eight. It's about 120 routes (p x 2).

61 RAY: mm

62 INTERVIEWER 2: and probably not one of those routes will be the same every day.

63 RAY: mm

64 INTERVIEWER 2: Some will pick a child up and not take it home in the afternoon and some of them will pick up a child at lunchtime that they have not taken in in the morning, but pick up at night. About 120 routes. It goes as far as the border with XX.

65 INTERVIEWER 1: And there are instances of pupils going to schools outside the border as well

66 RAY: mm

67 INTERVIEWER 1: So (p x 2) a small but significant part of the job. (p x 5)

68 INTERVIEWER 1: Anything else?

69 RAY: No.

70 INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. Um Interviewer 3.
INTERVIEWER 3: (speaking rapidly) I've got some housekeeping questions that I need to ask you. Are you actually working at the moment?

RAY: I am (p x 1) working sort of (p x 3) part-time.

INTERVIEWER 3: How much notice would you have to give?

RAY: Um I'm sort of doing it on a day-to-day, but probably to be fair like a week or

INTERVIEWER 3: And er under the new Immigration Act I've got to ask if you require a work permit?

RAY: No.

INTERVIEWER 3: No, Okay. We are interviewing for the rest of the day and we've also got one candidate coming in next Tuesday, so we won't be able to let anyone know until about Wednesday or Thursday next week. The psychometric test er will be sent out to be evaluated and they will also send you a copy.

RAY: (voice barely audible) Fine.

INTERVIEWER 1: (very soft voice) I found the results of the psychometric test very interesting when I did one. Well, er thank you very much for coming in to see us and er we will we will be in touch.


INTERVIEWER 2: Thanks.

INTERVIEWER 1: Thank you.

*End of tape*
Appendix C  Transcript – Interviewers’ comments about Ray

Transport Officer job - Unsuccessful Applicant Ray

*Tape commences*

83 INTERVIEWER 1: (in very low voice) It's a waste of their time as well as yours.
84 INTERVIEWER 3: I did try to prompt him by asking him further questions but, you know, and he was another one who spoke in a monotone wasn't he?
85 INTERVIEWER 1: Yes. I mean, the job that we're offering is not the job for him.
86 INTERVIEWER 2: I know, I mean looking over his shoulder for help all the time, and that's absolutely not what we require.
87 INTERVIEWER 3: And where did he get those shoes from, and that suit!
88 INTERVIEWER 2: And the socks!
(Interviewers laugh)
89 INTERVIEWER 3: I mean he's only a year older than me and I would NOT consider wearing shoes like that.
90 INTERVIEWER 2: A geek.
91 INTERVIEWER 3: He is 31.
92 INTERVIEWER 1: Oh well there you are you'll be able to go to lunch early then chaps.
93 INTERVIEWER 2: It's a pity really because, I mean.
94 INTERVIEWER 1: Well, I always feel sorry for somebody who er (p x 2) but it's the usual thing it only goes to show. The sad thing is it is not the people whose application form is such that you interview them and then you realise interviewing them is a mistake. The thing that always worries me is the people who you rejected them on the application form, but had you given them an interview you would have given them the job. That's why you know it's always so difficult when you get large numbers of applications for a job, you know and you have to start weeding them out and you can't spend more than a couple of minutes looking at each one in trying to weed out and decide who you are going to interview. And I always feel that that's when you lose the best candidate, but you'll never know, because you never saw them.
95 INTERVIEWER 2: But I mean here's the last paragraph of his application "I am interested in the position as it seems to offer many different challenges and involves dealing with people. This offers a challenge to provide a worthwhile service for those
people less fortunate than ourselves and job satisfaction for somebody like myself."

96 INTERVIEWER 1: I suspect, well I think he is somebody who having been in the same job for years and now finds himself in the jobs market and is badly in need of training in how to go about getting a job. You know really he ought to get himself.

97 INTERVIEWER 3: An interview.

98 INTERVIEWER 1: I mean he can't get in the jobs club until he has been out of work for six months, but that's what he really needs. No doubt about it. He is just the kind of person that they can help.

99 INTERVIEWER 3: We could 'phone her (referring to jobs club) and tell her about brushing up interview skills.

100 INTERVIEWER 2: Oh yeah. She's probably interested to see how candidates tie up with their references.

101 INTERVIEWER 3: I've got them here.

102 INTERVIEWER 1: I think I know what ... but it would be interesting would it not if, it would be quite fascinating if the psychometric test told us that he was the star. I'd sort of crawl back and bang my head on the wall.

When I have used them before they have worked out well. I was the manager of a new bus company that was setting out but it was taking over half the depots and I needed to get a management team so I needed like, you know, a traffic manager, and chief engineer and company secretary to work with me as a team and I used it then because we interviewed for the traffic manager first. We got somebody who I knew was the right person for that job, and as it happened all the other people were hopeless and this guy was sufficiently potentially difficult to work with that I felt I needed to go into the psychometric testing with the others. Because this chap was so mercurial and creative I thought to myself we can't have somebody else like him in the team. I have got to have the other two people to be steadier and their strengths and weaknesses to complement this guy's and indeed my own, which is why I did it. In actual fact I managed to get a team that I was happy with and functioned very well until somebody offered me a better job and I left them to it. That's the way it went, and that's when I came to believe in it.

103 INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah I mean you don't look down and say "he'll do."

104 INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah, well, it would have been interesting, when I came to the organisation I had to do the psychometric test. On the other hand
the interviewers who did the interview said
they didn't care what the test said, “this
is the one we are going to give the job
to.” You don't know but in a situation like
this every piece of information that we
could have to try and help us make the
right decision is what we need . . . .
Right it is half past 12. Well if we can
all gather again at about 5 to 2.

105 INTERVIEWER 3: Yeah OK.
106 INTERVIEWER 1: He's unemployed now but only since July and
he has obviously got casual work to fill
in, but he had been in the same job for
years and years which is why he has not got
any interview skills.

107 INTERVIEWER 2: It is difficult to imagine him leaping into
action.

*End of tape*
Appendix D  Transcript - Interview of Brenda

Legal Assistant job - Successful Applicant Brenda

*Tape commences*

1 INTERVIEWER  Right, please take a seat.
2 BRENDA  Thank you very much.
3 INTERVIEWER  *(p x 8)* You've spoken to XX about her tapes of interviews I take it already?
4 BRENDA  Oh yeah yeah yes (laugh)
5 INTERVIEWER  That's nothing to do with the [practice um or or or recording it [for the practice or anything like [that.
6 BRENDA  *(laugh) that's alright (laugh) that's fine.
7 INTERVIEWER  Um right OK and you're presently at Cappello & Company?
8 BRENDA  I am
9 INTERVIEWER  and you've been there, a good while.
10 BRENDA  well (laughs x 3).
11 INTERVIEWER  Right um, it says you've had several breaks working in retail and returned on request, they are not actually marked er on the CV from 1995 to date, um?
12 BRENDA  Well, I started Cappello & Company again in 1995 *(um*
13 INTERVIEWER  *[yeah*
14 BRENDA  I think it was *(January 1995*
15 INTERVIEWER  *(January (p x 2) oh right it's Jan. 1995, then you're off September 1996, Jan. 1997 maternity leave*
16 BRENDA  um, um, yeah that was it yeah.
17 INTERVIEWER  and then, Jan. 1997 through to
18 BRENDA  January 1997? um well, I went on till October. Yeah I left Cappello & Company September 1996 maternity leave. Um they wouldn't take me back on a part-time basis so I totally left.
19 INTERVIEWER  uh huh.
20 BRENDA  And then, from about, must have been February March, I was doing retail and then XX begged me to come back (laugh), on any terms I wanted (laugh).
21 INTERVIEWER  Right.
22 BRENDA  So I came back and worked for him, um I started back 10 till 4 but I changed my hours from 9.30 to 4.30.
23 INTERVIEWER  Right *(p x 3), so you're still working 10 to 4.30?*
24 BRENDA  I do 9.30 to 4.30 all the time.
Right (p x 6), who are you working for principally?

BRENDA XX

INTERVIEWER Right (p x 8). So, the conveyancing work that you're involved in is really fairly varied?

BRENDA It is, I do um the commercial and domestic conveyancing so it's a bit [of both worlds.

INTERVIEWER [Right

BRENDA I was doing litigation, um some probate, um I haven't done much matrimonial, just working on the [odd case we've [done

INTERVIEWER [Right [Right

BRENDA Um

INTERVIEWER Now these case notes, these case notes are rather similar to mine rather than Robert's. Er mine's very much as you've just described there

BRENDA Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER as Robert's doing, er which is the job we've got available. It is doing domestic conveyancing with a smattering of er, a smattering of commercial bits, but er for the most part um it is domestic conveyancing through and through,

BRENDA uh huh

INTERVIEWER day in, day out (laugh).

BRENDA that's no problem (smiles).

INTERVIEWER Right (smiling), um and lots of it um (p x 2) what you presumably had quite a bit of client contact in in that case. Do you, are you left to effectively carry the carry the files yourself?

BRENDA Um quite often XX will go out and say 'due to exchange and complete on this. Here's the file. If the money comes in, send the TT money off.

INTERVIEWER mm

BRENDA Etcetera etcetera. Um I could, I could probably do a sale transaction from start to finish. Um I know about doing the contracts and letters out, replies to requisitions, that sort of thing. Um I haven't much had any chance to do that though I mean perhaps

INTERVIEWER Right

BRENDA perhaps in the future I will want to do that sort of thing you know to go back to or something that. Um I am quite capable of drawing up a contract and transfer and that sort of thing no problem at all.

INTERVIEWER Right (p x 6). Robert will basically work on saying "Do local search, or do post exchange bits" but I mean you won't be
expected to draw contracts from scratch yourself

mm

or anything like that.

Yeah

Um, but the opportunity is there, you know. Conversely, if you wanted to do the Legal Executive's conveyancing diploma, or even the full Legal Executive's course=/

=Oh right (intonation changes, sounds interested)

=thing. Um we are fairly keen to encourage staff to work through to that. Um now (p x 5), in terms of the several breaks from Cappello & Company working in retail roles, you've, so we've covered the maternity leave in the going back. Are there further breaks since then?

Um no, I left school to work for Cappello & Company as a junior and then progressed to be a secretary.

[that's what I wondered whether that's what this was getting at yeah. They can be a little bit misleading these agency CVs. They have been prepared without reference or approval to you, or or approval by anyone

[I haven't seen the CV

No

[So it's not been checked that it's right by the [person it's about (smiling)

[laughs x 3]

Um, so I did wonder when I read the top and then um what goes on at the bottom, that you started as, you started as a trainee there through to 1989, and then you've had then you've had gaps, and they have been continuous from 1997?

Yes

[yeah (p x 18) Um dealing with clients, awkward ones how do you?

Constantly (laugh). We get quite a few irate customers, or clients I should say, and um if I can't help them I will say well "I'll get XX to give you a call back" or something, you know. If it's out of our hands we try and help as much as possible, but at the end of the day some things we can't help on

Uh huh

asking specific questions. About something that can be dealt with um just try and help
as much as possible, that's all you can do really is to be helpful so.

65 INTERVIEWER mm (p x 6), How about local agents. Do you deal with any in particular, or is it just a matter of you fielding all and all and sundry, chasing the files?

66 BRENDA Estate agents you mean?

67 INTERVIEWER Yeah

68 BRENDA Er I think it's it's mostly like Harpers and Wetherby are the [main ones um. Right, right.

69 INTERVIEWER [Right, right.

70 BRENDA They are constantly on the 'phone chasing.

71 INTERVIEWER Right

72 BRENDA XX won't speak to them full stop so (laughs x 2).

73 INTERVIEWER Right

74 BRENDA I'm left to answer most things so (inhales deeply).

75 INTERVIEWER (p x 6) Okay, let me tell you a bit about us. We've been here 20 years, or more, a bit more, a bit more, um as David Grand & Co, changed to Smith Grand in the year 2000 um. We have three fee earners here, myself, Robert Jones and Andrew Black who deals with matrimonial. Um, as I say I've got a similar sort of case load to er XX, um and I'm not brilliant at answering local agents calls, but

76 BRENDA (laughs x 3)

77 INTERVIEWER (laughs x 2)

78 BRENDA (laughs x 3). Fair enough, at least you're honest (laughs x 3).

79 INTERVIEWER (laugh) um um Robert, he is he is a stickler for keeping in touch with all the clients and all the all the agents and keeps a LOT of domestic conveyancing work on that basis. We are computerised to the extent of um having a full precedent database on screen in Word and so on. We are just about to going onto an E-conveyancing scheme er which we need to load the details of all the clients onto the computer first to have a database, and then it's press button A hopefully and

80 BRENDA (laughs x 3)

81 INTERVIEWER Um and the Legal Assistant can make excuses straight off the screen instead of (laughs x 3)

82 BRENDA Can't think

83 INTERVIEWER [instead of trying to think of one yes (laugh)

84 BRENDA (laughs x 2)

85 INTERVIEWER Um (p x 6) we've each got as the three fee earners we each have a dedicated secretary. We have three part-timers coming in on
accounts and reception as a mix of those, and I have Janet assisting me as well on two days a week. Um (p x 4) we have 20 days holiday a year and we close a week at Christmas. Our hours are 9 to 5.30 with an hour at lunch um which is effectively sorted as rota between the Assistants themselves as to as to when between 12 and two they are off. Um (p x 3) we believe that we are paying rather better than most firms in town.

86 BRENDA Believe me you do (laughs x 2).
87 INTERVIEWER Uh?
88 BRENDA Believe me you do (laughs x 4).
89 INTERVIEWER Um and er we work and we you know we must be doing something right apart from just the pay, because most of our staff have been here 10 years plus. Um (p x 4), so as far as Cappello & Company is concerned, from doing the traineeship what what inspired you to go back sort of full five years later, because you had a a long break at Freemans?

90 BRENDA Well Freemans were laying off their Legal Assistants, they were [deployed
91 INTERVIEWER [Right
92 BRENDA to other departments
93 INTERVIEWER mm
94 BRENDA I didn't want to go to a department, I wanted to be a Legal Assistant
95 INTERVIEWER Right
96 BRENDA and XX advertised in the paper, so I applied. He actually turned me down.
97 INTERVIEWER Right
98 BRENDA And she couldn't cope with his work, so he rang me up and said "Can you help, I'll give you whatever you want, come and work for me," "Okay fine, I'll try then."
99 INTERVIEWER Right.
100 BRENDA Um I didn't actually plan to fall pregnant, it just happened um, but er I had Sean and then er he didn't want me to come back on a part-time basis. I must have been working like three or four months doing retail and er um he rang up out of the blue saying "Help, you know, what do you want?" So I went back.

101 INTERVIEWER (p x 2) Okay, um and looking now because you've now been there for quite a for quite a while. Um (p x 1) what provokes the job-hunt at this stage?
102 BRENDA Um a lot of things, it's XX himself. Um I always find it very hard, a lot of people have found it hard to work for him, and I've been the only one, not blowing my own trumpet or anything, but I've been the only one who has stuck it long enough to work
for him. Um the previous Assistant was on Valium. She could not work through stress, but he's he's constantly throwing tempers, throwing files around. Um the amount of dictation he produces is never-ending. He does like both sides of a tape um and it's always constant. You never get like a "end of tape" which is, I think it's, you need to have that on the tape, you know it's relief from it, and um it's always "oh do this, do this, do this" and it's never. I don't mind being rushed, but it's a constant stress all the like all the time and it's something I cannot cope with.

103 INTERVIEWER Uh huh
104 BRENDA I actually had a week off with stress last year because I got (so
105 INTERVIEWER [mm
106 BRENDA you know, so ill with it. Um so I don't mind doing hard work and putting my my time and effort into it, but it's how he's, how he treats the staff as well. It's you know, it's not healthy
107 INTERVIEWER Yeah
108 BRENDA in my opinion.
109 INTERVIEWER Yeah
110 BRENDA I don't know what sort of length of tapes and things you do, I mean?
111 INTERVIEWER Well mine are, the sort of thing I do working probably doesn't compare with Robert's anyway, um because as I say I've got this mix of the commercial, the litigation and the domestic conveyancing going on all at the same time. So I'm probably I've probably got the, the sort of workload that you have dealing with typing at the moment. Um, Robert on the other hand, most of his work is a lot more, well, basic but more of it,

112 BRENDA mm
113 INTERVIEWER you know, do a Transfer.
114 BRENDA mm
115 INTERVIEWER So, er, he gets well stressed-out with clients.
116 BRENDA [mm
117 INTERVIEWER [um he's he's forever sitting through there and "oh F***")
118 BRENDA (laughs x 4)
119 INTERVIEWER He always does take people and we just have to put up with listening to him cursing there in in a corner all day long. Um, so in terms of in terms of working for him yes it is stressful and um but I think his he deals with his in a far more, with far more humour that I would deal with his
[sort of lot,
120 BRENDA [mm
121 INTERVIEWER and the stress is really not quite so genuine on domestic conveyancing,
BRENDA (laugh)

INTERVIEWER and everybody knows that everybody else is working ten to the dozen, and will wait um.

BRENDA With deadlines and things like that?

INTERVIEWER Well everybody knows that they're [not not to be broken but knows that] [it is not the end

BRENDA [mm

INTERVIEWER of the world if the deposit cheque doesn't arrive the next day, or you know, completion must go through and the people out of their removal vans.

BRENDA mm

INTERVIEWER Um, so it doesn't get prioritised and it does work through properly um.

BRENDA mm

INTERVIEWER Um yes his is quite stressful, but I wouldn't have thought that it's um that it's the same sort of stress, because you can almost tell and anticipate what's coming, whereas with these sort of files you can't. It could be something really horrible on the next

BRENDA mm

INTERVIEWER on the next tape, er and as you say, if you just churn into er right continuation next tape

BRENDA mm

INTERVIEWER um so its continuous on this. Um well I think I personally, I don't think I personally would be able to do it, because I wouldn't be able to say to a Legal Assistant right you've finished, you've finished that lot you can move onto

BRENDA [mm

INTERVIEWER [you can move onto the next. I have myself just been told off by a senior partner of Taylor, Marlow & Briggs because um for putting too much on a tape instead of doing a short tape,

BRENDA (laugh)

INTERVIEWER so I could give priority to the letter I had to do to HIM!

BRENDA (laughs x 2)

INTERVIEWER So er yes, a few choice words were exchanged there

BRENDA [laughs x 4)

INTERVIEWER [laughs x 3)

BRENDA I can imagine them

INTERVIEWER (laugh)

BRENDA It's just, it's just his whole attitude to, not being racist but because he is XX, they treat things differently anyway, but it's just the slightest little thing. He'll just grrrrrrrr you know, and always blames you for it, and it's not your fault. I've tried to explain to him you know can I have a little a little break here between you know tapes, you know a slightly little break, a
little breather, and er sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't, but when I haven't got anybody to help me to do the typing he'll sort of panic and I don't know (voice becomes quieter)

147 INTERVIEWER No Robert is similar. He swears and blames others but he's got redeeming, he has got a greater sense of humour I think (laugh)

148 BRENDA (laughs x 3)
149 INTERVIEWER He's not as, he's not as manic as XX.
150 BRENDA Oh that sounds alright then (chuckles). It's just that he throws the files across the room, and I'm thinking "Okay fine. I've got to find bits of paper out of that now" (laughs x 2), silly little things but,

151 INTERVIEWER BUT um you know you've done that for, what is it, five years?
152 BRENDA Yeah.
153 INTERVIEWER Well certainly the last four er and hacked it, so why look to switch now? (chuckles) Enough is enough.
154 BRENDA Right.
155 INTERVIEWER Um and also, I mean I get on well, really well with the girls and everything, and then but John has started to get a bit um snappy as well, and the money is not good and I mean since Mr Griggs left things have got a bit, things that I felt, obviously this is confidential, but I feel that things are starting to go down. A lot of mistakes are happening that we're correcting their work and stuff and we shouldn't be doing that. Um I just feel that I'm going to bail out now, if I can (laughs x 2)

157 INTERVIEWER Right.
158 BRENDA while the going is good (laughs x 2).
159 INTERVIEWER Right.
160 BRENDA (laugh)
161 INTERVIEWER Um Okay now I mean, in terms of notice and the like?
162 BRENDA I think a [month's notice
163 INTERVIEWER [you're on a month
164 BRENDA Uh huh
165 INTERVIEWER And he's going to want to be talking you out of it.
166 BRENDA (laugh). He'll be lucky. It will take an awful lot to make me change my mind I tell you. If I decide to go, that's that (laughs x 3).

167 INTERVIEWER Okay well, as far as this position becoming available, it's becoming available because Margaret is taking maternity leave.
168 BRENDA Uh huh
Um and, on her return, er presuming she is returning er because she has still got time to change her mind of course, she's going to be coming back as a part-time er Legal Executive.

Right.

Um so she won't be coming back in to, she'll be doing her own typing but she won't be coming in to working as Assistant for someone, so although it's maternity leave that provokes the vacancy in the short term, it was going to be there anyway. Um in fact we had started, er we had started hunting around in September last year before we knew about er her babe on the basis of the proposed, um but at that stage we were looking very much for a junior working alongside too,

Uh huh

and er the type of job has shifted entirely. We need somebody who can replace Margaret for Robert um so we are looking for a senior um conveyancing partner's Assistant. Um Robert, whilst not a partner here, is a senior solicitor, he has got the same sort of case load, same involvement in the business, in a way rather rather like XX but I'm not sure that does Robert any service

[laughs x 2]

Um, so that's how the job becomes available. That's, Robert's now 61, so er in terms of in terms of future of the job, as I say we are we are looking to for career development for people within the firm, preferably, um. Now the month's notice would fit in because Margaret is due to leave at the end of August.

Er I have to finish this interviewing by 28th June in order to fit a month's notice to end of July to give you a month working alongside.

Uh huh

Um, because I think there's a fair bit of it all held in Margaret's head, mm

rather than Robert's, and you know just as Legal Assistants get used to their boss's strange ways

[laughs x 3]

um bosses have to get used to their strange ways. You know, it's filed under B oh that means D [laughs x 2] or something like that, yeah?

[laughs x 6]
Um, it's sauce for the goose and gander (inhales deeply). Um so, I have I think three more applicants to interview,

which I've got to fit in between now and the end of June, and I've then got to allow myself at least a week to cogitate., and hopefully get Robert in on second appointments

because he was supposed to be sitting in with these ones but today has gone leery

(smiles)

Er have you any questions of us?

Um what what hours, I take it it is 9 to 5.30, is it?

Well 9 to 5.30 is what we are looking at. I mean clearly we are going to have to be flexible allowing er whoever we take on,

and er we are of the size where we won't dictate you know "it must be".

mm

Um but what I'm er well I suppose I ought to run through some of the other basics. Actually I mean we don't have any paid overtime, and we don't have any car or other perks. Parking here is easy and free on XX Street

Oh right.

Um and we do have a stakeholder pension scheme which we don't pay into (laughs x 2).

([laughs x 3].)

So it's there ([laugh]).

[right that's fine yeah.

Um, but er yeah I'd have thought that on a 9.30 to 4.30 we could probably get things to work um, although any slippage from that would make it very difficult.

Right.

Um and equally any time outside that wouldn't be on the paid, be on the paid overtime basis, unless it was Robert specifically saying you know, I've got this particular job which needs sorting

and needs a day you know, a day in the office when you otherwise wouldn't be.

Right

Um and I think that has happened once since 1994 ([laughs x 2

([laughs x 2.

on Robert's things.

Oh right.

Er
Well I can start quarter past nine. Um it's 9.30 at the moment because I have to take my daughter to school for, it's now 8.45, it was like five to nine before but

mm, mm you're in Bridlington?

I am.

which is a fair old way out, isn't it? Mind you at least you don't have to get across town.

Not if I have to come to Stortford no I mean at the moment it takes me sometimes till half past nine to get into Surrey itself.

Yes.

So um I've timed it and I can get into Stortford for about five past, ten past nine.

[Right

So I should be able to start work say quarter past nine, that wouldn't be a problem.

Yeah OK (p x 10) she's about six?

Yeah, she'll be six in October.

(p x 7) Okay, yes sorry any questions, I started saying and then interrupted?

(laughs x 2) That's alright. Um so I would be working for Mr Jones would I?

Yes.

Not, not you?

Yeah.

Right okay, and do you have other Assistants that come in to help out, or it's just the three Assistants?

Three main, plus Janet two days.

Right.

Um so, I mean, holiday obviously we have to get we have to get temps in,

but we have um, we have some temps we know directly, so we just ring through to them rather than using somebody like the agency.

Um, so you don't have to pick up the pieces like when you return from holiday.

Yeah that's fine (p x 6). I don't think there's anything. I think you've gone through it all actually.

Right. Ok um well I suppose I should ask about your booked holidays, especially if you've got a youngster at school?

All I've got is a book, a week in October which is the=

/=Right, that's the half term

-No, it's the week before half term
INTERVIEWER Oh right.
BRENDA Um we're taking her
INTERVIEWER fine
BRENDA for a week.
INTERVIEWER Right, fine, okay.
BRENDA um
INTERVIEWER I mean the only reason, the only reason I
asked about it is the August, is the month
of August which um as I say Margaret will
be getting very close then, and will be
doing induction um
BRENDA mm
INTERVIEWER into the practice (laughs x 3)
BRENDA (laughs x 4)
INTERVIEWER at the same time (laughs x 2)
BRENDA No, I shall be here for August. I've just
got a
INTERVIEWER [week booked in October so
BRENDA yeah, yeah
INTERVIEWER Um that's all for now so.
BRENDA Right, okay right well if you think of
INTERVIEWER anything
BRENDA mm
INTERVIEWER don't hesitate to give me a ring. Um the
only contact details I've got for you are
through the agency um, so I have to go
through Patricia to sort out second
BRENDA Okay
INTERVIEWER You've got something set up with her for
her contacting you I take it?
BRENDA Yeah.
INTERVIEWER Yeah OK good, well if you think of any
questions as I say I have got three more to
INTERVIEWER interview before I actually start
cogitating and speak to Robert. Um and then
it's all a bit of a rush decision for us
from there.
BRENDA Okay.
INTERVIEWER Um and we'll take things from there.
BRENDA Thanks for your time anyway.
INTERVIEWER Yeah, great, thanks.
BRENDA Thanks very much (p x 2) nice to meet you.
INTERVIEWER Okay, I'll see you out.
BRENDA Thank you, bye bye.

*End of tape*
Appendix E  List of interviewers’ questions

Transport Officer Interviews

Interviewers asked each applicant in the Transport Officer interviews 14 questions. The questions were asked in the following order:

| No.  | Questions asked by the Interviewer                                                                                                                                 |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------________________________________|
| 1    | Can you define for me the role of the post as you understood it to be on the job description?                                                                    |
| 2    | What are your key strengths and how can they help you in filling this post?                                                                                       |
| 3    | What weaknesses do you think you’ve got?                                                                                                                               |
| 4    | Scenario: It is now 2.20 pm. You are called by a head teacher who tells you that the transport arrangements for a particular child are not satisfactory and she wants alternative arrangements put in place by 3.30 the same day. What questions do you think you may ask her and who do you look to for assistance? |
| 5    | If you were the transport officer how would you keep yourself up to date on legal and technical developments relating to the job?                                      |
| 6    | The organisation faces a very difficult financial situation during the next few years. If you were the transport officer, how could you make a contribution to tackling that problem? |
| 7    | Could you describe to me a situation in your career to date in which you were put under pressure and how you went about coping with that pressure?                   |
| 8    | How do you personally deal with stress and pressure?                                                                                                                  |
| 9    | What do you see as being the most difficult task as a manager?                                                                                                         |
| 10   | A parent complains to you that the driver of a minibus is consistently late in collecting her daughter. What would be your line of inquiry and how would you go about it? |
| 11   | Define the term "equality" and how would you ensure that it was put into practice?                                                                                     |
| 12   | Is there anything else you would you want to tell us and are there any questions you would like to ask us?                                                             |
| 13   | Just a couple of housekeeping type questions that I need to ask you. What notice do you require to give in your present job?                                           |
| 14   | A question I have to ask everybody regarding the Immigration Act. Do you require a work permit?                                                                      |

Note: No. = number. Interviewer 2 asked Questions 1 to 4. Interviewer 1 asked questions 5 to 8 and 13. Interviewer 3 asked Questions 9 to 12 and 14.