Abstract

Nyroos, Lina, Lina.Nyroos@nordiska.uu.se, Ph.D Student, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden: “‘What do you mean we? Speak for yourself!’ On disagreement and identity in academic seminars”. Språk och stil 18, 2008, pp. 93–111.

In this study the social actions pertaining to speaking for someone else and being spoken for are studied in an educational setting, namely a seminar meeting for undergraduates. The data on which this study is based consist of a total of five hours of video-recorded seminar meetings at a Swedish university.

The first part of the study focuses on three sequences in which the above-mentioned social actions are central for the participants. Through CA-techniques the actions are described and examined from the participants’ perspective. When speaking for more people than oneself, the speaker runs the risk of facing objections from the co-speaker(s) present. He/she/they may not accept being spoken for, and this may be put forward as a disagreement at which point the premises of the previous turn(s) may be renegotiated.

In the second part of the study, these social actions are connected to ‘identity’. This is seen as something that is continually achieved in interaction, rather than something that is ‘reflected’ in discourse. Hence, speaking for more people than oneself can be seen as an action which ascribes co-speaker(s) an identity. The analysis shows that the disagreement sequences presented in the first part of the article function as a forum in which a specific student identity can be put on display. The disagreement is used as a resource for the students to position themselves and take on an identity as the good students.

Keywords: Swedish, Conversation Analysis (CA), participation, identity, university education.