Disagreeing without a 'no': how teachers indicate disagreement in a Hong Kong classroom.

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Abstract

In traditional politeness theories, disagreements are face threatening acts, regarded as dispreferred options from a conversation analysis approach. However, in the classroom context, specifically in Language Education, it is often necessary for teachers to disagree with students. Previous studies of classroom disagreement have shown that teachers use linguistic markers to mitigate the face threat inherent in disagreements. In Hong Kong, we would also expect a significant use of mitigating lexical strategies as Asian cultures are typically regarded as being conflict-avoiding. However, as hand gestures and head movements have been observed to accompany negative linguistic markers to stress the lexical or pragmatic meaning of the utterance, they could be an alternative modality to communicate disagreement in the Hong Kong classroom.

This study analyzed teacher disagreements in ten hours of Language Education classroom teaching in a Hong Kong higher education institution. The results suggest that disagreements are indeed dispreferred options in this particular context and that the salience of the act itself is minimized by avoiding negative gestures or head movements. As this behavior was observed among all teachers who disagreed, it is proposed that this behavior has been conventionalized within this community of practice.

1.0 Introduction

The field of pragmatics is finally recognizing that various semiotic systems need to be taken into account to allow for a complete interpretation of the communicative act (Cienki, 2017). In particular, hand gestures, movements of the hands and arms, other than those used to perform an instrumental action, and head movements are considered communicative features belonging to a modality other than speech (Kendon, 2004; McNeill and Duncan, 2000). Although the full role of gestures and head movements in pragmatics is still not clear (Payrató and Teβendorf, 2013), there is no doubt that gestures affect the utterance (Harrison, 2010; Kendon, 1995; Müller, 2004; Streeck, 2008). Hand gestures externalize salient information (McNeill, 2016), helping the speaker in his or her cognitive process and facilitating the transmission of the message to the listener (Hostetter, 2011), and head

movements are confirmed to have semantic, discourse and interactive functions (Kendon, 1972; McClave, 2000). Therefore the expectation would be to see these two types of non-verbal behaviors in speech acts where the speaker feels strongly about the content, in particular if this content is salient, such as a disagreement.

Gestures in the classroom context have not been widely studied. Most classroom-based research refers to the representative content of the hand gesture or to how gesture aids cognitive processing (for a review of existing studies see Hostetter, 2011). Other body movements, in particular head-movements, have also been recognized as relevant to the communicative act (Harrison, 2013) and have received even less attention than hand gestures in classroom research. Disagreements have been chosen for this study because they are often mitigated linguistically but the question remains whether they are then communicated via head movements or hand gestures. Few studies have tackled teachers' disagreements in the classroom context (Charoenroop, 2016; Netz, 2014; Netz and Lefstein, 2016; Rees-Miller, 2000), other than disagreements as corrective feedback, and none, that we are aware of, have looked at disagreement from a multimodal perspective.

This study was carried out within the particular cultural context of Hong Kong higher education Language Education classrooms. The underlying hypothesis is that teachers in a classroom context mitigate content-related disagreement linguistically, in order to minimize the threat to the listeners' face, but will make it salient, making the disagreement obvious to the listener, through gestures and/or head movements with a clear negative meaning. Therefore we focused on head nods and shakes, noting also other types of head movements, and on hand gestures of a pragmatic nature, specifically those from the family of negating gestures (Kendon, 2004), recording also other types of gestures that might have a similar function as linguistic markers to indicate inclusion, humor, apology, etc.

Other forms of nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions and gaze, are also relevant in the expression of the disagreement. We chose to focus on gestures and head movements to add to the existing body of research on negating gestures and head movements.

2.0 Disagreements and politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) combined the idea of politeness and 'face'; each person's self-image (based on Goffman, 1967) by defining politeness as the "strategic avoidance of face threatening acts" (FTA) mostly in informal situations (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 65). 'Face' here refers to how interlocutors behave towards each other either to reinforce the self-image of the other or to ignore it. Positive face refers to the wish to maintain a positive image of oneself that will result in closeness to others, while negative face is defined as the right to free action and not to be imposed upon. Disagreement, "the expression of a view that differs from that expressed by another speaker" (Sifianou, 2012: 1), threatens the positive image of both interlocutors and has the potential to create

conflict. The interlocutor's positive face is threatened when their actions/ideas are questioned (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

In traditional politeness theories, disagreement is thus seen as a rather impolite act to be mitigated, or avoided, to save the interlocutors' face by using a series of strategies. These have been classified as positive or negative and off record politeness super-strategies. An additional strategy, bald on record, does not mitigate the disagreement but is linked to efficient communication, such as using imperatives (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 95). Positive politeness seeks to close the gap between speakers by enhancing cooperation, finding common ground or helping the interlocutor achieve their wants. In disagreements in everyday conversations between Anglo-Saxon speakers, the linguistic strategies observed to enhance positive politeness include seeking agreement through developing safe topics, agreeing, hesitating, providing token agreements, repeating part of the interlocutor's utterance but also distancing oneself from the position being advocated (Holtgraves, 1997: 236). Other positive politeness strategies to seek agreement include intensifying interest in the interlocutor, use of in-group identity markers such as jargon, claiming common ground, joking, using hedges, switching the center of knowledge to the interlocutor, giving or asking for reasons or using the plural pronoun "we" to create a sense of inclusion (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 102-129). Negative politeness "performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 129). This can be achieved by being conventionally indirect or apologizing, questioning and hedging to avoid making assumptions about the interlocutor's wishes, impersonalizing both hearer and speaker by avoiding pronouns such as 'I' or 'you', showing deference –this can also be achieved by using the plurals of 'I' and 'you', nominalizing or using passive voices (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 130-211). Off-record politeness acts use speech so indirect, ambiguous or vague that various interpretations can be possible, they allow the speaker to deny having performed a threatening speech act altogether. Some of the strategies include being ironic, ambiguous or vague, over generalizing, understating or overstating, using rhetorical questions , hints or clues (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 227). Silence can also be used to mark the disagreement, although its interpretation will be very much context and content dependent (Kakava, 2002). Holtgraves (1997) analyzed naturally occurring disagreements and found evidence mostly of positive and off-record politeness and just a few cases of negative politeness. Aside from these three super-strategies, there are occasions when disagreement is aggravated, for example, when the speakers' face is at risk and it is necessary to provide a strong defense of one's point of view (Kotthoff, 1993).

However, more recent studies on politeness are grounded on a discursive (Locher, 2004; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003) or an interactional approach (Arundale, 2006; Haugh, 2007) with this latter one "overlapping both" traditional and discursive approaches (Grainger, 2011: 171). These

newer approaches "shift from emphasizing the linguistic features of politeness to interpreting politeness in context" (Shum and Lee, 2013), regarding Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies as "realizations" of individual's efforts to align with others, or "relational work" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 10). These efforts are very much dependent on ever changing beliefs and value systems (Locher, 2015) that vary by community of practice (Kadar and Haugh, 2013: 95). Thus, disagreements are valued differently according to relationships or culture, taking into consideration that in some contexts disagreement is expected and encouraged (some business meetings) (Angouri and Locher, 2012). In Asian cultures, the concept of face is a societal one (rather than an individual psychological one) (Gu, 1990), in others, such as the Greek, speakers tend to be confrontational and disagreement is often an indication of engagement (Sifianou, 2012). The reasons for disagreeing could be unrelated to impoliteness, instead being used to create intimacy and increase sociability (Locher, 2004). Furthermore, within certain communities of practice sometimes disagreement is expected (Murphy, 2014). Therefore, these approaches advocate an analysis in which the act is considered within its past and existing context from a multimodal perspective and taking into account personal relationships (Angouri and Locher, 2012; Kádár and Haugh, 2013; Spencer-Oatey, 2004). By doing so, an interaction will be judged by its participants according to past experiences in a similar context and only unusual behavior will be noticed and marked as either negative –if non-politic and inappropriate– or positive, if politic and appropriate (Locher and Watts, 2005: 12).

2.1 The learning context

In a specific context, like the classroom, the norms participants use to judge the politeness of interactions are developed through past experiences between teachers and students (Richards, 2006). Cultural beliefs and values dictate that in traditional teacher-led classrooms there is a power asymmetry, with teachers controlling topics and turns (Markee, 2000), thus rendering appropriate and politic certain behaviors that would not be considered so in normal conversation where power is usually symmetric (Markee & Kasper, 2004), such as asking questions to which the answers are known. In a pedagogical environment, the interlocutors implicitly accept flouting of the Gricean maxims because they understand the objective of the context (to learn) (Rees-Miller, 2000).

In the traditional classroom, discourse tends to be formal, planned, and guided by the teacher (Dronia, 2013). Teachers pose either open or closed questions to which they might know (display questions) or not know (referential questions) the answers (Long and Sato, 1983), leading to a cycle of students' responses and teacher evaluation (Initiation-Response-Evaluation, IRE, Cazden, 1986; Mehan, 1979). The majority of questions posed by teachers tend to be display questions with one possible answer. The teacher can choose to evaluate the answers as correct or not (Sinclair and Couthard, 1975) or might use them to direct the discussion towards a particular point. Depending on the nature of the question, the teacher will decide whether to soften the response. Referential questions

have been found to be more productive and are used to encourage student interaction (Faruji, 2011). To develop this interaction teachers are recommended to provide positive reinforcement and avoid face threatening acts (Dronia, 2013) such as disagreements. Seedhouse (1997) further differentiates between disagreements related to content, which tend to be highly mitigated, and those which are procedural-related, where teachers are more likely to use bald on record disagreements. Seedhouse's context was the foreign language acquisition classroom, so his content was mostly of a linguistic nature.

The IRE cycle can be modified to lead to critical thinking instead. When the evaluation is replaced by feedback that does not close the subject but offers the chance to discuss the topic, and to change it or the interlocutor (Rymes, 2009), then the cycle can be used to evaluate but also to build knowledge, providing feedback (Initiate-Response-Feedback, IRF). In this scenario, questions lead to multiple possible answers, even though the teacher might be looking for a specific one; through a series of further questions, the student is lead to eventually reach the one sought. In these cases, the disagreement is likely to be very indirect, with a clear pedagogical goal, to encourage students to develop critical thinking (Rees-Miller, 2000).

The choice can pull educators two ways, between the pedagogical goal of teaching the correct concept and the intercultural norms of a society that might demand a high level of mitigation of potential face threats to interlocutors (Dronia, 2013; Seedhouse, 1997). From a cognitive point of view, disagreements in the classroom can be productive and constructive (Chichekian and Shore, 2017). Many educators defend the importance of disagreements in the cognitive development of students (Vygotsky, 1978), and stress the need to move away from treating disagreements as a negative action and agreements as a positive one (Smolka, et al., 1985). However, minimizing the potential face threat to the students, to protect their identity and close the affective gap between teacher and students is also an important pedagogical goal (Kerssen-Griep, 2001).

2.2 Observations from the classroom

Studies focusing on classroom discourse report the regular use of disagreements in discussions or as feedback strategies, as part of the IRE/IRF cycle (Charoenroop, 2016; Netz, 2014; Netz and Lefstein, 2016; Rees-Miller, 2000). Rees-Miller (2000) recorded 464 disagreements in 46.5 hours of colloquia and classes in a university setting in the US –these were between teachers and students (155 cases), vice versa (118) and between students. Charoenroop (2016) collected 108 disagreements from Canadian university students to teachers in 15 hours of recordings (no information is given about teacher's disagreement). These disagreements were most often mitigated when they came from the teachers, however differences between students of similar cultural backgrounds also exist: Canadian university students were found to use less mitigated disagreements than US university students.

Cultural differences are essential to understand disagreement politeness strategies. In a comparative study of US, UK and Israeli school classrooms Netz and Lefstein (2016) observed considerable differences in the number and attitudes to students and teachers' disagreements. In their study, the main differences are attributed to cultural rather than gender, age, topic or teacher idiosyncrasies –although these factors also play a part. The UK classroom, with 0.3 disagreements per lesson (by students and teacher) showed the lowest rate of disagreements. In particular, the UK teacher seemed torn between the pedagogical objective of encouraging the discussion and British cultural norms that demand a high level of mitigation or avoidance of the disagreement. On the other hand, the US class (with 6.7 disagreements per lesson) showed many strong disagreement events, few mitigated, by teacher and students. In this context there seems to be no conflict between encouraging discussion and politeness norms. Finally, in the Israeli classroom (1.6 disagreements per lesson) a discussion was observed that transcended the academic context with a clear preference for unmitigated forms of disagreement. The authors point out that although Israeli education usually follows an authoritarian style in the observed class an everyday communication style was used, which allows unmitigated disagreement (Blum-Kulka et al., 2002).

As the pool of specific disagreement studies is relatively small, other studies that provide background information are those related to the IRE/IRF cycle and how teachers choose to provide corrective feedback, disagreeing with students' answers. In second language acquisition classrooms, the most commonly observed strategies involve drawing attention to the error, by repeating it, repeating the words before it or the question, asking the student to repeat the answer and by supplying the correction, sometimes after accepting the incorrect answer (Seedhouse, 1997). These are mostly strategies to mitigate possible face threats. Generally, in all teaching contexts studied, non-face-threatening feedback seems to more effective than feedback threatening students' self-esteem (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). This is especially true in Asian cultures where students favor indirect and implicit feedback (Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000). Please refer to Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Kluger and DeNisi (1996) for reviews on feedback studies.

3.0 The Hong Kong context

Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) state that Chinese society is collectivist and thus places more emphasis than individualistic cultures on maintaining face to avoid conflict. They mention confrontation avoidance strategies such as silences, compliance or non-definite responses. However, Cheng and Tsui (2009) found that Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) are quite willing to disagree in order to advance their own views (in informal spontaneous conversations). In their study, HKC, as well as native speakers of English (in Hong Kong), were observed to use similar mitigating strategies to find common ground with their interlocutors. One significant difference between the two groups was that

native speakers of English were found to use bald on record (unmitigated) disagreements over twice as often (26.7% vs. 11.1%) as their HKC counterparts.

In the classroom, despite ongoing encouragement by teachers, Hong Kong students seem reluctant to take an active role, avoiding disagreements altogether (Cheng, 2000; Flowerdew and Miller, 1995; Liu and Littlewood, 1997). The Chinese student is still seen, by Western or Westernized teachers, as being reluctant to speak up in class. Confucian values have been given as the reason for this reluctance (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Scollon and Scollon, 1995). However, within the Hong Kong context this notion has been contested (Cheng, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Liu and Littlewood, 1997), as Confucianism encourages questions from students and accepts that students might know more than teachers. Another widely held belief is that Asian societies, being collectivist, suppress individual performance (Hofstede, 1980). Thus students do not speak up because they do not want to stand out. Ho and Chiu (1994) contested this idea, showing that Hong Kong society could be classified as cooperative but also as having a growing self-reliant orientation.

Aside from cultural values, within the Hong Kong context there are other factors affecting students' behavior. Students' gaps in proficiency and their lack of practice speaking English, coupled with changes (from secondary to higher education) in pedagogical strategies, often result in students being reluctant to talk in class (Cheng, 2000; Liu and Littlewood, 1997; Stephens, 1997). Higher education in Hong Kong is mostly in English. Upon entering higher education, many students move from a Cantonese or Cantonese-English based education to an English-only medium of instruction with the difficulties this entails (Evans and Morrison, 2017; Li et al., 2001). In addition, students might be encountering a Western pedagogical style for the first time (Kennedy, 2002), where interaction is expected. Since kindergarten, students are usually asked closed questions, discouraging the construction of meaning and the development of thinking skills (Li, 2004). Therefore, Hong Kong school-students are mostly used to providing short answers to questions, followed by an evaluation that does not give students the opportunity to develop their critical thinking abilities (Wong, 2011). In higher education, the type of question changes, becoming more referential, and feedback itself might be found frustrating and confusing (Lee, 2011, commenting on written feedback). The change in methodology together with difficulties in the use of English curtail the level of students' interaction in the classroom. This in turn means that teachers tend to be careful with their feedback, heavily mitigating any disagreements, to encourage participation. Teachers have a higher status than students, but are expected to maintain a fine power distance balance (a friend but a source of reference) (*author*, 2015). This study seeks to confirm these observations on "teacher's identity" (Richards, 2006: 51) and identify what is considered "appropriate and politic behavior" (Locher and Watts, 2015: 12) among teachers in the Hong Kong classroom through the study of their disagreements with students.

4.0 Gesture

If the disagreement is a salient part of the utterance, then we would expect the disagreement to be reflected in the hand gesture and possibly also in the head movement (McNeill, 2016). However, as the gesture and the head movement carry pragmatic meaning (Payrató, 2009) the question remains whether any mitigating politeness strategies are also reflected in the nonverbal acts. Although Kakava's definition of disagreement includes nonverbal actions: "an oppositional stance (verbal or non-verbal) to an antecedent verbal (or non-verbal) action" (1993: 36), the use of nonverbal strategies that accompany the disagreement and their possible intention in the speech act has received little attention thus far. Furthermore, few studies have focused on politeness through gestures, although it is recognized that linguistic politeness extends to gestures (Kita, 2009). Exceptions include the recent work by McKinnon and Prieto (2014) who focused on the perception of genuine and mock politeness taking into account the verbal content, gestures and also prosodic changes.

Gestures, movements of the hands used together with speech, are thought to be part of the speech act, representing the idea in two different modalities (McNeill and Duncan, 2000). Gesture theory considers that speech and hand gestures originate together and are two different modalities of the thought (McNeill, 2016). Hand movements are best described along Kendon's continuum (McNeill, 1992), which categorizes these movements depending on their co-occurrence and correlation with speech. At one end of the continuum we find sign languages (hand movements that occur without speech), followed by mime and emblems (symbols which have been codified in a particular culture and so carry meaning without speech). At the other end of the continuum are the so-called gestures, which are used together with speech and can have a more or less iconical relationship with the speech (depicting the object or event talked about or a part of it) or referring to it (pointing). Gestures can also be used to manage turn taking (pragmatic gestures). Different cultures gesture differently, with variations in the elements listed above (see Kita, 2009, for a summary).

Hand gestures, in particular those resembling the contents of the speech (iconic) are known to elicit in the interlocutor the same neural reactions as speech (Özyürek et al., 2007; Wu and Coulson, 2005), suggesting that the gesture and the speech are both essential in understanding multimodal communications (Özyürek, 2014). Cassell, McNeill and McCullogh (1999) observed that when a mismatch between gesture and speech takes place the communicative intent of the gesture appears to take priority. This has been confirmed by a number of studies in gesture-speech mismatches by young children, where adults prioritize the message conveyed by the gesture (Alibali et al., 1994; Church and Goldin Meadow, 1986; Goldin Meadow, 1997). However, mismatches might also have a pragmatic function when they are observed during a speech violation of Gricean maxims, with the gesture providing alternative information to normalize the behavior according to shared social norms (Cuffari, 2011). An additional issue to take into account is that although usually there is synchronicity

between the gesture stroke and the speech it relates to, the gesture can often be observed over more than one word or even more than one clause (McNeill, 1992), obscuring the mismatch. Recent studies on mismatches point out that further work is needed in this field (Cuffari, 2011; Waisman, 2017).

4.1 Pragmatic gestures

Gesture research from a pragmatic perspective is relatively recent, as traditionally a psychological or psycholinguistic stance was adopted (Payrató and Teβendorf, 2013). Streeck (2008) detailed a functional framework to gesture analysis, dividing gestures into pragmatic and iconic (based on Kendon's continuum described above). Pragmatic gestures refer to those not topic-related, often used in the management of the communicative act (meta-pragmatic). They can be employed to reference the interlocutor, list items, hold and give the turn, intensify, indicate a negation or request (Kendon, 2004). Ladewig suggests a new term "recurrent gestures" (2013: 1558) to refer to pragmatic gestures that have been somewhat conventionalized, are shared within a specific culture and show a correlation form-meaning, the meaning being derived from the form. Examples of such gestures are the Palm Up Open Hand (PUOP) often indicating that something is being offered or shown (Müller, 2004) or the brushing aside gesture indicating the dismissal of a topic or a negative stance (Payrató and Teβendorf, 2013).

Ladewig (2013) proposes a sub-category of recurrent gestures, grouping together those with a performative function (families). These operate "upon the utterance" (p. 1563) helping the speaker make the topic salient or express a specific attitude. One of these families is the Open Hand Prone (OHP) family of gestures used to negate. In these gestures, the palm is held open, but fingers not quite spread, and facing down or away from the speaker. They are used in negative implicit or explicit contexts, when denying, negating, interrupting or stopping something (Kendon, 2004). A version of these is the index finger or open palm raised facing away from the speaker and moving horizontally left to right, observed in French (Calbris, 1990) and English speakers (Harrison, 2010). Harrison reports on a study of British speakers' gestures to indicate negative propositions, finding that vertical and horizontal open palm gestures were used, together with head shakes, with the lexical markers indicating negation in the speech ('none' and 'no'). These were used to intensify and make the grammatical negation more explicit and thus "allow for an inventory of grammar-gesture usage in regards to negation" (2010: 433).

The OHP gestures have been regarded by Kendon (2004) as modal gestures (helping the interlocutor assess what is being said). As well as being used together with the negative particle to reinforce its meaning, they can also be used to act on meaning but without relating directly to the speech uttered, instead the gesture relates to the counterargument implied by what has been said and serves to negate that counterargument (p. 264).

4.2 Head movements

Head movements are also an important element of the communicative act, in particular head shakes (Harrison, 2013; Kendon, 2002), although their relationship with speech has not been as widely studied as that of hand gestures. Studies on head movements have confirmed their semantic, discourse and interactive functions. Head shifts have been associated to turn taking (Duncan, 1972), to marking semantic boundaries (Kendon, 1972), to producing disfluencies (Hadar et al., 1984) or uncertainty (McClave, 2000), to providing backchannel information (Ishi, et al., 2014) and to conveying attitudes and emotions (Busso et al., 2007; Woolf et al., 2009). It is this latter function that most interests us in this study, as head movements often convey the positive or negative attitude of the speaker (Kobayashi, et al., 2017), therefore we expect speakers to use nods to mitigate their disagreements, closing the affective gap with the interlocutors, or shakes to indicate bald on record disagreements.

In most of Europe, and in China, the head shake is interpreted as meaning 'no'. Positive interpretations of head shakes have also been found among American English speakers with intensifiers such as 'very', 'a lot' (McClave, 2000) and among French speakers to indicate agreement in certain cases (Calbris, 2011), although the consensus is that the majority of head shakes are likely to accompany a negative utterance, often with a negating gesture (Harrison, 2013; Kendon, 2002).

5.0 This study

The objective of this study was to identify how teachers disagree with their students in higher education Hong Kong Language Education classrooms. In particular, the study sought to identify specific hand gestures and head movements that were used with linguistic markers that made salient the negative part of the disagreement. The hypothesis was that teachers who mitigate the disagreement through linguistic markers would use negating gestures and head shakes to make obvious their disagreement.

5.1 Methodology

Naturally occurring data was video-recorded from ten spontaneous lectures from teachers of the same discipline in one tertiary institution in Hong Kong. The analysis was both qualitative and quantitative to determine the number of instances of disagreement but also to understand their nature. Following Sifianou (2012) and Kakava (1993), we included as disagreement any turn (verbal or nonverbal) that conveyed an alternative view to that expressed by the previous speaker, be it as part of an in-class discussion or feedback given in an IRE/IRF cycle. This included partial disagreements, interventions following students' answers that were partially right. The quantitative framework followed the work of Bro2n and Levinson (1987) and Rees-Miller (2000) to tabulate linguistic

markers used in either mitigated, aggravated, or bald on record disagreement. The qualitative analysis was used to describe other communicative elements of the disagreement act (such as head and gesture) and to detail the pragmatic meaning of the act when all the elements were combined –these included pre and post-occurring events.

5.2 Participants

Ten full time teachers were recorded. Eight agreed to have their sessions recorded (in the fall of 2016) and were allowed to choose what session. Two others provided videos of their sessions (recorded in 2014). Two cameras were used, usually one at the front of the classroom and one at the back, both pointing at the teacher in order to avoid recording students' faces. In most of the sessions (7) both the author and an assistant were present and carried out the recordings.

Teachers were lecturing on various Language Education topics. Some of the subjects were compulsory subjects, with classes of over 50 students, while others were electives with class sizes not exceeding 30 students (average class size was 33 students). All teachers were native English speakers or fully bilingual and had lived (worked or studied) in the UK. They all had over five years teaching experience. Three of the teachers were male. Five were culturally Anglo-Saxon and five were Chinese (specific data is not provided to protect their anonymity). All had lived and worked in Hong Kong for over five years, and were therefore familiar with the Hong Kong classroom.

Four of the sessions were aimed at undergraduates and six at postgraduates. The majority of students (90%) were from Hong Kong, the rest were from East Asian countries (Mainland China, Korea, and Taiwan); a fifth (20%) were male. The average age of undergraduates was 20, graduates ages ranged from 21 to mid-40s. Many postgraduates were teachers themselves.

The fact that the sessions were being recorded might have altered the dynamics of the classroom. To consider this possibility at the end of the sessions teachers were asked whether that particular session differed from others where cameras had not been present. Apart from three admitting to being somewhat nervous at the beginning of the session, none felt they had conducted the class differently from usual.

Teachers were not specifically told that their interactions with students would be analyzed in terms of the disagreement acts. They were aware that we would be analyzing nonverbal behavior and gestures in particular. As teachers did not know we were focusing on disagreements, and as gesturing patterns were uniform throughout the recording for all lectures, we concluded that their gesturing during the disagreements was not specifically affected by being recorded.

All classes were recorded after week 8 of term to ensure that the teacher/student bond had already developed. This meant that students were familiar with the teachers and their styles of teaching and addressing students, as seen by the fact that students interacted with teachers and posed and answered questions. To minimize the impact of the external observation, a member of the research team was

selected partly for her knowledge of the teachers observed, having been their student in previous years. This, partly emic, knowledge gave us more confidence in our analysis of disagreement cases, although all cases were discussed by all three team members.

5.3 Data analysis

The speech from the recordings of each session was transcribed by student helpers, using *Praat* (a free software for voice transcription), and checked by two research assistants and the author. The transcriptions were then imported into *ELAN*, a free software for multimedia analysis, where nonverbal transcriptions were added by the research assistants and the author (checked by each other obtaining intercoder reliability of 100% on 95% of the data after discussion –unclear events were excluded). The transcriptions record the gestures during disagreements only, marked as […], with the words occurring during the stroke underlined. Pauses within the disagreement are also marked as / (each / indicates 500ms of pause, the minimum length considered) and head movements are added in italics (more information on the annotation used is included in the Appendix).

Each disagreement act was then further analyzed to identify the type of linguistic marker used to indicate and/or mitigate the disagreement and the hand gesture or head movement co-occurring with the marker. An adaptation of Rees-Miller's (2000) framework based on Brown and Levinson's super-strategies (1987) was used to categorize the verbal and nonverbal elements of the disagreement as: mitigated disagreement using positive, negative and off-record politeness; bald on record disagreement (neither softened nor aggravated) or aggravated disagreement.

6.0 Results and Discussion

There were ten hours of recordings from ten teachers. In all but one of the sessions, at least one disagreement act was found. There were 50 cases of disagreement observed with 130 linguistic markers, including silences and laughs. In forty-six of the 50 disagreement cases these were either mitigated disagreements or off record (jokes, or utterances that were vague, such as when not getting any right answers from students, teacher 8 queries whether students have read the text she is referring to by saying: "the same readings?", see Example 9). Another three cases were initially categorized as bald on record disagreements using the negative markers "no" (two cases) and "not really" (one case) (see Example 1). There were three cases which were originally considered aggravated, as the use of "you" was deemed to be judgmental, and putting students in the spotlight (see Example 4). However, in all cases other markers and gestures were considered to mitigate the aggravation.

Although the data is given in a quantitative format, it is important to note that the disagreement acts were identified considering not only adjacent turns but the whole session. For example in the case of repetitions, although Brown and Levinson (1987) had classified repetition as a positive politeness strategy to indicate agreement with the interlocutor (building solidarity), Locher identifies

other uses (2004: 115-139). These include fighting for a turn, providing emphasis or self-repair (in themselves acts that might also be related to disagreement). Only those cases indicating disagreement, or partial disagreement, as agreed by all three researchers, were included.

Altogether, there were 130 specific linguistic markers identified (counting every single marker, even when it was repeated). Excluding the unmitigated disagreements on average there were 2.7 mitigating linguistic markers in each disagreement act. Table 1 details the type of linguistic marker found (silences have also been counted as linguistic markers as they were interpreted as containing linguistic information).

Type of disagreement		Total	Type of linguistic and non-linguistic marker	No.
Bald on record		31	Contradictory statement "but"	9
			Negation (including "not really")	16
			Other statements	6
Mitigated disagreement	(Positive politeness)	73	Positive assessment/comment	18
			Repetition	18
			Hedge "well"	14
			Hesitation "eh"	10
			Jokes	4
			Seek common ground and inclusions	9
	(Off record)	9	Rhetorical questions	2
			Laughs	4
			Silence	3
	(Negative politeness)	14	Impersonal (avoiding 'I' , 'you')	3
			Apology	1
			Downtoners "maybe"	2
			Statements with 'I think', 'I don't know'	8
Aggravated		3	Personal opinion	0
			Intensifiers	0
			Judgmental / personal accusations	3
Total		**130**		

(Adapted from Brown and Levinson 1987: 102-227 and Rees-Miller 2000: 1095)

Table 1. Linguistic markers used in disagreements

Of the 130 individual markers used within the disagreement acts about a quarter (24%) were considered markers for bald on record disagreements (unmitigated disagreements). These include negative particles, providing a contrary statement starting with 'but' as well as other statements that imply a disagreement by reason of their content. Chen and Tsui had observed 26.7% bald on record disagreements among native speakers of English and 11.1% among HKC (2009: 2371). Our results fall in between. However, in most cases (all but three) these were accompanied by other markers in the disagreement event, mitigating these disagreement acts (see Example 1).

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Nine markers were considered off record strategies, these included cases of ambiguous laughter and rhetorical questions. In addition, there were three nonverbal communication accompanying silences that we also considered off record. Whereas the rhetorical questions are considered off record by Brown and Levinson (1987: 120), when head movements and gestures are taken into account they might actually be mitigated disagreements. In our corpus we had two rhetorical questions followed by a negative marker and a mitigating positive politeness in which the teacher emphasizes her opinion. The teacher is asking students what fields, in their opinion, contain more neologisms. A student answers "the arts". The teacher retorts:

Example 1 - Teacher 3 (00.02.01.943 - 00.02.36.242)

1	Teacher (T)	^so which area do you think / there are many the ^most number of
2		new words?
3	Student (S1):	technology.
4	T	Technology. ^anything else?
5	S2:	// medicine.
6	T:	medicine. OK? that medicine can be in the area of technology.
7	S3:	// Science?
8	T:	Science. OK. // anything else?
9	S4:	// arts.
→ 10	T:	arts? do you think ^arts have many ^new words?
		Two head nods
→ 11	T:	// not ^really. I think many new words- . now ^science and
12		technology is one main area which has ^many new words and another
13		is politics / politics. *(further explanation)*

This exchange seems like the typical Hong Kong school IRE cycle where the teacher is just looking for short answers (Wong, 2011). The question is an inclusive one, being common knowledge, it would seem to seek student involvement and the feedback (by repeating correct answers) would seem to be deployed to enhance student's credibility (Witt and Kerssen-Griepp, 2011), rather than achieve a pedagogical goal. Hence, when the last answer does not match the teacher's expectations the teacher deploys a seemingly off record strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987). However, when taking into account the subsequent linguistic markers, facial expressions (a kind smile, as confirmed by an independent viewer of the footage), head (two nods) and gestures (on hold, therefore a lack of negating gestures), the disagreement comes across as being mitigated.

In almost all of the disagreement cases seen above (94%) teachers mitigate their disagreements with linguistic markers (including Example 1). When we go on to analyze the hand gestures and

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head movements we find that these are further mitigated, suggesting that strategies in this context follow a British approach to the disagreement, as observed by Netz and Lefstein (2016).

6.1 Gestures

When noting the gestures, hand and arm movements co-occurring with speech, it was found that in about a third (36%) of the linguistic markers mentioned in Table 1 a gesture stroke was observable. Although all phases of the gesture phrase were recorded (holds, preparations or returns to a rest position) only the strokes were taken into account as they relay the information of the gesture (Kendon, 1994). See Figure 1.
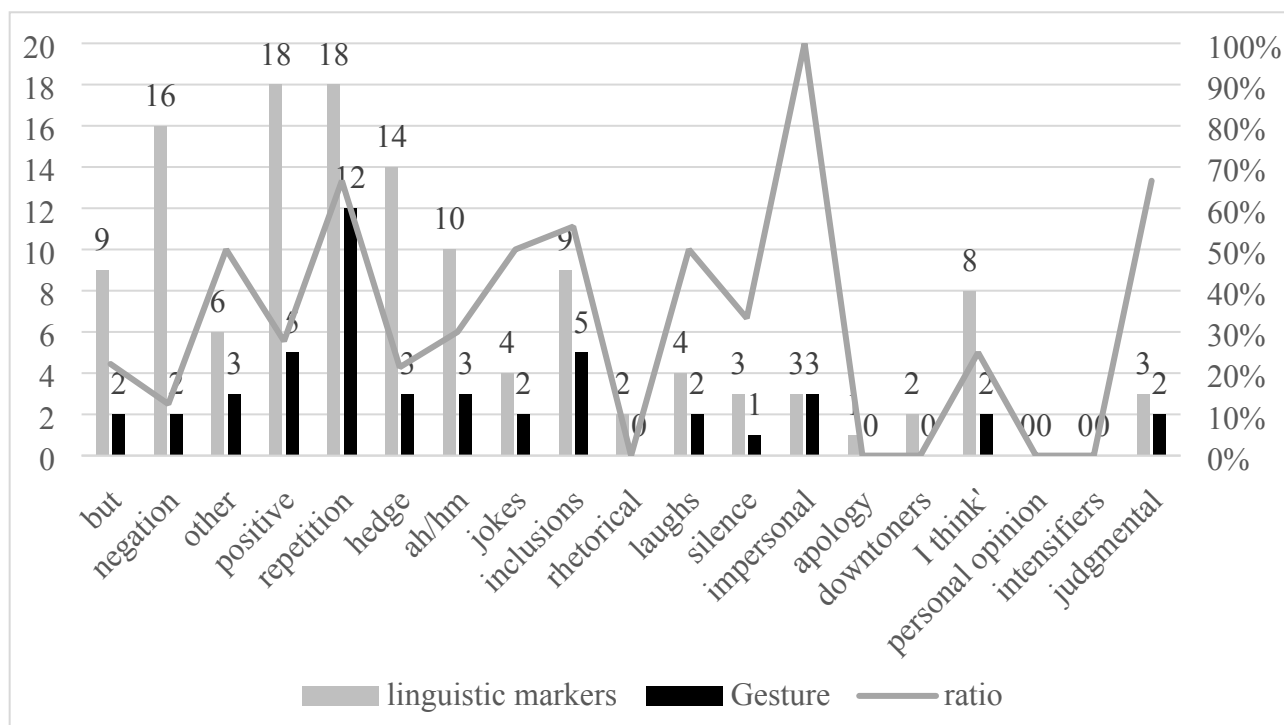
Figure 1. Gestures with disagreement markers.

Number of linguistic markers and gestures (left scale) and % gestures/linguistic markers (right scale).

Despite the limited data points it is interesting to note that in bald on record strategies there are fewer gestures than in other instances. Pragmatic gestures can be used to mark the utterance or stress parts of it but, with these linguistic negations, negating gestures were avoided, unlike what has been observed in daily conversations (Harrison, 2010). We suggest that this is a characteristic of the Hong Kong teaching context, where negative assessments (and overall negative statements) are dispreferred.

Of the 16 cases where we encountered a linguistic negation (no/not/not really) only two co-occurred with a gesture. In the first example this gesture belongs to the family of "throwing away gestures", a negating gesture, palm open facing down, dropped downwards (as if to throw away the contents), usually performed with the wrist but in this case the whole arm follows (Bressem and

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Müller, 2013). As Harrison observed (2010), the stroke was synchronized with the negative particle (underlined below, the gesture phrase marked by square brackets).

Example 2 - Teacher 9 (00.12.11.252 - 00.12.35.921).

Students have been told to listen to an audio and identify the places mentioned. A student confirms that this refers to an exact place (naming specific places mentioned before). The teacher is initially confused by the statement, starts to repeat the instructions, realizes what the student was saying and interrupts herself to answer:

1	T:	so what /// ^question does the journalist ask when he interviews people and:
2		which places are this people referring to within the <X…X>?

<p align="center">(student raises hand)</p>

3		yes. yes.
4	S:	<X…X> public they: /// <X…X> places they are the pedestrians, / ah / and he
5		was asking them **what happens nearby?**
→ 6	T:	[^<u>we- we</u> are going to-] [<u>no.</u> generally] actually, ^yes.
		[Gesture (G) 1] [G2]
→ 7		[well, that's actually part of the question].
		[G3]
8	T:	now you listen to second time.
9		/ ^you have the text that ^ can refer to if you find that difficult.

Gesture 1: Left hand up above the shoulder, palm open, facing students, fingers pointing to board behind teacher.

Gesture 2: Hand drops, palm facing down.

Gesture 3: The teacher has rotated her body towards the board, lifts both arms towards the board, seemingly a continuation of Gesture 1.

In this case, the teacher interrupts herself and returns to address a previous comment as indicated by a change in prosody and turning of the body to look at the student who had spoken in the previous turn. The left hand, which was at shoulder level, palm up and facing forward, ready to refer to something on the board, changes direction with the interruption and drops down with a wide arch. The negating gesture, the hand dropping, palm facing down, co-occurring with the negation, has a modal use, directly reinforcing the semantic meaning of ignoring (throwing away) previous ideas (Bressem and Müller, 2013). The teacher is providing feedback to a procedural issue; the student had the wrong idea as to how to proceed with the exercise, therefore, it is not surprising to find an unmitigated disagreement, as suggested by Seedhouse (1997). This is the only case we observed where a procedural issue was addressed.

In the second case of a gesture accompanying a negative marker, the purpose of the gesture is to stress new information for interlocutors and focus their attention. Teacher 1 is explaining aphasia and the possible effects of tumors on speech, he asks students what a tumor is and a student describes all tumors as being cancerous. The teacher says:

Example 3 – Teacher 1 (00.28.22 - 00.28.38.172)

1   T: ^tumor, what's a tumor?

2   T: /// tumor is?

3   S: cancerous.

→   4   T: well it's not [not all tumors are cancerous but] yes it's basically / another word for
                                            [G3]

5   tumor is-

6   T: / people like to say ^cancer so / that's where your tissue growth becomes

7   abnormal- // right (*further explanation provided*).

Gesture 3: The right hand starts from a rest position in front of the body, palm open, and closes into a pinched fingers gesture, hand by chest, as if capturing the concept.

The question seemed to be designed to quickly check students' understanding of tumors and the answer is used to clarify a misconception. The teacher deploys various positive politeness devices to enhance cooperation and close the potential gap that his disagreement might open (Holtgraves, 1997). The disagreement is linguistically mitigated by the hedge "well", a hesitation and a repetition of the answer, attention is swiftly placed on the explanation and not the disagreement act. The gesture accompanying the speech is similar to the ones describe by Kendon under the *grappolo* family of gestures (2004: 337), used when the core of the idea is being put forward. Therefore, the gesture is not referring to the negation but asking students to pay attention to this key concept, potentially sharing the idea with them.

None of the other bald on record negative marker disagreements make use of gestures. Even if the disagreement is not mitigated linguistically, it is certainly not aggravated via the gesture. There are no other negating gestures observed with any other disagreements, again suggesting that the negation part of the disagreement itself is not that relevant. The disagreement is not salient and does not need to be highlighted with a gesture (McNeill, 2016). What is salient, and to be remembered, is the contradictory argument.

These results are interesting for what is not observed. There is a lack of negating gestures, OHP (Calbris, 2003; Harrison, 2010; Kendon, 2004; Streeck, 2008), sweeping (Payrató and Teßendorf,

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2013) or throw away gestures (Bressem and Müller, 2013) that would indicate to the interlocutor that the act is indeed one of disagreement and that the argument is being negated. Instead, we only find only one such gesture in a case where the teacher has interrupted herself and answers a procedural issue. It is also a situation with a certain degree of ambiguity and she might have felt that it was necessary to make clear the disagreement, thus the gesture.

The highest ratios of gestures to linguistic marker are found in cases of impersonal, judgmental exclusion, and inclusion markers and repetitions. By exclusions we refer to cases where the teacher refers to the student as an individual such as in Example 4 below, these have been categorized as aggravated disagreement in that it would seem that the teacher is judging the student's answer and putting them in the spot. In this example, a student has provided a partially correct answer that the teacher is going to use to build up the ensuing explanation:

Example 4 -Teacher 1 (9400.04.04.259 - 00.04.36.492):

1   T: so can you please // explain to us why // you think number three is false?

2   S: because / the / key difference // is uh:- / one of them is true.

→ 3   T: OK. ^that is another key difference / so / there are- / there is more than ^ key

4   difference right? between traditional / ^mass media and- / uh- sorry traditional

5   mass media and contemporary social media right? so there are several

6   different- key differences.

→ 7   / [*you-you mentioned*] one / of them. which is correct but of course here:
         [G4]

8   you know / I used the indefinite article / ^a key difference means one of them

9   right. so maybe just the grammatical point // right? (*further explanation provided*)

Gesture 4: The right hand from a fist positioned by the chest is extended towards the student as the palm opens up and then comes back to the original position.

In this case the gesture is a deictic one (used to refer to the student), so although the marker might seem to be excluding the student from the group ('you-you mentioned'), the gesture could be seen to suggest otherwise, in a gesture from the family of Palm Up Open Hand gestures, sharing a semantic meaning of offering and receiving (Müller, 2013). In this case, the teacher is receiving the idea from the student and including the student's idea within the explanation. The partial disagreement is very indirect and not obvious until the end of the lengthy explanation when students are asked to repeat the exercise. Although this type of indirect strategy is common in the classroom, it might not be productive as it is confusing (Chichekian and Shore, 2017). By including the gesture the conflict is

mitigated further, and initially there are no signs to indicate to the students that there is a disagreement, until the teacher continues talking.

In Example 5 we observe another inclusive gesture (deictic this time), with an inclusive marker, where the teacher is giving feedback to a student's answer in an IRF cycle. The student's answer to the question 'why does code mixing happen?' appears not to be the answer the teacher needed to provide his explanation.

Example 5- Teacher 7 (00.09.04.892 - 00.09.30.643)

	1	S:	these terms don't exist in Cantonese.
→	2		yes.
			Teacher nods
	3	S:	<X…X>
→	4	T:	^well: [OK. ^let's let's- /// OK] let's say then one of the reasons that
			[G5] *Slight tilt of the head at the end of the gesture*
	5		teachers / use / code-mixing or code-switching in the classroom ^one
	6		maybe as you've said // to explain the habit that ^doesn't exist
	7		in in Hong Kong context *(further explanation)*
	8		^what are the reasons of code mixing?
	9	T:	[it is ^not the ^only reason.]
			[G6]

Gesture 5: Right hand index finger extended points towards the student and back to the board repeating this movement three times.

Gesture 6: Right hand by chest, palm up reaches out towards students and back to self.

In this example, the question seems to be an open display question but the teacher is using the IRF cycle to encourage critical thinking. The partial disagreement is heavily mitigated by hedges and the inclusion marker 'let's'. The teacher nods during the students' answer, providing positive feedback and later, as he continues his explanation, he connects the answer to the contents by pointing to both the student and the content on the board. It would seem that with the gesture the teacher is seeking to manage the rapport with the student (Spencer-Oatey, 2004), and encourage further interactions. Gesture 6 develops the rapport by encouraging students to provide an answer, a case of Palm Up Open Hand gestures (Müller, 2004) where the teacher is showing the problem (reflected in the outstretched open palm) and asking for an answer (as the hand comes back towards himself). There were no negating gestures to indicate there was a disagreement.

In Example 6 we observe how a disagreement mitigated by positive politeness, to minimize the threat to students' positive face but also negative politeness, in this case to protect the teacher's face. The students have just listened to a music extract and are asked to comment on its meaning.

Example 6: Teacher 8 (00.22.35.640 - 00.22.47.920)

	1	T:	what do you think the music is about?
	2	S1:	war.
→	3	T:	war?
	4	S2:	// heaven.
→	5	T:	heaven?
→	6	T:	// em it is [^apparently]- [according: according to the: to the historians].

                     [G7]   [G8] *Head nod*

→	7	T:	[I don't ^know because I can't ^read it] em apparently [these / are: / e:m / funny

                     [G9]   [G10]

	8		stories that these guys would have heard along their ways]. (*further explanation provided)*

Gesture 7: Shoulders shrug and both hands come up, palms parallel and pointing up (in an apologetic gesture).

Gesture 8: Both arms lift higher and are rotated to the left to point to the screen with palms facing the screen (behind the teacher).

Gesture 9: An iconic gesture representing holding a book (reading).

Gesture 10: A series of quick flicks of the hand, used to stress the content.

As in the previous example, the teacher has initiated an IRF cycle to encourage critical thinking (Rymes, 2009) and be able to develop the subject through students' answers. However, the answers provided are not conducive to her argument and she has to disagree. The strategy deployed is that of questioning the answers through repeating each of them with an ascending tone, indicating they are not the correct answers (a positive politeness strategy according to Rees-Miller, 2000). She eventually provides the right answer through a mitigated negative politeness strategy where she distances herself from the explanation by making it impersonal ("according to the historians"), stating she is not accountable ("I don't know") and using downtoners ("apparently"). It would seem that the teacher is seeking to protect her own knowledge-based identity (Richards, 2006). Meanwhile the gestures are reflecting the nature of the disagreement strategies, apologizing (Gesture 7) and then focusing on the content of the explanation. Again, negating gestures were absent.

As seen in the examples above, the gestures used with disagreements vary in function, some being deictic (pointing at the student), some iconic (referring to the content), and some pragmatic, used to stress the word repeated. Overall teachers seem very reluctant to disagree with the students, often accepting partly correct answers and working them into their explanations. Our suggestion is that a significant number of gestures might be related to teachers' efforts to include students or their ideas in the discussion, another strategy to build affect (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2008).

6.2 Head Movements

Head movements also contribute to the success of the communication, but their processing does not seem to be related to speech as closely as hand-gestures (Meister et al., 2003). The analysis of the head movements shows that speakers are more likely to use head movements than gestures during the individual markers of the disagreement, communicating their attitude (Busso et al., 2007; Woolf et al., 2009), see Figure 2. Only in the case of repetitions did we observe a high number of both head movements and hand gestures together. In Example 7 the teacher is showing some images in the screen explaining how some images arouse the viewer's interest. He is having problems identifying a particular object and a student spontaneously provides a description of the object.

Example 7: Teacher 6 (00.05.29.223 - 00.05.48.708)

1	T:	so / sos ^interesting in connection, this there's something going on
2		some^thing kind of / a- arouse your interest. right?
3	T:	so, if there's no- this thing / this is dumpling? or is it?
4	S:	rice.
→ 5	T:	rice?
6	Ss:	@@@@
→ 7		[rice is not <u>that attractive.</u>]
		[G11] *Two head shakes*
→ 8	T:	so ar yeah / let's just say dumpling.

Gesture 11: Shoulders shrug; both hands move outwards, palms facing each other pointing up (an apologetic gesture) and then are brought towards the center of the body.

The teacher disagrees with the student's option and repeats the answer (positive politeness) at the same time apologizing with the gesture (negative politeness). We observed this same gesture in Example 6. In both instances, there were head movements, but their nature varied. The one in Example 6 was a nod while in Example 7 it is a couple of shakes. The head movements are congruent with the hand gesture, the shakes convey the idea of an apology, 'sorry, I can't use your example'

while the nod can be read as a reluctant acceptance of others' ideas (for which the teacher has just apologized as she cannot confirm these). Although the head shakes could be perceived as negative signals they are heavily mitigated by the apologetic gesture. In this case the behavior seems to be considered appropriate and politic/polite (Locher and Watts, 2005) (despite disagreeing with what seems to be an acceptable option) as students accept the pedagogical intent behind the disagreement (stressing the emotional, rather than physical, hunger for what is shown in the picture).

Teachers tend to choose nods over shakes, even with the use of negative particles. Out of 55 head movements with the linguistic markers slightly less than half (46%) are nods, including in two cases of bald on record disagreement, providing a sign of agreement with the interlocutor, see Figure 2. In Example 8 the teacher is giving her comments on a students' presentation (which was itself feedback on another presentation). During their presentation students have indicated that the slides had too much information. The teacher begins to give feedback to each group and disagrees with that particular point:

Example 8: Teacher 2 (00.03.42.441 - 00.04.23.589):

1   T: but once again it would be great if ^you: can make the format and

2   design more ^consistent ^so. ^re:make- ^recreate hm the the charts of them.

→ 3   ahm: in general [not too:] much information in each slide
                                [G12] *Two head nods.*

→ 4   but I would [say ^perhaps] too little.
                                [G13] *One head nod.*

Gesture 12: Left hand moves up with palm facing up. Gesture is left on hold until the next gesture.

Gesture 13: Left hand drops slightly with palm facing up, moving slightly towards to the screen.

Even though the teacher is disagreeing with the students' feedback ('there was not enough information in the slides') she nods, perhaps to stress the mitigation of the disagreement which is linguistically marked by a bald on record 'but'. This introduces the contradictory statements which are then mitigated by series of downtoners including the expression 'I would say', in this case a negative politeness strategy and the elongation in the 'not', which seems to soften it. The teacher is protecting her identity as knowledge holder but at the same time mitigating the threat the disagreement might pose. The gesture seems to be a deictic one, not negating. The strategies used to mitigate the disagreements indicate that these teachers are very aware of students' identities and the need to maintain a positive affective environment (author, 2015).
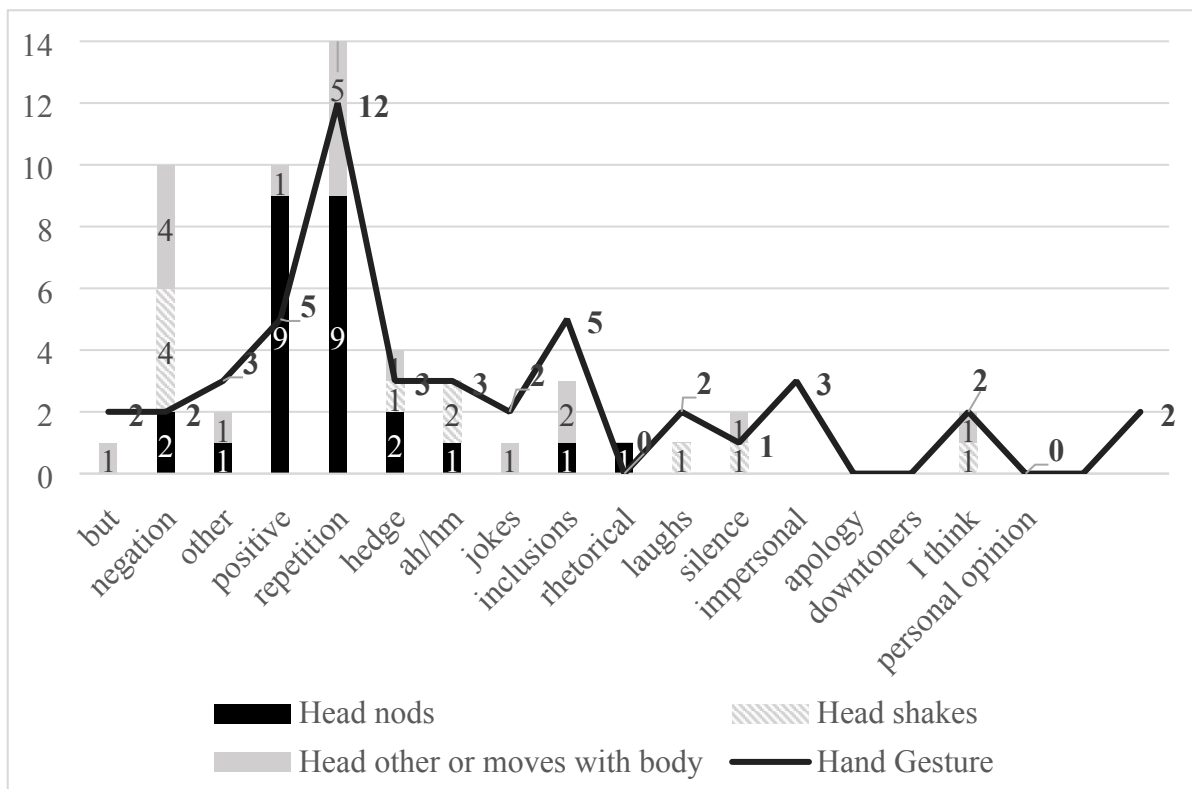
Figure 2. Number of types of head movements and hand gestures.

Although less than a fifth of head movements (10 cases, 18%) were head shakes, which carry a negative meaning among Anglo-Saxon English speakers, these were mostly limited to markers of negation (observed in 4 cases out of 16 negative markers). Others occurred with a hedge (1), a hesitation (2), a silence (1), a personal opinion (1) and during a laugh (1) – interpreted as a shake of apology rather than disagreement (Example 7). Other head movements included tilts of the head and times when the whole body moved and the head with it.

As with the gestures, head movements tend not to accompany explicit apologies, downtoners and other cases of negative politeness (see Figure 3). They are mostly used with positive politeness (and when using a negative particle). It would seem that in this context teachers are more interested in encouraging students with nods. Even in cases where the answers are not correct teachers will still provide positive encouragement.
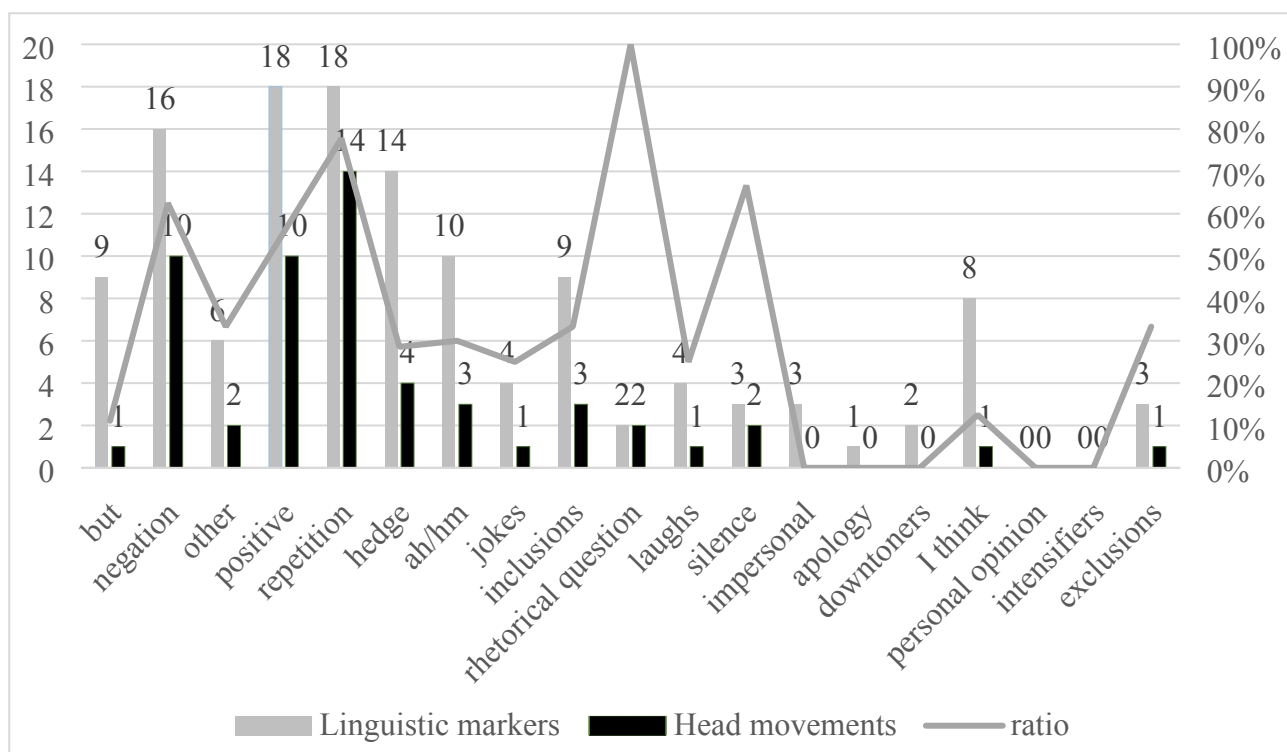
Figure 3. Head movements.

Number of linguistic markers and head movements (left scale) and % head/linguistic marker (right scale).

6.3 Conventionalized behaviors

The quantitative analysis suggests that we have observed a process of "identity construction" (Richards 2006: 51) through conventionalized behavior within the classroom, with teachers limiting the use of negative signs when disagreeing and aligning themselves with students by offering and accepting ideas. As Kadar (2017) suggests that the classroom might be a harder context to observe conventionalized behavior due to its free construal, we turned to the qualitative analysis for further insights. Aside from the giving gesture, a particular gesture that caught our attention, for its distinctiveness and because it was repeated by two teachers, is the 'thinking gesture' (hand on chin or mouth, as if the teacher was thinking). In Example 9 the teacher is using an IRF cycle to develop the biography of a historical character. A student has just given an answer that is not compatible with the explanation the teacher seeks to develop. The question, about the qualities of a historical figure and his achievements was based on a required reading. The next student provides an answer the teacher can build on and so the cycle continues.

> Example 9 – Teacher 8 (00.09.40.297 - 00.10.01.237)
>
> 1   S1:   he came up with a list of rules for his people?
>
> → 2   T: [/_//_]
>
>   [G14]

3   Ss: *@@@@*

→   4   T: [the ^<u>sa:me</u> reading?]

              [G15, 16]

5   S2:   he built a lot of infrastructure.

6   T: what sort of infrastructures? specifically:

Gesture 14: During the silence the right hand (RH) index finger extends to point at the student answering, both hands were already at chest height.

Gestures 15, 16: The left hand originally at chest height, (G15) strokes hair on the left side (an adaptor gesture, considered a response to a physical/emotional need) and (G16) comes to the mouth with the index finger vertically extended over the side of the lips (in a 'thinking' gesture).

The first question the teacher poses is preceded by a long pause during which the teacher frowns and scans the room moving her head from left to right very slowly, inviting other students to come forward and correct the wrong answer. As pointed out by Kakava (2002), silences can be part of the disagreement act, in this case mitigated by including the student through the pointing gesture. As no-one answers, she asks: "The same reading?" The head comes forward (and back) three times. All signs implying 'I am having problems processing this information'. At the same time, the prosody, an elongation of the 'a' in same, indicates that the comment is to be taken lightly. This silence could be considered an off record strategy with an ambiguous meaning, however, together with the gesture it can be interpreted as a mitigated disagreement, where the teacher is using humor, although slightly ironic, to indicate the answer is wrong. In this case, the teacher does not seem to be worried about the student's or her identity, as she has already built a close relationship with her students (as reported by the teacher).

The 'thinking' stance described in Example 9 is also observed in Teacher 1 who has a list of statements on the board and has requested students to indicate whether they are true or false, after the answer the teacher is looking at the board seemingly analyzing the answers:

Example 10: Teacher 1 (00.03.01.324 - 00.03.24.370)

1   T: at least one person give me the answer.

2   S: /// true false false true true.

3   T: OK thank you // true false false true true.

→   4   T: so I'm gonna ^say my <@> favorite word soon [/// *@@*]

                                    [G 17]

→   5   T: uh: ///

              Two head shakes still looking at the board.

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    6  Ss:  @@@@
→   7  T:   it's interesting, but- / unfortunately <@> for the wrong reasons. so:
    8  T:   can I have ^one more set of answers?
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Gesture 17: Right hand over chin, thumb under chin; left hand across chest under right elbow, gesture is left on hold here for the rest of the explanation until the teacher has to write on the board. Body and head move to the right to look at students and back to the board.

In Example 10, after stating that: "I'm gonna say my favorite word soon" Teacher 1 places his right hand under the chin pretending to think. Students know that his favorite word[s] are 'it's interesting' meaning 'it is not right'. He is now performing for students his disagreement that includes the act of thinking. The teacher knows the answer and does not really need to reflect before answering. We argue that this performance, the 'it's interesting' plus the 'thinking gestures' are understood by students to be signs of disagreement that have become conventionalized within this classroom context. Furthermore, the teacher hesitates and shakes his head, a further indication of a disagreement, although we would argue a mitigated one as it does not co-occur with a linguistic marker. He also laughs, and after the positive comment "it's interesting", he utters a "but" to clarify that the answer was incorrect. The disagreement was heavily mitigated even if at no time does the teacher explicitly negate the answer, a combination of the verbal and nonverbal behavior make it clear to the students that it was indeed a disagreement.

The 'thinking gesture' seems to be an attempt to mitigate the potential face threat of the disagreements by using humor at the same time as highlighting the content under discussion. We argue it is perceived as an appropriate strategy within the class context. The gesture is understood as a parody of the teacher trying to work something out, adding a note of mild, non-offensive humor that is probably used to create positive affection (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2008). A similar type of humor has also been reported in nurse-patient interactions (Grainger, 2011), however Grainger mentions that aside from being "solidarity forming" this type of humor "also has a distancing function" (2011: 175). We don't believe the latter to be the case in this context, as the behavior seems to be familiar to students, who respond by laughing in both cases. Although it could be a strategy to enhance the asymmetry between teacher and students, should teachers' identity feel threatened (not the case, as reported by the teachers).

In most of the previous examples, the gestures and head movements seem to further mitigate the disagreements, ensuring that these are not negatively perceived by students (Locher and Watts, 2005). Contrary to our expectations, it would seem that teachers mitigate content related disagreements not only through speech strategies but also through gestures and head movements. Audiences become

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used to certain behaviors (seen over time) and so these behaviors become conventionalized and set the norm for what is appropriate and, in this case, teachers' expected behaviors and identities (Richards, 2006).

7.0 Conclusions

Our hypothesis was that, in a Hong Kong Language Education context, where many teachers have been influenced by British culture (in this study, all of our subjects), teachers' disagreements would be linguistically highly mitigated (as observed by Rees-Miller, 2000). However, to realize the pedagogical goal of the disagreement, when it related to the content being taught, we expected teachers' disagreements to be made salient through the use of negative hand gestures or shakes of the head. This study found that, contrary to our hypothesis, there is a conventional way to pose a disagreement without including negating hand gestures or head movements, mitigating the verbal part of the message. It would seem that, similar to what was found in UK classrooms by Netz and Lefstein (2016), the concern with potentially threatening students' face drives disagreement strategies. Teachers mitigate disagreement through a series of linguistic markers, but also through nods, to encourage students to continue interacting. Furthermore, the negative part of the disagreement is minimized by avoiding negating gestures. The only such gesture observed was produced when referring to a procedural issue, when disagreements are less likely to be mitigated, according to Seedhouse (1997). Many of our examples illustrate how teachers are trying to align ideas with those of their interlocutors (Locher and Watts, 2005) through the use of offering and giving gestures (Müller, 2004). Some of these could be seen as strategies to maintain a positive affective environment (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2008; author, 2015). Should a teacher use aggravated disagreement this would be seen as falling outside of the conventionalized behavior and it would, at a minimum, disrupt the psychological balance of the classroom as it would go against the developed identity of the teacher (Richards, 2006).

It is not enough to analyze linguistic markers to understand disagreement. Including hand gestures and head movements in the analysis provides a better indication of the objective of the utterance, and our understanding of the interaction was improved by placing it within context (in this case, higher education Language Education classes in Hong Kong). Our analysis suggests that teachers do use disagreement in the classroom but a heavily mitigated multimodal form (confirming Holtgraves (1997) and Rees-Miller (2000) and contrasting with Netz and Lefstein's (2016) US-based observations). The Hong Kong context has developed norms that, at present, seem to require teachers to mitigate disagreements in order to minimize any potential threat to students' face, keeping students engaged and motivated. In addition, some negative politeness strategies seem to be directed at mitigating any damage to the teacher's own negative face and reinforce their knowledge-based role. These results

are very specific to the Hong Kong Language Education classroom context, and it is likely that teachers from other faculties and cultures will show different behaviors.

It cannot be argued that the mitigated disagreement is a dispreferred action, as teachers constantly pose questions to their students not expecting correct answers. Therefore, the mitigated disagreement ought to be interpreted within the context of the IRF cycle and the cultural context. It is our suggestion that the classroom context forms a "community of practice" (Kádár and Haugh, 2013) where participants are aware of teaching techniques used by teachers to elicit interaction. Participants share a history of events and students know that it is a safe environment in which the traditional notions of face are secondary to the objective: to develop critical thinking and learn. Therefore, teachers should be more willing to disagree as participants should feel that they can express their opinions freely knowing that if they do not accord with the knowledge imparted this will be noted, but not penalized.

Appendix: Transcription Conventions (speech transcription adapted from Du Bois (1991) and gestures transcription from McNeill (2005))

→	phenomenon under discussion
^word	stress
, ? .	Intonation (level, raising, falling)
@	Laughter
<@>	Laughter quality in speech
word:	elongation
-	Cut-off
/, //, ///	Pauses (/ under 1 millisecond, /// over 0.3 milliseconds)
<X…X>	Unintelligible
word	Interlocutors interrupt each other
[word]	Gesture phase
word	Gesture stroke

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