

Teaching unit 8: Lydia and Louise – competing for the floor

Background

Laura is a white British 19 year old from inner London. She is talking here to her friend and the interviewer about a deaf girl at college who had complained that Laura had been shouting in class. As a result Laura was almost expelled from her course. The point of the story revolves around what the girl said and what Laura said and, though to a lesser extent, what the teacher said, so the extract is rich in examples of reported speech, some of which Laura presents in a very dramatic way.

Audio, transcript and links to relevant Linguistics Research Digest articles are available at: <http://www.englishlanguageresources.org/TU08>

Discussion points

Indefinite *this*

(lines 1, 5, 20, 43). Louise sometimes uses *this* rather than *a* to introduce something that is new to the discourse. This involves the listeners in the discourse by presenting the new item as if it was actually present.

Non-fluency features

Er and *erm*

Lydia uses *erm* when she tries to take a turn at speaking (lines 38, 44, 46). She is probably planning the structure of what she intends to say but her *erm* allows Louise to interrupt and take the floor from her. Note that Louise uses the same strategy herself on line 17 and unlike her friend is successful in taking the floor.

False starts (lines 4, 7, 18, 42, 46, 51) are like crossing out in writing.

Repetition The repetition of the function words *that's on* (line 12) and *there's a* (line 22) indicates planning.

Note that the repetition of the content words *favourite* (line 23) and *high* (line 28) does not reflect a lack of fluency but instead adds emphasis to the words, like using an **intensifier**. In line 23 there is additional emphasis from the superlative *most* and in line 28 from Louise's shouting.

Nonstandard grammar

Louise uses some common nonstandard grammatical forms typical of the local area: past tense *done* (line 16) and relative *what* (line 38).

Rhetorical strategies

Louise is perhaps showing off by using a singing voice (line 23) and shouting (line 28). These strategies do, though, make her description very striking. She also uses repetition to add emphasis (see above), the intensifier *really* (line 37) and says *loads of lumps* (line 46) rather than simply *lumps*.

Vague language

Louise is intentionally vague on line 6 (the general extender *and stuff*), 13 (*little play area thing*), 14 (the general extender *and stuff* again) and 15 (*a little couch thing*). Vague language of this kind usually involves the listeners by suggesting that they understand what is being referred to and so the speaker doesn't need to be specific.