The importance of small talk has been emphasized by numerous studies conducted from 2000 on in workplace contexts. The interest of scholars in small talk exchanges among coworkers and between workers and costumers in different situations (doctor-patient, cashier-costumer etc.) characterizes a new branch of linguistic study. This specific area of small talk is considered a “big deal” (Holmes, 2005, p. 344) for its sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic importance (Coupland 2000); not to mention its multifunctionality within social relationships and interactions (Holmes 2000).

The lack of quantitative data that would account for the dimensions and the proportions of the elements of small talk interactions (Koester 2010; McCarthy & Handford, 2004) is addressed in this study through a methodological protocol for quantitative analysis of small talk interactions, their anatomy and recurrent discursive patterns.

The data that inform this analysis are comprised from the Small Talk at Work sub-corpus (henceforth STW), culled from a larger corpus, the ANAWC (AAC and Non-AAC Workplace Corpus; Pickering & Bruce, 2009). The STW sub-corpus consists of 420 small talk interactions that involve also workers who are affected by oral speech impairments and communicate through augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.

References


