

**Themes and Strategies in Early Requirements Gathering:
An Investigation into Analyst–Client Interaction**

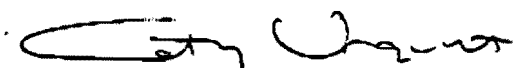
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of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis examines early requirements gathering, a necessarily verbal interchange between an analyst and client which represents the starting point of specification of a new information system, or amendments to an existing system. Six case studies of analyst–client interaction are presented, consisting of a number of data sources: a video taped interaction and review, paragraphs from the analyst and client presented prior to the interaction, and individual interviews with analyst and client carried out before and after their interaction.

The findings from the study are viewed through a theoretical framework that groups the issues associated with early requirements gathering from four perspectives: Social, Definitional, Environmental and Individual. The videotaped interactions were first subjected to analysis using grounded theory techniques which yielded two major categories, that of Systems Analysis Strategies and Conversational Strategies.

The codes generated from this phase of analysis were used as foundation for further analysis of the videotaped interactions and the other data sources. In this way, the micro analysis provided a solid foundation for subsequent macro-analysis, with the use of topics as an intermediate unit of analysis of the interactions. This further analysis generated a number of themes that serve as a fruitful avenue for discussion of early requirements gathering: Issues to Be Discussed, Scope of System, Information Input to System, Processes Associated With System, Links in Information, Future Action, Problem Identification, Information Output from System, Analyst's Understanding of Processes, Future Solutions, Organisational Context, Personal Disclosures, Professional Relationships, Note Taking and Use of Props. These themes are further organised and discussed using the theoretical framework.

The thesis concludes by evaluating the methodology used and the theory produced. It is suggested that both the systems analysis and conversational strategies identified, and the themes, represent findings that could be usefully disseminated to IS practice and education, given the apparent paucity of treatment of the communicational aspects of early requirements gathering in these two arenas.

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