

Н.В. НЕДІЛЕНЬКО

Методичні рекомендації  
до лекцій із спецкурсу  
«Конверсаційний аналіз»

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**Н 42 Н.В. Неділенько.** Методичні рекомендації до лекцій із спецкурсу “Конверсаційний аналіз”. Видавництво Волинського державного університету імені Лесі Українки. - Луцьк: "Вежа", 2007. — 32. с.

Методичні рекомендації до лекцій із теоретичного курсу “Конверсаційний аналіз” призначаються для студентів VI курсів факультетів іноземних мов вищих навчальних закладів. Рекомендації включають приклади та вправи з усіх основних розділів з курсу конверсаційного аналізу, та термінологічний глосарій.

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## PREFACE

Conversation is the verbalization of concepts involving abstractions and concrete objects which make up the world we live in. It is communication by two or more people, or sometimes with one's self, often on a particular topic.

Conversation analysis (CA) is a branch of sociology which studies the structure and organization of human interaction, with a more specific focus on conversational interaction. CA generally attempts to describe the orderliness, structure and sequential patterns of interaction, whether this is institutional (in the school, doctor's surgery, courts or elsewhere) or casual conversation. Inspired by ethnomethodology, it was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s principally by the sociologist Harvey Sacks and, among others, his close associates Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Sacks died early in his career, but his work was championed by others in his field, and CA has now become an established force in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, speech-communication and psychology. It is particularly influential in interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and discursive psychology, as well as being a coherent discipline in its own right. Recently CA techniques of sequential analysis have been employed by phoneticians to explore the fine phonetic detail of speech

The present edition is intended as a practical aid for English Language students of Universities and Teacher Training Institutes of Ukraine. This resource may also be of general interest to trainee teachers and anyone with a general interest in language science. It provides over 50 examples and exercises for all the main topics treated at lectures in Conversation analysis and meets the requirements of the programme in this subject.

### What does conversation consist of?

The following remarks are all likely to be spoken by parents attempting to teach young children the finer points of conversation. Consider them and discuss what rule of conversation they could be asking the child to learn.

- *Don't interrupt me while I'm speaking.*
- *Speak when you're spoken to.*
- *What's the magic word?*
- *Don't tell me what to do.*
- *Don't say that in front of your granny.*
- *Don't say 'what', say 'pardon'.*

### Spoken Language vs Written

Look at the following tasks and divide them into two groups - tasks where you would use spoken language and tasks where you would use written language:

*making a complaint, telling someone you love them, revising for an exam, confirming that you've sold your house, making an excuse, performing a marriage ceremony, giving someone directions, trying to change someone's opinion, sorting out your ideas, gossiping*

Put these points into practice. Can you explain the following?

- Both spoken and written language are used for performing the marriage ceremony
- Spoken language is mainly used for gossiping
- Making an excuse is easier in writing or on the phone
- Both written and spoken language can be useful for making a complaint

In order to have relevant spoken data to analyze, students in a sixth form class were asked to record themselves telling a joke. The following joke was told and recorded in the classroom by 18-year-old Andrew Herterich. It was told to an audience, but they were not supposed to interrupt. This is the spoken version of a joke. Produce the written version of the same joke and discuss:

- what features you left out;
- why they were present in the spoken version.

**Text: Joke**

right (.) three men sat in a pub (.) and er sat there having a quiet drink (.) and in walks this really drunken old man (.) and he staggers in and he's all over the place he's knocking drinks over (.) he's er standing on people's feet and (.) urn all the rest of it and um he walks over to the bar this old man (.) and he orders a pint of lager

(.) he er gets his pint (.) and downs it fast as he can in one (.) and then he staggers over to these three men (.) these three men are looking at each other nudging each other (.) right what does he want (.) and ur (.) this man walks over he says (.) I've had your mam I've had your mam and one of the men says (.) piss off! so (.) this this old man he staggers away and he goes to the bar and he orders another drink (.) another pint of lager and downs this even faster (.) he staggers back over to these three men (.) and he says I've had your mam I've put cream on her body and I've licked it off (.) guy stands up again he says look go away (.) so er this old man staggers back to the bar (.) all over the place he orders another pint (.) this one downs even faster and he comes and again again he comes back over to these three men (.) he says I've had your mam I've put cream on her body I've done things to her you wouldn't understand (.) well they've had enough so (.) one of the men stands up he says look dad you're drunk go home.

Go through your day and see if you can list some of the conversations you have had. Choose ten conversations and try to decide what their purpose was. What did you hope to achieve with these conversations? Consider what you most value conversation for.

Look at the following examples of spoken language. Decide what type of conversation or genre you feel the example has come from. Explain what language helped you define the nature of the conversation.

1. *Guess what I did at the weekend!*
2. *Thank you very much for listening and if there are any questions, we'll just take them now.*
3. *I put it to you that, at the time of the accident, you were doing in excess of the speed limit.*
4. *Good morning. Barnet Leisure Centre. How can we help you?*
5. *Hello number one, what's your name and where do you come from?*
6. *Right, we're going on, come on, shush please, we're going on today to look at....*
7. *How do you do?*

### Transcription symbols

**(0.5)** – The number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second

**(.)** – A dot enclosed in a bracket indicates pause in the talk less than two tenths of a second

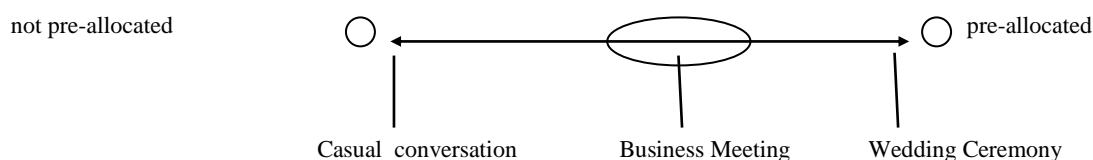
**under** - Underlined fragments between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset (an end) of a spate of overlapping talk.

**.CAPITALS** – With the exception of proper nouns, capital letters indicate a section of speech noticeably louder than the surrounding talk or speaker's emphasis.

**= -** The "equals" sign indicates contiguous utterances.

### Turn-taking

Turns in casual conversation are not pre-allocated. There is no tradition or plan which says, for example, that first the oldest person speaks then the second oldest person speaks.



Turns can be built from single words, non lexical utterances ("Huh?"), single phrases and clauses. These latter three turn types are illustrated in the following three extracts. Arrows indicate the relevant turn.

#### (1) Single word turn

Fern: *Well they're not comin'*

→Lana: *Who.*

Fern: *Uh Pam, unless the c'n find somebody*



A: *Bill?*  
B: (Bill looks up)

Or more typically both verbal and non-verbal exist together, helping to organize the interaction even in complication situations like a party.

(hands a plate of food to B)  
A: *Here have some* 1) ...  
B: *Thanks* 2) ...

(looks at watch as student comes into the class)  
A: *Class started at 11:10* 1) ...  
B: *Sorry, I'm late I forgot my book.* 2) ...

A: *Bill?* 1) ...  
B: *Yeah?* 2) ...  
(Bill looks up)

Look at the following questions and discuss whether they are open or closed? Consider how effective they would be at encouraging speaker participation.

*Did you enjoy the spaghetti bolognese?*  
*Do you love her?*  
*I think the Labour candidate's the best, don't you?*  
*Are you going to put up with that?*  
*What plans have you for the next few years?*

Look at the following exchanges and discuss how they appear to flout the normal expectations of adjacency pairs. Can you imagine a context that would explain this?

1. A: *Hello*  
B: *Goodbye*
2. A: *Did you go out with John last night?*  
B: *Why are you asking?*  
A: *Why do you think?*
3. A: *What do you think of this?*  
B: *Gosh is that the time? I must go!*
4. A: *Your tea's on the table*  
B: (6)  
A: *Did you hear what I said?*  
B: (4)  
A: *Answer me, will you?*

### Exchange structure

The following conversation took place in a chemistry lesson in the classroom of a sixth form college. SDR is a male teacher in his early fifties; FP is his pupil, a female 17-year-old student. Read the following transcription of a classroom conversation and answer the questions:

#### Text: The chemistry lesson

SDR: that's good (.) that's excellent (.) so you can answer the questions (1) Fiona (.) if you heat up the reaction (.) what happens? (.) to the reaction FP: it goes quicker
--

SDR: it goes quicker (.) so the key to any reaction at all is that it goes quicker (.) because all the molecules will be flying around faster (.) so it speeds up a reaction (.) but it speeds up a given (1) increase in temperature speeds of different reactions to different extents (1) Fiona (.) exothermic reactions (.) what is an exothermic reaction? (1)  
 FP: one that gives out heat

## Preference organization

1) preferred acceptance and dispreferred rejection

A: *Why don't you come up and see me some times*

B: *I would like to*

A: *Uh if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee*

D: *hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you I don't think I can make it this morning hh uhm*

(delay) (marker) (appreciation) (refusal of declination)

*I'm running an ad in the paper and uh I have to stay near the phone* (account)

2) unexpected responses vs expected ones.

A: *"why don't you come to our party on Saturday?" (pause)*

B: *"Well I'd like to but it's Hannah's birthday" (marked rejection)*

3) dispreferred response

A: *"why don't you come to our party on Sunday?"(pause)*

B: *"Well ..."*

4) dispreferred reply

A: *"why don't you come to our party on Sunday?"*

B: *"No"*

### How to perform a dispreferred social act

How to perform a dispreferred social act	Examples
Delay, hesitate	<i>er; em; ah</i>
Preface	<i>Well; oh</i>
Express doubt	<i>I'm not sure; I don't know</i>
Token yes	<i>That's great; I'd love to</i>
Apology	<i>I'm sorry; what a pity</i>
Mention obligation	<i>I must do something</i>
Appeal for understanding	<i>You see; you know</i>
Make it non personal	<i>Everybody else; out there</i>
Give an account	<i>Too much work; no time left</i>
Use mitigators	<i>Really; mostly; sort of; kinda</i>
Hedge the negative	<i>I guess not; not possible</i>

## Pre-sequences

a) Pre-invitation

(1) A: *What are you doing tomorrow night.*

B: *Nothing much. I'm just gonna watch some TV.*

A: *You wanna go to a movie? =*

B: *=Sure.*

A: *Whaddaya doin' t'morrow night?*

B: *I gotta study for the exam Friday.*

b) Pre-request

→ A: *Do you have a TAPE recorder?*  
B: *Uh HUH, why?* (“GO AHEAD” MOVE)  
A: *Can I BORROW it?*

→ A: *Do you have a TAPE recorder?*  
B: *Yeah, but my sister's usin' it* (“BLOCKING” MOVE)  
A: *Oh*

→ A: *Do you have a TAPE recorder?*  
B: *Sure do you wanna BORROW it?* (PREEMPTIVE OFFER)  
A: *Uh HUH if you don't MIND.*

c) Pre-announcements

A: *Guess what ↓ =*

B: *=what ↓*

A: *I got 'n A on my test.*

B: *Great!*

A: *Didya hear what happ'm'd to Sally's? =*

B: *=No what?*

A: *She got robbed. They took everything.*

B: *REALLY?*

Define the type of the following pre-sequences:

1. Ann: *Would you do me a favour?*  
Bob: *Sure.*  
Ann: *Are you going to be needing your car this weekend?*  
Bob: *Uh, not really.*  
Ann: *Great. Could I borrow it Saturday night?*  
Bob: *I guess so.*  
Ann: *I'd have it back early Sunday.*  
Bob: *Okay. No problem.*
2. Ed: *So are you busy Saturday night?*  
Judy: *Not really.*  
Ed: *Have you seen the new "Star Wars" movie?*  
Judy: *No.*  
Ed: *Do you want to go with me Saturday?*  
Judy: *I'd love to.*
3. Ed: *So are you busy Saturday night?*  
Judy: *What do you have in mind?*  
Ed: *Do you like Chinese food?*  
Judy: *At which restaurant?*  
Ed: *Kung Foo on Elm Street.*  
Judy: *I'd love to.*
4. Ann: *Oh, guess who I saw last night.*



Bob: *Who?*  
Ann: *Judy.*  
Bob: *Really?*  
Ann: *Yeah. She was at the movies with George.*  
Bob: *Wow.*

5. Ann: *Oh, guess who I saw last night.*  
Bob: *Harry?*  
Ann: *No, Judy.*  
Bob: *Oh.*
6. Ann: *Do you know who I saw at the movies last night?*  
Bob: *Who?*  
Ann: *Judy.*  
Bob: *Wow.*
7. Ann: *Do you know who I saw at the movies last night?*  
Bob: *No.*  
Ann: *Judy.*  
Bob: *Oh.*

### **Insertion sequence**

A: *Shall I wear the blue shoes?*  
B: *You've got the black ones*  
A: *They're not comfortable*  
B: *Yeah, they're the best then, wear the blue ones*

Agent: *Do you want the early flight?*  
Client: *What time does it arrive?*  
Agent: *Nine forty-five.*  
Client: *Yeah – that is great.*

Paul: *Could you mail this letter for me? (Q1=request)*  
Fred: *Does it have a stamp on it? (Q2)*  
Paul: *Yeah. (A2)*  
Fred: *Okay. (A1=acceptance)*

### **Repair (What do people do when there's a mistake?)**

Student: *He let me write his assignment=*  
Tutor: *He let you READ his assignment?*  
Student: *Yes.*

A: *Hey, the first time they stopped me from sellin' cigarettes was this morning.*  
(1.0)  
B: *From SELLing cigarettes?*  
A: *From buying cigarettes.*

Frankie: *I want pizza.*  
Mother: *Please.*  
Frankie: *I want pizza please.*

### **Discourse markers**

The following conversation took place between three female teenagers at the home of one of the teenagers. They are all aged 17.

Examine how:

- the discourse markers 'well' and 'oh' operate;
- the conjunctions 'and' or 'but' work to signpost the structure of the exchange.

**Text: Teenage chat**

A: well does Caroline like Jane (.) I don't know to be honest (2) well no (.) she said (.) she's cold she said (.) she doesn't dislike (.) but they've never really clicked  
K: cold?  
A: er yeah  
K: Jane's cold?  
A: and they've never really clicked (.) but she only has to work for her three days a week  
K: I thought it was erm (.) Irene she didn't like  
S: no it's Jane she didn't like  
A: oh (.) and she was saying that (.) you know you were saying why didn't she get any men (.) in the hairdressers (.) she gets loads of offers she said (.) but they're all from married men (.) who want affairs

## Openings and closures, repetition

### How do we start a conversation?

- We establish joint attention, then say something conventional ways of opening a conversation
- Address another person
- Establish eye gaze, use a vocative, etc.
- Use a formulaic greeting or fixed expression
- Request/offer information

### Conventional ways of ending a conversation

- Use a pre-closing form (discourse marker)
- Summarize the content of the conversation
- Give a reason for ending the conversation
- Express pleasure
- Plan future contact
- Wish each other well

The following transcription is of a phone conversation that took place when Miss Reed (MR), a woman in her early forties, phoned a female school secretary, S, about the opening hours of the school shop. Read the transcription and consider these questions:

1. What marks the opening and closure of the conversation?
2. What role does repetition play in the conversation?

**Text: The school shop**

S: St. Ambrose College MR: oh hallo (.) um (.) I know it's a bit early in the summer holidays bur could you tell me when your your school shop's going to be open? S: er (2) oh dear (3) second (.) second of August MR: second of August is that the first time it's open? S: yeah MR: right what time would that be till? S: oh wait a moment 31st August right that ( <i>inaudible</i> ) MR: 31st <u>August</u> S: <u>yep</u> MR: or 31st July? S: yep sorry I mean 31st July RP: that's a Monday S: we're open till 31st July	MR: sorry say it again S: would be it's closed at the moment until 31st July MR: right yeah S: and then it's open ten till five MR: every day? S: er Monday Wednesday and Friday MR: right Monday Wednesday and Friday <u>right</u> S: <u>yeah</u> MR: up till term time S: yep yep MR: then right that's <u>excellent OK</u> S: <u>OK then</u> MR: thank you very much indeed S: <u>right</u> MR: bye (.) bye S: bye
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### Politeness within conversation

Look at the following utterances and decide how they could either challenge someone's face or protect it:

1. If this letter was typed, I'd be very grateful.
2. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, I mean, if you don't mind, I'd be grateful if you'd type this letter.
3. Do you drink tea? - Yes but I prefer coffee.
4. Would you like to come to my house? - Well, I'd love to at another time.
5. Shut the door!
6. I feel really knackered. - Do you? I must admit I am tired too.
7. Could you pass the salt please?
8. Let's go swimming!

### Politeness Technique

	What was said	How polite is it?
Direct message – threatens face	'Shut the door'	Message clear - challenge to negative face could cause offence
↓	'Please shut the door'	'Please' indicates awareness of politeness but still could cause a reaction as quite blunt
	'Could you shut the window please?'	Command hidden as question - implies listener has some choice! This saves face.
	'Shall we shut the window please?'	Use of personal pronoun 'we' implies we're in the same in-group, have the same values and are doing the task together. This protects someone's positive face.
	it's cold here	No challenge! You can always deny wanting anyone to do anything. Message unclear. Response might easily be 'Is it?' or 'Why don't you shut the window then?'
Indirect message – no threat to face		

### Uncooperative conversation

The following conversation is between a mother and son, Matthew. The son, playing happily on his computer, is resisting his mother's attempts to persuade him into other activities. Read the transcription and discuss.

1. What methods does the mother use in her attempt to persuade her son to action?
2. What methods does Matthew use to resist his mother?

**Text: Mat's resistance**

Mum: Matt what are you doing? (1)	Matt: <u>later</u>
Matt: the computer	Mum: later when Matt? (2) what?
Mum: could you turn the music down then please (1) ( <i>music turned down</i> ) thanks (1)	Matt: go away
Matt (1) what do you want to make me a cup of coffee (2)	Mum: go away! (4) Matt you could do your bedroom or you could go into Audenshaw and get your glasses which you going to do?
Matt: in a minute (1)	Matt: I'll get my glasses later
Mum: in a minute when Matt? (5) it's been a minute now	Mum: what about the bedroom? (2)
	Matt: I'll do that in a bit

Matt: ( <i>sighs</i> ) Mum: pardon? Matt: no (1) Mum: are you going to do your bedroom? Matt: no (2) Mum: Matt you could do your bedroom couldn't you because you're halfway through (.) you nearly <u>finished</u>	Mum: please Matt (4) what about that cup of tea now then cup of coffee (1) Matt: no (almost <i>inaudible</i> ) Mum: what? (1) you just said no Matt: ( <i>inaudible</i> ) care Mum: what? Matt: I don't care
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This is a conversation between a teenager, this time a daughter and her mother. It is obviously an open argument. Read the transcription and attempt the following questions:

1. What topic is Ruksana trying to avoid discussing?
2. What techniques does she use to be unco-operative?
3. How does her mother try to keep Ruksana on the topic?

**Text: The argument**

Mum: I just want a bit of appreciation for try (.) the effort I made on your birthday (.) I was almost dying on your birthday (1) don't you realize how much effort it was for me to go there? (1) Ruksana: oh sorry make me feel guilty about my birthday 'cos that's so good isn't it? Mum: make you what? Ruksana: do you make me feel guilty about going <u>out on my birthday</u> Mum: <u>no you should</u> Ruksana: <u>shut up</u> Mum: no you should feel <u>guilty about not</u> Ruksana: <u>no you should</u> feel guilty Mum: about what? Ruksana: about holding your illness over going <u>out on my birthday</u> Mum: <u>I haven't held</u> it against you I <u>just</u> Ruksana: <u>well</u> you just did then Mum: why? (1) I held your ungratefulness against you	Ruksana: I think you should stop this now Mum: I'm showing you how illogical your argument was Ruksana: how illogical my argument was (.) you sat there saying to me that it's my fault that you were ill on <u>my birthday</u> Mum: <u>no</u> Ruksana: your fault <u>you dragged yourself out</u> Mum: <u>no I didn't say that</u> I said <u>that you were ungrateful</u> Ruksana: <u>I mean it's</u> like an effort that you dragged yourself out for my birthday <u>well I'm sorry</u> Mum: <u>well it was an effort</u> Ruksana: <u>for having</u> my birthday Mum: I did drag myself out (.) I showed how much I loved you did you show how much you loved me by being <u>sensitive?</u> <u>I've</u> Ruksana: <u>oh shut up</u>
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### Conversational genres

#### a) Comment and elaboration

The following conversation took place on a car journey between two sisters. Kathy is 41 and a teacher. Julie is 49 and runs her own soft furnishing business from home. They are driving to the local town where they intend to go shopping together. Kathy has recently had a minor operation and is at home on sick leave. Their mother lives some distance away. Read the transcription and discuss how far it uses features of a comment and elaboration genre.

**Text: Two sisters**

Kathy: I had a cup of coffee in the Thornton's shop 'cos I thought I'd give myself some <u>caffeine</u> Julie: <u>good idea</u> K: to keep going and then I just struggled back home and lay down on the settee didn't have lunch was just so knackered by going to <u>Stafford</u>	all the people there thinking God (2) if you go in Sainsbury's do you have to pay? J: well you don't have to pay but you have to buy something from Sainsbury's and (1) then you have I think it's an hour or two hours (1) we'll um we'll just stop here K: yeah have a look round first J: well we're going up tomorrow to see Mum um
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<p>J: <u>oh dear</u>  K: isn't that weird?  J: yeah (.) are you hungry now?  K: oh yeah  J: I got on the scales this morning I've put a load of weight on  K: oh shit  J: I mean half way back to what I was before  K: oh no Julie that's not on is it?  J: so I've just got my <u>new season ticket</u>  K: <u>you were so good</u>  J: to go swimming  K: yeah  J: and I'm just gonna have to do it all again  K: yeah  J: it seems a shame doesn't it <u>do it twice</u>  K: <u>I've got to do it</u> as well (.) I was really worried in that hospital looking at</p>	<p>K: yeah are you going all day tomorrow then?  J: she wants me to dream up something to have for lunch (.) should do a pudding but I don't know what to do (1) .  K: well get yeah (.) get some winter fruits (.) and make um (.) summer pudding you get the idea frozen winter <u>fruits</u>  J: <u>yeah</u>  K: you do put them in bread don't you 'cos Mum likes <u>summer pudding</u>  J: <u>yeah</u> (<i>inaudible</i>)  K: that's right you can have um (1) yoghurt with that can't you as well or (.) instead of ice cream or cream can't you?  J: that all right that is</p>
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### b) Language in action

The following transcription is between two female friends in their early forties. Read the text and answer the following questions:

1. What point in the conversation do you realize what's happening?
2. Why is it difficult sometimes to ascertain exactly what the speakers are discussing?
3. Why are there long silences?
4. Look at the questions in the transcription. What purpose do they serve?
5. What features of informal co-operative conversation can you find?

#### Text: Parking problem

<p>Fiona: there you are there's a is that a Space?  Jean: oh God it's a bit <u>tight</u>  F: I wouldn't get in that <u>one</u>  J: I don't know  F: what about this one? can you get in that one? (2)  J: that's alright (.) now what's the parking here?  F: oh I don't <u>know</u>  J: <u>half an</u> hour  F: oh that's no good then is it? (2)  J: where is the shop anyway?  F: just keep going down the <u>left there's a</u>  J: <u>going down</u> is it?  F: (<i>inaudible</i>) yeah (2)  J: right (1) let's just keep  F: going under this shop here (3) oh where is it now? (.) yeah I went <u>out here um</u>  J: <u>I'll</u> park right  F: oh (.) right</p>	<p>J: oh this one on the left here  F: this one? (.) it looks alright doesn't it?  J: oh there's enough room here  F: do they not want you here because of the loading stuff?  J: <u>no those</u>  F: <u>what are?</u>  J: those aren't in use are they? (2) is that it over <u>there?</u>  F: <u>the</u> Greenhouse yes (4) oh it says drop in for afternoon tea (<i>laughs</i>) if we stay long enough we can go to the afternoon tea (4) oh you're good at doing this  J: am I?  F: much better than me anyway (4) do you think it means over there is a car park? (3)  J: got loads of room anyway (<i>inaudible</i>) and we've got half an hour to eat  F: that should be alright shouldn't it?  J: whoops that's very handy isn't it? (2)  F: OK</p>
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### c) Service encounters

Read the following transcription. Decide what is happening here.

#### Text: Eating out

<p>Elizabeth: um is that coleslaw in the middle there?</p>	<p>Elizabeth: can I have a cup of coffee as well?  Assistant: with milk?</p>
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Assistant: it is yes Elizabeth: I'll have that then please (1) Jenny: I'll have a bread roll please (.) got to have bread haven't I? Elizabeth: ( <i>laughs</i> ) (2) that's lovely thank you ...	Elizabeth: please yes (3) I do (.) I do like scones (.) it's my treat on Friday to have a scone (3) thank you (.) we'll come back for pudding shall we? Jenny: yeah
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The following transcription is of a conversation that took place between a housewife in her forties and a door-to-door salesman, probably in his early twenties. The salesman has called at the door with a bag full of household goods, such as dusters and dishcloths. He is displaying the goods to the housewife in an attempt to sell them to her. She is investigating what he has to offer before agreeing to purchase something. Read the transcription and answer the following questions:

1. What questions does the housewife ask and why?
2. What examples of ellipsis and context-dependent language can you find? Why are they present?
3. How are discourse markers used here?
4. What signals the completion of the transaction?
5. What features of dialect can you find?

**Text: The door-to-door salesman**

Salesman: anyway, there's yellow dusters er dishcloths um oven gloves is like them ones and them ones er there's demist pads (.) there's gentlemen's socks er Ken Dodd tickle sticks um Housewife: it's a weird assortment of things in't it? S: yeah there's hankies (.) well there's men's and then there's ladies' hankies as well right we got super scissors you can use these for flowers for cutting food and they've got like a wire stripper on as well H: yeah S: um (4) then (.) also (.) this is like (.) got all sorts of different bits in (.) if you have an accident H: yeah S: but (.) uh (.) it's not very optimistic is it if (.) I mean I suppose it's always there if you need them (.) uh (.) anyway there's chamois leathers like different types sponge mitts H: it's a what? S: sponge mitts that goes on your hands for washing stuff and then super chamois (.) uh (.) they are reduced from marked price them ones	H: how much are they then? S: uh supposed to be eight ninety nine but they're two quid off (.) you can put them in washer H: they'll still be six ninety nine wouldn't they? S: yeah H: yeah okay ( <i>inaudible</i> ) S: um (.) and then we got dishcloths (.) floor <u>and</u> H: <u>how</u> much is the sponge mitts? S: ah three ninety-nine H: they're not very cheap then are they? S: I don't know love cos <u>I don't</u> H: <u>and</u> how much is this thing here? S: um cheaper them (.) them are two ninety-nine H: oh (.) I don't know S: you can use (.) them like for (.) in well wet and dry as well H: for what? S: wet and dry (.) you can use them for taking condensation off and like putting soap <u>on</u> H: <u>okay</u> I'll buy one of those thank you
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**d) Learning encounters**

Two transcriptions follow: one of a politics lesson, one of a philosophy lesson. Both lessons took place in two separate A-level classes in a sixth form college. The classes are mixed, but the gender of the student has not been indicated in the first transcription. The teacher in the politics lesson is female and in her early forties. The teacher in the second transcription is male, in his early thirties. Examine the two transcriptions for the features of the genre and use your answers to compare and contrast the way the two lessons work.

**Text: The politics lesson**

Teacher: right (.) so impact on the UK then (.) this is your essay then (.) and you are doing government and politics A-level (2) so if you had to do a rough draft of the essay and that's all
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we're going to do today (.) like bullet points (.) what (1) parts of British politics do you feel you would need paragraph after paragraph on? C'mon (.) the order is irrelevant.

Student 1: parliament

T: yes (.) parliament good (.) impact on parliament yes very good but even before that the very big one (4) the one we spent the last half term doing

St 2: constitution

T: good (.) constitution good 'cos that would then fit in with the practical operation of constitutions which is parliament (2) and also in particular which underpinning principle of constitution? (1)

St 3: parliamentary sov

T: parliamentary sovereignty (.) good (.) right we're going to be up and running (.) and that is obviously the sort of thing people worry about most (.) that sort of theoretically constitutional background and the difference between Europe and Britain good (3) again, thinking about the second and third principles of the constitution because Europe to some extent has taken to some extent our sovereignty what would we look at? (.) c'mon you got sovereignty of parliament, what's the other?

St 4: judiciary

T: judiciary (.) so you'd have to look at the legal system (.) and if you like the judiciary and obviously people who are going to go on and do law (.) as most of you are thinking of doing (.) that's gonna be (.) that's gonna turn up in an interview next year

### Text: The philosophy lesson

Teacher: Gemma do you think that people can be born leaders?

GEMMA: yeah

T: go on

G: 'cause I think you've either got it chemically in you (.) and you've (.) you've got the like confidence and (.) the ability to say what you think and (.) be able to tell that to other people (.) or you haven't

T: mmmmmmm

G: some people just (.) really can't do it like they don't (.) have it (.) don't have like the sense

T: mmrammmm

G: to be able to delegate and put across to other people

T: mmmm (.) okay (.) so what about the sort of precept if somebody said well if you go on a an assertiveness training course (.) that'd be timid or something like that (.) you'd say you're really wasting your time if you were of a certain type (.) all of that kind of stuff is superfluous (.) it won't do you any good (.) so if (.) if you were born a certain (.) certain leader type and that's (.) you can (.) you can develop it one way or the other but a lot of people just fall in-between

Matthew: I don't think that's true sir (.) you've got (.) correct me if I'm wrong here but (2) but the qualities of leadership are actually being sort of assertive and

G: you don't have to be necessarily be assertive to be a good leader

T: no.

G: it's (.) it's the way (.) the way that you handle things and the way that you process things

M: yeah (.) and vice versa someone can be taught to be assertive and it just won't do them any good

### Spoken language in written texts

#### a) Poetry

**Task 21.** The following poem, written in 1999, is by Steven Waling. Read the poem and answer the following questions:

1. What connotations does the title have?
2. What features of spoken language can you spot? What effect do they have on the reader?
3. What topics does the narrator address in the poem?
4. What is the importance of the final verse?

Didn't have any pain. More an ache across my shoulders, down my left arm. Dad wanted me so I joined the Rechahircs (a teetotal Christian group). Mind, I didn't fancy life without a drink.

Knew what it was. I'd read all about it, and seen it. *True posterior infarct*, that's what they wrote. I met Eunice through them: we used to swap each other's clothes.

You could have wrung me out like a dishcloth. Never knew I'd so much sweat. Anyway, it weren't as if I ever drank much. Still, I once won a poetry book, the sort I liked that rhymed.

I always have to be different. Your dad was in agony, nor me; nothing. Well anyway, now Eunice walks sideways downstairs, fat, can hardly get out the door. I don't like salad,

and she does. I've got bruises all up my legs, one right up here. Don't know what from. Did I tell you I fainted once on the beach from Blackpool? They said I couldn't even

have a medicinal rum. Just one of those things, it happens. It's not as if I ever ate, I mean, you're just going along and ... not even a nip. So anyway, I decided to leave the Rechahites.

## b) Novel

**Task 22.** The following conversation is taken from *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen. Previously, Elinor has fallen in love with Edward. Lucy, suspicious of Elinor's feelings, warns Elinor off, by revealing her own relationship with Edward. Read the extract and answer the following questions:

1. How does Jane Austen capture the prosodic features and body language of conversation? What effect does this have on the reader?
2. How does Jane Austen provide different spoken language for her two speakers? What do the differences show about the two characters?
3. What advantage is there in using dialogue rather than any other form of narration?

### **Text: *Sense and Sensibility***

'Good heavens!' cried Elinor, 'what do you mean? Are you acquainted with Mr. Robert Ferrars? Can you be?' And she did not feel much delighted with the idea of such a sister-in-law.

'No,' replied Lucy, 'not with Mr. Robert Ferrars - I never saw him in my life; but,' fixing her eyes upon Elinor, 'with his elder brother.'

What felt Elinor at that moment? Astonishment, that would have been as painful as it was strong had not an immediate disbelief of the assertion attended it. She turned towards Lucy in silent amazement, unable to divine the reason or object of such a declaration; and though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity, and felt in no danger of a hysterical fit or a swoon,

'You may well be surprised,' continued Lucy; 'for, to be sure, you could have had no idea of it before; for I dare say he never dropped the smallest hint of it to you or any of your family; because it was always meant to be a great secret, and I am sure has been faithfully kept so by me to this hour. Not a soul of all my relations know of it but Anne, and I never should have mentioned it to you, if I had not felt the greatest dependence in the world upon your secrecy; and I really thought my behaviour in asking so many questions about Mrs. Ferrars must seem so odd that it ought to be explained. And I do not think Mr. Ferrars can be displeased when he knows I have trusted you, because I know he has the highest opinion in the world of all your family, and looks upon yourself and the other Miss Dashwoods quite as his own sisters.' - She paused.

Elinor for a few moments remained silent. Her astonishment at what she heard was at first too great for words; but at length forcing herself to speak, and to speak cautiously, she said with a calmness of manner which tolerably well concealed her surprise and solicitude - 'May I ask if your engagement is of long standing?'



'We have been engaged these four years.'

'Four years!'

'Yes.'

Elinor, though greatly shocked, still felt unable to believe it.

'I did not know,' said she, 'that you were even acquainted till the other day.'

'Our acquaintance, however, is of many years' date. He was under my uncle's care, you know, a considerable while.'

'Your uncle!'

'Yes, Mr. Pratt. Did you never hear him talk of Mr. Pratty?'

'I think I have,' replied Elinor, with an exertion of spirits which increased with her increase of emotion.

'He was four years with my uncle, who lives at Longstaple, near Plymouth. It was there our acquaintance begun, for my sister and me was often staying with my uncle, and it was there our engagement was formed, though not till a year after he had quitted as a pupil; but he was almost always with us afterwards. I was very unwilling to enter into it, as you may imagine, without the knowledge and approbation of his mother; but I was too young and loved him too well to be so prudent as I ought to have been. - Though you do not know him so well as me, Miss Dashwood, you must have seen enough of him to be sensible he is very capable of making a woman sincerely attached to him.'

'Certainly,' answered Elinor, without knowing what she said.

### c) *Drama*

**Task 23.** The following is an extract from *Othello* by William Shakespeare. It is taken from Act 3, Scene 3 and is where Iago, Othello's ensign, is tempting him to believe that Othello's wife, Desdemona, has been unfaithful with Cassio. Desdemona has just left the stage and Othello starts the extract by exploring his feelings for her. Read the extract and answer the following questions:

1. What is implied in this conversation but not said?
2. How is it implied?
3. How does Shakespeare show the body language he expects Iago to use and why is this important?
4. What relationship exists between the two speakers?

*Text: Othello*

Othello: Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee; and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again. Iago?

Iago: My noble lord

Othello: What dost thou say, Iago?

Iago: Did Michael Cassio,

When you wooed my lady, know of your love?

Othello: He did from first to last. Why dost thou ask?

Iago: But for a satisfaction of my thought;

No further harm.

Othello: Why of thy thought, Iago?

Iago: I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

Othello: O yes, and went between us very oft.

Iago: Indeed?

Othello: Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st though aught in that?

Is he not honest?

Iago: Hnnest, my lord?

Othello: Honest? Ay honest.

Iago: My lord, for aught I know.

Othello: What dost thou think?

Iago: Think, my lord

Othello: Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me,  
As if there were some monster in his thought  
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something.  
I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that,  
When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?

And when I told thee he was of my counsel  
In my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st 'Indeed?'  
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,  
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain  
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,  
Show me thy thought.

Iago: My lord, you know I love you.

## A GLOSSARY OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURES

**NOTE** – this is far from an exhaustive 'list' – just some basic terms that students should be familiar with for analysis of spoken data. Students are reminded, however, of the primacy of context in studying transcripts – approach such texts with an open mind rather than mechanically applying 'labels'.

### TERM DESCRIPTION

**Adjacency pair** - (such as summons and response, question and answer, invitation and response) two turns by different speakers, one following the other, for which the first requires a particular kind of second.

**Adjacency triplets** - exchanges, consisting of three moves known as initiation, response and follow-up or feedback.

**Back-channel features:** words, phrases and non-verbal utterances [e.g. 'I see', 'oh', 'uh huh', 'really'] used by a listener to give feedback to a speaker that the message is being followed and understood

**Body language** - at turn endings speakers relax their body, complete their gestures, and re-establish eye contact

**Conversation** is a type of discourse: it is spoken dialogic discourse. Thus, conversation analysis may be seen as a subfield of discourse analysis.

**Conversational implicatures** - such components of an utterance that are not expressed semantically but are understood by communicants in the process of communication

**Discourse markers** - minor grammatical words that we use to indicate pauses, transitions, or other aspects of communication when we are talking. They are unstressed, and occur frequently, in both formal and informal English speech.

**Face Threatening Acts (FTA's)** - acts that infringe on the hearers' need to maintain his/her self esteem, and be respected.

**Fillers:** items which do not carry conventional meaning but which are inserted in speech to allow time to think, to create a pause or to hold a turn in conversation. Examples are 'er', 'um', 'ah'. Also called voiced pause.

**In-breaths** are points in a conversation when one stops talking to take a breath.

**Insertion sequence** - one adjacency pair within another. It happens because not all first parts immediately receive their second parts.

**Interactional talk:** language in conversation used for interpersonal reasons and/or socialising

**Gap** - silence at the TRP when the current speaker has stopped talking without selecting the next speaker, and there is a brief silence before the next speaker self-selects. A gap does not "belong" to anyone.

**Grice's Maxims:** Grice proposed 4 basic conversational 'rules' [maxims] as criteria for successful conversation: quantity [don't say too much or too little]; relevance [keep to the point]; manner [speak in a clear, coherent and orderly way]; quality [be truthful]

**Hedge:** words and phrases which soften or weaken the force with which something is said – e.g. 'perhaps', 'maybe', 'sort of', 'possibly', 'I think'.

**Lapse** - silence when no next speaker is selected, and no-one self-selects: the conversation comes to an end for at least a moment. (N.b., a gap and a lapse can be distinguished from one another only in retrospect.)

**Negative face** refers to our right not to be imposed on. Thus politeness involves speaker showing an awareness of the other's 'face needs'.

**Not pre-allocated turns** are common in casual conversation. It means that there is no tradition or plan

**Overlap** – when two or more speakers talk at the same time.

**Paralinguistic features:** related to body language – it is the use of gestures, facial expressions + other non-verbal elements [such as laughter] to add meaning to the speakers message beyond the words being spoken

**Pause** is silence when the current speaker has selected the next speaker and stopped talking, but the next speaker is silent. A pause is also silence that occurs within a participant's turn (i.e., before a TRP is reached).

**Pre-allocated turn** - means that the order of the speakers is fixed according to some tradition. A system of pre-allocated turn-taking is common in many formal ceremonies, for example weddings, graduations.

**Preference** - " The central insight [of preference organization] is that not all the potential second parts to the first part of an adjacency pair are of equal standing: there is a ranking operating over the alternatives such that there is at least one preferred and one dispreferred category of response . . . In essence, preferred seconds are unmarked - they occur as structurally simpler turns; in contrast dispreferred seconds are marked by various kinds of structural complexity. Thus dispreferred seconds are typically delivered: (a) after some significant delay; (b) with some preface marking their dispreferred status, often the particle well; (c) with some account of why the preferred second cannot be performed."

**Pre-sequence** - A turn that sets up the possibility of an adjacency pair, such as sounding out someone before an invitation.

**Politeness principles** - The way in which people try to make conversations work is sometimes called a cooperative principle. This can be explained by Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner.

**Positive face** refers to our need to be liked and accepted;

**Question intonations** are points in the conversation when a speaker's voice marks the end of a question.

**Repair** - The moves people make to correct what they think is a mistake, one they've made themselves or the other person has made.

**Repetition** can be used to suggest that someone is naturally uncertain or preoccupied. It can also be used effectively as a rhetorical device, ensuring that a central concept is made clearly and powerfully.

**Sentence intonations** are points in a conversation when a speaker's voice marks the end of a sentence.

**Speaker changes** are points in the conversation when some other party to the conversation does speak. Points in the conversation when speaker change does occur are points when turns are taken.

**Speech act** is the action performed by the speaker via utterance in the process of communicative intercourse.

**Turn-taking system** - the general observation that participants in conversation do not generally leave silences or continue overlaps. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson also describe a system for selection of next speaker.

**Turn-constructive units (TCU)** is a piece of language that is somehow "complete" in its context.

**Transition relevance place (TRP)** is a place/time where a new speaker might begin speaking.

**Vague language:** statements that sound imprecise and unassertive. E.g. - 'and so on', 'or whatever', 'thingummy', 'whatsit'

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