This practical and accessible handbook encourages teachers of language and literacy to examine why using authentic spoken discourse in the classroom benefits second language learners. It gives them clear guidelines on how to do this as part of their own teaching program.

The book derives from the Spoken Discourse Project conducted through NCELTR, whose main aim was to increase knowledge and understanding of how authentic language could be used in teaching.

‘I see what you mean’ contains:

- a useful introduction to current key theoretical approaches to spoken discourse analysis
- a study of the implications of ethnographic research into spoken language use
- advice on how to collect and transcribe samples of spoken language
- comparisons of scripted spoken dialogues with natural samples of language
- sample analyses of data as models of how to analyse spoken language data
- guidelines for incorporating spoken discourse into teaching frameworks for analysing learner needs and structuring units of work

The book is an excellent, accessible introduction to the field, and uses a practical task and case study approach.

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Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1
Theoretical approaches to spoken discourse 1

Chapter 2
Spoken language in society 29

Chapter 3
Spoken discourse and the language classroom 43

Chapter 4
Transcribing and analysing spoken discourse for the classroom 60

Chapter 5
Using spoken discourse in your teaching program 71

Chapter 6
Sample analyses 96

References 122
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Introduction

How this book came to be written

This book arose from a national project entitled the *Spoken Discourse Project*. This was an action research and professional development project conducted through the Professional Development Section of the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR) at Macquarie University, Sydney. The project involved two groups of teachers from the Adult Migrant English Program, one from New South Wales and one from South Australia, who worked together at regular intervals during the period 1990–93. The *Spoken Discourse Project* aimed to complement and extend an earlier action research project, the NCELTR *National Literacy Project*, which had been conducted during International Literacy Year and which focused on the analysis of written texts and on the pedagogical issues and approaches in teaching literacy as a part of adult ESL programs.

In the *Spoken Discourse Project*, the two groups of teachers met with the project coordinator and other researchers on a regular monthly basis over a period of a year. The various workshops that were held provided theoretical input on discourse analysis, as well as opportunities for discussion and analysis of the samples of natural spoken data which were collected by the participants.

The project was structured in such a way that it aimed to draw collaboratively on the expertise of both practitioner and researcher. The research process involved interrelated cycles of theoretical input, data collection and analysis, and action research in the classroom. A major aim of the project, both for the teachers and the researchers, was to increase our knowledge and understanding of how authentic spoken language data could be used in the teaching of English as a second language to adult immigrant learners. We set out to:

- explore the role of the teacher as ethnographic researcher of spoken language
- apply a range of theoretical perspectives to the analysis of spoken discourse
- understand the typical features of naturally occurring spoken language
- understand the discourse strategies used by native speakers to negotiate meaning
- develop some relevant analyses of authentic spoken discourse which could be used to teach spoken language in the classroom
- trial various teaching approaches which could be used with groups of adult ESL learners who were at different stages in their learning.

The researchers and the teachers adopted complementary roles which changed in emphasis as the project proceeded. The focus at the beginning was on the presentation of the theoretical input which would provide the basis for undertaking the analyses. This became less the focus as the practical tasks of collecting and analysing the data and discussing the practical implications for teaching assumed greater prominence (see Burns 1992–93).

The practical components of the project involved three phases. In the first phase the teachers took on the roles of ethnographic researchers. They recorded authentic examples of spoken discourse in a variety of social contexts outside the classroom and also investigated the spoken language practices within these contexts.
In the next phase the teachers transcribed the samples of spoken language and consulted with the other teachers and researchers in the group to analyse the resulting data. Finally the teachers discussed how classroom tasks and activities based on this authentic data could be used with their learners, and then incorporated these ideas into their teaching for discussion at subsequent meetings.

**The purpose of this book**

The NCELTR *Spoken Discourse Project* resulted in a rich collection of samples of natural spoken data, analyses of the data using theoretical principles current in discourse analysis, and case studies of practical approaches to the use of this data in adult language classrooms. We have drawn upon these outcomes of the project to present a practical handbook which we hope will provide a useful starting point for other researchers, teachers, teacher educators and professional developers wanting to know more about the nature of spoken discourse for teaching purposes.

This, then, is not a coursebook of spoken materials and recordings for use as classroom activities. Neither is it a report of a research project. We aim, rather, to:

- reflect the outcomes of the *Spoken Discourse Project* by presenting and discussing the connections between current theories of spoken discourse analysis and classroom practice
- encourage language teachers to consider why using authentic spoken discourse as part of classroom tasks may benefit second language learners
- encourage teachers to investigate their own understandings of language and language use
- encourage teachers to explore their role as discourse analysts for the purposes of language teaching
- examine some of the characteristics of natural spoken language and the implications for classroom teaching
- provide teachers with guidelines for collecting, transcribing and using authentic language data as part of their teaching
- provide sample analyses of spoken language texts which were collected as part of the project.

**How this book is organised**

The organisation of the material in this book follows, broadly, the pattern of the project itself. In Chapter 1 we begin by providing a broad overview of the major theoretical approaches which can be taken in analysing spoken data. This overview is necessarily brief and selective, aiming to draw out some of the key concepts used in the project and to provide basic theoretical tools for readers wishing to understand more about spoken discourse and its analysis. To complement this discussion we provide a number of key references for readers to follow up in order to extend further their knowledge of each of the theoretical perspectives we present.

Chapter 2 considers the implications of ethnographic research for teachers as a way of increasing our understanding of spoken discourse. We briefly survey recent ethnographic research perspectives on language and literacy development and discuss some of the key concepts of ethnographic research. We also provide guidelines for collecting samples of spoken language. Chapter 3 compares spoken language which has been scripted for use in
teaching dialogues with natural samples of discourse. We also discuss similarities and
differences between spoken and written language.

Having considered in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 the theoretical and ethnographic aspects of the
project, in Chapter 4 we go on to discuss the practicalities of transcribing and analysing the
data. This chapter provides guidelines for transcription, and frameworks for analysing spoken
data which take into account classroom teaching purposes. Chapter 5 continues to consider
the pedagogical issues by suggesting how spoken discourse can be incorporated into program
planning processes. It offers frameworks for analysing learners’ needs, selecting and
sequencing units of work, scaffolding learning and teaching processes and assessing
achievement. Where possible we have drawn upon practical examples from the project as
illustrations.

Chapter 6 completes the book by setting out sample analyses of data collected in the Spoken
Discourse Project. These sample analyses are intended to provide models for teachers wishing
to analyse their own spoken language data and to consider the implications for teaching.

In the book we have also included two other features: Reader tasks and Case studies. The
material for these emerged either from the project itself or from material and tasks used
during the course of the project by the teachers, presenters, researchers and coordinators
involved. These are explained below.

Reader tasks

Reader tasks, similar to those used in the project, occur throughout the handbook. The
purpose of these tasks is to provide readers with opportunities to reflect on the ideas
presented, to analyse spoken texts, and to consider how they would integrate authentic
spoken texts into their course design and day to day programming.

Case studies

From time to time we have included case studies of practical examples from the Spoken
Discourse Project to illustrate the theoretical principles, concepts and guidelines presented.
These practical examples include accounts of discussions that occurred, examples of teachers’
insights from the project and illustrations of how theoretical ideas were applied in the
classroom.
**Key to transcription conventions**

Transcription was an important aspect of the *Spoken Discourse Project* and we devote part of Chapter 4 to considering issues in transcribing spoken data. Throughout the book, we have attempted to keep the conventions of transcription as user-friendly as possible. Speakers are identified by letters (e.g., A, B, C), by first name or by position titles (e.g., Course Information Officer). Other transcription conventions and symbols we have used in this handbook are listed below:

- \[ \] = overlapping turns
- \(...) = approximately one second pause
- \{ \} = contextual information accompanying text
- \// = clause boundary
- \(()\) = uncertain transcription
- \((?)) = indecipherable
- ^ = followed by
- ( ) = optional generic stages
- <> = altered transcription used for confidentiality

We hope that this book will be of interest to all those involved in language teaching and teacher education who are interested in knowing more about language, and particularly the way spoken language is used in daily life, and in how we can more effectively impart this knowledge to our second language learners.

---

Chapter 1
Theoretical approaches to spoken discourse

We begin this book in the same way that we began the NCELTR Spoken Discourse Project, with an overview of various theoretical approaches that can be taken in analysing spoken discourse. We anticipate that readers of this book will, like those who participated in the project, be at different stages in their familiarity with approaches to spoken discourse analysis. As a result this chapter aims to provide theoretical tools which form the basis for analysing the language data presented. Readers already familiar with the theoretical perspectives presented here may wish to begin at Chapter 2. Similarly, readers less familiar may need to refer back to this opening chapter as they read through the book.

Spoken discourse can be approached from a number of different theoretical perspectives and these perspectives provide different models for discourse analysis. In the Spoken Discourse Project several approaches to the analysis of spoken language data were considered, but analysis drew mainly on two perspectives:

- **systemic-functional linguistics**

- **exchange structure theory**
  (Berry 1981)

The other theoretical models of analysis which also contributed to the approaches taken in the Spoken Discourse Project were:

- **conversation analysis**

- **pragmatics**
  (Brown and Yule 1983; Leech 1983; Levinson 1983; Schiffrin 1994; Thomas 1983)

- **critical discourse theory**

Analysis of the structures and mechanisms of spoken discourse and the development of ways of using spoken discourse analysis for teaching are still in the early stages. Consequently this handbook provides only suggestions for
teachers interested in using spoken discourse analysis in their teaching. In this chapter we give a brief outline of the five approaches listed above and provide references for those who would like to explore these approaches further.

Systemic-functional linguistics

The language model developed within systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) provides valuable insights into spoken discourse for teachers because it:

- highlights the socially functional nature of language
- explains the two-way relationship between the vocabulary and grammatical (lexicogrammatical) choices which speakers make and the cultural and social contexts in which language is used
- systematically describes the similarities and differences between spoken and written language.

This model is also concerned with texts; that is, it is concerned with connected sequences of language as discourse rather than as single sentences. As the model examines how speakers convey meaning through extended discourse rather than through single utterances or sentences, it allows us to systematically analyse the structure, organisation and development of texts.

The concepts of genre and register, which explain the interrelationships between language, text and context are outlined below together with other important terms.

Genre

We define genre as a staged purposeful social process — genres, in other words, are goal oriented, and work towards these goals in steps. (Martin 1989: 34)

Language evolves over time to achieve particular purposes as people develop ways of behaving and interacting with each other within a particular culture. Systemic-functional linguistics is interested in analysing how the **context of culture** (Malinowski 1935) influences the nature of the language we use. The concept of genre has been developed within a systemic-functional linguistic framework and describes the ways we use spoken and written language to achieve social purposes within a culture. Broadly speaking, genres are the patterned discourse structures which have developed in a culture over time as social demands are placed upon language. The concept of genre is an abstraction: it involves an averaging of the structure of those texts which aim to fulfil the same purpose. For example, if we took all the general practitioner consultations within Australia they would not all be the same but they would have a recurring structure which effective participants in these consultations recreate. Genres also reflect the ever changing nature of society and culture and therefore continue to be established and to change over time.

Genres vary from culture to culture according to the values, beliefs and expectations of speakers within those different cultures. Examples of spoken
genres within the Australian cultural context include:

- an enquiry about further education courses
- a recount of a recent cricket match
- a personal anecdote within a casual conversation
- making a booking to travel by plane
- making an appointment at the dentist.

Within a cultural context, genres exhibit typical ways of beginning, progressing and ending. We can refer to this as the generic or schematic structure (Martin 1989). Native speakers are very familiar with the way in which the overall structure unfolds as interactions proceed, and this enables them to make predictions about the kinds of things which are likely to be said. However, for second language learners the anticipated structure of a genre may need to be explicitly taught.

A generic structure analysis of a consultation with a general practitioner in Australia is outlined below for Text 1.1. The right hand column identifies the typical stages in the structure of the discourse. You will notice that the names of the stages reflect the function of the stage.
Text 1.1 Consultation with a general practitioner

D = Doctor
P = Patient

Discourse Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D:</th>
<th>Come in and take a seat.</th>
<th>Opening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Thanks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>What seems to be the trouble?</td>
<td>Eliciting Symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I've got this rash on my arm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Has it been itchy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>When did it first appear?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>About a week ago.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Any other symptoms? Like sore eyes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes my eyes have been stinging a little.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Have you been putting anything on the rash?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Only some calamine lotion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Can you think of anything which may have caused it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Food or anything?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Well it started after I'd been gardening on the weekend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OK roll your sleeve up and I'll take a look. Turn your arm over. Uh uh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open your mouth and I'll look at your throat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OK now tilt your head back and I'll have a look at your eyes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OK you can roll your sleeve down now.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I see. What should I do about it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>I'll give you some capsules to take and some cream for the arm. Rub the cream in twice a day and it should clear up. If not come back and see me and we might run some tests to check for allergic reactions OK?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Fine. Thanks doctor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>OK bye.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>See ya.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stages labelled in Text 1.1 are the obligatory stages which must be present in a general practitioner consultation in Australia where people expect the structure to be:
Opening ^ Eliciting of symptoms ^ Examination ^ Diagnosis ^ Treatment ^ Closing. (Note: ^ means followed by.)

It is also possible for the genre to include stages which are optional, such as:
- a patient enquiry (about medications or on alternative forms of treatment etc)
- a prognosis (where the doctor will give the patient some indication of the time frame and stages of recovery).
From a generic analysis we can see how the stages are marked by a shift in grammar and how grammar is linked to the functional purpose of the stages. In the classroom this enables us to teach grammar in context. For example, in Text 1.1 we see the following broad links between grammar and the first four stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Formulaic phrases of greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliciting symptoms</td>
<td>Various question structures and corresponding answer structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>Imperative structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>Statements with high modality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TASK 1.1** Using the table below label the generic stages of Text 1.2, which is a simple service encounter in a local grocer shop in Australia. We don’t expect you to know the labels linguists use, but try to use labels which describe the function of each stage. Remember that a stage can bridge a number of turns at talk.

**Text 1.2 Minimal service encounter**

G = Grocer
C = Customer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G: Can I help you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Yes I’d like some batteries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: What kind?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Two double As thanks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: OK. That’ll be $1.20.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Thanks (handing over money).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: There you go. Bye.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Thanks. See ya.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obligatory and optional stages in Text 1.2 are labelled in Text 1.2A. You will note that the first stage is an optional one (marked in parentheses) as it is possible for the service encounter to commence with the sales request. Other optional stages could include a sales enquiry where the customer asks for more information about the goods being purchased.
Text 1.2A Minimal service encounter with stages marked

Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G:</th>
<th>Can I help you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>Yes I’d like some batteries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G:</td>
<td>What kind?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>Two double As thanks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G:</td>
<td>OK. That’ll be $1.20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>Thanks. [handing over money]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G:</td>
<td>There you go. Bye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>Thanks. See ya.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stages

| (Sales initiation) |
| Sales request |
| Sales compliance |
| Sale |
| Purchase |
| Purchase closure |
| Finish |

(After Halliday and Hasan 1985: 59–61)

The two examples of genres analysed in Texts 1.1 and 1.2 demonstrate how the stages of various genres evolve over time and can be predicted by native speakers. This structural information is invaluable to students who are trying to learn how language operates within the second language culture. The structure of discourse can be explicitly taught to students in the classroom, and they can develop some predictive skills which will assist them as they try to engage in spoken interactions outside the classroom.

Register

Within the broader cultural context, the use of spoken discourse varies from one social situation to another. Systematic–functional linguistics is also interested in analysing how the context of situation (Malinowski 1935) influences the nature of the language we use. The linguistic choices a speaker makes in any social situation are influenced by three contextual variables (field, tenor and mode) which together determine the language register. The register of spoken discourse results from the interaction of these variables within a particular context of situation. The three contextual variables which operate within every context of situation and influence the language choices a person makes are called the register variables (Halliday).

Commonly in second language teaching register has been described as a feature of language which is linked to the person being addressed, and the choices have ranged between formal and informal. The definition of register offered by systemic–functional linguistics is more precise and goes further than seeing variation in register as being simply a reaction to the person who is being addressed. Each of the register variables is defined below.

Field

Field is the social activity which is taking place and what is being talked about in a social situation. Some examples of field from the Spoken Discourse Project included:

- sponsorship for immigration
- books
• workplace tasks
• flight information at the travel agent.

Tenor
Tenor is concerned with the roles and relationships of the interactants, including:
• their relative status in terms of power, expertise and so on
• their feelings towards each other and the topic under discussion
• how much previous contact they may have had with each other.

In the *Spoken Discourse Project* data the relationships of interactants included:
• friends
• lecturer and student
• receptionist and patient
• public service officer and member of the public.

As conversation involves immediate person to person interaction, the tenor register variable is particularly significant. Conversation generally develops through dynamic negotiations between the interactants. This is in contrast to written discourse, or to texts which are written to be spoken, where the writer has more time to plan the text which is finally produced and the text is not normally negotiated with the reader or listener.

Poynton (1985: 77), drawing on the work of Halliday, identifies three different dimensions of social relationships which will be present to different and shifting extents in all spoken interactions:
Contact: a dimension of social distance or intimacy
Power: a dimension which involves force, authority, status or expertise
Affect: an attitudinal dimension concerned with attitude or emotion towards the addressee or towards the topic under discussion.

Figure 1.1 (after Poynton 1985) illustrates how a relationship can occur at different points on the continuum of each dimension.

**POWER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>equal</th>
<th>unequal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**CONTACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>frequent</th>
<th>occasional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**AFFECT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>high</th>
<th>low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Mode**

Put simply, mode is concerned with the channel of communication; that is, with whether the interaction occurs face to face, by telephone or in writing. However, to understand mode more precisely, we need to consider the idea of *distance* in communication, and how this affects the role which language plays in any interaction (Martin 1984). As language becomes more distant in time and space from what it is describing, the language changes. For example, if we attend the annual New Year’s Eve fireworks display in Sydney, our comments during the display might be something like this:

- Oh wow!
- Look at that!
- That’s the best!
- I love those!
- That’s a fantastic blue!

Here there is no need to name the fireworks we are observing – the comments convey our enjoyment of the display as well as our joint observation of it. However, in a descriptive report of the event the language would play a different and more complex role as it would need to recreate the display for the reader. We may read something like this:

> The annual New Year’s Eve fireworks display last night was voted as the best so far by all who saw it. The exploding balls of stars seemed to rise higher and to be more vivid and varied in colour than ever before. The cries of pleasure from the people who had taken up vantage points under the bridge continued through the whole display, rising to a crescendo when the final display saw the bridge crying a shower of sparkling white tears which cascaded from the road level to the water below.

The data gathered in the *Spoken Discourse Project* varied in terms of the channel of communication (as some interactions were face to face and others occurred over the telephone) and also in their distance from the actual context they were describing. Some interactions:

- accompanied the action being referred to, or
- constituted the action, or
- commented on completed actions.

**Register and grammar**

Each of the three register variables, field, tenor and mode, influence the grammar and vocabulary choices which speakers make. These variables influence choices from the lexicogrammatical systems of the language in the ways outlined below.
Field is reflected in choices of content words through:

- verb selections (i.e., action verbs or verbs of feeling, thinking, having and so on)
- nouns and nominal groups
- circumstances (expressions of time, place and manner which are realised through prepositional and adverbial phrases).

Tenor is reflected in interpersonal choices which are seen through the use of:

- modality (i.e., expressions of probability or tentativeness)
- modulation (i.e., expressions of obligation, necessity or attitude)
- clause type (i.e., declarative, interrogative or imperative).

Mode is reflected in the cohesive ties throughout a text, such as:

- thematic organisation (or what is given first position prominence in the clause)
- the links between the different parts of the text reflected in conjunctions, pronouns etc.

Figure 1.2 is a model, developed by Derewianka (1990: 19), which illustrates the relationships between context, genre, texts, register and grammar.

Figure 1.2 The relationships between context, text and register
Systemic-functional linguistics in the classroom

Over the past two decades we have been concerned with teaching students to use spoken language appropriately and to understand how language reflects the second language culture. Systemic-functional linguistics provides a precise way of explaining to students:

• how texts are structured
• how they reflect the second language culture
• how grammar and vocabulary choices are influenced by the social context.

A typology of spoken interactions

A number of writers (Brown and Yule 1983; McCarthy 1991) have suggested that spoken interactions fall predominantly into the following two categories, which are sometimes referred to as the overall functional motivation for interactions:

Transactional language involves the exchange of some form of service or information. Some examples of transactionally motivated texts would be seeking information about a job or calling an ambulance.

Interactional language involves the creation and maintenance of personal relations. Some examples of interactionally motivated texts would be speaking to a boyfriend over the phone or chatting to a neighbour over the garden fence.

Eggins (1990:7) uses the terms interpersonal and pragmatic for these two major types of functional motivation. She defines these terms as:

Interpersonal motivation: interactions which are motivated by the creation, maintenance or exploration of affective bonds of attitudes, inclinations, obligations etc (eg casual conversation).

Pragmatic motivation: interactions which are motivated by the achievement of specific, practical, usually tangible objectives (eg buying and selling encounters).

Eggins combines this concept of functional motivation with Poynton’s notion of tenor dimensions to provide a useful typology which categorises spoken interactions. This is illustrated in Figure 1.3.

This typology shows how spoken interactions can be broadly identified as primarily interpersonally motivated or primarily pragmatically motivated. Many spoken interactions may, of course, contain a mixture of both the interpersonal and the pragmatic. However, for teaching purposes, we can begin to classify the kinds of spoken texts we wish to introduce according to whether they emphasise pragmatic or interpersonal motivation.
Eggins uses the terms *conversation* and *encounters* to identify the different categories and subcategories of interactions involved. These are outlined in Table 1.1 using examples from the *Spoken Discourse Project* data.
Table 1.1 Categories of spoken interactions (after Eggins 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Subclassification</th>
<th>Example from project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Conversations where the participants have equal power in the interaction</td>
<td>Mother chatting for the first time to her son’s new friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confirming</td>
<td>Interactions where the participants are in close or continual contact and therefore have developed affective attitudes or feelings towards each other</td>
<td>Two long-term friends attending a book club meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Conversations where there is unequal power between the participants in the interaction</td>
<td>Teacher and student talking at an end-of-course party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounters</td>
<td>Factual</td>
<td>Interactions which are predominantly oriented towards giving or seeking information</td>
<td>A woman enquiring on behalf of her husband how to apply for membership of a professional association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Interactions which involve obtaining or supplying goods and services</td>
<td>A woman telephoning the dental receptionist to arrange an appointment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of SFL for analysing language in the classroom

We have outlined some of the concepts from systemic–functional theory which are helpful in the language classroom and we have presented a typology of spoken interactions. Together they can provide a useful framework for analysing samples of natural spoken discourse for teaching purposes because they enable the teacher to identify:

- the functional motivation of the text (eg interpersonal)
- the general social purpose of the text (eg factual encounter or polite casual conversation)
- the genre and therefore the schematic stages within the text
- how the context and the language work together through the register variables
- how the register variables of field, tenor and mode are realised in the lexicogrammatical choices in the text
- the role of tenor in the text.

The teacher can use the insights provided by systemic-functional linguistics and the typology when deciding which aspects of text analysis should be the focus of classroom tasks and activities for different groups of learners.
An illustration

The analysis of Text 1.3 illustrates how these key concepts can assist us to analyse authentic spoken discourse for use with language learners. (This transcript was originally used as part of the NCELTR National Literacy Project 1990.)

Text 1.3 Unscripted doctor’s consultation

I felt really crook

D = Doctor
P = Patient

D: Hello Judy.
P: Good morning.
D: Have a seat.
P: Ta.
D: How are you going?
P: I feel really bad. I think I’ve got what’s going around at work.
D: What’s that?
P: Well I woke up yesterday morning with this terrible sore throat. It felt really bad and I went to work though, because it was the first day of the sale you know and we were really busy. Anyway by 11 o’clock I felt really crook. I couldn’t even move my legs I was feeling so sore all over, pains everywhere. So then I went to Mr B and I said I’m sorry I just can’t stay any longer or I’ll drop. He told me I shouldn’t even have bothered to come in and I should go home to bed. Then this morning when I woke up I felt even worse. I’m all stuffed up and my head feels like it’s being squashed on the ground.
D: Have you had a cough at all?
P: No. It’s just my throat and the pains that’s really bad.
D: OK. I’ll just have a little look. Tilt your head back and I’ll have a sticky. Say aah.
P: What?
D: Open your mouth a little more. Thanks.
P: It hurts when I open it wide.
D: Mmm, yes it’s quite red. I think you’ve probably got a bad case of this flu that’s going around. I’ve had about forty patients with the very same thing you have this week. Most of the flu’s gone by this time of year, so it’s strange I’ve seen so much of it lately.
P: So how long do you think it will last? I want to be feeling better by the weekend, my sister’s daughter is getting married.
D: These viruses can hang around for a week to ten days sometimes. You
should be feeling a lot better by the weekend.
P: What’s your opinion on taking Vitamin C? Will that make me better sooner?
D: Well it probably won’t hurt you. Although it’s probably better for you just to take some Panadol. If your diet’s OK there’s usually no need to take extra vitamins. The best thing to do of course when you’ve got a virus is to make sure that you rest. Take it easy, just rest over the next few days and you’ll be right by Friday.
P: OK.
D: OK. Come back or ring me if you begin to feel worse. Alright now?
P: Thanks Doctor.
D: OK. See you later.
P: Bye.
D: Bye bye.

Analysis

Social purpose
Pragmatic – transactional (to obtain services for a medical condition)

Genre
General practitioner consultation

Schematic structure
Greeting ^ Eliciting of symptoms ^ Physical Examination ^ Diagnosis ^ Prognosis ^ Treatment Advice ^ Follow-up ^ Closure.

Register

Field
Medical setting and activity
Grammatical features:
(Lexical items related to a medical condition (pain, sore, flu, patients, vitamins)
Verbs related to different schematic stages
Focus on thinking and feeling during problem presentation (I feel really bad, I think I’ve got what’s going around at work.)
Focus on action during examination (tilt your head back, open your mouth)

Tenor
Doctor/patient relationship (ie one of unequal power where the doctor is in a position of authority through expert knowledge)
Medium affect where the doctor and patient appear to be relatively familiar
Medium contact through an ongoing doctor/patient relationship
Grammatical features:
(High incidence of pronouns especially I and you)
High use of certain forms of modality (really, just)
Some informal lexis related to affect and contact (Hello, Judy; I’ll have a sticky)

Mode
Spoken language jointly constructed in a face-to face situation
Grammatical features:
(Thematic ties relating to I as patient describes symptoms
Collocations such as cough, spit, stuff, throat)

Exchange structure analysis

Although we can transcribe whole pieces of connected spoken discourse as a static text, it is clear that spoken interactions between people are not static. When people are actually interacting in the spoken mode, they are engaging in a dynamic and unfolding use of language.

Exchange structure theory (Berry 1981) provides a framework for analysing the dynamic moves made by speakers during interactions. It takes a bottom up approach which is concerned with the move by move organisation of conversation and how each series of moves made by speakers is organised and executed (Pedler 1992). It is not concerned with whole text organisation. It provides a way of analysing the discourse strategies used by speakers to negotiate meaning within the stages of a genre. An exchange involves either:

• giving information in a knowledge exchange (these conversational moves are labelled K when analysing the exchange structure)
• giving/accompanying goods and services in an action exchange (these conversational moves are labelled A when analysing the exchange structure).

In the following discussion we will concern ourselves with examining knowledge exchanges only. Berry suggests that knowledge exchanges are concerned with the negotiation or transmission of knowledge. They consist of a sequence of four functional slots in which the speakers can take up one of two roles:

• the primary knower (K1) who is the person who already knows the information (Berry 1981: 9) and who has the power which comes from being able to display knowledge
• the secondary knower (K2) who is the person to whom the information is imparted (Berry 1981: 10).

The speakers can also make follow up or feedback moves (these are labelled as f when analysing the exchange structure).

The four part exchange in Text 1.4 illustrates the basic pattern of speaker roles in a knowledge exchange.
Text 1.4 Noeline's wedding

K2 When's Noeline's wedding?
K1 December.
K2f Oh!
K1f Yeah.

Changes in this basic pattern indicate that something unusual is occurring and that the speaker may be using a particular discourse strategy, such as challenging, summarising, clarifying or hypothesising, to shift the way he or she is positioned in the interaction. Consider how this occurs in Text 1.5.

Text 1.5 Membership enquiry

K2 Can you tell me how I would go about applying for new membership, then?
K1 Well, I’m not sure you’re eligible to apply any more. You’ll have to write to us. OK? Right?
K2f Oh ...
K2ch I've got one of your brochures in front of me. It says I should be able to get information over the phone. Is that right?

When we analyse this exchange we see that:

• the K1 speaker is in a position of control as the one who has access to the required information
• the K2 speaker initially assumes a conventional secondary knower position by requesting that the required information be imparted
• K1 responds with minimal information which does not fulfil the request and then attempts to close the interaction with OK? Right?
• K2 initially responds with a follow-up move but then challenges the K1 speaker by:
  - providing K1 information with I've got one of your brochures in front of me
  - making a further K2 move of asking a question which places a social obligation on the K1 speaker to provide an answer
• the K2 speaker uses the discourse strategy of challenging to renegotiate her position within the interaction.

The value of exchange structure for analysing language in the classroom

We can use this type of analysis to understand how knowledge and action are negotiated at each stage of a text (see Martin 1992). Learners can be taught the basic patterns that may occur in unproblematic exchanges as well as discourse strategies for renegotiating their position as speakers in more difficult exchanges.
TASK 1.2 Consider Text 1.6. What strategic moves would you focus student attention on?

Text 1.6 Confirming an appointment
P = Patient
R = Receptionist

P: That’s alright … um, I’m just calling to confirm an appointment with Doctor X for the first of October.
R: Oh
P: Because it was so far in advance I was told [to]
R: [I see what you mean, to see
if she’s going to be in that day.
P: That’s right.
R: Oh we may not know yet.
P: Oh I see.
R: First of October … Edith … yes [receptionist consults appointment book]
P: Yes.
R: There she is. Okay you made one [what’s your name?
P: [at nine fift…
R: Got it got it.

Analysis
In this interaction we can see the following:
• There are two pieces of information which need to be given by the receptionist (that the doctor will be on duty and that the appointment has been made).
• During the interaction the patient is in a K2 position because although she knows the particulars of the appointment, she does not know whether the doctor will be on duty and if the appointment has actually been made.
• The receptionist is in the K1 position and has the control because she knows the doctor’s schedule and she has records of all appointments made.
• Interestingly, at the end of the interaction the receptionist moves into a K2 position when she asks the patient her name but the patient ignores her request for information and maintains a K2 position when she asks about the appointment through giving the time.
• A significant move occurs midway through the interaction when the receptionist states, Oh we may not know yet. It would be possible for the interaction to end here if the K2 interactant interpreted this as the end of the available information, and many second language learners may well believe that they cannot be told if the appointment has been made.
Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) is associated with the North American discourse analysis tradition. Conversation analysts initially study the smallest units of conversation (Goffman 1967, 1971, 1981; Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). They observe what happens between the participants in a conversation and what conversational norms and patterns emerge as an interaction unfolds. In this chapter we only briefly consider two aspects of conversational analysis, and teachers who are interested in this approach should see the reference list for further reading. The two aspects which we will consider are turn taking and turn types which have been adapted from Cook (1989: 52–54).

Turn taking

Turn taking is concerned with when and how speakers take turns in spoken conversation, and can be aligned to types of conversation or different features of conversation. For example:

- **Overlaps in conversation** mark instances of disagreement, urgency, annoyance, or a high degree of competition for a turn.
- **Little competition for turns** marks interactions which are more cooperatively negotiated.
- **Pauses between turns** may indicate that a speaker is searching for the correct response or is signalling that an unanticipated response is likely.
- **Longer turns** signal their endings by such things as pauses, laughter or fillers such as *anyhow* or *so*.

Turn types

The main turn type which we will consider here is adjacency pairs, which are the patterns which occur in conversation when the utterance of one speaker is likely to be followed by a particular kind of response. The response can be either a preferred response or a dispreferred response. Table 1.2 outlines some examples of adjacency pairs. For a more extensive explanation of turn types see Cook (1989: 55–57).

Table 1.2  Examples of adjacency pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Preferred response</th>
<th>Dispreferred response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Refusal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>Fulfilment of request</td>
<td>Refusal to fulfil request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A dispreferred response is typically accompanied by a justification or an explanation.
The value of conversation analysis for analysing language in the classroom

Text 1.7 was collected in the Spoken Discourse Project and illustrates turn taking and turn type.

**Text 1.7 Travel agent to customer**
A = Agent  
C = Customer

A: Do you want me to hold you some seats?  
C: ... No... I’m just finding out the price. I’m not sure whether I can go yet.

**Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn taking</th>
<th>Participant roles</th>
<th>vendor initiates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>customer responds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pause</td>
<td>marked response: negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn type</th>
<th>Adjacency pair</th>
<th>question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negative answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Response type | dispreferred with a justification and explanation |

In summary, we can describe this interaction as an adjacency pair in which:
- the customer is asked a question and makes a response
- the question appears to be perceived as a challenge by the customer and she pauses before replying, indicating a dispreferred response
- the dispreferred response is accompanied by:
  - a justification, *I’m just finding out the price*
  - an explanation, *I’m not sure whether I can go yet.*

Conversation analysis can be a helpful tool for the language teacher who wishes to focus on turn taking and turn types. Some of the aspects which can be explored in the classroom are outlined in Table 1.3.
Table 1.3  Conversational analysis and language learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of CA</th>
<th>Focus of classroom activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Turn taking organisation and sequencing | • similarities and differences in turn taking conventions between different cultures and languages  
• turn taking conventions in English  
• turn taking conventions in different social situations  
• the degree to which overlaps and pauses are tolerated in different cultures and languages  
• the degree to which turn taking is cooperative, as opposed to competitive, in different contexts  
• the signals, discourse markers and nonverbal signs by which speakers can gain turns or give up turns in spoken discourse  
• paralinguistic (non-verbal) conventions such as eye contact, body posture and position  
• the nature of preferred as opposed to dispreferred responses  
• the language which typically accompanies preferred or dispreferred responses  
• similarities and differences between turn types across different cultures and languages  
• the role of turn types in negotiating spoken interaction  
• strategies within turn types; for example:  
  - repair which means correcting your own words or the other speaker's words  
  - clarification which can be done through reformulating the gist or upshot of what has been said |

TASK 1.3  Read the following short extract from Text 1.6 between the receptionist and the patient. Use Table 1.3 to analyse the extract, and then think about the implications of your analysis for teaching.

K2 Because it was so far in advance I was told [to]  
K1 [I see what you mean, to see if she’s going to be in that day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of CA</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Teaching implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turn taking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pragmatics

Pragmatics is also concerned with how meaning is created in context (Levinson 1983; Leech 1983) and therefore involves analysing the meanings and intentions of speakers within the particular social setting of the language interaction. Pragmatics examines how interactants use and understand appropriate utterances in relation to various situational contexts. For example, the statement:

I've got to go to the bank

occurring in a conversation five minutes before the bank closes may be an apology that the conversation must be cut short.

Pragmatic studies have drawn on the work in speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) and the conversational maxims of Grice (1975). Speech act theory examines:

• what it is that certain pieces of language are doing or what role they are performing (e.g., apologising, requesting, promising, threatening, accepting, rejecting)
• how it is that people draw upon their knowledge of the world in successful communicative exchanges.

Conversational maxims are derived from what Grice (1975) called the cooperative principle, which is based on the assumption that in any interaction the speaker is potentially obeying four conversational maxims:

- be true - the maxim of quality
- be brief - the maxim of quantity
- be relevant - the maxim of relevance
- be clear - the maxim of manner

These principles make it possible for a conversational participant not only to relate to the overt meanings, but also to trace possible hidden or indirect meanings. Let’s consider the maxim of relevance in the following scenario:

I am engaged in conversation with a friend and I say something. My friend responds with something which appears odd or disconnected. My friend is in violation of the maxim of relevance. This odd response triggers in me a need to search for the intended but hidden meaning and I ask myself:

What assumption could I add into the total meaning here that would make my friend’s contribution not irrelevant?

Pragmaticists have also explored:

• the conversational principles of politeness (Lakoff 1973)
• the way in which cooperation and the maintenance of social relationships acknowledge the fact that people need to maintain face in conversational interactions (Brown and Levinson 1978; Goffman 1967)
• cross-cultural communication misunderstandings, assumptions and expectations because pragmatics provides explanations of why
communication breakdowns may occur (Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts 1979; Roberts, Jupp and Davies 1992; Willing 1992).

The value of pragmatics for analysing language in the classroom

The major unit of analysis in pragmatics is the illocutionary act. The performance of a particular piece of language is analysed and given meaning in relation to the whole context of the interaction. Text 1.8, from the Spoken Discourse Project, illustrates how the meaning of an illocutionary act is derived from the whole context of the interaction.

Text 1.8 Service encounter in a bureaucratic setting

I = Information officer
C = Caller

I: Hello. Enquiries.
C: Hello. Can I talk to somebody about the sponsorship scheme for migrants?
I: Yes. You can talk to me. What can I help you with?

Analysis

The word Enquiries, which is a statement, acts here as an offer of service.

Speaker I’s second illocutionary act is fulfilling several different speech functions at once and exemplifies a complex illocutionary act (Thomas 1983):

• Speaker I gives a Yes which responds grammatically to the previous interrogative in an adjacency pair of a yes/no question and an answer.
• I also responds pragmatically with an identification (You can talk to me).
• I also gives a further offer of service (What can I help you with?).

Pragmatics offers teachers the opportunity to explore with students:

• the appropriateness of utterances in relation to various situational contexts
• what pieces of language do or what roles they perform
• how knowledge of the world is essential for successful communication
• how speakers obey certain principles in conversation
• cross-cultural communication.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse theorists propose that language use is not neutral and that language analysis should take account of the way in which linguistic exchanges are mediated by differences between speakers’ world views, social purposes, intentions, age, race, gender and so on. These theorists include Martin (1992), who addresses ideology as another level of context within the SFL model; Fairclough 1989, 1992; Fowler et al 1979; Kress 1989; and Kress and Hodge 1979.
These theorists:

- examine the structures, functions and forms of language (as do text linguists)
- view language as ideological in nature
- view language as a medium for social control
- see all texts, even the most seemingly unremarkable and everyday texts, as critical sites for the negotiation of power and ideology
- aim to *denaturalise* discourse in order to reveal how particular discourse practices act to the detriment of certain social groups and individuals
- investigate the power relationships of particular discourse practices within areas such as:
  - professional practice (e.g., the law)
  - multi-cultural and multi-racial settings
  - gender-related differences
  - literacy practices
- examine the social power relationships between interactants and how these affect and motivate choices of linguistic form
- presuppose that language is doing more than merely representing a neutral state of affairs.

**The value of critical discourse for analysing language in the classroom**

Classroom discussion about power relationships and the available target culture responses to inappropriate behaviour can empower students. The *Spoken Discourse Project* data provides numerous examples of ways in which native speakers overcome verbal barriers to obtaining goods and services or information. Text analyses show critical points in dialogues where opportunities for shifting the balance of power exist.

In the *Spoken Discourse Project* data, it was noted that receptionists and information officers:

- have considerable gate-keeping status in that they often control access to services and levels of information
- can easily categorise their interlocutor as a *wrong* or *difficult* enquirer and make communication difficult
- can exclude their interlocutor from services or withhold information or cut them short.

Text 1.9 is from the *Spoken Discourse Project* and shows how a person making an enquiry in a bureaucratic setting (a Technical and Further Education setting) was able to gain a more equal power relationship with an information officer.

**Text 1.9 Enquiring about courses**

CIO = Course information officer
E = Enquirer

CIO: Course enquiries. Can I help you?
E: Hello, I’d like to make an enquiry about an upholstery course, please.
CIO: Upholstery course?
E: Yeah.
CIO: They’re trades courses.
E: They’re trades courses.
CIO: That’s right, which means you ah must be an apprentice to do the course.
E: Uh, huh.
CIO: And ah, once you’ve got an apprenticeship well then ah you’ll be able to apply for the course.
E: Right, and how would you go about doing that.
CIO: You’ve gotta find yourself a job in the industry.
E: Oh I see.
CIO: And they indenture you as an apprentice for a period of time.
E: Right.
CIO: Within that time you’ve gotta fulfil the requirements, uhm that are given through the ah ah the apprenticeship board.
E: Oh I see.
CIO: Ahm basically one day a week you come to Tech here.
E: Oh right.
CIO: And four days a week you work.
E: Yeah.
CIO: You work with your employer.
E: There’s no course available for the home handyman like me, to do it?
CIO: No that’s the only...
E: That’s what I was really interested in.
CIO: That’s the only
E: Rather than doing it as a profession, I just wanted to ...
CIO: No we’ve got nothing at the moment. Well in the future we may have but ...
E: Oh yeah.
CIO: But at the moment we don’t, we don’t have anything like that.
E: Alright.
CIO: Ahm.
E: Yeah I would be advised to ring up later to ask if ...
CIO: Well ... I mean we’re always running ah hobby courses here there and everywhere, you know, and that at the present stage we’ve got, we’ve only got it for trade.
E: There’s not another hobby course at any other Tech that you know of?
CIO: Not as far as I know. You can ring up the TAFE Information Centre
E: Oh alright.
CIO: On 212
E: 212
CIO: 44
E: 44
CIO: 00
E: Right.
CIO: And they …
E: They might be able to …
CIO: That's a general course information section for TAFE courses.
E: Yeah.
CIO: Ahm but ah that's the only thing that I can suggest at the moment.
E: Alright.
CIO: Ahm we've got one called Trimmer Refresher, but that's only for basically … preference is normally given to those people that are or have got a trade course background.
E: I see.
CIO: Or, or have, ah got some knowledge in the that sort of industry.
E: Right.
CIO: Yeah
E: OK well thanks very much. I'll ring up the information centre.
CIO: Yep you're right.
E: Bye.
CIO: Bye then.

Analysis
Text 1.9 is not a socially neutral text, but is indicative of many which occur when people approach bureaucracies for information. Officers in bureaucratic settings often have set or well-practised pieces which they engage in with people who approach them for information. The Course Information Officer (CIO) in Text 1.9 is in a position of social power in that he is able to give information to the caller or withhold it. He has the option to give minimal information or to assist the caller as much as possible by referring to the written course information texts which are at his disposal.

The CIO has a spiel which he uses to exclude inappropriate callers (Pedler 1992). The spiel continues through a number of turns as he explains the apprenticeship system and its relationship to study at technical college. The CIO then attempts to close down the exchange by responding to the caller's request for something other than a trades course:

E: There's no course available for the home handyman like me, to do it.
CIO: No that's the only…
However, E persists and forces the exchange to continue through another attempt by the CIO to close the information exchange. The caller continues to express her needs until the CIO admits that hobby courses are conducted:

E: That’s what I was really interested in.
CIO: That’s the only
E: Rather than doing it as a profession, I just wanted to …
CIO: No we’ve got nothing at the moment. Well in the future we may have but …

The CIO then attempts again to close the interaction:

E: Oh yeah.
CIO: But at the moment we don’t, we don’t have anything like that.
E: Alright.
CIO: Ahm.

Here the caller needs to use a strategy to come away from the exchange with some information which she can use. She states a procedure to the CIO who then admits that there are hobby courses run in various locations:

E: Yeah I would be advised to ring up later to ask if …
CIO: Well … I mean we’re always running ah hobby courses here there and everywhere, you know, and that at the present stage we’ve got, we’ve only got it for trade.

This piece of information given by the CIO then enables the caller to ask a direct question about the type of course which she wants and this leads to the CIO giving her another telephone number.

E: There’s not another hobby course at any other Tech that you know of?
CIO: Not as far as I know. You can ring up the TAFE Information Centre
E: Oh alright.
CIO: On 212
E: 212
CIO: 44
E: 44
CIO: 00
E: Right.
CIO: And they …
E: They might be able to …
CIO: That’s a general course information section for TAFE courses.

If we analyse Text 1.6 again, this time from a critical discourse perspective, we can see that this typifies many information exchanges in institutionalised settings.

Receptionist: Doctor’s rooms can you hold the line for a moment?
Patient: Yes.
Receptionist: Thanks.
{Receptionist keeps caller waiting on line}
Receptionist: Hello
Patient: Hello
Receptionist: Sorry to keep you waiting.
Patient: That's alright ... um, I'm just calling to confirm an appointment
with Doctor X for the first of October
Receptionist: Oh
Patient: Because it was so far in advance I was told [to...]
Receptionist: [I see what you mean,
to see if she's going to be in that day.
Patient: That's right.
Receptionist: Oh we may not know yet.
Patient: Oh I see.
Receptionist: First of October ... Edith ... yes [receptionist consults appointment
book]
Patient: Yes.
Receptionist: There she is. Okay you made one [what's your name?]
Patient: [at nine fift...]
Receptionist: Got it got it.

Gollin (1994: 31) makes the following observations about this discourse.

_The receptionist demonstrates her gatekeeping role by:_
- keeping the patient waiting
- interrupting the patient’s explanation
- being vague about the availability of the doctor - ‘Oh we may not know yet’.

_The patient reinforces her own subordinate role by:_
- accepting the receptionist’s routine apology
- using modifiers such as ‘just’
- using passive voice - ‘I was told’
- responding to the receptionist’s vagueness with a mild ‘I see’.

Bureaucracies are notoriously difficult to deal with over the phone and many people give up without being given the information they require. However, it is possible to adopt strategies which enable a caller to gain more control of the situation. In her exchange with the Course Information Officer in Text 1.9, the caller was able to leave the exchange with some information by gently persisting in stating her exact needs. A critical approach to texts enables us to look beyond the words to the social and ideological setting of the text and to analyse how the text represents the larger social structures and institutions which affect our lives. As Gollin (1994: 31) states:
By bringing these aspects of the interaction to the attention of the learners they can begin to see that there are a range of spoken language options open to them and that there are specific points in the discourse when they can exercise them. They may or may not choose to be more assertive in a similar situation. This will depend on their own analysis of the relative costs and benefits to themselves but at least they have the power to make more informed choices.

Critical discourse analysis is in its early stages of application to language teaching, but when combined with other forms of textual analysis it can make us aware that language is not socially neutral and we can begin to provide students with:

- knowledge about how language is socially powerful and ideological in nature
- skills in how to renegotiate power relationships within an interaction.

Summary

The theoretical approaches outlined in this chapter provide different perspectives on the analysis of spoken discourse. Nevertheless, they have a number of principles in common which contribute to the principles of spoken discourse analysis adopted in this handbook:

- Spoken language occurs within cultural and social contexts.
- Spoken language is used to achieve different cultural and social purposes.
- There is a systematic relationship between spoken language and the context in which it is used.
- Spoken language is used to construct and maintain interpersonal and pragmatic social relationships.
- Spoken texts are dynamic and are sites for the negotiation of meaning and power.
- Spoken discourse needs to be analysed from a socio-cultural perspective and the analysis needs to give a socially situated account of the text.
- Spoken language needs to be taught as connected text and not as sequences of single utterances, phrases or words.

In this chapter we have very briefly introduced some of the major theories associated with the analysis of spoken discourse. In presenting these theories we have proposed that exploring and analysing authentic spoken language from a discourse analysis perspective is a worthwhile pursuit for language and literacy teachers. In the chapters which follow we highlight further theoretical and practical considerations for teachers wishing to analyse and teach authentic spoken discourse within their classrooms.
Chapter 2
Spoken language in society

Socially-based linguistics enables us to analyse the interrelationship between the language of a text and the social context of its use, while ethnographic research enables us to understand how people use language as members of society. In Chapter 1 we examined some of the socially-based approaches to investigating and teaching language which have been adopted in the field of second language teaching in the last decade. In this chapter we turn to an exploration of some of the aspects of ethnographic research and the relevance of ethnography to language teaching.

Ethnographic research

Ethnography is a systematic attempt to discover the knowledge groups of people have learned and are using to organise their behaviour (Spradley: 1979). Ethnographic studies of language are concerned with exploring how people make use of social knowledge when communicating in social contexts. Ethnographic language research focuses on language as social practice and is concerned with such questions as:

• When and why do people choose to speak and when to write?
• When do people choose to approach someone face-to-face and when do they choose to telephone?
• When and why do people decide to remain silent?
• What are the culturally accepted procedures for contacting people in various social positions?
• How and why do people develop personal relationships with others and when do they keep their distance?
• How does spoken language integrate with gestures and with written language?
• What role does language play in social practices?

Effective users of language understand that language is a social meaning system governed by the practices of the broader culture and by the social conventions of the more immediate social situations in which it is used. In other words, they know how language works in these cultural and social contexts. Ethnographic research works hand in hand with linguistic research and enables us to understand how language shapes, and is shaped by, the social practices within the different situations of our daily lives.

In seeking to analyse the role which spoken language plays in society and in individual lives, we need to understand how it operates in different contexts of social life (eg in the community, at work and in education). We also need to know how spoken language relates to written language and to other semiotic systems, such as visual and numerical systems of representation, and to the non-verbal signals which we send one another.
Key concepts of ethnographic research

There have been many ethnographic studies of the literacy practices of literate societies. These studies have been concerned with exploring how different groups within literate societies use literacy in their daily lives. Heath’s early research into the literacy practices of communities in Carolina became a model of how ethnographic research could investigate language as social practice (Heath 1983). More recently, there have been a number of research projects which have investigated the language and literacy practices of people in various contexts of language use, such as the workplace. Publications from some of these research projects are listed in the reference section of this handbook and are available to the teacher to inform syllabus design and classroom practice.

Three key concepts underpin ethnographic research into the literacy practices of society. These concepts focus on the roles which written language plays in our lives. These three concepts are outlined below.

**Literacy domains**

... school, work, and community are different domains of literacy and...we need to develop ways of talking about literacy in these different domains.

(Barton and Ivanic 1991: 3)

Literacy domains are the range of different social contexts and settings where people make use of literacy in their daily lives. The concept of a domain of literacy allows us to identify or categorise the social environments, such as home, religion, entertainment, work and so on, where the use of literacy is embedded.

**Literacy practices**

...we approach literacy as a set of socially organised practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use.

(Scribner and Cole 1981: 236)

Literacy practices are to do with the concrete activities for which people use literacy, combined with the values, attitudes and meanings they attach to these activities in different social contexts. Literacy practices are concerned, therefore, both with ‘doing’ reading and writing and ‘knowing’ how it relates to broader social purposes and institutions. In other words they concern people’s views and opinions on their various literacy activities.

**Literacy events**

The notion of literacy event has its roots in the sociolinguistic idea of speech events...Literacy events are the particular activities in which literacy has a role; they may be regular repeated activities. Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilising literacy that people draw upon in a literacy event.

(Barton and Ivanic 1991: 5)
Literacy events are specific occasions on which literacy plays a role in the interaction between people, such as the discussion which may go on around the reading of a newspaper article or the composition of a letter of complaint. These concepts have their counterparts in broader language research and in this handbook we have expanded these terms to talk about:

- language domains
- language practices
- language events.

## Language domains

Social life can be divided into four broad domains of language use:

- family
- community
- work
- education.

Obviously language differs across these domains; for example, children use a form of language in the school playground which is unacceptable in the classroom and they are often chastised if they bring their playground talk into lessons. Similarly, in official situations it would be inappropriate and meaningless to use most of the interactions which occur in the home. The main issue for language teachers and researchers is to understand how much language and language practices differ from one domain to another.

In some domains, spoken language will be more dominant. For example, in the family the main means of communication is spoken language, while in the school context written language plays an equally important role.

### TASK 2.1

In the table below, list the types of language courses (if any) which are conducted to prepare students for the different domains of language use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Types of language courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>English for Further Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language practices

We need to use language effectively if we are to participate in sociocultural practices and to play our role as participants in the society and in the broader culture. To be able to do this, we need to understand the role which language plays in social practices. Language shapes how we relate to the world and how we relate to other people in it. We take this link between language and social practices for granted until social practices change, then – when we are confronted with a situation where the usual practices of language no longer operate – we realise how unconsciously we follow defined social and related language pathways. For example, in Australia, for many years, we telephoned Directory Assistance to ask for telephone numbers and we engaged in exchanges similar to Text 2.1.

Text 2.1 Telephoning for directory assistance
O = Operator
C = Caller

O: Directory assistance
C: Could I have the number for W Dess Glenmore Rd Paddington?
O: Just a moment ... That's 321 0984
C: 321
O: 0984
C: 0984
O: Yes
C: Thank you Bye
O: Bye

Now computerised telephone number data bases have been introduced and the answer we receive is from a computer (even though we make our request to a living, breathing telephone company employee who asks us to hold for the number). At first many of us were taken aback when we could not say thank you and goodbye and, in fact, some of us still said it to the computer. The social practice of enquiring for telephone numbers has changed and the discourse we use has changed with it. The structure of the exchange has been truncated and many of us are left feeling unsatisfied that we cannot thank the original telephone employee as our social education tells us we should do. Many people now squeeze a please into the original request and a thank you in before the computer activated voice gives us the number, as is demonstrated in Text 2.2. This then satisfies us that we have fulfilled the social obligation to be polite to someone doing us a service.
Text 2.2 Truncated directory enquiry
O = Operator
C = Caller
O: Directory assistance.
C: Could I please have the number for W Dess Glenmore Rd Paddington?
O: Hold for the number.
C: Thanks.

TASK 2.2 In the box below list any recent changes in social practices and the changes in discourse which have occurred as a consequence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social practice</th>
<th>Changes in discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>computerised telephone</td>
<td>truncated telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number database</td>
<td>number enquiry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language events

Spoken language forms a part of the sequences of events which make up our daily lives. Each encounter we have with another person can be seen as a language event. As ethnographic researchers, we are interested in analysing how native speakers use language in these language events. As language teachers, this knowledge enables us to understand what second language learners will need to learn in order to participate in similar events.

TASK 2.3 Let’s consider the social practices and the sequence of events which occur when Australians receive a telephone account in the mail. Answer the following questions.
1. How do you know that it is a telephone account before you open it?

2. What sections of the bill are you likely to read first?

3. When would you complain to the telephone company?

4. How can you pay the bill?

1. When Australians receive a telephone account in the mail they know that it is a telephone account before they open it because they recognise the logo of the telephone company on the envelope and because they are normally aware that it is time for their quarterly account.

2. Generally, when they open the bill they read the amount and the due date and then they may check for more details. They may question members of their household if the bill is high.

3. They may complain to the telephone company if the bill is unacceptably high.

4. If the amount they have been billed is acceptable, then they pay the bill, but they have a number of choices as to method of payment. They may:
   - pay in person at the local post office
   - write a cheque and mail it to the telephone company
   - use a credit card and note the particulars of their card on the bill before they post it
   - pay over the phone with their credit card through an automated system using the push button numbers on the telephone handset
   - pay over the phone with their credit card through an operator.

The telephone bill illustrates how people are engaged in the practices of the culture. They are individuals who own phones and use them to contact other members of the society. They are consumers of communication technology and they must pay for it. The telephone company has given them a number of alternate ways through which they can fulfil their side of the consumer bargain (ie a number of ways to pay).

When people pay their telephone bills they are using their knowledge of the culture and the society and they engage with a number of related spoken, written and numerical tasks as they:
   - read the account
   - make a complaint
   - engage in a service encounter at the post office
   - write a cheque
   - address an envelope
   - follow a spoken set of instructions to make an automated payment using the numbers on the telephone handset.

When researching spoken language we need to understand that language enables us to participate in the practices of our broader culture and in the more
immediate social practices of our day-to-day lives. We need to understand that
language is linked to our identity as social beings and with the social order in
which we live. This has enormous implications for the classroom, and as teachers
involved in teaching spoken language we need to ask ourselves a number of
questions each time we plan a course or a unit of work:

• Is it enough to teach only spoken language or only written language?
• What broader cultural knowledge do the learners need in order to use
spoken language effectively and to participate in the social practices of
which spoken language is an integral part?
• Are there written texts which accompany the spoken language in the social
context of use and which the learners need to control if they are to fulfil
social roles?
• Are there other spoken texts involved in the social situation?

Intertextuality

The more we research the use of language in society, the more we understand
that spoken language does not stand alone. Spoken language is related to other
spoken texts, to written texts and to other forms of representing meaning. This
interrelationship between texts is called *intertextuality* and it has implications for
the programming of language courses and lessons. Let us take a teaching unit on
health as an example.

When designing a unit of work around the topic of health it is helpful to
consider the visit to the general practitioner as a central event in a language event
sequence. A possible sequence of events in Australia is as follows:

| Make an appointment by telephone. | Report to the receptionist upon arrival at the surgery. | Engage in the consultation. | Go to the pharmacist to fill a prescription and engage in a service encounter. | Complete a medical insurance claim form for a government refund. | Read the instructions on the medication. |

This sequence of events, centred around a consultation with the general
practitioner, will vary across Australia. In some cases patients will not need to
make an appointment to visit their local doctor; or they may not need to
complete a medical insurance claim form, but will need to sign a form in the
doctor’s surgery if the doctor directly bills the government for patient services.

The issue illustrated here is that in order to teach the language related to health it
is important that students are given more than vocabulary and formulaic phrases.
They need to be shown how whole discourse operates in the contexts of health
so that they can participate effectively in the consultation and in the service
encounter at the pharmacist. They also need to be given knowledge about the
cultural and social practices which govern medical services and the relationship
between the spoken and written texts which they will encounter when
participating in the social practices of medical services.
Ethnographic research shows us that to enable language learners to become effective users of the language is to enable them to participate in the culture and in the society of the second language. To do this they need knowledge about:

- language
- the second language culture
- the society in which the second language is used
- how language and language practices change in different situations
- how one language text relates to other language texts in situations of language use.

Language learning for both native speakers and second language learners is a life-long process. Both groups need to learn new uses of language when they find themselves in new situations. Language teaching is about assisting students to increase their social repertoire through explicit intervention in the learning process.

**TASK 2.4**

In the table below outline an interrelated sequence of language events in which you have recently participated. How would this inform your teaching?

---

**Ethnographic research and the classroom**

In our view, language teaching within a rapidly changing world needs to be based on linguistic and ethnographic research and analysis. As society changes and the demands for second language learning increase across a range of contexts, the language teacher is no longer simply a classroom practitioner. Language teaching involves more than teaching students vocabulary and language structures. While vocabulary and language structures are two crucial aspects of language teaching and learning, it is also important to teach students:

- how effective language users make choices in vocabulary and grammar to create texts
- how these texts are related systematically to their social contexts of use
- how language is an integral part of cultural and social practices
- how language is ideological in nature and arises from cultural assumptions and positions.

Teachers will be familiar with some domains of language use because they are regular participants within those domains. However, even if we are regular participants, it is still worthwhile to check that we are fully conscious of the
language practices we engage in. In many instances teachers will need to undertake some research into contexts of language use in order to prepare their students adequately. For example, teachers who teach in workplaces find research into the language and social practices of the workplace is a necessary initial phase of their work. It is important in these contexts to understand how language actually works, rather than to assume some idealised version of how language ought to work.

The implications of ethnographic research into language practices are significant for the language teacher and the language classroom. In order to enable students to participate in social activities through language, we need to understand how language operates in the contexts they wish to access.

Collecting spoken texts

An ethnographic framework is needed when investigating contexts of language use, and in the remainder of this chapter we will look at some of the issues which arise in researching spoken texts in social contexts. We provide guidelines for collecting spoken texts and gathering knowledge about social practices by presenting three strategies which can be used when researching spoken language. We also offer guidelines for using tape recorders and microphones and point out some of the problems in collecting samples of spoken language and offer solutions.

In order to prepare students for the language they will hear in social contexts, it is important that the teacher hears the actual language of the context as well. We emphasise the word hear because it is not helpful to research spoken language by asking people What do you say? It is inevitable that they will give an idealised version of their language because they are concerned to give you what they see as the most acceptable version. As well as this, people never really think about what they say and so cannot usually remember accurately.

In 1983 the NSW Adult Migrant Education Service conducted an interesting research project into the language of childbirth. The aims of the project were to analyse the language of prenatal and delivery contexts in maternity hospitals and to produce language learning materials which would assist pregnant immigrant women from non-English-speaking backgrounds to develop the language skills relevant to these contexts. The project report noted the differences between what medical personnel thought they said in these contexts and what was revealed through tape recordings.

The necessity of using materials drawn from real situations is obvious. We compared samples of language doctors and nurses said they used with what was actually used. The words and word order were often markedly different because language functions (eg asking for information and giving instructions) can be expressed in so many different ways. A sister in an ante-natal clinic said she always asks:

‘Is your baby (still) moving?’
but she was actually recorded asking:

‘The baby’s moving?’

and

‘Is baby moving a lot or has it quietened down?’

She also said she always asks:

‘Do you feel alright?’

but was recorded asking:

‘How’ve you been?’

(Diesendorf et al 1983: 19)

**TASK 2.5** Decide on a specific context for research within a broader domain of language use. Ask participants in your chosen context what language they use when they engage in a specific task and note language samples in the first column in the table. Then record the actual language of the participants and note recorded language samples in the second column. In the third column make notes on the differences between what people thought they said and what they actually said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples of what people thought they said</th>
<th>Transcript of what people actually said</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Is your baby moving?                    | The baby’s moving?                      | • actual use was less formal  
  • actual use was a statement structure functioning as a question – relying on intonation rather than word order to signal the request for information |
Strategies for collecting samples of authentic language

Shadowing people
In order to know how language is used as part of social practices, it is important to observe people actually using language. Your role as researcher is to be a participant observer. Your task is to note what people are doing, what social tasks they are performing and what language is accompanying the tasks. It is helpful if you can shadow a regular participant in the context you are researching. In order to collect data in a systematic way it is important to have a framework for recording the data. For example, Table 2.1 was created for a spoken language research project into the food industry in Australia and was used by the researchers to systematise data while shadowing people in the workplace context (Joyce, Scheeres and Slade 1994).

TASK 2.6 Shadow someone in your chosen research context and complete Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Data collection table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of informant</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Interactants</th>
<th>Language samples</th>
<th>Written texts &amp; symbols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I see what U mean  21/11/07  3:24 PM  Page 39
**Recording spoken language**

It is essential to record samples of spoken language to enable you to analyse how the interactants create the discourse and what language features occur in the context. Recorded samples of language can also be used to prepare your students to listen for language as it actually occurs. An important aspect of spoken language is its dependence on simultaneous systems of meaning such as gesture and facial expression. For this reason it is worthwhile to video some segments of authentic language, if possible.

**Recorders**

There are a number of different types of recorders which can be used very effectively to collect data. You do not necessarily need expensive equipment and in many cases an ordinary cassette player may be sufficient.

Recorders with built in microphones are usually compact and easy to use and to transport, but the quality of the recordings may be poor and the recordings may be difficult or unsuitable to use with your learners. However, they will be suitable for transcription purposes in most cases.

Recorders with plug-in microphones will generally give you better quality results. However, they are also likely to be more obvious than those with built-in microphones and they need to be set up in advance.

**Microphones**

The choice of microphone is crucial in recording spoken language, and technical advice can be helpful in deciding what microphone would be most appropriate for the context in which you are recording. Multidirectional microphones can be effective in contexts such as meetings, but may be problematic in noisy environments such as the workplace. Lapel microphones give good results if you can organise to use them.

Take care in handling microphones as every movement of the hand is recorded along with the conversation. If you need to move the microphone, move it slowly to a point which is close to the person talking. When setting up a stationary microphone, set it up equidistant from the speakers on a cushion of some sort, or even better, on a stand.

**Guidelines for recording**

You will produce better quality recordings if you observe some simple guidelines. The following may seem obvious, but many a good interaction has been lost because one of these common-sense steps has been forgotten.

- Have the microphone as close as possible to the speaker(s).
- Record when the environment is as quiet as possible – incidental noise such as traffic can greatly distort the recording.
- Set up the microphone equidistant from the speakers if you are recording more than one person.
- Use a cloth or foam mat under the microphone to minimise surface noises.
- Test your equipment by making a short recording and then playing it back.
• Make sure you have spare batteries and tapes.
• Remember to turn your recording equipment on to record.

Checking analysis with informants
The role of the researcher is to reconstruct the social context and the language use within it and it is important to check your inferences and perceptions with someone who knows the context well. It is a useful strategy to have a number of informants who will assist you in understanding the social context and the accompanying social practices. However, it is important that the researcher, while establishing a relationship of trust with the informants, does not know them too well. If the researcher and the informants are well known to each other, then the informants may leave out vital information, or the researcher may fail to ask the appropriate questions.

Problems which may occur when gathering authentic spoken language data
There are problems associated with shadowing people and recording authentic language, but it is important that this does not deter teachers and students from using these recordings in the classroom. The difficulties which may arise and some possible solutions are set out below.

A well known phenomenon in research is the observer’s paradox (Labov 1972). Although the researcher tries to treat the data he or she is collecting objectively, the nature of that data is unavoidably changed by the very presence of the researcher and the recording device. Despite this problem, it is still essential for researchers and teachers to observe and collect natural data because it is only by doing so that we will ever get close to what actually occurs in social settings outside the classroom.

People’s language will change when you are present, especially when people are being observed for the first time. Both audio and video recording will affect the language used if the recorder is too prominent and people are not used to being recorded. The only way to overcome this is to spend more time in the context and so become a part of the scenery which people no longer worry about. However, in many cases this amount of time is not available so it is important to be as low key as possible in how you position yourself and the recorder in the physical context and in how you record data. It is equally important to reassure people that the data will only be used in classrooms.

Often contexts can be too noisy for effective recording and then it is important to write down samples of language using devices such as Table 2.1.

Authentic language is context dependent and therefore playing authentic tapes in the classroom requires the teacher to spend time contextualising the language before students will be able to tune in to what is being said. It is therefore important to prepare contextual notes while recording.
Ethical and legal aspects of recording spoken language

In many countries it is illegal to record people without their prior knowledge. For example, Australia has legislation in many states which deals with listening devices. People have a right to know that they are being recorded. One approach in this regard is to inform people that they will be recorded in the context but at random times. Another strategy is to inform people after the recording has been made and to ask their permission for the data to be used.

It is important that everyone in the context where you will be gathering data knows the purpose of your research. In most cases you will find that people respond well to the fact that you are interested in researching their language and contexts. People are generally very cooperative if you make the effort to inform them fully and enlist their help. However, if anyone objects to being recorded, then it is imperative that you do not do so.

TASK 2.7 Prepare a list for other teachers of the legal restrictions on recording which occur in your country or state.

Collecting samples of other meaning systems and written language

Spoken language often occurs in context with written texts. It may be important in your research to gather samples of these or record them in some way (eg by using a table like Table 2.1 above). You may need to consider how:

• the spoken language relates to written language
• people speak about the written texts involved in the context.

Summary

Collecting samples of spoken language and researching social contexts of language use are not always easy. However these ethnographic activities are fundamentally rewarding for any one interested in language and language use. They generally lead the researcher to marvel at the extraordinary nature of language and the ability of people to manipulate it as they make use of it to fulfil a vast range of social tasks. The researcher is made aware of the creativity with which people use language within the necessary confines of social and cultural practice, confines without which we would not be able to communicate with each other at all.

Chapter 3
Spoken discourse and the language classroom

We have long had the question of how people use language uppermost in our minds when we design teaching materials, or when we engage learners in exercises and activities aimed at making them proficient users of their target language, or when we evaluate a piece of commercially published material before deciding to use it.

(McCarthy 1991: 1)

It is generally recognised that language learning is a dynamic and creative process. As teachers, we strive to create authentic situations inside the language classroom which reflect contexts in other language domains. However, outside the classroom the language which students encounter is often much more challenging, and they often find themselves in spoken interactions very different from those which they have rehearsed in classroom situations.

As language teachers, our overall aim is to prepare our students for effective language use outside the classroom and, therefore, the question of what occurs in authentic spoken discourse in other language domains should be of great interest to us. We need to know how authentic discourse differs from scripted or semi-scripted texts and how to use this knowledge to assist second language learners to prepare for interactions in the community, in other educational institutions, and in the workplace.

Authentic spoken language in the classroom

Many function-based language models are as unnatural and inappropriate for communicative language teaching as are the older, more traditional texts because the notions or functions are introduced through the same unnatural texts and dialogues.

(Cathcart 1989: 105)

When teaching spoken language, language teachers generally rely heavily on scripted materials which are produced in a written form in course books and are often accompanied by a cassette with recorded, but fully scripted, dialogues. These materials may be appropriate for some students at certain stages of language learning; however, they rarely reflect the structure or features of natural spoken discourse.

One reason for this is that they are usually introspected, which means that they are based on writers’ intuitions or assumptions about what occurs in spoken interactions. They often represent spoken exchanges as neat, fully formed, predictable, and unproblematic. However, as we have already suggested, spoken
interactions outside the classroom may be anything but predictable and unproblematic for second language learners. They are often faced with linguistic and strategic difficulties which are not anticipated in the spoken texts presented in the classroom.

Many of these scripted materials are also based on traditional grammars of written English. As a result they tend to omit the essential grammatical features and the typical discourse strategies which native speakers use to jointly construct spoken interactions in social situations.

Scripted dialogues often take grammatical structures or functions as the starting point for their design. They may use a structure (such as the present perfect) or a function (such as apologising) as the basis of a dialogue. This use of structures or functions to construct a dialogue reverses the natural order of the relationship between context and spoken discourse. In effect, the situational context becomes the *vehicle* for the function or grammatical structure, and the real purpose of the scripted dialogue is to reinforce the structure or function (Slade 1986).

**Typical features of scripted dialogues**

Text 3.1 is concerned with asking for and giving directions and is typical of teaching resources which are based on a functional-notional approach to language teaching. It illustrates some of the features of scripted material.

**Text 3.1 Scripted dialogue**

Asking and giving directions

A: Excuse me. How do I get to the North East Shopping Centre?
B: Take a number 9 bus to Westmore Street. When you reach Westmore Street, transfer to the number 34 bus at the corner of Walton Road. This bus will take you to the North East Shopping Centre.
A: How will I know when I have arrived at Westmore Street?
B: The bus driver will let you know if you ask him.
A: Thank you. How much will it cost?
B: It will cost about $3.50 altogether. You will need to have the exact money as the driver cannot give you any change.
A: I see. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

**TASK 3.1** Read Text 3.1 out loud and then, using the table below, analyse some of the main features of the text by answering the questions.
The obvious features of Text 3.1 as a scripted dialogue are listed below:

- Each utterance occurs as a sentence and is fully formed.
- Certain structures are repeated rather unnaturally (e.g., use of future tense, "uh-" questions).
- Each speaker takes distinct turns with no overlapping of talk (e.g., there are no hesitations or backchanneling such as "uh-huh, hm, okay").
- Each speaker says about the same amount.
- The speakers use formal and standardised language forms.
- Contextual knowledge is very explicitly provided through the text title and there is no reference to shared knowledge of the locations.

Scripted samples of speech differ in a number of significant ways from the spoken language of daily life. The general characteristics of scripted dialogues are set out in Table 3.1, which is adapted from Porter and Roberts (1981).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How are the speakers' utterances represented?</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>How is the context in which the exchange takes place?</th>
<th>Level of formality of the text?</th>
<th>What grammatical structures are being emphasised in this text?</th>
<th>What quantity of talk does each speaker have?</th>
<th>How is turn taking managed in the text?</th>
<th>Quantity of talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 Typical features of scripted materials for spoken language teaching

| **Pronunciation** | • tends to be *standard* pronunciation  
|                   | • usually enunciated with greater than usual precision |
| **Structural frequency** | • particular structures or functions occur with unnatural frequency |
| **Sentence structure** | • utterances occur in complete sentences which are short and well-formed |
| **Turn taking** | • distinct turn taking  
|                   | • one speaker waits until the other has finished  
|                   | • speakers tend to have equal turns or speak in the same order |
| **Pace** | • typically slower than normal speech |
| **Quantity of talk** | • speakers generally say about the same amount |
| **Discourse signals** | • backchannelling (eg *uhuh*, *ahah*) and discourse markers (eg *right*, *OK*) are generally absent |
| **Level of formality** | • biased towards standard forms and structures  
|                   | • swearing, slang and idioms etc occur less frequently |
| **Complexity** | • rarely contains additional background noise  
|                   | • vocabulary is generally restricted to one field of discourse |
| **Context** | • does not reflect redundancy of natural discourse which is based on the shared knowledge of the interactants  
|                   | • explicit references are made to people, objects and experiences |

Typical features of authentic spoken discourse

Text 3.2 is an unscripted dialogue. It is also concerned with asking for and giving directions and illustrates some of the features of authentic spoken discourse.

Text 3.2 Unscripted dialogue

Asking and giving directions

A: Um ... give me an idea how I get to your place ... I don't ... 'cos, I don't, um, ... know it too well round there. I'll, uh ... probably be coming by bus ... so

B: Right, well, going towards French Street, stay on the bus for, oh ... about
... the trip takes about twenty minutes by bus

A: Right

B: Now, you go ... the bus will go out along St Katherine’s Road well, you ... just keep on the bus...
A: [Mm ... hm ...]

B: And it’ll cross over Peters Road which is fairly [major ...]
A: [Yeah ... I know Peters ...

B: ... Hm ... now, you watch out for Minter Street. ... It’s about ... oooh, fifteen minutes by bus from the corner of Peters. [Maybe ...
A: [Right ... uh ...

B: ... a bit longer, maybe twenty depending on the traffic. ... Um, now get off at the ... um, South Weston post office, which I think is two stops ... two stops past Minter Street.
A: Right ... that’s fine ...

---

**TASK 3.2**  Read Text 3.2 out loud and, using the table below, analyse some of the main features of the text by answering the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How are the speakers’ utterances represented in the dialogue?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structures</strong>  What grammatical structures are being emphasised in this text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turn taking</strong>  How is turn taking managed in the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity of talk</strong>  What quantity of talk does each speaker have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of formality</strong>  What is the level of formality of the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong>  How is the context in which the exchange takes place represented?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The obvious features of Text 3.2 as an unscripted dialogue are listed below:

- The utterances are fragmented and difficult to set out as sentences.
- There is a range of structural choices which vary according to the speaker’s need to negotiate meaning.
- There are overlappings and interruptions, rather than distinct turns.
- Utterances vary greatly in length.
- Hesitations and backchannelling are relatively frequent.
- Informal and idiomatic language is used by the speakers.
- The context of the interaction is implied and there is reference to shared knowledge and understandings of locations and processes.

Text 3.1 and Text 3.2 reflect different versions of spoken language and present very different forms of language for analysis and study. Text 3.1 is an idealised version of language which is based on formal sentence grammar. The use of texts such as this in the classroom tends to remove language and language use from real purposes and from actual instances of communication. It also minimises the significance of context in language interactions. In the past this type of text has often been considered appropriate for spoken language teaching in the classroom. This idea comes from a longstanding tradition which promotes the concept that language teaching should focus on formal grammatical rules and structures which are important for language learners to know.

While it is certainly important for language learners to know grammatical rules and structures, the exclusive use of scripted dialogues in the classroom overlooks the nature of language as it is used to fulfil social purposes. If we believe that language learners need to be able to deal with the unpredictability of spoken language outside the classroom, we need to introduce more than idealised versions of language into the classroom. A more useful approach for language teaching is one that includes knowledge of language as discourse as well as knowledge of grammar, as the account of one class’s experience demonstrates (see Case study 3.1). Suggesting ways in which authentic discourse can be used in teaching spoken language to adult learners is one of the main purposes of this book.

**Case study 3.1**

One of the Spoken Discourse Project teachers was teaching telephone enquiries. She had been using scripted dialogues, but decided that the students needed practice in authentic situations. She directed the students to telephone a range of places, such as travel agencies and hospitals, and make enquiries. The results were illuminating:

> A Vietnamese doctor in the class rang the local hospital and enquired about visiting hours. He reported that the receptionist had been very difficult and ultimately suspicious. She had asked the name of the patient he wished to visit and when the patient had given birth. She then gave a lengthy
explanation about the different hours which applied to different wards and different days.

Another learner found himself booked on a scheduled flight to Bombay.

(Gollin 1994: 28)

The learners were in a state of confusion as a result of this experience. The teacher realised that the realities of the situation outside the classroom had not been dealt with adequately. It was clear that the interactions outside the classroom had presented the learners with unanticipated linguistic and strategic difficulties.

Differences between spoken and written discourse

Writing and speaking are not just alternative ways of doing the same things; rather, they are ways of doing different things.

(Halliday 1985a: vii)

Generally, in second and foreign language teaching, dialogues and spoken interactions have been based on grammars of written English. Conversely, in approaches to second language literacy development, students have often been advised to write it down as you would say it. Both these approaches confuse the critical similarities and differences between spoken and written language, with the result that the realities of each form of discourse are not well represented to language learners.

Recently, spoken language has become an increasing focus of linguistic research. One branch of linguistics which has been concerned with systematically describing the similarities and differences between spoken and written language is systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), already referred to in Chapter 1.

Spoken and written language draw on the same systems of language, but they do so in different ways because they have evolved over time to fulfil different sociocultural functions. It may be helpful to think of a language continuum with very spoken texts, such as casual conversation, at one end and very written texts, such as novels, at the other (see Figure 3.1). If we place texts along this continuum, we can see that some texts are clearly written and others are clearly spoken, while others blur the distinction and have characteristics of both spoken and written texts. Two examples of these midway texts are the TV news, which is written to be spoken, and a personal letter, which is written to appear spoken.
The main differences between spoken and written texts are clear when we compare texts at the most spoken end of the continuum with texts at the most written end. By placing related texts along the continuum we can also analyse how texts draw on the resources of language differently as they move away in time and place from the context of action. Let’s consider five related texts about a basketball game which we can place at different positions along the continuum (see Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2 Continuum for five basketball texts](image)

The first text is an exchange between two fans at a basketball game:

A: Oh man what a play!
B: He can really get it on from downtown.
A: Go go.

The second text is a TV report reviewing the game. Parts of the game are being replayed and the reporter is commenting on this footage:

We pick up the game in the third quarter ... score is thirteen ten the Jets ... Ellis is being guarded by Davis ... Johns is trying to get a piece of it ... so far we haven’t seen any pressure by the Bombers ... there we go pass from Johns to Ellis ... who nails the three!

The third text is a letter which one of the fans has written to a friend about the game:

Smithy did this mad slam dunk. Just left the ground man, like he was flying.
Then Ellis did this three pointer from half way.

The fourth text is an article in a basketball magazine (adapted from article in *Slam Magazine*, January 1995):

When you look into the eyes of guard Bill Ellis you see a lot of things. Fear, however, isn’t one of them. Ellis’s no fear style came of age in game three of the
finals. With 32 seconds left, Ellis calmly accepted a pass from Johns and casually sank a three-pointer to put his team ahead 89-88.

The final text is adapted from an article in *NBA basketball: An official fans guide* (Vancil 1994):

> The record books are full of names and numbers, superstars and stats. Individuals win scoring titles and block all shots. They pass out assists and lead the league in steals. But all of them operate within the context of a team. The greatest of these teams manage to combine diverse individual talents into a singular battle plan. We can see this in the work of Ellis, Smithy and Johns who work together, combining their individual skills to lead their team to victory.

We can see from these five texts that as the language moves away in time and space from the event it is describing, it works harder to recreate the context of the game. Some of the differences between the texts are analysed in Table 3.3. These texts are creating the same event for different purposes over increasing distance in time and space from the original game. There is increasing generalisation and abstraction about the basketball game as we move towards the written end of the continuum. Content words become more important. The language must work harder to reconstruct the context of the game as the texts become more distanced from the original game. It is important that teachers recognise the differences between spoken and written language and enable students to develop skills in producing both spoken and written texts. The main differences are outlined in Table 3.2 which has been adapted from Eggins (1994: 55).

**Table 3.2 Main differences between spoken and written texts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken texts</th>
<th>Written texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>essentially dialogic in nature</td>
<td>essentially monologic in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typically created by two or more people</td>
<td>typically created by one person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually interactants share knowledge of the context in which the language is being used</td>
<td>writer typically removed from the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generally spontaneously created</td>
<td>generally drafted and edited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generally accompany action</td>
<td>generally reflect on action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependent on immediate context for meaning</td>
<td>independent of context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intricate interrelationship between clauses</td>
<td>relatively straightforward relationship between clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fewer content words and more grammatical words</td>
<td>more content words and fewer grammatical words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the interpersonal aspects of language are typically foregrounded</td>
<td>the topic of the discourse is typically foregrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 1</td>
<td>language is accompanying the action of the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 2</td>
<td>language is describing the action of the game as if it were happening at the time of the broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 3</td>
<td>the language is focusing on selected aspects of the action for the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 4</td>
<td>the language is reconstructing the action for the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 5</td>
<td>the language is generalising about the game of basketball from the action of the particular players</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Analysis of five basketball texts
Characteristics of spoken language

In the past many approaches to teaching language have favoured the written form of the language because it was seen as the superior form. Spoken language was often referred to as unformed and ungrammatical. However, over the past few years we have come to a better understanding of spoken language and we now realise that it is no less structured and highly organised than written language (Halliday 1985a). In this section we will explore two characteristics of language – grammatical intricacy and lexical density. We will do this by comparing two related texts, one spoken and one written. These texts are about giving directions.

Text 3.3 is a repeat of Text 3.2 with the clause boundaries marked with the symbol //</.

Text 3.3 Spoken text
Asking and giving directions

A: //Um ... give me an idea //how I get to your place //... I don't ... //'cos, I don’t, um, ... know it too well round there.// I'll, uh ... probably be coming by bus ... //</.

B: //Right,// well, going towards French Street,// stay on the bus for, oh ...

A: //Right//

B: //Now, you go ... //the bus will go out along St Katherine’s Road //well, you ... [just keep on the bus...//

A: // [Mm ... hm ...//

B: //And it'll cross over Peters Road which is fairly [major ...//

A: // [Yeah ... I know Peters//

B: //......Hm ... now, you watch out for Minter Street.// ... It's about ... oooh, fifteen minutes by bus from the corner of Peters.// [Maybe ...

A: // [Right ... uhh//

B: ... a bit longer.,// maybe twenty// depending on the traffic.// ...Um, now get off at the ... um, South Weston post office,// which I think is two stops// ... two stops past Minter Street.//

A: //Right// ... that's fine ...//

In Text 3.4, which is a set of written directions, the clause boundaries are also marked:

Text 3.4 Written text
Giving directions

Go through the glass entrance doors// and turn right.// Walk to the corner// and turn right again into Walker St.// Walk along Walker St for four blocks// until you come to Light St with the ANZ Bank on the corner.// Turn left into Light...
St// and continue to Francis St with the fruit shop on the corner.// Cross to the
other side of Light St// and then cross over Francis St.// Continue along Light St
// until you come to the Light Arcade.// Go to the stairs at the back of the
arcade// and you’ll find the Medical Centre on the first floor above the coffee
lounge. //

**Grammatical intricacy**

Spoken language has been described as being ‘grammatically intricate’ (Halliday
1985a: 87) when compared to written language, which is relatively
grammatically simple. This intricacy occurs in spoken language because people
do not generally speak in sentences, but in clauses. In fact, the sentence is a unit
of written language. As people talk they negotiate meaning with each other and
devlop discourse through clauses which relate to one another.

When we examine how speakers jointly create spoken texts, we can see that they
develop meaning through networks of interrelated clauses. Text 3.3 is constructed
jointly by the two participants who use many clauses, which are related to each
other, to create the text. In Table 3.4 the first thirteen clauses in Text 3.3 are
numbered and an analysis is presented of the dynamic and spontaneous nature of
the spoken dialogic language created through such things as:

- explicit links between clauses (ie links which are obvious in the words used)
- implicit links between clauses (ie links which are implied but not actually
  signalled in the words used)
- the omission of words and information from clauses
- unfinished clauses
- the reformulation of clauses after false starts.
Table 3.4 Analysis of clauses in Text 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Um... give me an idea</td>
<td>beginning of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>how I get to your place</td>
<td>implicit link to cl 1 (of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I don’t</td>
<td>unfinished clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘cos, I don’t, um, ... know it too well round there</td>
<td>speaker reformulates clause 3 with explicit link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to cl 2 through conjunction cos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I'll, uh ... probably be coming by bus</td>
<td>implicit link to cl 4 (and)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>so</td>
<td>explicit link to cl 5 through conjunction so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>but clause is left unfinished as the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>speaker understands what is being asked and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>responds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>explicit feedback to cls 1 to 6 meaning I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>understand what you want me to tell you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>well, going towards French Street</td>
<td>beginning explanation in response to cls 1 to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 implicit link (while) to cl 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>stay on the bus for, oh ... about ...</td>
<td>implicit link to cl 8 unfinished clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>the trip takes about twenty minutes by bus</td>
<td>reformulated clause as a statement of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>length of the journey rather than completing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the instruction in cl 9 to stay on the bus for a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>specified length of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>feedback to show that speaker understands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the directions given in cls 8 to 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Now, you go ...</td>
<td>explicit link to cls 8 to 10 indicating next step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in directions through word now but clause is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unfinished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>the bus will go out along St Katherine’s Road</td>
<td>reformulates into a statement about the bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rather than the instruction commenced in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clause 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text 3.4 is a written, monologic text. It is carefully written to give the reader a set of clear directions to the medical centre. The text is composed of one and two clause sentences in a logical sequential order. The clauses are temporally and spatially sequenced and in the two clause sentences the links between the clauses are explicitly signalled in words such as and until. This structure is analysed in Table 3.5.
Table 3.5 Analysis of clauses in Text 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Go through the glass entrance doors</td>
<td>first instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>and turn right.</td>
<td>second instruction linked explicitly to the first by <em>and</em> implying <em>and then</em> as an additive temporal conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Walk to the corner</td>
<td>third instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>and turn right again into Walker St.</td>
<td>fourth instruction linked explicitly to third by <em>and</em> as additive conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Walk along Walker St for four blocks</td>
<td>fifth instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>until you come to Light St with the ANZ Bank on the corner.</td>
<td>clause linked dependently to clause 5 by <em>until</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Turn left into Light St</td>
<td>sixth instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>and continue to Francis St with the fruit shop on the corner.</td>
<td>seventh instruction linked to clause 7 by additive conjunction <em>and</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cross to the other side of Light St</td>
<td>eighth instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>and then cross over Francis St.</td>
<td>ninth instruction linked to clause 9 by additive conjunction <em>and</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Continue along Light St</td>
<td>tenth instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>until you come to the Light Arcade.</td>
<td>clause linked dependently to clause 11 by <em>until</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Go to the stairs at the back of the arcade.</td>
<td>eleventh instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>and you’ll find the Medical Centre on the first floor above the coffee lounge.</td>
<td>linked to clause 13 by additive conjunction <em>and</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examination of Text 3.3 illustrates how the spoken text is more dynamic in nature, which is the result of the intricate relationships between the clauses. By contrast, the links between the clauses in Text 3.4 are repetitive in pattern and develop a text which is more precise.

**TASK 3.3** Text 3.5 is from the *Spoken Discourse Project* (we introduced this text in Chapter 1 as Text 1.1). The first seventeen clauses have been set out in table form. Try to describe the links between the clauses. It may be helpful to look back at Table 3.4. The object of this task is not to test your linguistic knowledge but to help you understand the dynamic nature of authentic spoken discourse.
Text 3.5 Unscripted dialogue
Confirming an appointment
P = Patient
R = Receptionist

R: Doctor’s rooms can you hold the line for a moment?
P: Yes.
R: Thanks.

(Receptionist keeps caller waiting on line)
R: Hello
P: Hello
R: Sorry to keep you waiting.
P: That’s alright … um, I’m just calling to confirm an appointment with
Doctor X for the first of October.
R: Oh
P: Because it was so far in advance I was told [to…
R: [I see what you mean, to see
if she’s going to be in that day.
P: That’s right.
R: Oh we may not know yet.
P: Oh I see.
R: First of October … Edith … yes (receptionist consults appointment
book)
P: Yes.
R: There she is. Okay you made one [what’s your name?
P: [at nine fift…
R: Got it got it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Doctor’s rooms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>can you hold the line for a moment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thanks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hello.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hello.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>to keep you waiting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>That’s alright</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>um I’m just calling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>to confirm an appointment with Doctor X for the first of October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Oh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Because it was so far in advance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lexical density

Earlier in this chapter we stated that spoken texts generally contain fewer content words than written texts. This means that the message in spoken texts is not carried through lexical items, such as nouns or noun groups, to the same extent as in written texts. The number of lexical items in a text divided by the number of clauses gives us a measure of the lexical density of a text. Let's compare the lexical density of the first 13 clauses of Texts 3.3 and 3.4. To do this we will underline all the lexical items in the texts, count them and then divide this number by the number of clauses.

In the spoken text, we have approximately twenty lexical items over the thirteen clauses which gives a lexical density of approximately 1.4

In the written text we have approximately thirty-four lexical items over thirteen clauses, which gives a lexical density of approximately 2.6.

The dynamic nature and context dependency of dialogic spoken language means that it relies less on content words such as nouns and is, consequently, relatively lexically sparse. On the other hand, written language needs to be independent of context and therefore must rely on content words such as nouns to convey meaning to the reader. Our brief exploration of grammatical intricacy and lexical density have illustrated how written and spoken language require students to learn to use language in different ways.
Summary

It is important when teaching spoken discourse to understand the nature of spoken language and how it differs from written language. This enables teachers to clearly delineate spoken and written texts within the classroom for their learners and to understand what knowledge about spoken language students need in order to interact with people outside the classroom. Teachers can then provide explicit information to students about the features and functions of spoken discourse.

Students should be provided with the opportunity to develop both spoken and written language because there is clearly an interrelationship between spoken and written language in a literate society. People talk about what they write, they talk about what they read and they put down in written form what they have been talking about. For example in Text 3.5 the receptionist checks an appointment book while she is talking to the patient and she talks about what she has read (ie that the appointment has been recorded).

As teachers, if we understand the significant differences between spoken and written language, we will be aware that the exclusive use of scripted dialogues based on grammars of written English will not equip students to engage in or listen to spoken language outside the classroom. Approaches to teaching language should not confuse the critical similarities and differences between spoken and written language. Each form of discourse needs to be presented to language learners through explanation, modelling and analysis, so that they can better understand the realities of language use outside the classroom.
Chapter 4
Transcribing and analysing spoken discourse for the classroom

As we discussed in Chapter 3, teaching spoken discourse through scripted materials usually falls short of helping learners with the complexities of second language interactions. On the other hand, compiling your own set of spoken recordings and transcriptions (or even better, developing them with other teachers or with your learners) can provide a valuable resource for both language teaching and language learning.

Teachers are busy people and text recording, transcription and analysis are time consuming. However, as the participants in the Spoken Discourse Project found, there are many benefits to be gained from the processes of recording, transcribing and analysing natural spoken data which go beyond the valuable activity of providing learners with the opportunity to listen to native speakers rather than invented models of language.

We believe the eventual advantages for classroom teaching and learning which result from using natural data outweigh any disadvantages involved in transcribing. Also, the task can be made less time consuming if teachers share their recordings and transcriptions with others, thus increasing the range and variety of their set of recordings. The same recording of spoken discourse can also be used in a variety of ways with different groups of learners and can be analysed for different aspects and features of spoken interaction, from the macro level of overall text structure to the micro level of specific discourse features and strategies.

In this chapter we suggest procedures for transcription and discuss some transcription conventions. We then offer suggestions for analysing transcribed texts.

TEST 4.1 List all the authentic recordings which are available in your teaching context. Categorise them according to language domains, specific social contexts and/or teaching topics.

Transcription

Transcribing recordings can take considerable time, but it has a number of benefits for teachers in learning more about analysing language and making pedagogical decisions about how to use the data with learners.

The process of transcribing is in itself revealing as it contributes to our analyses
and increases our awareness in various ways. Through working closely with spoken data we can:

• see the importance of context in teaching spoken language
• become more aware of discourse structures, structural features, intonation and grammatical patterns and discourse strategies
• increase our knowledge of how the prosodic features of spoken discourse (ie intonation, stress, rhythm and articulation) contribute to meaning
• increase our knowledge of the differences between spoken and written discourse
• raise our awareness of the significance of interpersonal roles and relationships in spoken interactions
• raise our awareness of how speakers jointly achieve social goals
• think creatively about different ways we can use texts with learners.

An illustration from the *Spoken Discourse Project* of how transcriptions can be used creatively to help learners is presented in Case study 4.1.

**Case study 4.1**

Two of the *Spoken Discourse Project* teachers noted that their beginning learners became frustrated when trying to exchange personal information with native speakers and that their conversation often ‘dried up’. The teachers realised that their learners were not aware of discourse strategies for keeping conversations going. They also realised that it was the teachers themselves who tended to ask the questions in the classroom situation and that the learners rarely had the chance to practise question forms.

The teachers recorded and transcribed a brief exchange in which native speakers swapped personal information. They then worked with their learners to examine the devices of backchannelling and question forms. Using the transcribed exchange, the learners identified and marked with highlighter pens the question forms and backchannelling used by the native speakers to jointly construct the interaction. The students then practised extending their own interactions by using these question forms.

**Coding conventions**

There is no one best way to transcribe spoken data and whatever way you choose to transcribe language will be necessarily selective (Ochs 1979). Many different sets of conventions have been used for transcription and the transcription features and conventions you use will generally depend on the purposes for transcribing. Some transcribers employ quite complex systems to indicate stress and intonation patterns, in addition to written representations of spoken utterances (see for example McCarthy 1991). You will notice that in this book we have opted for a fairly simple and user-friendly approach which uses a minimum number of symbols, and we suggest that this simple approach is adequate for most teaching situations.

[ = overlapping turns
Guidelines for transcribing

The following guiding principles for transcription (adapted from Halliday and Plum 1985:17–18) are useful for both analytical and teaching purposes.

- Keep the transcription as simple as possible and include only what is necessary.
- Decide as soon as possible on the set of conventions you will use and maintain them throughout the transcription.
- Label the speakers using one of the following systems:
  - letters eg A B C
  - first names if confidentiality is not an issue
  - names of positions (eg Information officer, Receptionist).
- Number lines or clauses from the beginning of the discourse for easy reference.
- Insert contextual information which explains essential aspects of the location or topic and any non-verbal interaction.
- Retain the wording of the discourse as accurately as possible.
- Avoid making the text look visually disorganised because this may impede understanding.
- Use ordinary orthographic transcription, with conventional punctuation where appropriate, to facilitate understanding.

Introducing transcripts to learners

You may or may not decide to use your transcribed data with your learners. Your decision will depend largely on the level of the students, their literacy skills in English and the overall purpose of your task. You may wish to draw on only small portions of the transcript or in some cases you may decide to reduce it, simplify it, or to omit particular portions if the entire transcript would be overwhelming. Whatever approach you take, when using transcripts with your students it is necessary to:

- tell your learners why they are reading transcripts of spoken discourse and how reading a transcript is different from reading written text or scripted dialogues
- share essential information on the transcription conventions with your learners
- ensure that learners have adequate literacy skills for reading the transcript, otherwise it will add an additional burden to the task
- pre-teach some of the unknown vocabulary or grammatical patterns
- use both the transcript and the recording of the discourse as sources of language input.
Useful and more detailed discussions on transcription are provided by Ochs 1979, Hasan 1985, Allwright and Bailey 1991 and Atkinson and Heritage 1984.

**TASK 4.2** Transcribe an authentic recording using a set of conventions which you will share with your students. Design a key for your students to understand the symbols and conventions you have used.

**Analysing spoken discourse for the classroom**

The more that can be made automatic and predictable for students, the greater their ease when they are trying to cope with the dynamic social struggle of using language in cultural contexts. ...[We can adopt] models of language which show how aspects of language vary to correspond to the ongoing variation of aspects of the situation. These are things we can teach. We can provide our students with models which will be explanatory and predictive, thus giving them greater control over the language.

(Pedler 1992:10–11)

Transcription provides us with the opportunity to review a ‘live’ interaction after it has taken place and the luxury of being able to analyse:

- the style of interaction
- the results of the interaction
- the relationship of the interactants
- the purpose of the interaction and whether it was achieved
- the development of the interaction
- the strategies adopted by the interactants
- the turn taking and turn type patterns
- the sociocultural values which informed the interaction.

When we are actually involved in spoken discourse, there is a degree of uncertainty and unpredictability; the discourse may not unfold as we would wish. However, as native speakers of a language we also know that spoken language is not formless and we learn to use language for our own social ends in various contexts. We can predict a great deal about spoken discourse. For example we can:

- recognise what sort of interaction is going on
- predict in general how a text will unfold
- recognise what is happening at a particular moment even when there is a digression
- recognise the intention and meaning of what is being said.

The uncertainty of spoken discourse causes difficulties for second language learners because they cannot predict as well as a native speaker in terms of both
form and sociocultural norms. However, when students have the opportunity to analyse how spoken discourse is constructed by native speakers, it gives them the opportunity to examine:

- the skills and strategies which native speakers use to interact and achieve social purposes
- the patterns behind spoken discourse, which will decrease the complexity and unpredictability of social situations for the learner
- the systematic relationship between language and its cultural and social contexts of use.

The analysis of spoken discourse in the classroom can increase the chances for students to be successful in spoken interactions outside the classroom. The way you analyse a text will depend on what you want to teach your students about spoken discourse. The analytical perspectives which were outlined in Chapter 1 of this handbook, although all concerned with how people use language to achieve social purposes, focus on different aspects of spoken language as social interaction. The following lists summarise each analytical perspective in terms of its relevance for classroom teaching.

**The relevance for classroom teaching of different analytical perspectives**

**Systemic–functional linguistics (SFL)**
Can be used to:
- highlight the social and cultural nature of language
- highlight the functional nature of language
- highlight the characteristics of spoken and written language.

**SFL and genre analysis**
Can be used to:
- examine the generic structure of spoken discourse
- relate texts to their cultural purpose and to cultural knowledge
- introduce obligatory stages and optional stages, depending on the level of the students
- develop grammatical structures relevant to the functional stages of the discourse.

**SFL and register analysis**
Can be used to:
- relate texts to their immediate social context and to social knowledge
- develop relevant vocabulary
- investigate aspects of the social relationship of interactants and how this affects the language of the discourse
- examine the characteristics of spoken language and to compare this with written language
- develop grammatical structures relevant to the social situation.
SFL and the typology of spoken interactions
Can be used to:
• categorise types of discourse
• examine the functional motivation of discourse.

Exchange structure analysis
Can be used to:
• examine the dynamic nature of spoken discourse
• outline the structure of dynamic moves
• reveal the roles which speakers can adopt and how these can be renegotiated
• examine how knowledge and action are negotiated at each stage of a text
• investigate how dynamic moves relate to social aspects of the discourse.

Conversational analysis
Can be used to:
• investigate turn taking patterns and strategies
• investigate turn types
• reveal strategies which speakers use to renegotiate turn taking
• investigate how turn taking relates to social aspects of the discourse.

Pragmatics
Can be used to:
• investigate how speakers use knowledge of the world in communication
• investigate principles of appropriateness for utterances in relation to context
• investigate what language is doing in relation to the context
• outline principles for conversation
• examine cross-cultural communication.

Critical discourse theory
Can be used to:
• place language in its ideological context
• investigate texts as sites of ideology and power
• examine texts in situations of social power and what options are open to
  speakers to renegotiate power relationships.

A framework for analysis

When analysing spoken discourse it is useful to have a framework which can
assist you in analysis and which can help you to decide what the implications of
the analysis are for the classroom. The following framework was used to analyse
the texts which you will find in Chapter 6. Note that it is not necessary to
undertake all analyses with all texts. You will need to decide what aspects of
spoken language each text will illustrate for your students.
Framework for analysis

1 Transcribe the recording
   • Give the text a title.
   • Leave a line between each speaker and number lines for easy reference.
   • Label each speaker using letters, first names or positions (e.g., Officer, Receptionist).
   • Insert contextual information.
   • Retain the wording of the discourse as accurately as possible.

2 Analyse the transcript
   Complete the analysis on a page facing the transcript and use the following headings for analysis:

   Background to the text
   • Include information about where, when, how and why the text was collected.
   • Include relevant social and cultural information.

   Type of interaction
   • Identify the text as pragmatic or interpersonal.

   General comments
   • Make some general comments which will help your students to understand general features of the text.

   *Generic structure analysis
   • Categorise the text according to its sociocultural purpose.
   • Label the stages of the texts with functional labels (e.g., examination).
   • Indicate which stages are obligatory and which are optional (if possible).

   *Register analysis
   • Identify the field of the discourse and the related grammatical features.
   • Identify the tenor of the discourse and the related grammatical features.
   • Identify the mode of discourse and the related grammatical features.

   *Exchange structure analysis
   • Identify significant sections of the text (if any) for exchange structure analysis.
   • Label the moves of speakers in the selected section of the discourse.
   • Analyse the discourse strategies which the speakers have adopted (e.g., challenging).
*Conversation analysis

- Identify significant adjacency pairs (if any) for conversation analysis.
- Analyse turn taking patterns and related discourse signals and markers.
- Analyse turn types and related strategies.

*Pragmatic analysis

- Identify significant sections of the text for pragmatic analysis.
- Analyse the speech functions.
- Analyse how speakers are obeying conversational principles.
- Analyse any cross cultural aspects which may be significant to the students.

*Critical discourse analysis

- Identify any significant aspects of the text in terms of ideology and social power (eg gatekeeping).

*Decide which of the above approaches you wish to take for your analysis and follow the guidelines under the selected approach.

3 Identify implications for teaching

- Identify the significant teaching points which arise from the analyses.

A sample analysis

The following analysis of Text 4.1 demonstrates how the framework outlined in the previous section can be used to highlight features of an authentic text.

Text 4.1 Authentic dialogue

Banking enquiry

B = Bank employee
C = Customer

2. C: Hello um I have an enquiry about depositing into a cash management fund.
4. C: Um I have an account with you.
5. B: Yeah.
6. C: Um in September um my boyfriend is going to get a sum of money in the form of a cheque.
7. B: Yeah.
8. C: And he would like to deposit it into my account.
UNABLE TO ACHIEVE
PDF FOR PAGE 68
Analysis of Text 4.1

Background to the text
Telephone text recorded as authentic spoken language data for the Spoken Discourse Project in 1992. Australian text where the customer asks for information about banking a cheque. The bank employee explains the difficulty of banking the particular category of cheque and poses a solution for the customer.

Type of interaction
Pragmatic encounter – obtaining service information

Generic analysis
Telephone service encounter


Register analysis
Field: Banking activity
Lexical items related to banking (cheque, account, Visa, signature)
Action verbs dominate (deposit, verify, sign)
Tenor: Bank employee to customer
Modality expressing compulsion and obligation (you won’t be able to, shouldn’t, that’s the only way we will be able to)
A special feature of this text is the way the employee uses informal slang when expressing solidarity with the customer and explains how to beat the system (Um now you may be able to get away with it)
Mode: Spoken text negotiated over the telephone requiring constant feedback from the customer.

Conversation analysis
Very cooperative text with the employee being very helpful and showing solidarity with the customer.

No overlapping of turns but customer carefully backchannels in response to the information given.

Teaching implications
• Intertextuality of written texts in procedures in banking – need to get advice before appropriate forms can be completed.
• Cultural awareness of banking procedures to understand the problem with banking the cheque.
• Generic staging – especially important to initiate and fully explain the purpose of the call.
• Importance of backchanneling in the telephone call to maintain the solidarity set up by the employee.
**Summary**

We have suggested that the process of collecting, transcribing and analysing natural spoken data, although time consuming, is a valuable activity for language teachers. This chapter has offered some guidelines for transcription and a framework for text analysis. We suggest that when analysing a text, you will not need to consider all the headings in the framework, but only those features which are foregrounded in the text and which are important for the tasks you may wish to develop for students. It is a valuable resource to build up sets of analyses of authentic spoken texts. This can be done on an individual basis or groups of teachers can develop a bank of analyses as a collective exercise.

Sample analyses of six of the texts collected in the *Spoken Discourse Project* are presented in Chapter 6. These texts can be used as a guide for your own analyses of a variety of pragmatic and interpersonal texts.
Chapter 5
Using spoken discourse in your teaching program

In this chapter we turn to the pedagogical issues which were considered in the Spoken Discourse Project. We suggest a number of planning steps and strategies which can be used to incorporate spoken discourse into your teaching program. These strategies move from general concerns with the overall context and nature of the student group to more specific issues of planning teaching sequences which can develop spoken discourse.

Step 1 Analysing your learner group and setting objectives

Decisions about aims and objectives and the spoken discourse tasks and activities for the classroom will inevitably depend on your learner group and whether they are at beginning, intermediate or more advanced stages of language learning. The most important starting point when deciding how you will use natural spoken data in classroom activities is to gather background data about your students, including educational and social information, skills and language levels. You will need to gather objective information, such as personal data, and subjective information, including teacher and learner assessment of spoken language learning needs. This information will lead to a number of planning questions:

- What are the implications of my student profile for selecting and using spoken discourse samples in the classroom (eg Do they have limited literacy in English which would make the use of transcripts difficult)?
- What course aims and objectives can I develop for my students in relation to spoken language skills (eg to identify the typical structure of different types of spoken interaction; to compare the structures of texts)?
- What kinds of spoken texts do my learners need to focus on (eg interpersonal or pragmatic)?
- What specific discourse strategies would help my learners to improve their skills (eg backchannelling, asking for clarification, turn taking)?
- What experiences have my students had of unpredictable or gatekeeping situations? What discourse strategies could I introduce to help them deal with such situations (eg extending the interaction when the other speaker wishes to close)?

To demonstrate how a profile of your learner group can provide the basis for these planning questions, we present a sample learner group profile from one of the Spoken Discourse Project class groups (see Case study 5.1).
Case study 5.1: Sample learner group profile

The students were in a course which aimed to develop work-related skills. The teacher summarised the objective data for the group and discussed with the students their spoken language needs.

Objective data
• relatively short-term residence in Australia (1–3 years)
• mixed language backgrounds (Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai, Cambodian)
• male students only (12 in total)
• ages 24–40 years
• attending first English class in Australia
• all literate in L1
• intermediate skills in spoken English
• intermediate skills in written English.

Subjective data
The students need to:
• improve skills in listening to and speaking English in a range of work contexts
• participate in casual conversations with English speaking workmates
• improve skills in making enquiries and seeking information in service situations
• give relevant personal information required in work and community contexts
• improve skills in explaining Asian names and in spelling them for workmates.

TASK 5.1  Using the table below, develop a similar profile of your learners, focusing particularly on their subjective spoken language needs. Involve your learners in this task. Provide some examples of their current skills in spoken language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken discourse samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case study 5.2 is an example of how this learner group profile was used to plan a unit of work based on the teacher and student assessment of needs.

**Case study 5.2**
The teacher developed a number of aims and objectives for spoken language development based on the student group profile analysis.

In the workplace context the students were often called upon to give opinions and needed to improve their ability to put forward and support personal ideas. In negotiation with the students the teacher developed the following broad aims and specific objectives for a unit of work.

**Unit: Personal opinions**

**Aims**
- to develop skills in giving personal opinions orally
- to discuss the cultural and social purpose of opinion giving.

**Objectives**
- to develop the notion of lexical relations for different fields (eg production schedules in a workplace meeting)
- to develop the language of opinion giving (eg *I think, I suggest*)
- to identify how clauses expressing opinion are linked by conjunctive ties (eg *so, because*)
- to identify the generic stages in opinion giving (ie Statement of opinion ^ Presentation of argument ^ Elaboration of argument ^ Restatement).

**Step 2 Selecting your starting point**
It is unlikely that teachers will plan lessons as self-contained or stand-alone sessions. Generally we want to build into our courses a logical sequencing of language learning and skills development through longer units of work. These sequences will inevitably relate to a number of complex factors such as learner profile, rate of learning, current skills in spoken discourse and student goals. As we have suggested, a number of planning decisions will need to be made. The first of these is to decide on a starting point for planning units of work. Two possible starting points are topic and text.

**Planning from topic**
Teachers often like to choose a topic approach as this provides a focus for selecting materials, tasks and teaching resources. There are a number of questions you will need to consider in selecting topics which lend themselves to spoken discourse development:
- Are the topics realistic and relevant to my students?
- Will the students find themselves in situations outside the classroom where
they can practise the discourse skills which they will rehearse in class?

• Are the discourse skills they acquire transferable to other related topic areas?
• Can I obtain spoken discourse recordings related to the topics?
• Do I have access to other materials and resources which will support the recorded data?
• Do I have access to other English speakers who could provide models and examples of spoken discourse?

The steps in developing a unit of work from the starting point of topic are illustrated in Figure 5.1 (adapted from a diagram by Hood 1989). You will notice that these steps are represented as being cyclical as the process is one of continual review and adaption to suit students’ changing needs as the unit progresses. The steps in the process are:

• Identify the topic or field for the unit.
• Consider the tasks which the learners will be involved in outside the classroom.
• List the genres or types of spoken texts likely to arise.
• Identify written text types likely to arise as well.
• Record and analyse samples of appropriate spoken text types.
• Transcribe the whole texts or sections of texts as necessary.
• Develop a series of related classroom tasks.
• Develop tasks which learners can practise outside the classroom.
• Review and discuss the outcomes of out-of-class tasks with your learners.
• Re-teach or further develop skills in this text type.
• Focus on further topic development through other related texts.
• Re-enter the cycle adapting its various stages to changing student needs.

Case study 5.3 illustrates the development of a unit of work from the starting point of topic.
Case study 5.3
A project teacher developed, in consultation with her learners, a unit of work on the topic of health. First she developed the following aims and objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner group:</th>
<th>Intermediate learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims:</td>
<td>to improve language skills related to the topic of health to discuss cultural expectations in the area of health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives:</td>
<td>to make a medical appointment to participate in a doctor’s consultation to understand and act on information about medication to complete a medical claim form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having identified her overall aims and objectives, the teacher considered each of the objectives and developed a series of tasks following the process outlined in Figure 5.1. Her plan for the first objective is outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>to make a medical appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real world tasks</td>
<td>making a medical appointment by telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>making a medical appointment face-to-face in surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changing or confirming an appointment time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reading an appointment card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken interaction</td>
<td>recorded telephone interaction of appointment making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom tasks</td>
<td>developing and practising the vocabulary of personal information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practising phrases of time and date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>listening to recording and identifying the structure of the interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reading transcript of recording and analysing structure and vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practising opening and closing strategies (eg greetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discussing and practising typical question and answer sequences arising from recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>using discourse strategies to ask for clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practising strategies to ask for information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discussing the nature of tenor roles and relationships in making appointments by telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reporting by students of previous experiences of appointment making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in real-world situations</td>
<td>students make appointments and report back to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students make notes in L1 on difficulties encountered in appointment making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TASK 5.2** Decide on a topic which relates to your students’ needs and complete the following table.
An alternative starting point for programming is to plan the unit around a particular text type which your students have identified as important. A useful way of identifying relevant texts is by using the communication network in Figure 5.2 (adapted from Joyce 1992) as the basis for discussion with your students.
The communication network diagram can be used to identify:
- the contexts of situation your students wish to access
- the people your students wish to communicate with
- the kinds of texts your students need to control.

Using the communication network to identify texts involves the students in thinking about particular kinds of spoken interaction which are highly significant for them in daily life. The network can be completed by the students themselves, either individually or in groups, or alternatively in discussion with the teacher if the students’ second language is limited.

The network can also be used with other people who are in contact with the students. For example, supervisors in the workplace or lecturers in educational contexts can provide further perspectives on the spoken discourse needs of the students. Once relevant texts have been identified through the network, you can then begin planning the classroom tasks for the unit of work.

It is preferable to demonstrate the use of the network by giving the students a completed example or by jointly constructing a sample with them. Figure 5.3 is an example of a communication network based on the texts needed by students in a study skills class.
The steps in the process of working from a text-based starting point are set out in Figure 5.4 (adapted from Hood 1989). Like the topic approach, this also involves recycling back into the process according to student progress. The steps involved in this approach are:

- Identify the text or text type for the unit.
- Identify or categorise the spoken discourse types (see Figure 1.3 Typology of spoken interactions in Chapter 1).
- Identify the field or topic related to the text types.
- Predict and identify related texts.
- Record and analyse samples of appropriate text types.
- Transcribe texts or sections of texts as necessary.
- Develop a series of related classroom tasks.
- Develop tasks which learners can practise outside the classroom.
- Review and discuss the outcomes of out-of-class tasks with your learners.
- Re-teach or further develop skills in this text type.
- Re-enter the cycle adapting the various stages to changing student needs.
Figure 5.4 Planning from text

Example:
Using questions practised in class at parent-teacher interview
Informed by:
• student access to real world contexts
• student level of proficiency in the genre
• student confidence

Text

Classroom tasks

Practice in real world situations

Recording of spoken interactions

Example: Text related to parent-teacher interactions
Informed by:
• discussion of communication network
• cultural and social experiences of teachers and students

Text identification

Related texts

Example: Parent-teacher interviews about child progress
Informed by:
• guidelines for categorising spoken discourse types
• identifying field or topic
• predicting text structure and linguistic features

Example: Parent-teacher interviews
Informed by:
• discussion of communication network
• cultural and social experiences of teachers and students

Example: Parent and teacher discussing child’s progress
Informed by:
• principles and guidelines for:
  • text collection
  • recording
  • ethical considerations

Example: School report
Informed by:
• student and teacher knowledge of related texts
• language event analysis
• integration of spoken and written real world texts

(Adapted from Hood 1989)
Case study 5.4 describes part of a unit of work initiated by the learners’ need to develop skills in social situations and then planned around appropriate texts.

Case study 5.4
The intermediate students in one of the classes involved in the Spoken Discourse Project wanted to extend their repertoire of texts associated with short casual encounters with neighbours and workmates. The teacher identified, with the students, a range of fields (eg enquiring about the family, the weather, activities over the weekend, holidays and so on) and decided to develop a unit of work covering several lessons which focused on discourse strategies for casual encounters. For one of these lessons, she recorded Text 5.1, which is a short interaction on the subject of holidays.

Text 5.1 Holidays
A: Oh hello Mary. How are you?
B: Well, but I’m really ... looking forward to a break, you know ... over the holidays ...
A: [Oh yeah ... are you doing anything?
B: No ... unfortunately ... wish I was. What about you?
A: No I don’t think we’ll be this year ... either, although ... we’re having the family... [together at Christmas.
B: [That’ll be nice ... yes ... um ... are you doing anything special at Christmas time ... y’know ... parties or anything like ...
A: Yes I ...
B: [Yeah ...
A: [I think my brother’s coming down from Tamworth ... and
B: Oh lovely ...
A: He doesn’t usually come down ...
B: [Mmmmm ... Yes ...
A: [And bringing his girlfriend with him too ...
B: Oh ... that’ll be interesting. Have you met her before?
A: No, I haven’t met her ...
B: [Oh ...
A: [But I’ve spoken to her on the phone.
B: Yes, yes ...
A: She sounds lovely ...
B: Yes ... oh that’s good.
A: Yes, so we’re really looking forward to it ... well, I’d better be going. I’ve got so much to do ... Catch up with you later, I hope.
B: Yes see you later.
Using the recording of Text 5.1, the teacher designed a number of activities in which the students:

- listened to the whole recording
- identified the field of the text and discussed related vocabulary and grammar
- discussed the tenor relationships between the speakers
- listened a second time to the whole recording to confirm their responses
- transcribed the recording in student groups
- checked the transcription with the teacher
- identified different stages in the encounter
- focused on strategies for turn taking and questioning to extend response
- focused on backchannelling and feedback strategies
- practised similar casual interactions with native speaker volunteers at the teaching centre.

Step 3 Selecting and sequencing units of work

In this section we outline two planning frameworks – the language event and the mode continuum – which can assist in the selection and sequencing of content for your program.

The language event

In Chapter 2 we discussed the concept of the language event as reflected in social practices of language use. In language events, spoken discourse is frequently interrelated with written discourse and the language used in the resulting spoken and written texts will be associated in a number of ways.

TASK 5.3 Consider the two related texts (Texts 5.2 and 5.3) and answer these questions:

- What broad context are these two events from? How do you know?
- What is it about the texts which makes it obvious that one is written and one is spoken?
- What similarities and differences can you identify between the two texts?

Text 5.2

A: Geez, mate...what happened ’ere?
B: I was stopped when that ... that bloody thing over there moved back and ... 
A: But you’ve smashed inter ... the bloke ... behind!
B: I was jus ... trying to get out the way ... and backed inter him ... He’d ...
he’d come up behind me ... and ... and I didn’t realise he was there ... yeah ...

(From Burns and Joyce 1993:53)

Text 5.3
I was following a crane which was passing No.5 Blast Furnace when the crane stopped to allow a ram truck to pass from the opposite direction. I stopped behind the crane.
It became apparent that the crane would not have enough room to allow the ram truck to pass and would have to reverse, so I checked that nothing was behind me in case I needed to reverse. It was clear. When the ram truck was alongside the crane, the crane rolled back so I reversed back without then checking if anything was behind me. In doing so, I collided with a car which had stopped behind me since I had last looked behind.

(From Burns and Joyce 1993:59)

Analysis
Both these texts are taken from a workplace context in which an accident has occurred. They are from a language event sequence which resulted from the accident.

Text 5.2 is a spoken exchange which is jointly constructed by two speakers almost immediately after the accident. We know there has been an accident because of the use of lexical items such as moved and smashed and we know that it is very recent because of the adverbs such as here and over there. However, we are not able to identify the context of the accident or the type of accident because the people and things in the context are not explicitly named.

Text 5.3 occurred some time after the accident. It is a written text in the form of a factual recount of the accident. This time the specific context is much easier to identify as specific things associated with the accident are named (No. 5 Blast Furnace, ram truck, crane, car).

There are a number of similarities and differences in these two texts which are outlined below.

Similarities between the two texts
Both texts:
• answer the question What happened? and so are recount genres
• draw on common vocabulary associated with the context (eg I, stopped, moved back, behind, backed into)
• use past tense to describe a past event (eg stopped, smashed)
• recount a sequence of events using similar conjunctions to build the sequence (eg when, and).
In both texts the driver of the vehicle is the primary knower who is in the
defensive position of having to provide an explanation for his behaviour.

**Differences between the two texts**
The differences between the spoken and written text are outlined in the table
below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details about the accident are inferred by the speakers from the physical context.</td>
<td>Details about the accident are internal to the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are very few nouns and there is a vagueness of reference to things in the context (eg bloody thing).</td>
<td>There are more nouns used to name the objects involved in the accident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenor relationship is foregrounded and equal or near equal status is marked by expressions such as mate.</td>
<td>The field of the discourse is foregrounded as the text is concerned with describing the accident to a distant reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a piling up of clauses through the use of the conjunctions and and but.</td>
<td>More conjunctions are used including those concerned with cause and effect (eg so, when, since).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language is highly personal and emotive (eg I, he, geez, bloody).</td>
<td>There is no emotive or personal language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have presented only two related texts in the language sequence which would occur as a result of the accident. However it would be reasonably easy to predict other texts which might also be linked to these. For example:

- a recount of the accident told to a supervisor
- an enquiry about procedures to follow as a result of the workplace accident
- a form to document the damage
- an enquiry about where to take the vehicle for repair
- a request for information and feedback on the damage
- a recount of the accident to workmates.

A language event sequence centred on booking a flight with a travel agent is outlined in Case study 5.5, from the *Spoken Discourse Project*.

**Case study 5.5 Language event sequence – booking a flight**

Ask friends about a travel agent.
Consult yellow pages for telephone number.
Make initial request for brochures by phone.
Consult the travel agent on cheapest alternatives.
Discuss a range of options.
Make the payment.
Discuss travel plans with friends or neighbours.
Identifying and analysing a language sequence of events can provide a useful framework when planning a unit of work. It enables you to:

- identify the spoken and written discourse encountered in different social practices
- integrate spoken and written discourse authentically into course design rather than teaching written and spoken language as separate macroskills
- discuss learners’ experiences of how spoken and written discourse may be related (e.g., a letter of complaint following up on a telephone call)
- discuss with learners the different discourse strategies needed at different points in spoken discourse
- prioritise the discourse types and strategies considered most important by the learners
- discuss the sociocultural knowledge implicit in such language sequences
- identify critical sites where gatekeeping or power relationships may occur.

The mode continuum

We introduced the mode continuum in Chapter 3 as a way of showing the shifting relationships, similarities and differences between spoken and written discourse. We suggested that the spoken and written texts which arise in everyday social contexts can be viewed as being on a continuum from *most spoken* to *most written*. We now return to a discussion of the mode continuum, this time as a means of planning classroom tasks.

Classroom tasks usually represent a balance between real life tasks and pedagogic tasks. *Real life* tasks draw their language content, procedures and activities as much as possible from authentic sources and attempt to prepare students for situations outside the classroom. For example, buying fruit and making a fruit salad in class. *Pedagogic tasks* focus on developing the skills needed to carry out real life tasks and are designed to develop particular skills and knowledge necessary in the language learning process. For example, practising the vocabulary and verb tenses needed to engage in a service encounter to buy fruit.

When teaching spoken discourse it is often necessary to include written tasks to help students focus on particular linguistic features and discourse strategies. The mode continuum can help us to identify which classroom tasks focus on spoken discourse, which on written discourse and which on both spoken and written discourse.

Language programs sometimes pay exclusive attention to spoken language development and ignore written language development altogether. On the other hand, literacy programs sometimes pay exclusive attention to written language development and ignore spoken language development. The mode continuum can be used to assist teachers to integrate related spoken and written texts to achieve a greater balance in course design and classroom learning. Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot (1992) and Joyce (1992) all provide examples of how spoken and written texts and tasks can be integrated using the mode continuum.
Case study 5.6 describes the planning for a unit of work which used texts based on their relationship to one another on the mode continuum.

**Case study 5.6**

One teacher developed a unit of work using text as his starting point. He wanted to assist his students with pragmatic interactions focusing on formal enquiries in a bureaucratic setting. To begin his unit, he used a recording of a telephone enquiry to a social security department about entitlement to a pension. He planned tasks which shifted along the mode continuum as shown in Figure 5.5 (adapted from Green 1992). In Figure 5.5 we can see how tasks in the classroom varied in their focus on spoken and written language. Some tasks focused on spoken language, some on written language and some required the students to engage with both spoken and written language to complete a task.

**Text:** Telephone enquiry to a government department

**Objectives:** To develop:
- the spoken language required for making enquiries in bureaucratic contexts
- discourse skills in asking for clarification
- awareness of questioning techniques
- strategies for extending feedback from the other speaker.

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**Figure 5.5 Planning through the mode continuum**

[Diagram of planning through the mode continuum]

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86 I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN
### TASK 5.4

Look back at the language event sequence you developed in Chapter 2 (see Task 2.4). Would you now wish to modify this in any way? Use the mode continuum to develop a sequence of tasks for your students which focus on a spoken text table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken tasks</th>
<th>Written tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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### Step 4 Planning ongoing learning and teaching processes

Most language programs recognise that language learning is a gradual process where students need time for the continual extension and recycling of skills and knowledge. In this section we present a framework for planning ongoing learning and teaching processes. This framework draws on the notion of scaffolding.
Scaffolding

The term scaffold was first used by Bruner (1983) and derives from the work of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky. Vygotsky argued that learning occurs in social situations where children are not given immediate and full responsibility for achievement of tasks but, depending on their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1934;1978) they share this responsibility with their adult caregivers. As a child’s competence becomes greater, the adult decreases the amount of support provided and increases expectations of how much of the full performance can be achieved by the child.

The notion of scaffolding and shifting levels of support and responsibility involved in completing a task is a useful one when thinking about language teaching and learning processes. Handing over full responsibility for tasks to students at early stages of new learning is problematic because the students may not have developed the skills required to complete set tasks. The teacher’s role becomes one of providing explicit support and guided practice and of thinking about when it is appropriate to withdraw this support as the students gradually become more able to complete tasks independently.

Figure 5.6 (which has been adapted from Pearson and Gallagher 1983:344) demonstrates how this shift might take place over a series of lessons or units of work involving the teaching of natural spoken discourse.
High teacher scaffolding and low student input
As Figure 5.6 suggests, high teacher scaffolding will occur when spoken texts or tasks are new to the students. As the skills required are at beginning stages of development, the students will be dependent on teacher input at this point. This input will involve explicit instruction from the teacher, such as:

- providing and discussing relevant cultural, social and contextual information associated with the text or topic
- linking cultural, social and contextual information with student experiences
- using typical and/or predictable models of natural spoken discourse related to the topic or field
- focusing on and guiding students on various aspects of the discourse (eg the overall structure, specific discourse strategies, particular lexical items, grammatical structures)
- providing native speaker models of spoken discourse
- giving explicit explanation and modelling of the tasks to be undertaken
- setting up tasks for guided practice on various components of the text.

Teacher and students will both be participating in the analysis and construction of spoken texts, but the primary responsibility for input will fall to the teacher.

Low teacher scaffolding and high student input
As student competence in using the spoken discourse associated with the task increases, the teacher can lessen the amount of modelling and guidance. Greater responsibility for linguistic input and independent performance of tasks can be given to the students. At this stage the teacher will focus less on explicit instruction and will adopt different teaching strategies, such as:

- acting as a coach or facilitator of classroom activities
- monitoring student competence with various aspects of spoken language (eg overall structure, use of appropriate lexis)
- providing further input as a resource to individuals, pairs or groups
- encouraging students to provide feedback to each other
- providing corrective feedback on task performance to the whole class
- introducing untypical or unpredicted elements into the discourse and discussing discourse strategies for dealing with these
- reintroducing explanation, modelling or guidance as necessary.

At this stage the students will be taking the primary responsibility for input and the teacher will be supporting students as they analyse and construct spoken texts independently.

Case study 5.7 demonstrates the use of scaffolding in a unit of work.

Case study 5.7
One teacher decided to teach a unit of work based on the topic of the environment and recycling. Her students wanted information on recycling and to be able to put forward positive arguments for it. This involved a new topic and new spoken discourse skills for the students and so the teacher developed a series of lessons drawing on the concept of scaffolding.
She recorded a series of short interviews in which native speakers discussed their answers to the question *What do you think about recycling?* The teacher designed a teaching sequence which aimed to scaffold the development of discourse strategies to enable the students to put forward similar arguments to those in the short interviews. She described it this way:

*The lesson is part of a unit on recycling/the environment. I used classification activities, pictures, posters, surveys and so on (spoken and written texts).*

*The first part mainly concentrated on building the topic knowledge (field), by focusing on the words/lexical items particular to the field. The students sequenced the field words as they listened to the recording. They also grouped and placed words together.*

*The second part involved the modelling part of the process – looking at the structure of the discourse, including the length, the strategies for elaborating and expanding, language features and semantic elements of the discourse (e.g. conjunctive relations and lexical relations).*

*At this point the students did a number of activities. They listened again and sequenced words written on strips of paper as they heard them. They then sequenced the clauses in the interaction. Next they checked their responses by listening again. We discussed this sequencing and focused on the conjunctions used to link clauses, such as ‘because’ and ‘so’.*

*The students then analysed the text to find typical ways of introducing personal opinions, such as ‘I think’ and ‘I believe’. Next, as a whole class activity, they developed structures for producing personal opinions, incorporating the structural stages, discourse strategies, lexical items and conjunctions they had already practised.*

**TASK 5.5  Think about the following issues. If possible discuss them with your colleagues.**

- How is the concept of high and low teacher scaffolding a useful one for your teaching?
- Think about a specific type of spoken discourse which could be taught to your students. What aspects of the text type do you want the students to focus on?
- Develop a series of tasks, such as those in the case study, which would assist your students to practise the components of the text with a view towards mastering the whole text.
Step 5: Assessing achievement

The issue of language assessment has become more pressing in recent years for a number of reasons including:

• greater demands for accountability to funding providers
• student concern for feedback on their progress
• the need to pass on information on student achievement to other teachers
• the need to provide articulated pathways of language development for students.

Assessment should occur throughout the course design process and throughout a teaching program. In a learner-centred curriculum, assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. A number of assessment principles to consider when assessing spoken discourse are outlined below.

Principles of assessment

Assessment criteria must be made explicit to the students
Organisational criteria may need to be adapted and discussed so that students can understand. Criteria should be explained to students in language adapted to their level.

Students must be informed that they are being assessed
This is the ideal, but some recent research shows that this also affects student performance if they know a specific task is for assessment (Burns and Hood 1994). A compromise position in these circumstances is to inform students that assessments will take place regularly throughout a course without notifying them of specific tasks.

The method and assessment ratings must be explained to the students in language adapted to their level
This should be discussed at the beginning of a course as part of overall orientation. The method of assessment should be discussed in terms of the educational requirements of the institution (eg if the institution adopts competency-based assessment then this should be explained).

Assessment must relate back to the aims and objectives of the program
Assessment will be facilitated if objectives are couched in terms of what learners should be able to do at the end of the course or teaching sequence.

Assessment must be reliable
Assessment should be consistent in two ways:

• the same assessor should rate several task performances at the same standard (intra-rater reliability)
• several assessors should reach agreement about the same task performance (inter-rater reliability).
Assessment must be valid
Assessment should assess what it claims to assess; for example, assessing skills in spoken discourse should not depend on a student’s ability to write. Equally, assessment should assess what has been taught (content validity).

Assessment must be reported in terms of a common language about achievement, comparable across the organisation
If other teachers, curriculum writers and program managers are to understand statements about achievement, this must be done through the use of common and shared descriptors.

Integrating assessment into the program
In good teaching programs assessment occurs throughout the program and becomes an integral part of teaching and learning. Formative assessment occurs throughout a course. It informs teachers about student progress and whether there is a need to revise and modify the course in any way. It also informs students about their progress and what they should be doing to improve their language development. Summative assessment occurs at the end of a course of study and is used to plot student progress, which is important in terms of future courses.

Formative assessment
At each stage of a course you will need to take into consideration the amount of scaffolding the students need. You will need to ask a number of course evaluation questions at each stage of the teaching unit to determine whether students need more direct instruction, more guided practice, or are able to attempt the spoken discourse tasks independently. Some of these questions are listed below for the various stages.

High scaffolded stage
- Do the students demonstrate understanding of the relevant cultural, social and contextual information associated with the text or topic?
- Can they link cultural, social and contextual information with their own experiences?
- Can they use typical and/or predictable models of natural spoken discourse related to the topic or field?
- Can they deal with various aspects of the discourse (eg the overall structure, specific discourse strategies, particular lexical items or grammatical structures)?
- Do they need more modelling of native speaker spoken discourse?

Guided practice
- What type of guided practice on various components of the text do they need?
- How can I monitor student progress with various aspects of the text (eg overall structure, use of appropriate lexis?)
- How can I provide input as a resource to individual students, pairs or groups in guided practice segments?
• How can I encourage students to provide feedback to each other?
• How can I provide corrective feedback on task performance to the whole class?
• Do they need more explicit explanation and modelling of tasks?
• Are they ready for an independent task?

Independent practice
• How can I introduce untypical or unpredicted elements into the discourse and discuss discourse strategies for dealing with these?
• How well have they performed independently?
• Should I reintroduce explanation, modelling or guidance?

Summative assessment
At the end of a unit of work or at the end of a course you will need to provide an assessment of student progress in spoken language development. A variety of strategies can be used to collect information on student performance for the purpose of assessment. These include observing students during role play activities, recording student performance on a given task for later analysis, observing student interaction with a native speaker and assessing student performance in real-world situations.

Table 5.1 sets out a framework of criteria which can be used to assess students’ spoken discourse performance. Not all the criteria will apply to your particular assessment tasks. You should select from these criteria or add to them according to the aims and objectives of your particular teaching unit and the level of your students.
Table 5.1 Assessment criteria for spoken discourse

Student name: ____________________ Class: ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse dimension</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Evaluation action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Genre               | • identifies sociocultural purpose of discourse  
|                     | • identifies motivation of discourse as interpersonal or pragmatic  
|                     | • makes lexicogrammatical choices appropriate to different stages of discourse  
|                     | • controls unpredictable stages in discourse | Yes | Partially | No |
| Register            | • identifies social context of discourse  
|                     | • makes appropriate lexicogrammatical field choices  
|                     | • makes appropriate lexicogrammatical tenor choices  
|                     | • uses appropriate thematic ties and referential links to extend discourse | Yes | Partially | No |
| Exchange strategies | • maintains own role in constructing the discourse  
|                     | • uses appropriate conversational moves to negotiate effective knowledge or action exchanges | Yes | Partially | No |
| Discourse strategies| • maintains turn taking roles and rights  
|                     | • makes appropriate use of adjacency pairs  
|                     | • makes appropriate preferred and dispreferred responses  
|                     | • responds to and initiates appropriate conversational moves  
|                     | • uses appropriate backchanneling | Yes | Partially | No |
| Critical strategies | • uses appropriate discourse strategies to challenge gatekeeping situations | Yes | Partially | No |
Summary

In this chapter we have outlined some planning frameworks for integrating spoken discourse tasks and assessment into language teaching programs and into classroom teaching. When using authentic discourse in language programs it is important that students understand:

- why you are using authentic spoken discourse in the classroom
- the transcription conventions you will use
- the phases of your teaching cycle (e.g. direct instruction followed by guided practice followed by independent construction).

It is essential that students practise spoken discourse in social contexts outside the classroom, and this will be more likely if they encounter authentic discourse in the classroom where they can explore the real nature of spoken discourse through a variety of activities and analyses.

1 For further information on assessment see Brindley 1989; Burrows 1993.
Chapter 6
Sample analyses

In this chapter we use the ‘Framework for analysis’ presented in Chapter 4 to analyse six texts collected during the Spoken Discourse Project. These texts are:

Text 6.1: Mother chatting to son’s new friend
Text 6.2: Sharing stories
Text 6.3: Academics talking about article: ‘Destroying the gift’
Text 6.4: Student academic seminar: ‘Ideology’
Text 6.5: Designing a newsletter
Text 6.6: Making an appointment

These analyses are not exhaustive, but focus on features which might be useful to highlight with particular student groups. When analysing spoken discourse remember that:

- it is not necessary to analyse texts from all perspectives
- spoken texts will foreground different aspects of spoken discourse and this should guide your decisions about analysis
- the aim of your analysis is to make explicit the aspects of spoken discourse your students need to understand and practise
- once completed your analysis will then be available for future student groups
- it can be more useful for teachers to collect and analyse spoken discourse as a collective activity.

Framework for analysis

1 Transcribe the recording

- Give the text a title.
- Leave a line between each speaker and number lines for easy reference.
- Label each speaker using letters, first names or positions (eg Officer, Receptionist).
- Insert contextual information.
- Retain the wording of the discourse as accurately as possible.

2 Analyse the transcript

Complete the analysis on a page facing the transcription and use the following headings for analysis:
Background to the text

• Include information about where, when, how and why the text was collected.
• Include relevant social and cultural information.

Type of interaction

• Identify the text as pragmatic or interpersonal.

General comments

• Make some general comments which will help your students to understand general features of the text.

*Generic structure analysis

• Categorise the text according to its sociocultural purpose.
• Label the stages of the texts with functional labels (eg examination).
• Indicate which stages are obligatory and which are optional (if possible).

*Register analysis

• Identify the field of the discourse and the related grammatical features.
• Identify the tenor of the discourse and the related grammatical features.
• Identify the mode of discourse and the related grammatical features.

*Exchange structure analysis

• Identify significant sections of the text (if any) for exchange structure analysis.
• Label the moves of speakers in the selected section of the discourse.
• Analyse the discourse strategies which the speakers have adopted (eg challenging).

*Conversation analysis

• Identify significant adjacency pairs (if any) for conversation analysis.
• Analyse turn taking patterns and related discourse signals and markers.
• Analyse turn types and related strategies.

*Pragmatic analysis

• Identify significant sections of the text for pragmatic analysis.
• Analyse the speech functions.
• Analyse how speakers are obeying conversational principles.
• Analyse any cross cultural aspects which may be significant to the students.

*Critical discourse analysis

• Identify any significant aspects of the text in terms of ideology and social power (eg gatekeeping).
*Decide which of the above approaches you wish to take for your analysis and follow the guidelines under the selected approach.

3 Implications for teaching

- Identify the significant teaching points which arise from the analyses.

Text 6.1: Mother chatting to son’s new friend

M = Mother
S = Sarah

1. M: Hello ... um ... Hi. What’s your name again?
2. S: Sarah Pinter.
3. M: Sarah?
4. S: Yes.
5. M: Pinter?
7. M: That’s real ... sort of English name, isn’t it?
8. S: Um ... actually I think it’s Hungarian. I’m not sure. I think so. My grandfather came from Hungary so ...
9. M: Yeah. Right. And you’re Jewish, are you?
11. M: Oh ... um ... And how did you come to know David?
12. S: Ah well ... Jill lives in the same house in Glebe where I live ...
14. S: Ah well ... Jill lives in the same house in Glebe where I live ...
15. M: Right.
16. S: So ... um ... and Jill knew David ... so they said that they were going on a holiday weekend and they invited me along ... actually a holiday a couple of days, because it wasn’t a weekend, it was Monday through to Wednesday ... so I just went with them.
17. M: How long have you been in Australia?
20. S: And I’ve only been in Sydney. I haven’t been out of Sydney. Well now I’ve been you know up past Newcastle and ... but I haven’t really been much ... to anywhere else.
21. M: Mmm so what do you think of Australia?
22. S: Well that’s ... it’s hard to make any kind of ... anything because I haven’t really been anywhere else ... um ... Sydney is ... is a very fun city. I’ve had a great time staying here ... um ... I can’t ... it’s not that different though from America. I mean ... there are a lot of differences but, in
30. general it's another Westernised city ... and it's not that different.
31. M: Right.
32. S: So I'm really looking forward to going into the Outback ... and just ...
33. other areas of Australia ... so I can see what Australia is really like.
34. M: Right. Which parts of Australia? Which parts of the Outback are you going to?
35. S: Um I don't ... everything is ... completely up in the air. I just keep hearing what people tell me and try then to go where they suggest ... um ... so far everyone has said Alice Springs and Ayers Rock.
36. M: Oh yes, yes ... except that it's probably the wrong time of the year.
37. S: Now why ... is it the wrong time of the year?
38. M: Er ... well if you were thinking of going now, it probably would be quite hot.
39. S: Right. Well actually, I think we're going to be going in ... um ... at the end of March, beginning of April.
40. M: Oh. [That would be a good time.
41. S: [Is that better? OK.
42. M: Yes, yes. But it's beautiful, really spectacular country.
43. S: Yeah that's what I've heard.
44. M: Yes. We just ... went for a holiday to Ayers Rock and Alice Springs ... um ... last September in the school holidays. And I loved it. It was beautiful.
45. S: That's what I've heard from everybody.
46. M: Mmm.
47. S: So I'm looking forward to it ... The one thing that is typical of Australia, I was told by Bill and David, is that when we were driving ... um ... two days ago I guess it was ... um I saw signs with a kangaroo and a koala bear on it ... and obviously, I'm not used to that ... it was great! I went out and took pictures of it.
48. M: [laughs] You didn't see the real kangaroos or the real koalas.
49. S: We saw real koalas.
50. M: Did you?
51. S: Yeah ... up in the trees.
52. M: Did you?
54. M: In the daytime?
55. S: Yes.
56. M: Oh you were very lucky.
57. S: Yeah. That's what I've been told. Yeah. That's very exciting. I still haven't seen a kangaroo yet, but considering I've been around Sydney, I don't really expect to see one for a while.
Analysis of Text 6.1

Background to the text
Australian text
Face-to-face conversation involving two women recorded as authentic spoken language data for the *Spoken Discourse Project* in 1992.

Bill, David, Jill and Sarah have just come back from a short holiday at David’s holiday home near Newcastle. Bill’s mother has just come home and has interrupted their meal preparations and discussion of kosher cooking. In this conversation the mother talks to Sarah in a nearby lounge room.

Type of interaction
Interpersonal, casual polite

General comments
In this conversation, where there has been little previous contact between the interactants, notice how the conversation changes from stiff and interview-like to a more natural conversation as the two speakers warm to each other.

Generic structure analysis
Casual conversation like this is not readily analysed for generic structure. However, there are identifiable stages of greeting, establishing identity, confirming a relationship, sharing attitudes and polite four part closing – typical of casual talk between relative strangers. It is not easy to say how much is obligatory.

Sociocultural purpose: The mother wants to find out what the son’s new girlfriend is like.

The relationship between the speakers changes with key stages of the conversation:

**Establishing identity**
The mother is virtually interviewing Sarah. Short turns with question and answer sequences as the mother seeks information, low affect.
Confirming relationship
The mother changes topic with *How long have you been in Australia?* showing interest in Sarah’s travel plans. The dialogue starts to change to more recognisable casual conversational style, but the mother continues to control the conversation through her questions and advice giving (*It’s probably the wrong time of year*).

Sharing attitudes
After Sarah accepts her advice (*Is that better?*) affect changes. The mother volunteers her own experiences (*I loved it*), gently jibes Sarah (*You didn’t see the real kangaroos or the real koalas*). This builds the relationship.

Register analysis

**Field**
Personal background and attitudes to travel in Australia
Lexical items refer to:
- name and background (*Jewish etc*)
- attitudes to travel experience (*great, I loved it etc*)
- Australian place names (*Ayers Rock, Alice Springs etc*)
- adjectives expressing affect (*good, beautiful, spectacular, lucky etc*).

Verbs focus on:
- experience (*I haven’t been, enjoy etc*)
- perception (*seen, heard*).

**Tenor**
- Contact: Low – speakers have met for the first time.
- Status: Mother has status because:
  - she is in her own home
  - her son is Sarah’s friend
  - she is older.
  - Passive voice used by Sarah in deliberately not asserting her own opinion, being very polite (*That’s what I’ve been told*).
- Affect: Moves from medium to high.
  - Affect markers increase as the relationship builds (*I’m really looking forward to going to the Outback, It’s beautiful, really spectacular country etc*).
- Mode: Spoken face-to-face dialogue.

**Exchange structure analysis**
In the exchange of information, the mother positions Sarah as the primary knower (K1) for the first part of the conversation because she is seeking factual information. Because of the status difference, Sarah is not in a position to
demand any information from the mother. Sarah’s minimal responses at the beginning virtually force the mother into the position of interviewer.

Sarah offers one fairly weak challenge to this role of interviewee by offering a dispreferred response (Actually I think it’s Hungarian). Sarah’s use of modality (I think, I’m not quite sure) weakens the challenge. She then follows with an explanation (My grandfather came from Hungary).

In line 39 the mother renegotiates her own position into one of adviser and primary knower:

K1 M: Oh yes, yes ... except that it’s probably the wrong time of the year.
K2 S: Now why ... is it the wrong time of the year?
K1f M: Er ... well if you were thinking of going now, it probably would be quite hot.
K2f S: Right.
K2 Well actually, I think we’re going to be going in ... um ... at the end of March, beginning of April. (seeking confirmation)
K1 M: Oh. That would be a good time.

This marks the tenor shift where the mother drops her questioning stance and the status becomes more equal.

**Teaching implications**

This text could provide students of intermediate level and above with the opportunity to study:

- strategies for talking to strangers (eg questions to ask, ways of responding, politeness strategies and subjects which can be talked about)
- ways of taking control of a conversation (eg challenging the other person’s questions)
- how certain types of questions can be construed as rude and how there are alternative ways of asking questions politely
- cross cultural aspects of conversation (eg the question You’re Jewish are you? has cross-cultural implications and could lead to discussion of when and to whom such a question could be asked and how to deal with unwanted questions).

**Text 6.2 Sharing stories**

C = Charlotte  
N = Naomi

2. N: Hello Charlotte. Nice to see you tonight. Where’s Rachel?
3. C: Rachel’s at home entertaining guests ... but I must tell you about what I did today ... one of my most embarrassing moments. I went to Mary’s Speech Day this morning, then went shopping, and on the train coming
home, I suddenly realised I had no house keys. I hadn’t driven into town so ... I hadn’t picked up my purse with the keys in it. So we got home, and found a door open which only goes into the rumpus room. So Jane and I managed to get into the rumpus room. Then we had to prise off a flyscreen and climb through the window ... with my parcels, in my good dress [laughs] and my high heels and that’s how we managed to get in. Otherwise we wouldn’t have been here tonight. We’d have been sitting on the doorstep waiting for Joseph to come home I think. [laughs]

N: Oh it’s a wonder ... lucky no-one saw you. They might have thought you were [a burglar.

C: [Well it took about five minutes to break in and I thought if you were a professional burglar you probably would’ve done it in about half the time [laughs] ... so I don’t feel very secure any more.

N: Oh well it was er ... you had plenty of initiative ... and [a helper, Jane.

C: [That’s right

N: Hmm... Well I haven’t had a wonderful day either. I’ve been dropping things and forgetting things all day. However, I went to the library this morning to get a copy of *Salt*, and when I got there I realised I’d left my list behind, and I didn’t know the name of the author, so the librarian looked it up on the computer and there were literally hundreds of Salts. [laughs] I couldn’t identify it at all so I went home and rang ... um ... Sutherland and they said ‘Yes we have one copy at Cronulla [library ...,

C: [Back to Cronulla. [laughs]

N: So back to Cronulla I went. And then I went up to Miranda Fair and er... There were several things I wanted to do up there and I had a plastic bag with a pair of shoes in it to take to the repairer ... to have the heels and toes done.

C: Right.

N: And when I arrived there I opened my bag and I’d taken the wrong [shoes

C: [laughs] [Oh no.

N: So all in all I’ve had a rather ... disjointed day.

C: And it’s not even Friday the thirteenth? [laughs]

N: No. [laughs]
Analysis of Text 6.2

Background to the text
Australian text
Face-to-face conversation involving two women recorded as authentic spoken language data for the *Spoken Discourse Project* in 1992.

The women, who are middle aged and middle class, are members of a Book Club which has been meeting regularly once a month over some years. Charlotte has a sister, Rachel, who is also a member of the Book Club but who was absent that night. Jane is Charlotte’s daughter. Initially some self-consciousness about the recording process is noticeable.

Type of interaction
Interpersonal, casual confirming conversation

General comments
This text illustrates the *observer’s paradox* (see page 41). The women are obviously self conscious about being taped at the beginning of the conversation. Note the rather constrained greeting and the formality and careful structure of Charlotte’s story, the well-formed sentences and careful grammatical choices. As they begin to warm to their task and forget that they are being recorded, there is more noticeable overlapping, backchannelling and hesitation.

Generic structure analysis
This is a casual conversation in which Charlotte and Naomi exchange anecdotes. An anecdote always revolves around some crisis and a reaction to it. In telling the story people tend to elaborate to make it more entertaining. The following staging is evident up to line 18:

Greeting: lines 1 to 2 ^ Abstract: lines 3 to 4 ^ Orientation: lines 4 to 5 ^ Crisis: lines 6 to 7 ^ Reaction: lines 7 to 11 ^ Completion: lines 11 to 12 ^ Coda: lines 12 to 13 ^ Solidarity building: lines 14 to 21.

Charlotte’s anecdote occurs between the greeting phase and the solidarity building phase. The anecdote is characterised by temporal sequencing conjunctions (eg *then*) and causal conjunctions (eg *so*), as well as explanations (eg *I hadn’t driven into town*, lines 6–7).

Following the anecdote there is a solidarity phase with overlapping of turns, high use of modality and attribudinal lexis such as *lucky, secure, plenty*. Solidarity building is an important phase in sharing stories, particularly among women, who use non-competitive story telling to build on personal relationships.
Naomi’s anecdote follows a similar pattern, and is also followed by a phase of solidarity building (lines 38–39). Note, however, that Charlotte gives a steady stream of feedback during Naomi’s anecdote.

**Register analysis**

**Field**  
Embarrassing situations  
Lexical items in Charlotte’s story include many action verbs as hers is a story of actions (prise, climb, sit, managed etc). In Naomi’s story verbs tend to be mental processes like realised, know, identify as she is focused on her absent-mindedness. Both stories are highly contextualised, with strings of nouns referring to places like town, Sutherland, Cronulla and parts of the house, door, rumpus room, flyscreen, doorstep.

**Tenor**  
Contact: High as speakers meet regularly.  
Status: Equal with both women comfortable in revealing to the other their absent-mindedness. There is a shared knowledge about each other’s families, friends and routines.

Affect: Attitudinal language reveals only mild discomfort. Frequent laughter shows amusement with the events which caused them inconvenience. High use of modality in solidarity-building phase (‘they might have thought’, ‘you probably would have’).

**Mode**  
Spoken face-to-face dialogue. Characterised by two long largely uninterrupted anecdotes with long clause complexes.  
Discourse markers such as and, but and so typical of anecdotes.  
Frequency of I in thematic position.

**Pragmatic analysis**  
Charlotte’s lengthy response to Naomi’s question Where’s Rachel? appears to infringe Grice’s maxims of quantity and relevance (see Chapter 1: Pragmatics); that is, she seems to say more than the immediate context calls for, and what she does say is not relevant to the question. However, Charlotte probably recognises that Naomi’s question is really an invitation to say something about her day. She quickly dispenses with Rachel’s whereabouts and starts her own story. This conversation is highly context-dependent. Each speaker assumes her references to other people, places and things (eg Salt) need no explanation.
Cross-cultural aspects
The significance of events like Speech Day and Friday the thirteenth are shared knowledge. Charlotte's action in climbing through the window is interpreted as initiative, and Naomi's absent-mindedness is seen as amusing, not a fault. The humour in Charlotte's story depends on the irony that a middle-aged, middle-class woman wearing high heels and good clothes climbing through a window could possibly be mistaken for a burglar.

Teaching implications
This type of text would be suitable for lower intermediate to intermediate students. It highlights:

- the way good friends share stories and how they will even reveal embarrassing moments to each other
- stages of anecdotes
- how people in conversation hold the floor when telling an anecdote
- ways of providing supporting feedback to encourage the person speaking.

Text 6.3 Academics talking about article:
‘Destroying the gift’
S1, S2, S3, S4 = academic speakers

1. S1: [wrapping up introduction to the paper]... So I suppose that's where I'll leave the discussion at this stage
2. S2: Ah-m
3. S1: (?)) Your comments
4. S2: When I read it for the first time I found it quite an interesting way of approaching the whole argument, but reading it for the second time I felt slightly uneasy because she never put, really defines why, the reasons why, the changes that were introduced were introduced, I mean she doesn't really go into any depth and feel that that idea of a gift is great and I accept that totally, but it was never, it was never used as such previously, because it was
5. S1: hhh [breath]
6. S2: kept very much as
7. S1: [Yes she (( ? )) does she?
8. S3: [I see (( ? ))]
9. S2: Yes, she
10. S1: (( ? )) that it was?
11. S2: [Well
12. S3: [That's what I thought
13. S2: She has these slightly odd references to the cement of our society being
I see what you mean 22/11/07 10:10 AM Page 107

21. one of trust, goodwill and mutual aid...(( ?)) ... to improve our society
22. except of course we haven’t really experienced [laughs] that (( ? ))
23. S3: I … I think what she’s really saying is that social cohesion comes out of
24. that sort of, ah, ah, y’know, ah all those factors and, ah she goes on then
25. to say that we i-if a that society c- by being ((a gift)) society the benefits
26. are far greater than what we actually contribute on the one hand
27. S2: [Yeh
28. S3: [In the next bit
29. S2: [Yeh
30. S3: [That we actually offer more than we are obliged to and what she’s
31. saying that this, this market ah, bringing the market values into it, ahm,
32. causes, eh, or actually deprives the whole process of knowledge.
33. S4: I think you’re right. I, ahm, I actually found this a very useful paper to
34. describe something that the (( ?)) informed. But only because it is partly
35. what I was saying yesterday ...

Text 6.4 Student academic seminar: ‘Ideology’

L = Lecturer
E, S, K and T = Undergraduate participants

1. L: Well, what’s the relations of what Tania and Melissa said to this article,
2. the Aboriginal article and what (( ?)) was saying? Can you see any links
3. between?
4. E: Ideology. Have you got an hour or two? [all laugh] Language and power.
5. L: Well, we don’t have to … we have got another … before we go on to
6. another topic but just even briefly, just mention some of the links, so
7. that, so that we can get, while they’re fresh in your mind.
8. E: Marginalised people have to stay marginalised, but I still can’t cope with
9. the understanding why. Why is it that we have marginalised people and
10. we keep them out there? Why do we have kids in boxes and we keep
11. them there? And we have Aboriginals in boxes. I can’t cope with that.
12. (( ?)) I know but I can’t cope with it.
13. S: It’s like Brave New World where they add alcohol to each embryo (( ?))
14. L: Why would society want [that?]
15. S: [do everything for themselves. You know, make
16. your own shoes, do everything for yourself, grow your own vegetables (( ? )
17. get the job done, share all the tasks, but some jobs have a bit more
18. status than other jobs you know.
19. K: And it’s like what … [Elsa?
20. L: [Melissa
K: What Melissa was saying about how someone actually puts a book out then you know they become more powerful and more powerful. It's like the cultures in society. A culture takes over. The British culture came out here and a lot of European cultures came and joined and it was strong enough to take over the Aboriginal culture and thus it is seen to take over, it's seen as an expert, it's more powerful and so it's treated thus, and so the levels on which the different cultures are based on, I suppose, are interpreted as being a larger margin as the years have gone by, and it's only now that we are trying to start to bring the margins back together again, but it's gone at such a phenomenal rate, you know, that it's backtracking, and it's going to take a very long time.

T: The whole thing is that most, how is it that, most people don't see it. They don't think that happened either or don't realise, or we don't realise.

E: It's transparent.

K: Yes, It's just like natural, natural, natural world.

S: Yeah, but (( ?))

K: That's what ideology's about, naturalised. For what it is, yes, the more naturalised, the harder it is to see it for what it is. Yes.

Comparative Analysis of Text 6.3 and 6.4

Background to Text 6.3 and 6.4

Texts 6.3 and 6.4 are two Australian texts from a university setting. Text 6.3: ‘Destroying the gift’ is an extract from a longer text of a group of academics participating in a staff seminar. Text 6.4: ‘Ideology’ is an extract from an undergraduate tutorial on the marginalisation of Aboriginal culture. Both texts were recorded as authentic spoken language data for the Spoken Discourse Project in 1992. Comparison of these texts shows how the academics are more focused on the content of the article under discussion, more tentative in their opinions and more willing to interrupt one another than the undergraduates.

Text 6.3

Type of interaction

Interpersonal, formal group discussion
General comments

In the text preceding the extracted Text 6.3, the first speaker introduced a discussion of an article which everyone had previously read. The article argued that economic rationalism was not an appropriate model for academic research. The generic structure in the longer text is not clear cut. However, in this extract taken from the discussion after the first speaker’s presentation, there is a recurring pattern of one person giving an opinion supported by evidence, followed with reaction by one or more speakers. Finally one speaker resolves the discussion with a summing up.

Generic structure analysis

Opinion giving

The following staging occurs twice, in lines 5–19 and lines 20–35:
Opinion ^ (Evidence) ^ Reaction ^ (Evidence) ^ (Resolution).

Register analysis

Field
Evaluation of abstract ideas
Lexical items include metalanguage for discussing texts (the whole argument, defines reasons, depth).
Verbs projecting someone else’s ideas (What she’s really saying, She goes on then to say).
Verbs relating to the senses and mental activity (read, found, felt, mean, accept).

Tenor
Contact: No indication of previous contact – impersonal.
Status : Peer group interaction – equal status assumed.
Affect: Low affect towards group members.
Medium affect directed at the text under discussion.
Expression of a range of opinion from tentative to definite through modality (interestingly, slightly uneasy, partly, totally, really).

Mode
Spoken by four participants face-to-face

Exchange structure analysis

The presenter of the paper positions himself as a secondary knower by freely inviting comments (notice how this differs from the more controlling way in which the lecturer invites students to comment in Text 6.4).
When speakers take the floor they position themselves as primary knowers by making declarative statements which are then challenged.

K1 S2: She has these slightly odd references to ...
ch S3: I..I think what she’s really saying is that... (challenging S2)

In the final stages of this excerpt, notice how S3 continues to build his case, overriding interjections from S2 which may just be supporting backchannelling or could be weak bids to re-enter the debate.

bch S2: [Yeh
K1 S3: [In the next bit
bch S2: [Yeh
K1 S3: [That we actually offer more...

**Conversation analysis**

There is competition between speakers for turns. Speakers bid for turns by making overlapping comments. For example:

S2: [Well
S3: [That’s what I thought

Once speakers win the floor, they tend to take long turns, closing up any gaps with fillers like sort of, ah, you know.

**Critical discourse analysis**

The text illustrates the way a discussion can function to reinforce solidarity within a group. The comments of the academics position the ideas of the writer slightly outside the ideology assumed by the group (slightly odd, quite an interesting way, doesn’t really go into any depth). S4’s comment shows grudging acceptance that the writer has a valid point of view, (But only because it is partly what I was saying yesterday).

**Teaching implications**

This text illustrates:

- turn taking and strategies for holding the floor; sophisticated competition for turns compared with Text 6.4
- how to give feedback
- ways of hedging and expressing tentative opinions
- that even highly competent speakers use incomplete sentences in spoken language.
Text 6.4

Type of interaction
Interpersonal, semi-polite, semi-formal group discussion

General comments
This extract is from an undergraduate tutorial. The students are discussing links between some texts they have all read and a student seminar on the marginalisation of Aboriginal culture. As in Text 6.3, a similar generic pattern of opinion-giving emerges after the initial invitation by the lecturer. However, notice that it is less obvious which text they are referring to, and evidence seems to be mainly from everyday experience.

Generic structure analysis
The first part of the discussion (lines 1–20) is similar to conventional patterns of classroom discourse, with the lecturer eliciting responses. In lines 20–38 we see an Opinion ^ (Evidence) ^ Reaction ^ (Evidence) ^ (Resolution) pattern similar to Text 6.3. Note, however, that only student K provides evidence clearly based on the seminar (Melissa was saying). The reactions by other students are not followed by evidence.

Register analysis

Field
Marginalisation of Aboriginal culture
A few lexical items are constantly repeated (margins, European culture, Aboriginal culture).
Verbs tend to be mental or verbal (see, realise, cope, suppose, say).

Tenor
Contact: Regular.
Status: Lecturer indicates higher status by directing the discussion through interrogatives. Students are assumed to have equal status with one another.
Affect: Little affect towards one another. Strong affect towards the topic which contrasts with the academics in Text 6.4 where affect towards the topic is controlled.
Few modality markers. Declarative statements are made with high certainty (I can’t cope with that, It’s transparent; It’s just like natural).

Mode
Spoken by five participants face-to-face
Exchange structure analysis

At first the lecturer takes up a delayed primary knower role as she is eliciting a response from the students to a question she can already answer for herself (compare with Text 6.3). She has a little trouble getting the desired response, so has to challenge.

dK1 L: Well, what's the relations of what Tania and Melissa said to this article, the Aboriginal article and what (?) was saying? Can you see any links between?

K2 E: Ideology. Have you got an hour or two? [all laugh] Language and power.

ch L: Well, we don't have to, we have got another, before we go on to another topic but just even briefly, just mention some of the links, so that, so that we can get, while they're fresh in your mind.

rch E: Marginalised people have to stay marginalised...

(student responds to challenge)

Notice how E responds to the challenge, but then goes on to ask some questions she cannot answer:

K2: Why is it that we have marginalised people?

Once the discussion is established, the students take up primary knower positions in turn, reacting to and building on one another's opinions. They take turns at stating their own opinions rather than challenging one another as the academics in Text 6.3 do. They tend to tolerate long turns rather than interrupting. The students are still apprentices at the academic game – they take up dogmatic positions rather than using tentative language as do the academics.

Teaching implications

These texts would be suitable for advanced students preparing for further study.

A comparison of these two texts can highlight the expert versus the apprenticeship role in an academic setting. For example, the way more competent speakers:

• employ different strategies for interrupting and holding the floor
• use metalanguage to discuss ideas
• introduce supporting evidence
• use modality to show shades of certainty in opinion.

A comparison of these two texts can also highlight the tenor relationship between lecturer and undergraduates which might limit the options the undergraduates have for expressing critical opinions.
Text 6.5 Designing a newsletter

B = Brian
M = Mary
G = Gillian
F = Fiona
T = Tony
D = Denise

1. B: mm ... well I guess we decided that we just put a big effort into an
   information pack, a newsletter. I think if we can get a newsletter out
   before the end of the year ... and I make a start drafting some of that
   with the policy formation, where we've ... at who we're dealing with,
   our network and what our plans are. Just let everybody know.
3. B: And if everybody who's been involved in an area say if we could have a
   story on the teacher training ... and a bit of a story on on ... 
4. G: [I think we need to work on format for this.
5. B: Yeah
6. G: I don't think we should have a big written thing I think we need ... to
7. B: oh no, a newsletter with you know...
8. G: Really there needs to be, no, a you know reflect the plain English stuff
9. B: and using using visuals
10. G: Yeah
11. B: A newsletter [say 2 pages foldout
13. B: (( ?)) [laughter] Let's get (( ?)) OK
15. G: OK so newsletter's priority and the glossy folder.
16. F: Well [information pack
17. D: [Well some sort of information
18. F: Information yeah
19. D: Getting our information
33. G: Information and I think that’s, the gloss, that’s quite that, that’s quite adequate.
34. B: I’d like to get our own …
35. T: A glossy for us’d be good too.
36. B: I’d like to get our own so we can maybe even put two together and have our own. It wouldn’t take long to even go to a private supplier and get say 500 of these type of thing done up with <name of organisation>
37. G: [At this time of the year it’s not real good the printers are very busy.]
38. B: Mmm.

Analysis of Text 6.5

Background to the text
Australian text involving a group in a workplace.
This text was recorded as authentic spoken language data for the Spoken Discourse Project in 1992. This is a regular Monday morning team meeting in a workplace where team members are expected to take an active role in decision making. The excerpt is from the last half hour of the meeting. The topic of this segment is the proposed preparation of a newsletter for a new workplace education service. Brian is the manager and Mary is second in charge. The other people are either permanent or casual staff. Gillian has specialist knowledge of the publishing process. The team leader, Brian, allows others to make suggestions and contribute to the building of ideas.

Type of interaction
Pragmatic, goal oriented group negotiation
Ideas and information are being exchanged (rather than more tangible commodities).

General comments
A discussion like this does not lend itself to a generic structure analysis; however this excerpt can be divided into two clear phases:

Phase 1 (lines 1–28)
The two people with most status jointly determine the key features of the project. Other team members either keep quiet or murmur support:

Lines 1–9 Brian sums up what has been decided so far, then sketches out his ideas for the publication and roles everyone should play.
Line 10 Gillian moves in with her concept of the format.
Lines 10–28: Brian and Gillian jointly build a concept of the format and style of the newsletter.
Phase 2 (lines 29–42)
The other members of the team provide input and the logistics of printing are discussed.

Lines 29–32 Denise and Fiona emphasise the importance of information.
Lines 33–34 Gillian acknowledges this input and quickly returns to her focus on the appearance of the newsletter.
Lines 35–42 Brian tries to wrap up the discussion but Gillian brings up a new problem.

Register analysis

Field
Content and format of newsletter.
Use of technical terms (visuals, A3 folded).
Strings of related nouns (story, newsletter, report, folder).

Tenor
Colleague to colleague; manager to employees
Contact: The participants know each other well through frequent contact; there are few politeness markers and a lot of assumed contextual knowledge.
Status: Brian is the team leader but he downplays his organisational status in the spirit of joint decision making. Status for Gillian in this context comes from a display of technical knowledge about the production process.
Affect: The team members are focused on the goal rather than each other. Enthusiasm for the newsletter is expressed through fast overlapping comments and suggestions for the product (a glossy for us’d be good). Frequent use of markers of modality by Bob (I guess, I think, if we could, maybe) contrasted with strong declarative statements of opinion by Gillian (OK, so newsletter’s priority and the glossy folder).

Mode
Face to face negotiation involving six people.
Themes alternate between interpersonal, (I), and the goal, (newsletter, information, a glossy).

Conversation analysis
High degree of overlapping between speakers. Turn taking is unequal, with Brian and Gillian taking most of the turns.

Notice how in adjacent pairs:
• one speaker picks up on the previous speaker’s words and expands on them:
  G: [Something that can be done on the Mac or
  B: [Yeah done on the Mac and the photocopier
• Some speakers give input less effectively by simply reformulating the same phrase:

F: Well [information pack]
D: [Well some sort of information]
F: Information yeah
D: Getting our information

• A speaker recovers from being interrupted by repeating his last phrase:

B: I’d like to get our own …
T: A glossy for us’d be good too.
B: I’d like to get our own so we can maybe even put two together and have our own…

Critical discourse analysis

This example demonstrates ways in which power and status relationships operate in a group. Brian downplays his status as leader to encourage participation and Gillian takes this as an opportunity to foreground her interests. Brian and Gillian jointly build the idea of the newsletter, but there is potential here for one agenda to override the other. Brian’s initial concern about purpose and content is overtaken by publication details, particularly the appearance of the newsletter. The other members of the group attempt to refocus the discussion on content, but in the end even Brian is focused on production issues not content. Gillian’s strategies include interrupting with her own opinions (I think, I don’t think), demonstrating technical knowledge (You’ve got a Ready Set Go), and field knowledge (the printers are very busy). She controls the topic by acknowledging the contribution of others briefly, then returning to her own point (line 28 and line 33).

Teaching implications

A text like this could be used at intermediate level and above.

This text highlights:

• issues of power and control – how individuals can push their own agendas through language
• the use of technical terms to display status through knowledge and hence to take control
• use of modality markers and modal adjuncts
• why some speakers fail to put their own opinions effectively
• how native speakers agree, disagree and sum up.
Text 6.6 Making an appointment

R = Receptionist
P = Patient

1. R: Good morning. Dr Wong’s surgery. Ros speaking.
3. R: How are you Emily?
4. P: Hi I’m fine.
5. R: That’s good.
6. P: I’m ringing to make an appointment for Jennifer to see Wen ... for a
check-up.
7. R: Right.
8. P: During her school holidays.
9. R: When is ... when is the school ... first to the thirteenth?
10. P: Er no ... well any day from the twentieth of September
11. R: Oh that’s nice. Oh no sorry ... um we’re away.
12. P: Oh.
13. R: Yes.
14. P: That always happens ... ah ... When are you back?
15. R: Um we’re back on the fourteenth.
16. P: Is that school ...
17. R: October ... um ... and ... then school’s back, isn’t it? Oh well actually
that’s very interesting. We’re away for the whole of the school holidays...
18. P: because she breaks on the nineteenth, does she?
20. R: Then she resumes on the fourteenth.
22. P: Oh.
23. P: What about the actual fourteenth. I think she might have to go in on the
fourteenth, on the evening of the fourteenth.
24. R: Oh, on the evening of the fourteenth. Well then that’s fine. We could
make it on the day. We could make it as early as nine.
25. P: Nine? OK.
26. R: Course you’ll be back at work then, won’t you?
27. P: Yes yes.
28. R: Is that a problem for Jennifer?
29. P: Um ... that’s a thought.
30. R: Do you want me to make it after four?
31. P: Well ... make it after school ... yeah.
32. R: That’s not cutting it too fine for you, is it?
37. P: Um ... yeah ... that's a problem.
38. R: [laughs] (? ?) here and back home again?
39. P: Well how about ... I could drop her there and she could get herself back home or she could go out for the day.
40. R: Right.
41. P: OK, well we'll leave it for nine ... er ... nine o'clock.
42. R: Yes on the fourteenth.
43. P: Right that's Monday isn't it?
44. R: Right yes.
45. P: OK good.
46. R: Good. Are we going to see you on Saturday? You weren't there last Saturday.
47. P: No. Er yes I will be coming next Saturday.
48. R: Good. Even though it was windy, the weather had actually dropped when we were on the courts. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be.
49. P: Oh really? Actually that's why I didn't come because it was so windy and I thought I'd get on with other things.
50. R: [laughs] Yes I was tempted to do the same and Wen said no we're going. [laughs]
51. P: OK. Well see you Saturday.
52. R: Thank you Emily.
53. P: Bye Ros.

Analysis of Text 6.6

Background to the text
Australian text
Telephone conversation involving two women recorded as authentic spoken language data for the Spoken Discourse Project in 1992.

The patient is ringing the receptionist in a dental practice to make an appointment for her daughter. This is a variation on the expected impersonal transactional encounter which would be more normal in this situation. The patient and the receptionist are good friends and obviously play tennis together on weekends. As a consequence of their relationship, the receptionist's knowledge of the patient's circumstances is brought to bear on the negotiation of a suitable appointment time.
Type of interaction
Mixed pragmatic and interpersonal
Transactional encounter of making an appointment mixed with casual confirming conversation which occurs when the transactional part of the encounter has been completed.

General comments
This type of mixed interaction is common where clients and providers have a long-standing association, or in small communities where people are likely to meet socially as well as professionally. The dialogue unfolds as a series of obligatory goods and service phases interspersed with interpersonal relationship maintenance phases.

Register analysis
Field
Appointment making
Lexical items related to appointments (ie time and dates: day, nine o’clock, holidays, thirteenth, fourteenth etc)
Relational verbs dominate throughout (is, are)
Action verbs include those relating to holidays (breaks, resumes) in transactional section
Verbs of saying, thinking and perception occur in the casual conversation at the end of the text.

Tenor
Contact: High, as the people involved in this interaction have regular social contact through a tennis club. The friendly relationship is seen in the extended negotiation of a time which is suitable for Emily and her daughter. This length of negotiation would be less likely if the patient and receptionist had a formal service-oriented relationship.

Status: The status differences in this exchange are minimal because of the friendship between the two women who are on first name terms and call the dentist by her first name. A number of tag questions are exchanged which indicates the sense of real negotiation here (eg lines 30, 36 and 44).

Affect: Medium. Use of epithets (nice, very interesting, fine).

Mode
Spoken text negotiated over the telephone so there is spatial distance and no visual feedback. There is constant backchanneling (right, OK, good etc) which indicates that the listener is still attending to the conversation.
Pragmatic analysis

Lines 1–6 are a good example of how interpersonal and pragmatic concerns are mixed in this conversation. If we didn’t know the context, P’s response to the receptionist would appear to infringe Grice’s maxims of relevance and quantity. Normally, the greeting, identification and expression of purpose stages would be expected to go something like this:

R: Good morning. Dr Wong’s surgery. Ros speaking.
P: It’s Emily (surname) here. I’m ringing to make an appointment for my daughter to see Dr. Wong for a check-up.

If the interactants did not know each other, using first names and making enquiries about health would be considered inappropriate at this stage. However, in this context, there is an interpersonal relationship to be maintained, so these elements are appropriate.

Similarly, the questions about the school holidays and appointment times are relevant in this context. Both the receptionist and the patient utilise background knowledge to negotiate a suitable date and time.

Teaching implications

This type of text has wide application. The earlier part, up to line 11, could be used with students from lower intermediate level. The complications in the rest of the text could be introduced with more advanced classes.

This text highlights:
• how people easily depart from the expected script due to aspects of tenor
• how students would need to distinguish the obligatory stages in the transactional encounter from those phases in the interaction which fulfil a social function of maintaining a friendship
• how to address people with different degrees of politeness and familiarity
• ways of giving feedback over the phone
• use of modality expressing degrees of certainty or obligation in negotiating the time
• the extent to which a date or time is open to negotiation.

Published course books rarely introduce difficulties into appointment making and this text could show students how a real life negotiation may be extended over a large number of turns.
Concluding remarks

The basic assumption of this book has been that it is valuable and helpful for teachers to have some kind of organising principles or frameworks for thinking about the nature of spoken discourse. Using such principles, we have the potential to address in more realistic ways the language needs of learners outside the classroom. Native speakers have implicit understandings of how language is used competently in different situational contexts. If we use real samples of spoken discourse from these contexts and develop tools for their analysis we can give our learners information about actual language use which may help them become more effective language users.

Collecting samples of spoken discourse is not necessarily easy and it is also time-consuming. At the same time it is an exciting and revealing activity and one which can provide enormous benefits for language teaching. We hope that this book has gone some way to enthuse readers to collect their own samples of spoken discourse and to attempt data analyses that can then be used in the language classroom with learners at various stages of learning.

Finally, we hope that the book has encouraged readers to reflect on current practices in teaching spoken language and to evaluate the usefulness of discourse analysis in the language classroom in the same way that the teachers in the project that gave rise to this publication were able to do.
References


