

Evaluation of the usefulness of Hymes' ethnographic framework from a teacher's perspective

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Hymes provides a framework for exploring speech events (Hymes, D. (1971) 'Sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking' in Ardener: 47-93; Hymes, D. (1972) 'Models of the interaction of language and social life', in Gumperz and Hymes: 35-71).

Use this framework to summarise the distinguishing features of:

- a) an English classroom activity (e.g., a presentation activity, drill, small group discussion, or role-play) that you use in your teaching. (You should record your own data for this.)
- b) casual conversation (you may either record your own data or use published data for this, but whichever you choose, the conversation should be natural and not 'set up' or elicited by you or another researcher.)

Which of (a) or (b) has the features which are the easiest to identify, and why? Discuss the usefulness of this kind of analysis for understanding different kinds of communication.

You should include short real-life examples to illustrate distinguishing features but you are not advised to collect and analyse extensive quantities of data.

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Introduction

Teachers who aim to prepare students for using language outside the class need to have an understanding of language as it is really used, which is the concept of communicative competence. In classrooms that focus on grammar, students do not learn how language is used, and end up unable to handle daily conversation (Brazil 1995:2, Brazil 1992). Even in classes that aim to simulate language produced in the outside world, students focus on producing learned phrases (Willis 1992:178) which do not represent natural communication. An understanding of the nature of language used outside the classroom allows teachers to examine their own teacher talk (Thornbury 1996). As well, students benefit from exposure to authentic samples of language and classroom activities based on real communication. We need as thorough a definition as possible of what is and isn't real.

Hymes (1972, described in Coulthard 1985:33-58) developed a framework for the 'ethnography of speaking' to explore the notion of communicative competence. The framework is designed to describe in complete detail different genres of speech (see table 1) in order to understand what real communication is and what rules, linguistic or otherwise, make a speaker 'competent.' In this paper, Hymes' framework will be used to examine a classroom drill and a conversation recorded by the author in order to inform teaching practice by understanding the differences between these genres. Section 1 will apply the framework to the samples, and describe their features in detail, and section 2 will discuss the difficulties in conducting the analysis as well as its usefulness in understanding the genres and informing practice.

Table 1: Outline of Hymes' framework

Area of Framework	Definition	Examples
Speech community	“Any group that shares both linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation.” (Coulthard 1985:34-7)	New York African-Americans, speakers of American English
Speech Event	Genres of communication (ibid.:42-3)	Conversation, prayer
(Aspects of Speech Event)		
Setting	Location and time (ibid.:44-5)	A restaurant, classroom, set time every Sunday, randomly occurring
Participants	Who is participating and what roles they take (ibid.:45-7)	Addressor, addressee, speaker, hearer or audience
Purpose	The purpose of the speech event (ibid.:47-8)	Litigation, discussion, ritual greeting
Key	The tone in which something is said (ibid.:48-9)	Sarcastic, sincere
Channels	Medium of communication (ibid.:49)	Written, telegraphic, semaphore
Message content	Topic (ibid.:49)	Many possibilities
Message form	Grammatical and lexical composition (ibid.:50-54)	How face saving gestures are realized

1. Analysis

This section is an analysis of two samples: one classroom drill and one conversation. It will describe the samples according to Hymes' ethnography of speaking framework (as described by Coulthard 1985:33-58) and is based on written transcripts of the samples illustrating salient features.

The classroom drill sample is taken from a recording of an English class taught by the author to Japanese children, and the conversation sample from a recording of the

author's interaction with friends. Although the original intent in recording the conversation was to examine English interaction, it contains many samples of Japanese and English bilingual interaction, which complicated the analysis.

Although Hymes urges an exhaustive description of all aspects of a speech event (Coulthard 1985:42), the analysis is limited to generalizations about each genre due to the small sample size, and no exhaustive labeling systems are attempted.

1.1 Speech community

Coulthard (1985:35) defines the speech community as “any group which shares both linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation.” Labov (1972a, cited in Coulthard 1985:37) expands the definition to those who participate “in a set of shared norms.” Coulthard (1985:37) argues that the speech community is a useful concept, but an idealization, as “speakers do not fall neatly into categories.”

1.1.1 Speech community of the classroom

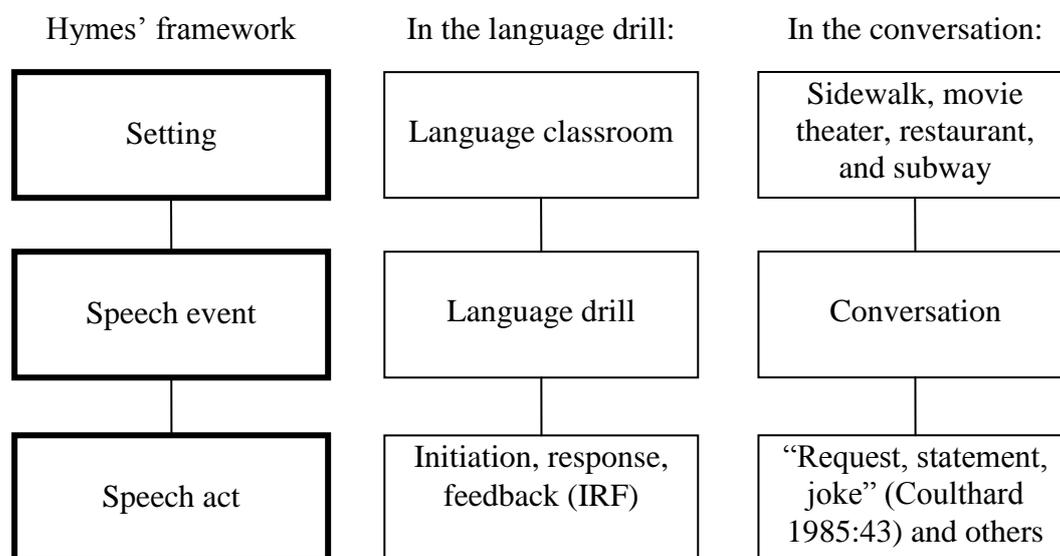
The speech community doing the language drill consists of nine members who communicate with a very limited English vocabulary, flashcard images, and gestures. They share rules of classroom behavior, but the rules can be unclear due to the teacher's limited means of communicating with them. All members of the community understand Japanese, but school rules prevent the teacher from sharing these linguistic resources with the children, although the children negotiate meaning with one another and have asides in Japanese.

1.1.2 Speech community of the conversation

This community had four members representing three countries: the United States, England, and Japan. Although each member has different levels of proficiency in English and Japanese, as a group they have the resources necessary to continue conversing for several hours. Two of the members require translations (see section 1.4.2), which leaves open the possible interpretations that they are peripheral members of the speech community, that they temporarily cease to be members if translation is not provided, or that it is enough for them to be present even in non-understanding to count themselves as members.

1.2 Speech event

In Hymes' framework, a speech event is a genre of communication which is made up of many speech acts (Coulthard 1985:42). Every speech event takes place in a situation (see table 2). As Coulthard states (1985:42), an exhaustive list of speech events and speech acts for a speech community is one of the major goals of ethnographers using Hymes' framework.

Table 2: Hierarchy of speech event and speech act in Hymes' framework

1.2.1 The classroom drill as a speech event

The classroom drill is a series of exchanges where the teacher asks students to produce vocabulary from flashcard prompts. The beginning and end are clearly defined (see section 1.4.1). The speech acts are limited to those of a typical "three part exchange" (Brazil 1995:39) as seen in transcript 1:

Transcript 1 – IRF three part exchange

Author: Okay. [pause] Okay, what's this?
 [students talk, make jokes about the picture in Japanese]
 Student: Sister!
 Author: Sister. Good.

1.2.2 The conversation as a speech event

During the time the participants spent together, different interpretations are possible: that there was one long bilingual conversation going on between everyone, that there was a separate English and Japanese conversation, or that there were a large number of conversations in both languages, their boundaries determined by significant topic

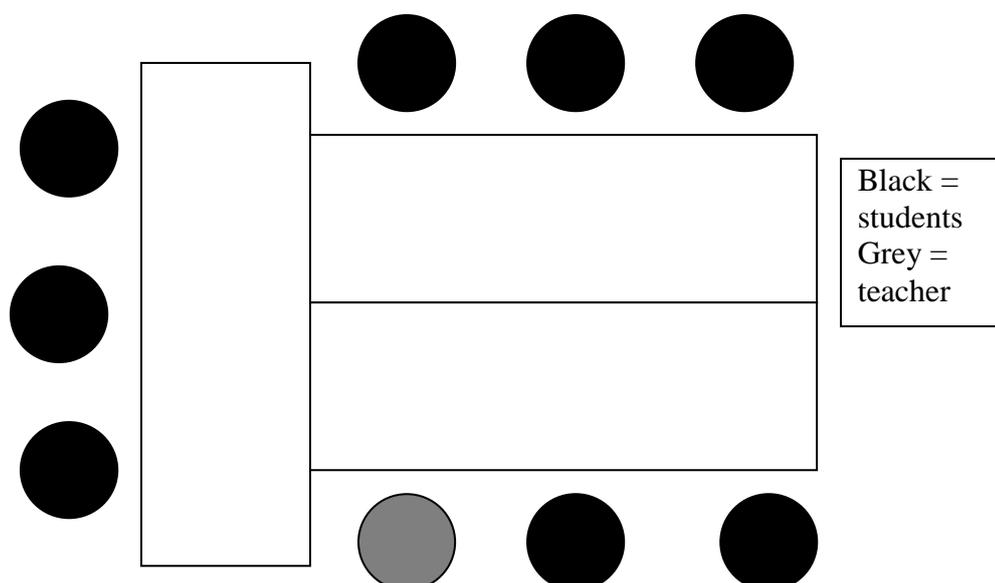
change or lapses of time. I will accept that a conversation necessarily has opening and closing rituals (Dornyei and Thurrell 1994:42-3), and for this paper define the conversation speech event as the first of the interpretations above.

1.3 Setting

According to Hymes' framework, the setting of a speech event is where and when it takes place (Coulthard 1985: 44-45).

1.3.1 Setting in the classroom

The children's class drill takes place in the classroom of a private English school. The physical setting of the classroom has been modified by the teacher for specific pedagogical reasons. The teacher has arranged the available furniture so he can be as close to all of the students as possible, with a large surface in the middle where students can focus on flashcards. There are markers, spare paper, whiteboards, and other materials easily available to the teacher.

Table 3: Layout of children's classroom:

The class is held at the same time every week, and while this specific drill is not repeated in every lesson, similar drills with different sets of flashcards are common and the students understand what is expected of them. This predictability is known as scaffolding (Wood, Burner, and Ross 1976, cited in Cameron 2001:8).

1.3.2 Setting in the conversation

The conversation, on the other hand, was not a routine for the participants. On this day the participants met on the street, and began their interaction with one another. From there they went to a movie (where they were silent as they watched it), then to a restaurant, and continued their conversation until they physically parted ways. Only the portion of the conversation in the restaurant was recorded. The setting of this part of the conversation clearly influences the course of the conversation, as can be seen in the following transcript:

Transcript 2a – Influence of Setting

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

- B: [After eating] Supposedly, real Chinese food isn't oily.
 Author: Really.
 J: [Seeing K eat] *You're left handed!*
 K: [Nods]
 J: *She's left handed. She's eating with her left hand.*
 B: [Thinking] Oh, left hand?
 J: [Garbled questions in Japanese] *That's amazing. You write with your right hand...*
 B: [to K] Ambidextrous? [to the author] What's Ambidextrous?
 Author: I dunno the exact word. [Garbled talk in Japanese to K, trying to explain what B is trying to ask]
 K: *Hm, it kind of depends.*
 J: *Huh. What about scissors?*
 [garbled exchange]
 B: Scissors left hand... [pause] How about a gun?
 Author: [laughing] Yeah... [to K] *How about a gun?*
 K: [laughs, non-verbal response]
 B: [laughs] That's cool.
 J: *Wow, that's amazing.*

Transcript note: The names of the participant have been changed to initials to protect their privacy.

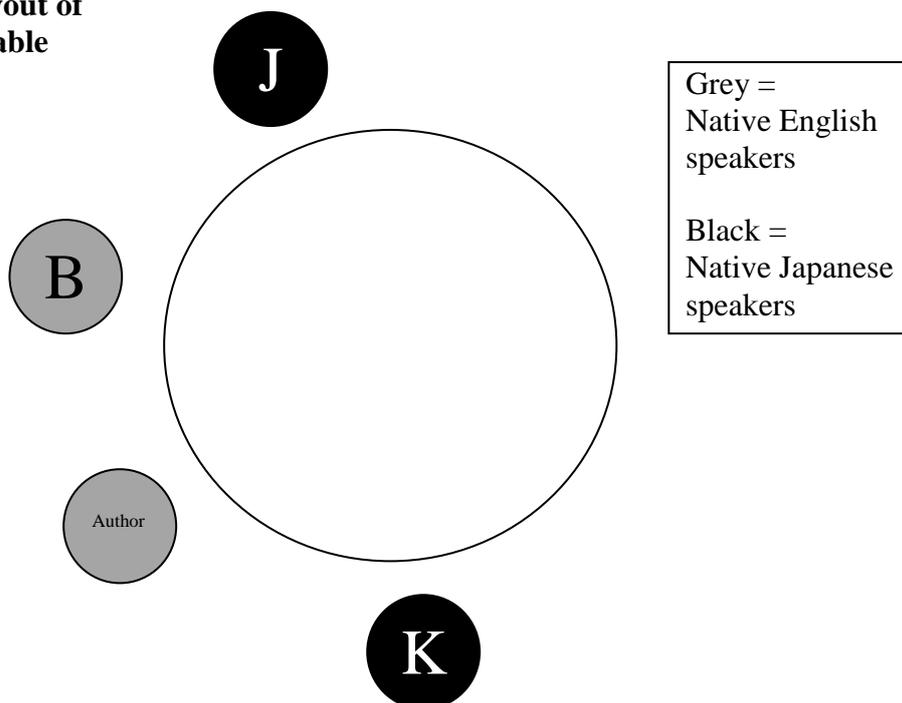
B is a man from England, and the author's friend.

J is B's fiancée, and is a Japanese woman.

K is a Japanese woman, and is the author's girlfriend.

This convention will be used for all of the conversation transcripts.

First, the food being eaten sparks comments about Chinese food in general, and then the act of eating reveals that the author's girlfriend is left handed, beginning a wider discussion of handedness. The conversation is dynamic in nature, and the influence of the setting unpredictable, as there are no social rules among this group for including the setting in conversation – it is spontaneous.

Table 4: Layout of restaurant table

NOTES: The author is an American man. B is a man from England. J is B's fiancée and is a Japanese woman, and K is the author's girlfriend, who is Japanese.

1.4 Participants

Hymes proposes four participant roles, “addressor, speaker, addressee, and hearer or audience” (Coulthard 1985: 45). Hymes proposes that conversations may require only two roles (addressor and addressee), but others may require speaking or listening on the behalf of others (speaker, audience).

1.4.1 Participants in the classroom

The roles during the flashcard drill are static and ritualized. The role of teacher and students is predefined. There were 8 students aged 10-12.

Certain intonation patterns were exclusive to the teacher. The teacher marked the beginning and end of the drill with a “boundary exchange” (Brazil 1995:24):

Transcript 3 – Boundary exchange (opening)

[Students converse in Japanese while teacher gets flashcards]
 Author: Okay. [pause] Okay, what's this?

Transcript 4 – Boundary exchange (closing)

[Teacher gets cards together for next activity, students chat a bit in Japanese]
 Author: Okay, good.

The initial “okay” and final “good” (underlined) are marked by low termination units (Hewings 1992:195, Brazil 1995:119). Also typical of teacher power, in the drill the teacher initiates each sequence, a “three part exchange” (Brazil 1995:39) as seen previously in transcript 1:

Transcript 1 – IRF three part exchange

Author: Okay. [pause] Okay, what's this?
 [students talk, make jokes about the picture in Japanese]
 Student: Sister!
 Author: Sister. Good.

1.4.2 Participants in the conversation

In contrast to the drill, sequences in the conversation are initiated by different participants and participation is limited only by interest in the topic and language abilities of the participants. At several points the Japanese participants break off from the English conversation to talk in Japanese about different topics, only to join in the English conversation later, although speaking in Japanese at some points and English at others. In transcript 2, the author acts as a speaker for B, who is addressing his questions about handedness to K, and J and the author speak on her behalf to give B his answer.

Another example of this comes when the author doesn't believe K will understand questions, and automatically answers on her behalf without her consultation.

Transcript 5 – Answering on another's behalf

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

- B: Yeah, so next Sunday, barbecue?
 Author: Oh, right, right. Yes. Monday. Yeah, Monday. And then next two Saturdays.
 B: Yeah, Saturday night. [to K] You can come too.
 [talk in Japanese between the author and K]
 Author: [to K] *Sunday*.
 [garbled]
 B: What, do you have to work?
 Author: She's probably got to know like a month in advance.
 B: You don't get public holidays off?
 Author: No, she's a temp.

The choice to answer on K's behalf was not predictable, as transcripts 2 and 5 show different approaches, and throughout the conversation the roles are very dynamic. None of the participants has a dominant role, and moves such as the low termination boundary exchanges, and follow-ups evaluating language performance would be seen as patronizing and rude, while in the classroom context they are expected.

1.5 Purpose

Hymes' framework proposes that all speech events "have a purpose, even if occasionally it is only phatic" (Coulthard 1985:47).

1.5.1 Purpose in the classroom

In the case of the vocabulary drill, the purpose is implicit in its label. The pedagogical aim of the drill was to review previously introduced vocabulary related to family

members. The drill and its purpose were part of the teacher's lesson plan, and designed to set up the next activity, a more complex game, by making the words fresh in the students' minds and reducing the language demands placed on them (Cameron 2001:24). However, despite the teacher's intentions the students do manage to subvert his purpose by making jokes about the funny pictures on the flashcards and otherwise misbehaving.

1.5.2 Purpose in the conversation

The conversation, on the other hand, is not occasionally phatic as the Coulthard suggests, but almost completely. Its purpose is primarily social (Brazil 1995:155) as we can see by the fact that it does not end at the conclusion of any transaction, but by the participants' physical separation. It is not completely without transactional features, as transcript 5 shows when B confirms the author's attendance at the BBQ and determines if K is also coming, but its purpose is mainly "just [to] fill the time of day" (PirSIG 1976, quoted in Brown and Yule 1983:3-4).

1.6 Key

Key is defined as the "'tone, manner or spirit' in which an act is performed" (Coulthard 1985:48). This includes descriptions of sarcasm, where meaning and overt content are opposite, and keys may be signaled by non-verbal signs or changes in voice.

1.6.1 Key in the classroom

The teacher and the students each use a limited set of keys during the drill, and the sets available to each are different.

Transcript 6 – Approving key

Author: Okay, good. [displays another card]
Student: Sister and brother [lots of simultaneous answers, but slightly different]
Student: Broth...
Student: Par... [unable to remember the last part of the word]
Author: Good, parents.
Student: [repeating] Parents

Transcript 7 – Disciplinary key

Author: What about this? [to a “misbehaving” student] Stop, stop, stop, stop!

In transcript 6 the teacher uses an approving tone although only half of the expected answer was produced, and in transcript 7 the teacher’s voice becomes high and his words fast as he tries to convince the student to stop. These keys, commonplace in the classroom, would be out of place in the conversation and would likely cause offense.

1.6.2 Key in the conversation

The conversation shows a number of subtly different keys, some sincere and others not.

Transcript 8 – Mock-disgust

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

- Author: [Sound of mock disgust, looking at menu] Fried scorpion!
 B: What?
 Author: Fried scorpion, that's what it says.
 B: Ooh...
 Author: [Pointing out another item on the menu] Silkworms, baby!
 B: Oh God!
 J: *I heard those are a kind of snack.*
 Author: Are you gonna have it?
 B: It's not a snack.
 Author: I think... Oh man, I don't know.
 B: I don't want to eat a scorpion.
 Author: I don't want to eat a silkworm either!
 B: I'm not in a desert.
 Author: Yeah.
 B: Look at... Scorpions... Oh god.

Although neither participant wants to eat either of the mentioned items, the exaggerated speech is an attempt at humor and not a sincere expression of disgust.

Transcript 9 – Assuming a different persona

- B: So, it's the 22nd.
 Author: Yeah.
 B: Yeah.
 Author: [pause] I just remember it's the weekend before my birthday.
 B: Oh. A double celebration then.
 Author: Yeah. [in a high, nasal voice] It's all about me, guys. It's my birthday too. C'mon guys!
 B: More importantly...

In this case the author is trying to be humorous by implying his birthday party is more important than his friend's wedding, but does so by assuming a different voice to signal his lack of sincerity. The words of transcripts 8 and 9 would have much different implications if uttered in a serious, sincere key. Determining the exact nature of these keys is difficult, however. Neither are sincere, but they differ phonologically and in

nuance. Neither could have been swapped for the other. No complete set of labels is available in the framework, and the conversation is too long and various to attempt to meaningfully describe all of the keys used.

1.7 Channels

Channel is “the ‘choice of oral, written, telegraphic, semaphore, or other mediums of transmission of speech’” (Coulthard 1985:49). It is implied that these mediums are transmitting words, but pictures are not specifically mentioned. In both the drill and the conversation, which use the oral channel, they are used in lieu of words, and they serve a communicative purpose.

1.7.1 Channels in the classroom

In the classroom, the vocabulary cards are used to elicit specific words in the English language, and to serve as an initiation of a three part exchange.

Transcript 10a – Showing flashcard as initiating move

Author: [Shows next card without saying anything]
 Student: Mom
 Student: Mother
 Author: Mom, mother... [already showing the next card]
 Student: [garbled]
 Author: [responding to student] Dad, father.
 Student: [repeating teacher's follow-up] Dad.
 Author: [Showing next card]
 Student: Grandma
 Author: Grandma [shows next card]
 Student: Grandpa
 Student: Grandfather
 Author: Good [drawn out] Grandpa or grandfather

If the teacher said “brother” in the students’ L1, and then asked them to translate the word into English, it would likely produce the same desired response. However, translation and flashcard drills are different in nature, and based on this it would be a stretch to say flashcards are transmitting *speech*. The drill, without changing the language, would have been impossible without the cards. Because they do serve a communicative purpose, however, they must be considered a channel used by this speech community.

1.7.2 Channels in the conversation

Similarly, the conversation is oral, but there is an instance where the author references a price in the menu without reading it aloud, and the others read it in their own menu and confirm:

Transcript 11 – Written medium

Author: [looking at menu] Is that one price for everybody, or per person?
J: Everybody.
B: It’s everybody... Yeah.
Author: Okay. [pause] Well, that’s pretty cheap per person.

This is a clearer example of the visual medium taking the place of speech, and two channels being used at the same time.

1.8 Message content

Hymes defines message content as “*topic, and change of topic*” (Coulthard 1985:49).

1.8.1 Message content in the classroom

In the classroom drill there is only one topic, and only one person who can introduce it.

As previously mentioned, it is the teacher who defines boundaries to show students when the topic has changed, and it is done in predictable ways (low termination at the end of the drill). The children do not have the freedom, or at this stage, the language ability to change the topic to what they are interested in, and indeed have no exposure to topic changing language other than that used specifically by teachers.

1.8.2 Message content in the conversation

In contrast, the conversation’s topics are introduced unpredictably and by each participant, and influenced by external stimulus. As seen in the following transcript, a topic can be interrupted by a new speech event, a toast, and then resume as though nothing happened:

Transcript 12 – Topic interruption

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

- B: Just walk past. [long pause while K stands up to walk by the statue]
But don't look. You have to, you know, be like [peeking gesture]
because they got angry last time.
- Author: Really?
- B: Because obviously it's got something to do with religion.
- Author: Oh really. [pause] They got angry?
- B: Yeah, because we were like taking...
- K: Eeeee!! [Grossed out squeal as she returns to her seat]
- B: Ha ha ha ha.
- K: *What was that??*
- Waitress: *Here you are.* [Beer is put down on the table]
- Author: Huh... interesting.
- B: Yeah, last time [suddenly] *Cheers!*
- J: *Cheers!*
- Author: Cheers, man!
[pause while everyone drinks]
- B: Yeah, last time. Last time, we were all like "HA HA HA HA"
- Author: Taking pictures, cause I saw a picture
- B: ... And they got really angry.

This conversation contains frequent references to the physical objects surrounding the participants, as in the transcript above, which is consistent with descriptions of the genre (Cook 1983:3). Gossip about friends, work, updates of personal status, and movies featured into this conversation as well. Although these topics occur frequently in the author's conversations outside this speech community, none of them are a required part of the speech event, and their order is unpredictable. In addition, topics tend to blend together, and are difficult to label.

1.9 Message form

Hymes defines message form as the grammar, lexis, etc. which manifests the speech event. However, in the bodies of work described by Coulthard (1985:50) the linguistic

elements are not robustly described. He limits his description to Brown and Levinson's (1978) treatment of the concept of face, and Face Threatening Acts (FTA). This is the aspect I will analyze in the following sections.

1.9.1 Message form in the classroom

The teacher does not concern himself with the threat to the student's face when he tells them to stop in transcript 7.

Transcript 7 – Disciplinary key

Author: What about this? [to a “misbehaving” student] Stop, stop, stop, stop!

On the other hand, the teacher considers it very important to protect the face of the students regarding their language performance, as seen in transcript 6 when he praises them although they are unable to produce the vocabulary. The teacher believed criticizing the students in this case would have negatively affected their motivation.

Transcript 6 – Approving key

Author: Okay, good. [displays another card]

Student: Sister and brother [lots of simultaneous answers, but slightly different?]

Student: Broth...

Student: Par... [unable to remember the last part of the word]

Author: Good, parents.

Student: [repeating] Parents

Because there is little variation in how the teacher addresses each student, and because of the small sample size, trying to define which grammatical or lexical features signal the teacher's treatment of face is difficult. The differences manifest themselves in his tone of speaking, as discussed in section 1.6.1.

1.9.2 Message form in the conversation

In the conversation the degree of consideration to face is based on the familiarity between participants, as can be seen when B uses different language when confirming whether or not the author and K can come to his barbeque in transcript 5.

Transcript 5 – Answering on another’s behalf

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

- B: Yeah, so next Sunday, barbecue?
 Author: Oh, right, right. Yes. Monday. Yeah, Monday. And then next two Saturdays.
 B: Yeah, Saturday night. [to K] You can come too.
 [*talk in Japanese between the author and K*]
 Author: [to K] *Sunday*.
 [*garbled*]
 B: What, do you have to work?
 Author: She’s probably got to know like a month in advance.
 B: You don’t get public holidays off?
 Author: No, she’s a temp.

To the author, B sets a date in the first sentence, reducing his freedom to respond, an example of “negative face” (Coulthard 1985:50). This is also realized by the sentence structure. Words such as the subject are omitted from the sentence, and the sentence has features of a statement (structure) and an interrogative (intonation, which is why I chose to put a question mark at the end). To K, however, B allows freedom to refuse when he says she *can* come. The subjects and verbs are also present in his questions to her.

2. Discussion

2.1 Ease of identification

Based on the analysis in section 1, the next sections will discuss the degree of difficulty in analyzing the drill and conversation (the results are summarized in table 5). Also, the difficulties will be compared, and reasons for disparities will be suggested. Difficulties caused by the bilingual nature of the conversation will not be discussed, as they are not a part of the assignment.

Table 5: Difficulty in identifying features of the drill and conversation

Framework feature	Drill	Conversation
Speech community	No difficulty	<i>Language abilities</i> , frequency of participation, etc. make determining status of members difficult
Speech event	No difficulty	<i>Languages used by participants</i> , separate and simultaneous topic conversation, and start and finish points of the speech event and difficult to determine
Setting	No difficulty	Descriptions of all locations
Participants	No difficulty	<i>Roles of translating members</i>
Purpose	No difficulty	No difficulty
Key	No difficulty	Labels are subjective, difficult to systematically and exhaustively list
Channels	Role of the flashcards	Role of the menu
Message content	No difficulty	Labels of topics are subjective, difficult to systematically and exhaustively list
Message form	Difficult to describe lexical and grammatical features due to the small sample size.	Difficult to describe in full due to the small sample size dealing with face.

Note: The sources of difficulty created by the bilingual nature of the conversation have been marked in italics, and would not affect an analysis of a monolingual English conversation.

2.1.1 Ease in identifying classroom drill features

It is easy to clearly identify the features of the classroom drill using Hymes' ethnographic framework. It is possible to exhaustively describe the features (all of the keys used, etc.) of the drill as well, as there is little variety in the pattern of language use. Only the role of the flashcards as a channel and the role of grammar and lexis in realizing face threatening or saving acts are ambiguous.

2.1.2 Ease in identifying conversation features

Identifying the features of the conversation poses many difficulties. Attempting to define what one distinct 'conversation' speech event is showed that different possible interpretations are possible, such as defining the borders at major topic changes, long pauses, and for simultaneous discussions of different topics. My decision to define it in terms of opening and closing rituals is subjective, and open to criticism.

Labeling also posed difficulties in identification. The participants category as outlined in Coulthard (1985:45) has an exhaustive, objective labeling system, but topic and key do not. There is too much variation in the conversation sample, and it would require a great deal of subjectivity to attempt a complete, exhaustive identification of these features.

2.1.3 Comparison of the ease of identifying features

The majority of work done by ethnographers of speech has been able to detail the structures of ritualized and predictable events (Coulthard 1985:59) but not for conversation. Conversation is spontaneous, complex, and long, and using Hymes' framework it is difficult to give an exhaustive description. With this framework of analysis we can expect only a rough portrait of spontaneous communication, but can expect a clear description of classroom talk.

2.2 Usefulness of analysis

The next sections will look at the usefulness of applying Hymes' framework to a drill and a conversation. Discussion will include the insights the analysis gives us as well as its shortcomings.

2.2.1 Contextualization of language

Hymes proposed the notion of communicative competence, "the speaker's ability to produce appropriate utterances not grammatical sentences" (Coulthard 1985:33). The descriptions in section 1 provide a context for the very different utterances produced in each speech event. The author's utterances in both the drill and conversation are grammatically correct, but the framework's descriptions explain why they would not be appropriate if used in the other speech event.

The context also helps us understand what is unchangeable in each speech event. Beyond the linguistic differences between the drill and conversation, differences in speech community language ability, purpose, participant symmetry, setting, and others cannot be changed. Students' purpose for using L2 in the classroom is to improve their language abilities, not to pass the time chatting as we can see the author and others doing in section 1, for example. To a communicative teacher this has implications. The only way students can be genuinely exposed to elements of conversation beyond the linguistic is to encourage them to engage in genuine L2 interaction outside the classroom, as Nunan (1999:87) suggests.

2.2.2 How the speech event is realized in language

As discussed in section 2.1, although Hymes stressed the importance of standardized and complete labeling (Hymes 1972a in Coulthard 1985:59), it is very difficult to describe the contextual features of spontaneous conversation. This section will examine the linguistic element of speech events, and the impact of the lack of a detailed linguistic framework on the usefulness of this kind of analysis, specifically, the notions of “message form” and “speech act.”

2.2.2.1 Lack of framework for message form

Hymes included message form in his framework in order to describe “how something is said,” or the grammatical and lexical components of an utterance (Coulthard 1985:50). Some ethnographers of speech have explored these notions. Brown and Levinson (1978 in Coulthard 1985:50) describe how lexical and grammatical features are used to protect speakers’ face in English. Geertz (1968 in Coulthard 1985:37-8) developed a description of how social status and context are realized by lexis in Javanese. These frameworks were developed by the ethnographers based on large data samples, and describe how certain salient features are manifested in linguistic terms. As enlightening as the frameworks are, however, they describe only specific aspects of speech and are not comprehensive descriptions of all uses of language.

In section 1.9 I briefly touched upon the concept of face based on Brown and Levinson’s framework, and was able to demonstrate how the concept was manifested. No such frameworks were available for other aspects of the drill and conversation, however, such as grammatical and lexical characteristics of different keys used. No

attempt was made to create a framework in this analysis as it requires large samples of data to highlight salient features.

Hymes' framework gives the researcher flexibility in determining what linguistic points are salient, and in creating language-specific methods of analysis. However, in a direct comparison of two small samples it is impractical to do so and we are left lacking an important piece of the puzzle in understanding the nature of and differences between the speech acts.

2.2.2.2 Lack of framework for speech act

Hymes proposes a hierarchical system where speech events are made up of smaller "speech acts." Describing the structure of discourse allows the researcher to understand the function of speech at the micro and macro level. The concept of speech act, however, is given little treatment by Hymes and he does not give a complete list of acts (Coulthard 1985:43). As with message form, this gives the researcher flexibility but also leaves them without any starting point other than intuition (Coulthard 1985:42). The task of exhaustively listing speech acts becomes a difficult task, as does describing their relationships with one another.

Transcript 10b – Showing flashcard as initiating move (Francis and Hunston analysis)

Dialogue	act	e.s.	move	e.s.	exch	ex
Author: NV [shows flashcard] Student: Mom. Student: Mother. Author: Mom, mother.	inq i i ref	h h h h	eliciting informing informing acknowledging	I R R F	Eliciting	1
Author: NV [already showing next card] Students: [garbled] Author: Dad, father. Student: Dad.	inq i ref ref	h h h h	eliciting informing informing acknowledging	I R F F	Eliciting	2
Author: NV [showing next card] Student: Grandma. Author: Grandma.	inq i ref	h h h	eliciting informing acknowledging	I R F	Eliciting	3
Author: NV [Shows next card] Student: Grandpa. Student: Grandfather. Author: Good. Grandpa or grandfather.	inq i i rec ref	h h h pre- h h	eliciting informing informing acknowledging	I R R F	Eliciting	4

Transcript 2b – Influence of setting (Francis and Hunston analysis)

(Note: All speech in Japanese has been translated into English and italicized)

Dialogue	act	e.s.	move	e.s.	exch	ex
B: Supposedly, real Chinese food isn't oily. Author: Really.	i end	h h	informing acknowledging	I R	Informing	1
J: <i>You're left handed!</i> K: NV [Nods]	m.pr conc	h h	eliciting informing	I R	Eliciting	2
J: <i>She's left handed. She's eating with her left hand</i>	i	h	informing	I	Informing	3
B: Oh, left hand?	ret	h	eliciting	I ^b	Clarify	4
[Garbled questions in Japanese] J: <i>That's amazing. You write with your right hand...</i>	ref	h	acknowledging	F	Eliciting	5
B: [to K] Ambidextrous?	n.pr	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting	6
B: [to the author] What's ambidextrous? Author: I dunno the exact word.	inq i	h h	eliciting informing	I R	Eliciting	7
Author: [Garbled talk in Japanese to K, trying to explain what B is trying to ask] K: <i>Hm, it kind of depends.</i> J: <i>Huh.</i>	inq i end	h h h	eliciting informing acknowledging	I R F	Eliciting	8
J: <i>What about scissors?</i> [Garbled] B: Scissors left hand.	inq ?? ref	h ?? h	eliciting ?? acknowledging	I ?? F	Eliciting	9
B: How about a gun? K: NV [laughs] B: That's cool. J: <i>Wow, that's amazing.</i>	inq rea end end	h h h h	eliciting acknowledging acknowledging acknowledging	I R F F	Eliciting	10

To demonstrate how an understanding of discourse structure is beneficial, one sample from the drill and conversation were analyzed with Francis and Hunston's (1992) framework (see pages 27-8 for the analyzed transcripts). Francis and Hunston's framework is based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, in Francis and Hunston 1992:123) model of analysis, and was developed to describe the structure of interaction in English over a variety of genres. In contrast to Hymes' proposed two levels of structure, the Francis-Hunston model describes structure thoroughly in the order of act, move, exchange, and transaction (in order of increasing rank). Like Hymes, Francis and Hunston caution that their labels for the lowest level act are not exhaustive (1992:134), but their model as it is needed no adaptation to analyze transcript samples 10b and 2b.

Several differences in the structure of the two samples are easily identifiable as salient. In the drill sample, only the teacher initiates exchanges, while in the conversation sample three different participants initiate. Both samples have a series of eliciting exchanges, but their structure varies on more than one level. Every exchange in the drill has a follow-up move by the teacher, but in the conversation the move is optional. Also, at one level below, the acts realizing each move follow a consistent pattern in the drill, but vary in the conversation (eliciting moves are realized by marked proposals, neutral proposals, and inquires). Even from a small sample size, features of these genres of discourse are largely consistent with results identified by their analysis with Birmingham methodology (see appendix 1).

Hymes' proposal for structured description of language used in speech events was a step in the right direction toward understanding as we can see that the discourse functions of

utterances is at times more important than the grammatical structure (Brazil 1995:5).

The lack of a systematic approach to discourse structure in Hymes' framework limits our ability to understand the functions of language within the speech event.

2.2.3 Generalizability of analysis

In trying to understand the natures of classroom drills and conversations, it is desirable to have information that can be generalized beyond the samples presented in this paper. Closely linked to the notion of generalizability is a systematic approach. Hymes said that in describing and labeling aspects of a speech event, being systematic and thorough was "heuristically important" (Coulthard 1985:59). A systematic approach is also necessary to make meaningful comparisons (Brazil 1995:128). Complete, systematic descriptions and data also allow for statistical analysis (Roger and Bull 1989:12-3). Unfortunately, several aspects of Hymes' framework reduce our ability to generalize and compare class drills and conversation.

In Hymes' framework it is necessary to describe the speech community, as this is the context for speech events and the group to whom they belong (Coulthard 1985:42). In the analyzed samples, however, two speech communities were described that were extremely small and only exist for very short periods of time. The participants making up the conversation's speech community represent an admittedly extreme case, but even if the Japanese participants are removed, a strict interpretation of Hymes' framework demands that the speech community be defined by the norms shared by one English speaker from Devon, England and another from the Northwestern United States. It is not useful to our understanding of the genre of conversation to say that it belongs to this

small speech community, and hinders our ability to generalize the analysis results to the larger English speaking world.

Difficulty in systematically describing elements of the speech events also impairs the generalizability of this analysis, particularly for the conversation. As described in section 2.1.2, labeling aspects of the conversation such as key and topic requires subjectivity and comparison with results from other researchers becomes difficult. The linguistic and structural elements discussed in section 2.2 also suffer from this problem, as salient points demonstrated with impromptu frameworks are difficult to compare across genre. Compare this with the Francis-Hunston framework, and we can see that the types of benefits derived from direct comparison are unavailable from Hymes' framework.

Conclusion

An analysis of these two samples with Hymes' framework gives us insight into what makes them so different. An examination of the very different purposes, the roles of the participants, the settings and more tell us that there are certain things that can't be changed in the classroom. This is very strong support for an approach that encourages learner autonomy. In the context of the children's classroom drill, autonomy may not be practical after all (Cameron 2001:1-2), but these insights can be applied to a number of the author's other teaching contexts.

On the other hand there are a number of features that the analysis can't thoroughly classify. Describing the features of the conversation, the sort of natural language we

want to use as a model, is difficult with Hymes' framework. Additionally, as a language teacher, knowledge of the differences in how language is used is the most practically applicable. The lack of thorough frameworks for examining the grammar, lexis, and structure limits our understanding. In this respect, Francis and Hunston's framework is more able to show us unambiguously how the genres differ.

On a personal level, conducting this analysis made me aware that I was not using natural speech to inform my children's class syllabus. I felt that focusing on natural speaking would have to wait until they had learned enough lexis and grammar to be "ready." Without learning how to use language as it is actually used in any way, however, the students may never be "ready."

Appendix 1 – Comparison of conversation and classroom language features yielded by Birmingham discourse analysis

The Sinclair–Coulthard analysis of classroom discourse suggests that:

- Teachers talk a lot. Pupils talk very little.
- Only teachers initiate. Pupils do not ask questions or provide information, except when it is asked for.
- Teachers control the discourse. It is the teacher who produces boundary exchanges. It is the teacher who marks the successful conclusion of an exchange by offering an evaluation.
- Pupil moves are usually one act moves. Teachers use pre- and post-head acts to organise turn-taking and direct attention. Pupils do not. Willis's analysis shows that much of the language produced in classrooms is citation – it is produced as a sample of language to be evaluated, not as a contribution to communicative discourse.

A comparison between the Sinclair–Coulthard and the Francis–Hunston models shows that:

- Many of the moves which are a natural part of everyday conversation do not take place in the classroom.
- The structure of conversational exchanges (I (R/I) R (F_n)) is much more complex than the structure of teaching exchanges (I (R)(F)).
- Roles switch during conversational interaction. Either participant may control and initiate.
- Moves tend to be more complex in conversational interaction.

(Brazil, 1995:157-8)

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