

**Employing Hymes' 1972 Sociolinguistic Framework  
to Compare Classroom and Casual Conversation  
Discourse Types.**

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## **1. Introduction**

In the scope of this paper, Hymes' (1972a) framework for the exploration of speech events is utilized to highlight and discuss the distinguishing features between a classroom presentation activity, recorded at a private junior high school in Yokohama, Japan; and a casual conversation, recorded between three Birmingham University Distance Learners, at a monthly study group meeting in Tokyo, Japan.

According to Hymes' (1972) own statement, his research focused on the way that people use language...

...in a social world who must know when to speak, when not, what to talk about, with whom, when, where, and in what manner (1972b: 277).

It is the purpose of this paper to view the classroom and conversational discourse types from a similar sociolinguistic perspective. First of all, the data from the classroom presentation activity and the casual conversation will be discussed, according to the seven criteria proposed by Hymes (1972a: 58-71) of setting, participants, purpose, key, channels, message content and message form. The distinguishing features of each will be given at the end of each sub-section, and then conclusions on the usefulness of this framework will be made.

## **2. Setting**

Setting is defined as 'the time and place of a speech event and, in general, to the physical circumstances' (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972a: 60).

The presentation activity took place on a Monday morning, from ten forty five to eleven thirty five in a classroom at the private junior high school where the author is

employed. The casual conversation was recorded on a Sunday morning at a family-style restaurant in Tokyo, Japan.

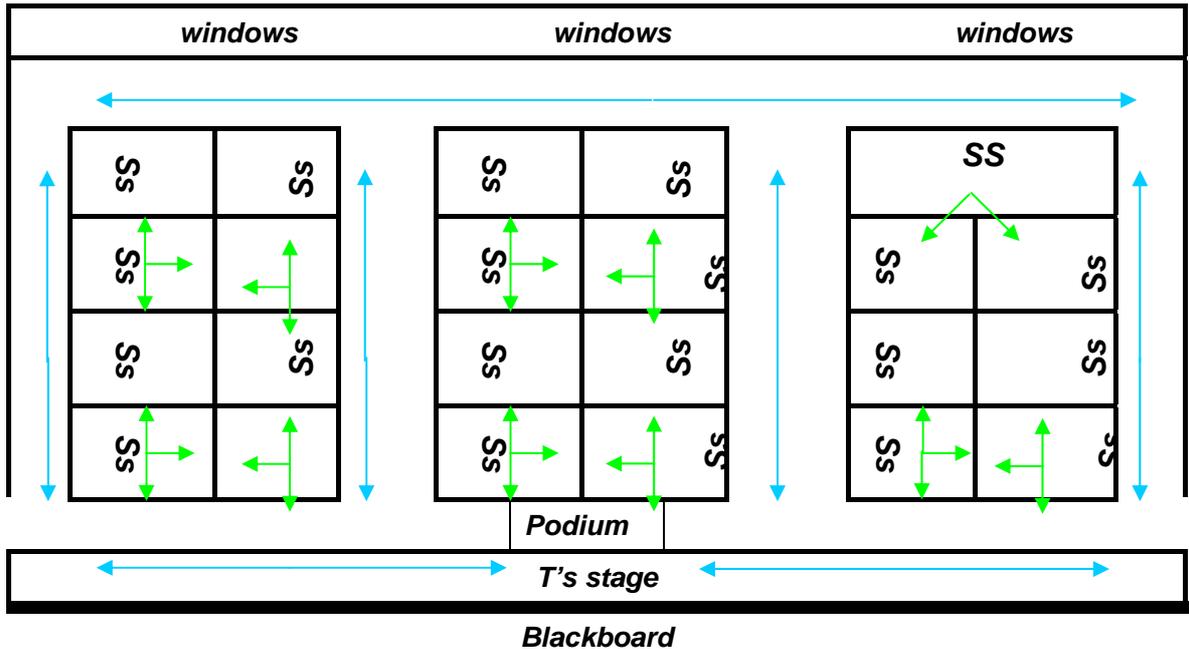
The author works within a team of eleven Native English Teachers (NET), who teach an Oral Communication (OC) component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to first, second and third year junior high school learners. NET class settings are unique from the more typical classes at this school containing a maximum of twenty five learners, as opposed to the normal class size of fifty learners. Secondly, learners are seated in three large groups of seven or eight, facing each other, instead of being in long columns facing the front of the classroom. The initially large groups within the NET classrooms may be further sub-divided to allow for small group and pair work activities.

An additional feature of the NET classroom setting is that it more accurately mirrors (most) learners' future work settings, because the NET classroom layout is very similar to the layout of most Japanese office settings. This researcher believes that the unique setup of the NET classroom; that is, where learners work together in pairs and small groups is advantageous in preparing learners to work and cooperate in teams, and this is also in line with Nunan's (1999: 84) observation that 'skills of communicating in groups are also increasingly required in the workplace'. Therefore, because the NET classroom setting allows for small group and pair work interaction to take place, it equips them with survival skills that they will require in the future.

The blue arrows in Figure 1 (below) indicate the teacher's proximity of movement within the classroom. The author has easy access to his or her learners, and therefore can easily monitor learners' progress, or give assistance where necessary. Further, the green arrows indicate learners' potential lines of interaction. Learners face one another,

rather than the front of the class. The author believes that the NET arrangement facilitates learner-learner and teacher-learner interaction more adequately than the usual setting.

**Figure 1 - Setting for the classroom lesson**

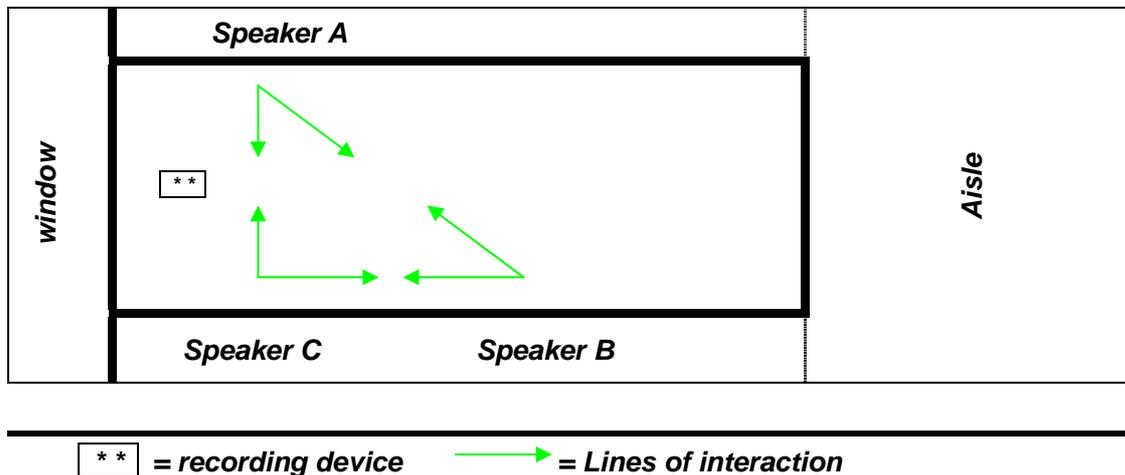


Even so, the classroom setting clearly delineates the teacher's controlling position in relation to his or her learners. Classroom items such as the elevated teacher's stage and podium, illustrated in Figure 1 above, plus the fact that teachers are free to go anywhere in the classroom, while learners are consigned to their desks, and may only move around with the teacher's permission, only serve to accentuate the different rights and privileges that teacher and learner have.

In contrast, the furniture arrangement at the family restaurant, where the conversation took place (please see Figure 2) lacked any obvious sign that one speaker was more dominant than another. This emphasized every speaker's right to stand up, sit down, move around, and most importantly, to 'make the contribution he or she

wishes to make (Wardhaugh, 2006: 310).

**Figure 2: Setting for the casual conversation**



Transcripts 1 and 2 (below) illustrate how the setting determines language use. Transcript 1 illustrates the teacher's employment of boundary, structuring and eliciting exchanges to assert the goals and delineate the lesson content. Therefore, Transcript 1 is in line with Brazil's (1995: 119) account that, '[the] decision as to where significant boundaries occur in a stretch of discourse is one that only dominant speakers can make'.

**Transcript 1: Classroom interaction**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	OK (#) so next week we have a test	fr con	pre-h h	informing	l	Boundary
	So (#) today (#) um we're just going to review money OK?	m ms ch	s h post-h	opening	l	Structuring
	So (#) what's this? (holding up a coin)	m el	s h	eliciting	l	Eliciting

(Transcription norms and coding based on Francis and Hunston's (1992) model for analyzing everyday conversation (cited in Coulthard, 1992: 123-161) (Please see APPENDIX A for a full

transcription key)

Conversely, Transcript 2 clearly shows the right of one participant to interrupt another without risking disciplinary action, as would have been the case in the classroom.

**Transcript 2: Casual conversation interaction**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
B	...the teacher can choose the next speaker (#) but that's the same for conversation as well (#) the speaker (#) like I'm the speaker now-	com	post-h	informing	I	Informing
A	-but I can interrupt you	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
C	Mm the rules are set {aren't they?	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
B	{{(laughing)}	(eng)				
A	{{(laughing)}	(eng)				
C	(laughing) yeah (2.1)	(eng)				
A	Where did that come from?!	rea	h	ack	R	

In summary, the classroom setting contained the most obvious and easily observed distinctions between the presentation activity and the casual conversation. It is the author's position that the presence on boundary markers made the classroom language more distinguishable, because this convention is exclusively utilized within settings where one participant clearly has more authority over the others.

**3. Participants**

Participant roles strongly influenced the language utilized in the classroom and conversational discourse types; a fact that is in line with most research findings in this area (Chaudron, 1988: 132-3; Nunan, 1999: 74; Thornbury, 1996: 281-2).

The classroom setting described above created an asymmetrical balance of power

between the teacher and his learners, which restricted learners' language use in particular. In this particular case, seventy two percent of teacher-learner exchanges consisted of the three-part exchange (see Appendix E, page 35), which Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) coined the 'Initiate, Response, Follow up' (IRF) exchange. The IRF exchange has a number of advantages and disadvantages for teachers and learners, which are displayed in table three, below.

**Table 3: Taxonomy of advantages and disadvantages of the IRF exchange**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Edwards and Westgate (1994: 38) state that it is 'situationally appropriate', in that it provides both teachers and learners with a familiar interactive structure, which may be reassuring for participants whose cultural upbringing recognizes strong teacher roles (Hofstede, 1986).</li> <li>● According to Chaudron (1988:10) teachers can 'scaffold' learners' thinking, allowing them to progress from basic forms of thought to more critically aware and autonomous ones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learners' output is unavoidably constrained to the answering turn. They receive very few opportunities to practice initiating exchanges, or for providing feedback for themselves.</li> <li>● Van Lier (1996: 157) argues that 'the IRF exchange can be seen as a [way of] acting...rather than ...as talk delivering messages'. That is, learners' interaction can be viewed as part of a 'ritual', and as such is limited in its communicative potential.</li> </ul>

Furthermore, the follow up turn in particular, is an unavoidable component of a teacher's language (Cullen, 2002: 118). This claim is supported by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975: 51) research. Sinclair and Coulthard recorded one instance where the teacher's non-provision of feedback resulted in a complete breakdown of participant interaction.

**Table 4: Taxonomy of the advantages and disadvantages of the follow up turn**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The follow up provides teachers with an opportunity to assess their learners' progress</li> <li>● It provides learners with information on their L2 development and their in-class behavior (Chaudron, 1988: 133).</li> <li>● Learners discover if their contribution is in line with the teacher's largely pedagogic objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher may provide feedback that is overly judgmental</li> <li>● This can cause learners to say less than they are actually capable of saying, for fear of giving a response which is not 'preferred' or one which is not grammatically correct (Tsui, 1994; Nassaji and Wells, 2000: 376-406)</li> </ul>

In addition, Chaudron (1988: 176) and Tsui (1994: 220) have catalogued evaluative, acknowledging, and turn-passing feedback as the most frequently utilized follow up turns employed by teachers. Furthermore, within asymmetrical relationships, evaluative feedback seems to be more prevalent. Acknowledging and turn-passing moves are more typical within non-classroom symmetrical discourse (Taylor, 2007: 75).

A comparison between classroom and conversational IRF exchanges, in transcript 3 (a) and (b) below, is a clear reflection of Chaudron (1988), Tsui (1994) and Taylor's (2007) research findings, stated above. Transcript 3 (a) shows the author's utilization of an evaluative follow up move within the classroom, while Transcript 3 (b) (in **bold**) illustrates speaker A's employment of acknowledging and turn-passing feedback.

**Transcript 3 (a) - The classroom IRF exchange**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	What's the <verb? (#) verb?>	el	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting
SS	Are (#) are	rep	h	answering	R	
T	<b>Are (#) &lt;great!&gt; very good (#) very good</b>	acc	h	<b>evaluating</b>	F	

(To aid comprehension, statements in learners' L1 (Japanese) have been translated and placed between <brackets>. See Appendix A for a full transcription key)

**Transcript 3 (b) - The IRF exchange within the conversation**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
A	From your perspective (#) you're happy if your students interrupt you?	el	h	eliciting	I	
B	I (#) I love it (1.5)	rep	h	answering	R	Eliciting (incomplete)
A	OK	rec	h	acknowledge	F	
B	It's one of the things that I say (#)	rep	h	answering	Rb	
A	And what's (#) what's their perspective?	rec	h	turn-passing	I	
B	They'd rather not	rep	h	answering	R	Eliciting
A	Because?	rec	h	turn-passing	F	
B	It's not in their culture	inf	h	informing	I	Informing

The three-part IRF exchange, in this case, is utilized among participants of equal status. However, as the evidence in Transcript 3 (b) shows, Speaker A has assumed a slightly more authoritative position relative to Speaker B (the author). In line with Van Lier's (1996: 154 findings), Speaker A's employment of turn-passing and acknowledging follow up moves has assisted the author to think more coherently and to express his thoughts with greater clarity.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 2) instigated their research into spoken discourse from within the classroom setting because, 'teacher-pupil relationships are sufficiently well-defined for us to expect clear evidence of this in the text'. Similarly, the findings of this paper are that the classroom's institutional setting created one-sided dialogue and teacher dominated discourse, which was more distinctive than the conversation's largely symmetrical participant interaction.

Additionally, the limited status of the three-part exchange outside the classroom has raised this researcher's awareness of a dilemma present within our professional field; namely, *how are learners to learn even the most fundamental conversational*

*strategies within a classroom environment when the language that is utilized in both is so different?* Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this paper to respond to this problem. However, some counter measures have been proposed by Willis and Willis (1990; 1996), Nunan (1989; 1999), and Lewis (1993; 2002), all of whom posit methodologies that accentuate replication rather than simulation of genuine interaction, thus facilitating greater classroom exposure of more realistic, non-classroom environments.

#### **4. Purpose**

Purpose refers to the final outcome of a lesson, or ‘speech event’, which is achieved through the completion of smaller individual goals, termed ‘speech acts’ (Brazil, 1995: 120; Gumperz and Hymes, 1972: 61).

There were two objectives at the speech event level, which is the term Brazil (1995: 120-1) gave to the lesson. The first was to prepare learners for a speaking test. The second was to talk about the sort of things that students might buy whilst shopping.

#### **Transcript 4: Eliciting, directing and informing exchanges within the classroom**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	How do you spell socks? (1.6) socks	el	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting
T	Spell	d	h	directing	I	Directing
SS	S.O.	rep	h	answering	R	
T	S.O. (writing)	acc	h	acknowledge	F	
SS	X	rep	h	answering	Rb	
T	No (#) no	rej	h	informing	Fb	
SS	K!	rep	h	answering	Rc	
T	C.K.S. (#) socks	inf	h	informing	I	Informing

Transcript 4 (above) illustrates that learners are first directed to answer a question to which the teacher, as ‘primary knower’ (Berry, 1981) already knows the answer. Learners’ replies are then accepted or rejected according to a pedagogic standard possessed by the teacher; who finally rejects the learners’ replies based upon a subjective preference for British spelling conventions over the American convention of spelling ‘socks’ as ‘S.O.X’.. In other words, the above exchange is purely pedagogic in nature, and is unquestionably under the teacher’s control.

However, Brazil (1995: 120) observes that the investigation of exchange-level interaction is more linguistically interesting than event level interaction, because the pattern of exchanges can more directly inform the researcher about the discourse type that he or she is investigating. For example, within classroom discourse, it was found that teachers’ use a large number of eliciting, informing and directing exchanges in order to achieve their lesson objectives. In this case, 23.5% of all speech acts employed by the author were eliciting exchanges, 19.7% were informing exchanges, while 4.2% were made up by directing exchanges. Totaling 47.4% of all classroom discourse, the utilization of these exchanges assisted the author to ‘formulate and transmit pieces of information’ (Stubbs, 1983: 146) (i.e. to manage turn-taking, delineate content boundaries and to establish topics).

Within the eliciting exchange, display type initiations were predominant. Teachers already know the answers to display questions before initiating them (Thornbury, 1996:282). Display questions have a two-fold classroom function; first of all, the teacher can check learners’ understanding of the topical content; secondly, teachers can elicit learner responses to provide them with feedback. These are perhaps

the most cogent reasons for the importance of display questions in the classroom environment (Long and Sato, 1983, cited in Chaudron, 1988:127).

Conversations, on the other hand, have a principally phatic function. Furthermore, referential initiations, which the initiator does not know the answer to, are the predominant question type; and evaluating feedback is, for the most part, non-existent. Van Lier (1996) finds that the typical eliciting, informing and directing conventions utilized in classrooms are essentially redundant outside of them: ‘If such [exchanges] were to happen in the street, the murder rate would skyrocket’ (1996: 149). More accurately, conversations contain ‘mechanisms’ (Brazil, 1995: 123) that allow everyone to participate. Back-channeling, illustrated in Transcript 5 (a) (in **bold**) below, is one such mechanism. Back-channeling allows speakers to support what others are saying, to make comments without seeming overly forward, and to signify their active involvement in the conversation.

**Transcript 5 - (a) Utilization of back-channeling cues**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
C	She didn't seem very happy, did she?	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
B	<b>No (#)</b>	rec	<b>h</b>	<b>acknowledge</b>	R	
B	she's kind of highly strung?	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
C	<b>Mmm</b>	rec	<b>h</b>	<b>acknowledge</b>	R	
A	She gets negative about things very easily	obs	h	informing	I	Informing

Wardhaugh, (2006: 303) found that the ‘side sequence’ is another conversational mechanism that is basically absent from classroom discourse. The main functions of side sequences are to elicit additional information, or to clarify a speaker’s utterance, as Transcript 5 (b) (in **bold**) below illustrates.

**(b) The side sequence (within the conversation)**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
C	Did you notice anything?	n.pr	h	eliciting	lb	Clarify (incomplete)
A	<b>I (#) when did you speak to her?</b>	Inq	h	<b>eliciting</b>	l	<b>Clarify</b>
C	<b>At Y's presentation?</b>	Inf	h	<b>informing</b>	R	
A	<b>OK (#)</b> and I spoke to her on the phone after that as well	M	s	<b>informing</b>	l	<b>Informing</b>
C	<b>Mm (#)</b> so we went to the restaurant after because Y's my tutor (#) we just had a drink and left early but she just didn't seem very happy	rec	pre-h	informing	R	

Although side sequences are typically absent from student initiations within the classroom setting, Transcript 5 (c), (in **bold**), illustrates a learner-initiated side-sequence to elicit further information from the teacher.

**(c) The side sequence (within the classroom)**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	Next week we have a test	con	h	acknowledge	F	Informing
SS	<What kind of test?>	el	h	<b>opening</b>	l	<b>Eliciting</b>
T	Speaking test	rep	h	answering	R	
SS	<No way!>	prot	h	evaluating	F	
T	No no (#) it's OK	com	post-h	informing	l	Informing

In summary, the classroom presentation activity clearly contained more easily distinguishable features than the casual conversation. The utilization of eliciting, informing and directing moves, clearly demarcated the classroom discourse from the conversation.

## 5. Key

Key connotes the atmosphere of a speech event, which can be realized by verbal and non-verbal cues, or possibly by combinations of these (Coulthard, 1985: 48-9).

Key is formulated in part by one's culture. For example, in Japan, the hand signal for 'come here' is the same signal used in some Western cultures for 'go away'. This can cause confusion, frustration, and could even be potentially dangerous. Similarly, Brazil (1995: 130) observes that '**silence tolerance**' is markedly different between Japanese and Western cultures:

Colleagues in Birmingham with classes of Japanese students report that open elicitations such as 'Are there any questions?' or 'What do you make of that?' are often greeted with silence...a famous professor now retired – is rumored to have simply put his feet up on the table and waited ten minutes for a response.

Cultural distinctions between NET lessons and learners' usual lessons at this school directly affect classroom key, and these can be disseminated into four critical areas, which are described in Table 5, below.

*Table 5: Taxonomy of four cultural distinctions affecting key within the author's classroom*

Feature	Comment
1. Class size:	The usual class size of fifty learners is halved, making learners more visible.
2. Seating:	Learners are seated facing each other in groups, which may give them a sense of security.
3. Grading :	Learners are graded during every NET lesson, as opposed to an end-of-term test. Forgetting homework or simply 'having an off day' directly affects their grade.
4. Goals and objectives:	Learners are expected to speak and participate during the lesson. This is beneficial to kinesthetic and more extrovert learners, but is a distinct disadvantage to aural learners, or those with more introverted personalities.

Furthermore, researchers concur that lowering learners' 'affective filter' facilitates their learning and eventual acquisition of the Target Language (TL) (Krashen, 1982; Nunan, 1999: 235). Thus, the creation of a key within the classroom environment that is conducive to learning cannot be overstated. Transcript 6 (a) (final line, in **bold**) below, illustrates the author's utilization of a reassuring key to assuage learners' test anxiety, while in (b), the author's Japanese pronunciation became a point of humor in the lesson.

**Transcript 6 - (a) Use of reassuring key in the classroom**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	Next week we have a test	con	h	acknowledge	F	
SS	<What kind of test?>	el	h	opening	I	Eliciting
T	Speaking test	rep	h	answering	R	
SS	<No way!>	prot	h	evaluating	F	
T	<b>No no (#) it's OK</b>	com	post-h	informing	I	Informing

**Transcript 6 - (b) Use of a humorous key in the classroom**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	<What?>	I	h	loop	I	Repeat
SS	<Can I try this on?> (laughing)	el	h	eliciting	I	Structuring
T	<Can I try this on?> (confused)	rep	h	answering	R	
SS	<Can I try this on?> (laughing)	e	h	evaluative	F	
T	OK	fr	pre-h	framing	I	Boundary
	<Concentrate please> (friendly)	d	h	directing	I	Directing
	What do you say in English?	el	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting
SS	Can I this? (laughing)	rep	h	answering	R	
T	Yes (#) can I <i>try</i> this? (smile)	acc	h	evaluative	F	

The example in Transcript 6 (b) above illustrates the immediate efficacy of humor in the classroom; learners were relaxed enough to risk making mistakes. This is in line with

Edwards and Westgate's (1994) observation that 'a great deal of classroom humour takes the form of repartee, [which is] judged to have "warmed" or "informalized" the classroom climate' (1994: 98). As a result, the learners' responses were structurally accurate. Significantly however, the two examples in Transcript 6 were the only learner-initiated exchanges in the entire lesson (i.e. two out of two hundred and thirty four exchanges). Clearly, the author needs to revise his lesson goals and objectives to incorporate more opportunities for learners to practice initiating exchanges in their L2.

In the conversation, keys ranged from light-hearted to gossiping. Keys such as the personal/light-hearted and academic/serious keys, realized in Transcripts 7 (a) and (b) below, would not be inappropriate within the classroom.

**Transcript 7 - (a) Personal/light-hearted key**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
A	Me and D went to JALT last weekend for four days (#) it was in Korea	inf	h	informing	I	Informing
B	D's conferenced out (laughing)	com	post-h	acknowledge	R	
A/C	(laughing)	(eng)				

**Transcript 7 - (b) academic/serious key**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
B	You're starting with a history	inf	h	informing	I	Informing
C	Yeah	rec	h	acknowledge	R	
A	And then y' (#) and then you create a hypothesis	inf	h	informing	I	Informing

On the other hand, gossiping keys, such as is realized in Transcript 7 (c) (below), would seem inappropriate, or at least inconsistent with the overall tone of a classroom.

**Transcript 7 - (c) Gossiping key**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
B	Yeah she <b>was a bit</b> disappointed at the last meeting, wasn't she?	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
C	She <b>didn't seem</b> very happy, <b>did she?</b>	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
B	No	rec	h	acknowledge	R	
B	She's <b>kind of</b> highly strung?	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
C	Mmm	rec	h	acknowledge	R	
A	She gets negative <b>about things</b> very easily	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
B	So <b>maybe</b> we should <b>y'know</b> make an effort to include her in the more social side (#) of the group?	com	post-h	acknowledging	R	

In the example immediately above, participants share a common observation by employing the same tentative key (in **bold**), which 'evokes "togetherness" or a shared perspective' (Brazil, 1995: 124) among the group. Furthermore, the similarities in participants' backgrounds, cultures and shared language resulted in the features of the casual conversation being easier to identify than the classroom presentation activity.

Finally, the classroom atmosphere was teacher-directed, making its features easier to identify than the conversation. Reassuring and humorous keys were employed to persuade and encourage learners to speak, but these strategies were not necessary within the conversation. Vygotsky (1986: 99) reasons that conversation's 'dynamic situation takes care of that'. Notably, the casual conversation was self-directed; this removed the need for one speaker to reassure, or command the other into speaking.

## 6. Channel

Hymes (1972a: 63) defines channel as the ‘choice of oral, written, telegraphic, semaphore, or other medium of transmission of speech’.

Perhaps it is a truism that classrooms in general are more distinctive from conversations because of the channels they use (e.g. a blackboard, text and workbooks, or an overhead projector), which are specifically designed to transmit information, and facilitate communication. The blackboard is both a visual and written channel, and was utilized in this particular lesson for a class brainstorming activity, and for spelling unfamiliar words, which included highlighting different spelling conventions (please see Transcript 4, page 9). In addition, a workbook and textbook were utilized to check learners’ homework, and provide a scripted dialogue for a pair work activity.

The author utilized directing exchanges in the classroom to instruct learners to open or close their books, to practice a conversation, and to look at the blackboard. During the pair work activity, learners utilized both spoken and written channels. Because the teacher and his or her learners are expected to produce spoken utterances at least some of the time, the spoken channel is particularly important in language lessons.

Different channels have different advantages and disadvantages. A blackboard is large enough to be viewed by every learner, and one is located in most classrooms. On the other hand, chalk dust can be objectionable to teacher and learners, and writing or drawing diagrams can consume considerable amounts of lesson time. Additionally, teachers face away from their learners while they are writing; Transcript 8, below, shows that while drawing on the blackboard, the author’s train of thought was deflected away from the lesson.

**Transcript 8: Teacher aside**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	Don't actually have a bronze [colored chalk] (2.6) so I'll just do (drawing with red and yellow chalk) (4.3) I wonder what (#) bronze (#) no not really (laugh)	z				

The author acknowledges that the employment of an Over Head Projector (OHP) in lieu of a blackboard would have resulted in clearer, more organized presentation of the lesson's content, and would have utilized the time more efficiently (Brazil, 1995: 122).

Both the classroom and the conversation utilized oral, visual and written channels. However, Transcript 9 (below) illustrates the utilization of a kinesthetic channel within the conversation.

**Transcript 9: A kinesthetic channel within the casual conversation**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
A	Do you learn by seeing things?	n.pr	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting
B	Yeah (#) no (#) by doing things	rec inf	pre-h h	informing	R	
A	OK (1.6)	rec	h	acknowledge	F	
B	Alright (#) so you've got your data	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
A	Aha (#) here (#) catch this (throws a screwed up paper 'ball')	rec m h	h s d	acknowledge directing	R I	R Directing
B	Sure (catching 'ball' and throwing back)	be	h	behaving	R	
A	By (#) so (#) if we took a computer model (#) of the flight path of this coffee thing (#) OK? Eventually we'd get lots of arcs (#) right?	inf	h	informing	I	Informing

In the above example, Speaker A utilizes an innovative mechanism to explain a hypothesis to Speaker B, by exploiting Speaker B's stated kinesthetic learning style. Such innovation is usually uncommon within the classroom environment. However, a distinctive feature of conversations is their spontaneous and unrehearsed nature, which contrasts with the normal classroom environment, in the author's experience at least, where lesson planning and preparation often seem to counteract spontaneous or novel explanations.

Finally, despite the fact that both the classroom and conversation utilized oral, written and visual channels, the teacher's use of directives resulted in the classroom channels being easier to identify than the conversation.

## **7. Message content**

Message content refers to '*topic* and...change of topic' (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972: 60).

Classroom topics are non-negotiable, fixed by the teacher and are in line with his or her pedagogic objectives (Edwards and Westgate, 1992: 46). On the other hand, a characteristic of conversation is its rapid, negotiated topic selection (Brazil, 1995: 123). The institutional and non-institutional nature of classroom and casual conversation environments is perhaps the most obvious explanation for this.

In Transcript 10 below, the teacher utilized (a) checking moves, (b) code-switching, and (c) repetition and meta-language references to assist learners' cognition.

**Transcript 10 - (a) Checking**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	So S.O.X. is um American American (writing)	inf	h	informing	I	Informing
T	OK?	ch	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting

**Transcript 10 (b) - Code switching**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	What kind of notes do we have in Japan?	el	h	eliciting	I	Re-initiation
T	What's that? (Showing a one thousand yen bill)	el	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting
SS	<one thousand yen> ten hundred	rep	h	answering	R	
T	Ten hundred	ret	h	eliciting	I	Clarify
T	<what's ten hundred in English?>	el	h	eliciting	I	Eliciting

**Transcript 10 - (c) Repetition and Meta-language references**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	Thousand {thousand	rep	h	answering	R	
SS	{Thousand	acc	h	acknowledge	F	
T	How do you spell thousand?	el	h	eliciting	I	
SS	T.H.O.U.S.A.N.D. (calling)	rep	h	answering	R	Eliciting
T	Great (writing on blackboard)	acc	h	evaluating	F	

Furthermore, in second or foreign language classrooms in particular, the language itself is an overlying topic (Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 182). Learners have primary and secondary tasks of understanding the 'locutionary' and 'illocutionary' meaning of a given speech act (Coulthard, 1985: 18-20).

In contrast, casual conversation topics are negotiable, and they are they not pre-determined by a single participant. Topic selection and maintenance of the topic in conversation is a shared activity. Brazil (1995: 115) notes that new topics arise out of

the appropriateness of the situation, and they often change rapidly, because they are not as clearly defined as they are within a classroom environment.

In summary, the pedagogical, teacher-directed nature of the classroom's message content resulted in a predictable series of topic changes. Topic boundaries were clearly delineated by concluding and framing acts. These features made the classroom discourse more easily identifiable than the casual conversation, where topics were negotiable.

## **8. Message form**

Message form relates to the notions of negative and positive face and the utilization of negative and positive politeness strategies to preserve 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for him [or her] self' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

According to Brazil (1995: 124), the classroom lesson is a 'highly face-threatening event' for learners in particular. Teachers' and learners' awareness of this results in the use of predominantly negative face saving strategies, which is reflected within the teaching and linguistic strategies that teachers utilize. For example, planning short breaks into the lesson, changing the topical content and closing an activity completely before beginning to open a new one are proven strategies for maintaining learners' interest and concentration for the lesson's duration (Knowles, 2006). Additionally, acknowledging and utilizing learners' already existing knowledge and experience to direct them to new areas of learning is another key strategy that the author employed in the lesson (Rutherford, 1987; Willis and Willis, 1996: 49).

An example of this within the lesson is the author's presentation on 'American money'. The author first modeled the language used to talk about money. By doing

so, the author affirmed learners' existing knowledge that money can be categorized into notes and coins, then further categorized the size, color and images on the notes, or by the size, color and shape of the coins. Only then did the author elicit a similarly categorized description from his learners' on a related sub-topic of 'Japanese money'. Further, Transcript 11 (a) below, illustrates the author's utilization of 'inclusive we' (*ibid*: 124), to generate a shared atmosphere between the author and his learners. Similarly, in Transcript 11 (b) the teacher employed 'shall we...?' in order to gain learners trust and cooperation, by making a directive sound more like a suggestion (Brazil, 1995: 124). Previously, Transcript 3 (page 7) illustrated the use of praise to encourage learner participation; while Transcript 6 (a) and (b) (page 14) display the use of humor, and the right of learners to initiate exchanges.

**Transcript 11 - (a) Use of inclusive 'we' within the lesson**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	What kind of notes do we have in Japan?	el	h	eliciting	l	Eliciting

**Transcript 11 (b) - Use of 'shall we...?' when issuing a directive**

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	Shall we do the homework check?	d	h	directing	l	Directing

In contrast, the linguistic forms utilized within the casual conversation tended to highlight the study group members' positive face and affirm their social closeness. In Transcript 12 (a) below, Speaker A's comment on the author's choice of assignment question (and subsequent state of mind) positively affirms both the difficulty of the question and the challenge that Speaker B faces.

***Transcript 12 - (a) Positive politeness forms in the casual conversation***

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
B	I'm doing the Hymes [question]	inf	h	informing	I	Informing
A	Y' mad (#)	com	post-h	acknowledge	R	

This positive politeness form is unlikely to be utilized within a classroom environment. The author is more likely, (as Transcript 6, page 15 shows), to announce a test the following week by using negatively affirming forms. Notably, discreetness of form and the use of 'circular' arguments is a cultural feature within Japanese society, which the author could have been unconsciously adopting in the classroom. Western speakers' place a greater value on straightforward opinions, as Transcript 12 (b) illustrates (Hofstede, 1986: 303).

***(b) Positive face in the casual conversation***

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
C	Yeah you're worn-out	obs	h	informing	I	Informing
B	I'm surprised you're here now	conc	post-h	informing	R/I	
C	You actually look tired	i	h	informing	I	Informing
A	Yeah?	rec	h	acknowledge	R	

In conclusion, the classroom environment contained the most easily recognizable message forms. The classroom lesson's asymmetrical teacher-learner relationship mitigated the author's utilization of typically negative politeness strategies. In contrast, the casual conversation's principally social atmosphere led participants to employ more socially affirming positive politeness strategies and linguistic forms.

9. **Why were features of the classroom presentation activity easier to identify than features of the casual conversation?**

This section summarizes in tabular form below, the information that was given at the end of each sub-section above.

*Table 6: The distinctive features of the classroom and the casual conversation*

Category	Classroom data	Casual conversation data
Setting	- Institutional	- Non-institutional
Participants	- Backgrounds were different - Large number of participants. - Asymmetrical participant roles	- Backgrounds were similar - Small number of participants - Symmetrical participant roles
Purpose	- Pedagogical.	- Academic and social
Key	- Friendly but serious	- Friendly, phatic
Channels	- Oral, written and visual	- Oral, written, visual and kinesthetic
Message content	- Topics were pre-determined and non-negotiated.	- Topics were spontaneous and negotiated.
Message form	- Negative politeness strategies and negative face were emphasized	- Positive politeness strategies, and 'straightforward-ness' valued.

(Information based upon author's own data)

10. **How useful has Hymes' (1972) framework been to compare these discourse types?**

This section discusses the usefulness of Hymes' framework relative to classroom and casual conversation discourse types.

This framework has been useful because it raised the author's awareness of his language use within both classroom and casual conversations, and of the various angles

and perspectives from which speech events may be analyzed, allowing for more accurate comparisons to be made between both discourse types. This finding is in line with Hymes' (1972a: 42) statement that classification causes '[individual] accounts that individually pass without notice [to] leap out when juxtaposed', and is also supported by Brazil's (1995: 128), observation that '[it] is only by working within a systematic framework that we can compare one set of data with another'. Furthermore, Hymes' seven categories of setting, participants, purpose, channel, key, message content and message form, were flexible enough for the classroom and casual conversation data (i.e. data from two diametrically opposed speech events) was able to be classified and analyzed.

Therefore, Hymes' framework is valuable because it contains 'a small number of categories to generate a large number of [conclusions]' (Brazil, 1995: 133), and because it can easily incorporate the examination of two diametrically opposed speech events, without 'an unacceptable proliferation of categories' (*ibid*).

However, with the exception of *setting*, and *participants*, this researcher found that some categories could be defined more than one way, which facilitated the inclusion of markedly different examples within the same category. For example, "key" is defined by Hymes (1972: 62) as 'the tone, manner or spirit of a speech event', while Brazil (*ibid*: 122) defines key in terms of intonational 'prominence'. Conversely, "key" has been defined in this assignment as 'atmosphere'. Thus, while the application of Hymes' (1972) framework was very useful to compare one speech event to another, this researcher contends that some categories are far too generalisable to receive a full endorsement of its usefulness.

## **11. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has examined classroom and casual conversation discourse from an ethnographic perspective in order to first of all highlight the distinguishing features of both. It was found that these discourse types varied enough to be considered in diametric opposition.

Secondly, the usefulness of employing this framework was considered, and the conclusion was drawn that it is a useful framework for the comparison of more than one speech event, but this was balanced with a single reservation regarding the author's difficulty in concisely delineating boundaries between Hymes' given categories.

A third and final conclusion relates to the questions that were raised regarding the teaching and learning of conversation within the classroom. Clearly, learners in this case, require opportunities to practice initiating exchanges, and the author needs to create classroom situations that are more representative of the language that communicatively competent speakers use outside the classroom.

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## Appendix A

### Transcription key

(Example)

	Dialogue	act	e.s	move	e.s	Exchange
T	What's the <verb? (#) verb?>	el	h	eliciting	l	Eliciting
SS	Are (#) are	rep	h	answering	R	
T	Are (#) <great!> very good (#) very good	acc	h	evaluating	F	

- The left column indicates the speaker: T = teacher, SS = students, A = Speaker A, B = Speaker B, C = Speaker C.
- The dialogue column contains pertinent classroom or conversational content.
- 'act' refers to the lowest possible level of categorization for utterances.
- 'e.s' refers to the element of structure of the preceding act
- 'move' refers to the level of categorization above act.
- 'e.s' refers to the element of structure of the preceding move.
- 'Exchange' refers to the final level of categorization used within this assignment.
- (#) indicates a pause that is under one second in length. Additionally, (1.5), not shown, indicates a longer timed pause, (in this example, of one point five seconds in length).
- { indicates an overlap of speech between speakers
- -- indicates one speaker interrupting another
- Language within <brackets> indicates L1 (Japanese) language use.
- Language within (brackets) indicates a non-verbal action that is relevant to the discourse.

Based upon Francis and Hunston's (1992) model for analyzing everyday conversation, in Coulthard, 1992: 123-161, and upon Lin, Angel M. Y, in 'Doing English – Lessons in the Reproduction or Transformation of Social Worlds?' in Candlin, C. N. and Mercer, N. (2001) *English Language Teaching in its Social Context*. London: Routledge. Ch. 17.

## Appendix B

### Taxonomy of acts, moves and exchanges relevant to this assignment

acts	abbr.	moves	Exchanges
framing	fr	informing	Boundary
concluding	con	opening	Structuring
marker	m	eliciting	Eliciting
metastatement	ms	acknowledging	Informing
checking	ch	answering	Directing
eliciting	el	evaluating	Clarify
comment	com	turn-passing	Repeat
observation	obs	directing	
engage	(eng)	loop	
reaction	rea	behaving	
reply	rep	directing	
accept	acc		
informing	inf		
directing	d		
reject	rej		
neutral proposal	n.pr		
protest	prot		
loop	l		
directing	d		
aside	z		
checking	ch		
return	ret		
prompt	p		
endorse	en		

(For a complete description of these acts, moves and exchanges the reader is referred to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model for the analysis of discourse, in *Towards an Analysis of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Francis and Hunston's (1992) model for analyzing everyday conversation, in Coulthard, M (Ed.) (1992) *Advances in Spoken Discourse*. New York: Routledge).

## Appendix C

### Taxonomy of acts within the classroom data

Classroom specific acts	Frequency #	% of total
reply	108	31.3%
elicit	90	26.1%
accept	53	15.4%
concluding	12	3.5%
directing	12	3.5%
evaluating	12	3.5%
return	11	3.2%
nomination	9	2.6%
behaving	9	2.6%
checking	7	2.0%
clue	6	1.7%
aside	5	1.4%
loop	5	1.4%
prompt	4	1.2%
protest	1	0.3%
endorse	1	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Appendix D

### Taxonomy of moves within the classroom data

<b>Type of move</b>	<b>Frequency #</b>	<b>% of total</b>
answering	122	27.7%
eliciting	115	26.1%
informing	59	13.4%
acknowledge	50	11.3%
opening	36	8.2%
framing	18	4.1%
evaluating	12	2.7%
directing	12	2.7%
behaving	9	2.0%
meta-statement	8	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Appendix E

### Taxonomy of Exchanges within the classroom data

<b>Type of Exchange</b>	<b>Frequency #</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Eliciting	56	23.5%
Informing	47	19.7%
Structuring	42	17.6%
Boundary	25	10.5%
Re-initiation	23	9.7%
Clarify	15	6.3%
Opening	14	5.9%
Directing	10	4.2%
Repeat	3	1.3%
Greeting	3	1.3%
Summoning	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100%</b>