

Conversation Analysis as Discourse Approaches to Teaching EFL Speaking

ANALYSE DE CONVERSATION EN TANT QU'UNE APPROCHE DISCURSIVE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT EN ANGLAIS ORAL POUR LES ÉTUDIANTS QUI APPRENNENT L'ANGLAIS COMME UNE LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE

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Abstract: Conversation has been of primary interest to language researchers; since natural, unplanned, everyday conversation is the most commonly occurring and universal language “genre”, in that conversation is a speech activity in which all members of a community routinely participate. Among approaches to discourse analysis in speaking, conversation analysis is one of the practical devices in teaching spoken English in EFL classroom. This paper tries to look at the theoretical basis for conversational analysis and explore the feasibility of applying a discourse approach to speaking in teaching a group of learners.

Key words: Conversation Analysis; Discourse Approach; EFL; Spoken English

Resumé: La conversation a été d'un intérêt primordial pour les chercheurs de langue, parce qu'une conversation naturelle, non planifiée et quotidienne est le genre de langue le plus fréquent et universel. La conversation est une activité de discours dans laquelle tous les membres d'une communauté participent régulièrement. Parmi les approches d'analyse du discours dans l'oral, l'analyse de conversation est l'un des dispositifs pratiques dans l'enseignement de l'anglais en oral pour les étudiants qui apprennent l'anglais comme une langue étrangère. Cet article tente d'examiner les fondements théoriques de l'analyse de conversation et d'explorer la possibilité

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d'appliquer une approche discursive à l'oral dans l'enseignement d'un groupe d'apprenants.

Mots-clés: analyse de conversation; approche discursive; anglais en tant qu'une langue étrangère; anglais parlé

1. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS

Conversation has been of primary interest to language researchers; since natural, unplanned, everyday conversation is the most commonly occurring and universal language “genre”, in that conversation is a speech activity in which all which all members of a community routinely participate (Riggenbach, 1999: 55). Conversational analysis is an approach to discourse dealing with the linguistic analysis of conversation, and strongly associated with ethnomethodology (Johnson and Johnson, 1998: 89). Richards et al. suggest that conversational analysis refers to the analysis of natural conversation in order to discover what the linguistic characteristics of conversation are and how conversation is used in ordinary life (1992: 106). Conversation analysis, according to Hutchby and Wooffitt, is the study of talk and is the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction: talk-in-interaction (1998: 13).

The analysis of conversation was first put forward by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), initially focusing on studying the smallest units of conversation (Burns et al., 1996: 18). The work of Goffman (1976; 1979) and Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) is important in the study of conversational norms, turn-taking, and other aspects of spoken interaction (McCarthy, 1991: 6).

Conversational analysis is often thought to provide a foundation for discourse analysis in general, and even more importantly, it is believed that an understanding of the structures and processes of conversation is essential to an understanding of language (Riggenbach, 1999: 55).

Conversation analysis is associated with the North American discourse analysis tradition (Burns et al., 1996: 18). The work of American discourse analysis tradition emphasizes the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural settings, including types of speech event such as storytelling, greeting rituals and verbal duels in different cultural and social settings (McCarthy, 1991: 6).

Conversational analysis is concerned with the structure of conversations, dealing with such matters as turn-taking, topic change and conversational structure—rules governing the opening and closing of conversations have been studied in detail (Johnson and Johnson, 1998: 89).

The role of conversation analysts is to observe what happens between the participants in a conversation and what conversational norms and patterns emerge as an interaction unfolds (Burns, et al., 1996: 18).

To be specific, major aspects of conversational analysis will be looked at as follows:

Turn-taking

Turn-taking is investigated to look at “the shape of the turn-taking organization device and how it affects the distribution of turns for the activities on which it operates” (Sacks et al., 1974: 696). It 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, and 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.

(Burns et al., 1996: 18)

Turn-taking is highly structured and speakers signal when they are prepared to give up the floor, often nominate the next speaker (verbally or non-verbally) and the next speaker can nominate him-or herself simply by starting to speak (Johnson and Johnson, 1998: 360).

Sacks et al. (1974) proposed a model of conversationalists' behaviour which they presented under the heading of a simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation (Cameron, 2001). The model from Sacks et al. has two main elements as follows:

The turn-constructual units

Sacks et al. (1974) define these units as grammatical entities, like a complete clause or sentence; but it might also be suggested that the units of spoken discourse are delineated primarily by prosody (intonation, stress, pausing) rather than grammar (cited in Cameron, 2001).

Turn-allocation mechanism

The second element of the simplest systematics model is a mechanism for allocating turns to particular participants in a conversation (Cameron, 2001). Change of speakership should occur at a TRP. One practice for allocating the next turn is "current speaker selects next"; the other is "self-select". (Sacks et al., 1974: 703)

Conversational styles

Yule suggests that there are two kinds of styles in a conversation as follows:

High involvement style: Some individuals expect that participation in a conversation will be very active, that speaking rate will be relatively fast, with almost no pausing between turns, and with some overlap or even completion of the other's turn.

High considerateness style: Some speakers use a slower rate, expect longer pauses between turns, do not overlap, and avoid interruption or completion of the other's turn.

(1996: 76)

Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pair is a sequence of two related utterances by two different speakers; the second utterance is always a response to the first (Richards, 1992: 8). Burns suggest adjacency pairs are the patterns which occur in conversation when the utterance of one speaker is likely to be followed by a particular kind of response and the response can be either a preferred response or a dispreferred one (Burns, et al. 1996: 18). In conversation, the two turns together are called an adjacency pair (Johnson and Johnson, 1998: 5).

Repair

In conversational analysis, repair is a term for ways in which errors, unintended forms, or misunderstandings are corrected by speakers or others during conversation (Richards, et al. 1992: 394). Johnson and Johnson also suggest that repair is a feature of spoken discourse in which a speaker retrospectively changes some preceding item (1998: 274). There are four types of repair according to Hutchby and Wooffitt:

- ♦ Self-initiated self-repair
- ♦ Other-initiated self-repair
- ♦ Self-initiated other-repair
- ♦ Other-initiated other-repair

(1998: 61-63)

2. ANALYZING A SAMPLE EXTRACT

2.1 Information about where, when, how the text was collected

This part of conversation is an extract from an interview program, namely Larry King Live at CNN on October 16. The interview was recorded as a video tape from TV.

2.2 Relevant social and cultural information

Larry King Live is a famous and popular talk show in the world. King has presented many shows over the decades and has interviewed presidents, prime ministers and many other celebrities. The extract is collected in his interview with the first lady of the States, Laura Bush. The first lady is talking about her personal feeling about the war in Iraq and her husband's sudden and unexpected visit to Iraq on Thanksgiving Day, 2003.

2.3 Transcription of the text

(K—Larry King, the host, B—Laura Bush, the first lady)

K: Do you (.) do you deal painfully with the daily reports out of Iraq?

B: =Sure=, // absolutely.*

K: How do they affect you?*

B: I mean, that's an hh very *painful* part of this job. It's a *painful* time for our country (1.0) when we lose people.

K: Do you take it *personally* a little?

B: No, not, I wouldn't know if I would say it *personally*, but ə, but it is, hh, you know, it's wrenching. There is no doubt about it. Wrenching for us, but wrenching for everyone, for the-, um, for all Americans when they read about it. That's, -

It's really a difficult time, but it's also a very, very challenging time for our country. And Americans are strong. And I see it, I see it everywhere I go. I see it when I visit military bases, when I, um, visit Walter Reed or Bethesda Naval Hospital with the president. One, um, one of the most moving time we had this year was when we visited the hospital and there were two (.) soldiers who had been wounded in Iraq. Neither one were American citizens. And we were there while they were sworn in (.) to become American citizens. And, (.) you know, a tear came to our eyes *for sure*. It was really a special time.

K: Um, All right. Let's go back to that extraordinary surpr::ise to Baghdad. When did Laura Bush know?

B: =Well=, //I knew about it---*

K: I've never seen your whole story line.*

B: I knew *fairly* early, um, maybe at least six weeks out when they first started talking about it. um, I knew that, of course, it was a big secret. I didn't mention it to *anyone*, and we didn't mention it to each other that often. You know, maybe once a week he would say, well, it looks like it's still on. And um, then, finally, on that Wednesday(.) right before Thanksgiving, then we know that it was definitely on. And so I was there on the front porch to give George a hug when he and Condi got in the *unmarked* van (1.5) to drive to the airport. He had just told the girls who were there for the holidays.

K: =That's when they learned?=
B: =That's when they learned.=

K: When did your in-laws learn?

B: They didn't learn until they got to the (.) ranch the next morning for thanksgiving (.) dinner. And that's when they found out. Um, that's it.

2. 4 conversation analysis

2.4.1 Adjacency pairs

In this conversation, a series of question-answer adjacency pair could be found. This lengthy, repetitive structure is common in interviews for the interviewers always dominate the direction of the conversation and requesting much information by asking questions. It's a convenient way to initiate a new topic and to ensure a response. All the questions are followed by preferred responses in the conversation. A brief analysis of the adjacency pairs is listed as follows:

Adjacency pairs	First pair part		Second pair part	
1	line1	Question	line 2	Answer
2	line 3	Question	line 4-5	Answer
3	line 6	Question	line 7-17	Answer
4	line 18-19	Question	line 22-29	Answer
5	line 30	Confirmation request	line 31	Confirmation
6	line 32	Question	line 33-34	Answer

2.4.2 Turn-taking

In this conversation, Larry King the interviewer has a complete framework for questions and knows where the conversation should go. He initiates questions one after another and turns are well controlled and well managed with a few overlaps marking urgency. Besides, little competition for turns indicates interactions which are more cooperatively negotiated.

Considering the conversational style, since the speaking rate of the conversation goes on very fast, with almost pausing between turns and with some overlap of the other's turn, this conversation uses a high involvement style.

In view of the nature of the interview, the turn size of interviewee is much bigger than that of the interviewer in that the interviewee offers much more information in the conversation. Details concerning the turn-taking are to be revealed as follows:

Line	Turn-taking
1	King gives the turn to Bush by raising a question.
2	Bush takes the turn.
3	King claims the turn, for he is eager to further his question; and Bush keeps her floor, which constitute an overlap.
4-5	Bush takes the turn.
6	King takes the turn by asking a question.
7-17	Bush takes the long turn to answer in detail.
18-19	Seeing the TPR, King takes the floor by asking another question
20	Bush takes the turn and is eager to answer.
21	King goes on adding one fact concerning the question in line 19, which makes up an overlap; he gives back the turn to Bush.
22-29	Bush takes another long turn to answer the question in line 19
30	King takes the floor by asking for confirmation, giving the turn to Bush.
31	Bush takes the floor by confirming the request.
32	King takes the turn by asking one more question.
33-34	Bush takes the turn by answer the question.

2.4.3 Repairs

In this conversation, both King and Bush have self initiated self-repairs. In line 1, King self-repaired his question by correcting his unintended form (Richards, et al. 1992: 394). Bush, in line 7-8, line 9, line 11 and line 13, makes her self-repairs for her errors and unintended forms in her answers.

2.4.4 Closing

In line 34, by saying “That’s it”, Bush mentions the end of her answer to the question in line 32. It is clear here that Bush indicates another question initiated by King.

3. TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

Advocacy from many scholars (Wong, 2000; Mori, 2002; etc.) of conversation analysis as a means of understanding and improving speaking in pedagogical contexts has continued to grow in recent years (McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2004: 30). Classroom activities deriving from conversational analysis highlight the micro-interactive level of talk, and teachers are able to explore language performance in the following ways:

Discussing speakers’ roles and rights to turns in spoken interactions in different contexts;
Observing and discussing how interactants get to keep and retain turns;
Practice the language that signals one’s wish to speak;
Noting, predicting, and practicing the different types of turns that are likely to follow one another;
Comparing norms for getting, taking, and keeping turns cross-culturally;
Recognising signals that others wish to speak.

(Burns, 1998: 107)

Besides, Burns et al. concludes that through working closely with spoken data, we can: (1996: 61)

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

EFL classroom practitioners could make full use of conversational analysis in teaching spoken English in the following aspects:

Discussing speakers’ roles and rights to turns in spoken interactions in different contexts;
Observing and discussing how interactants get to keep and retain turns;
Practice the language that signals one’s wish to speak;
Noting, predicting, and practicing the different types of turns that are likely to follow one another;
Comparing norms for getting, taking, and keeping turns cross-culturally;
Recognising signals that others wish to speak.

Under the above guidelines, an oral English activity is to be designed applying the implications of conversational analysis to practice learners’ speaking and induce their oral production. Throughout the whole activity, it is not language teachers’ role to teach those basic discoursal strategies; but it is the

teacher's job to provide the student with the necessary language to make those skills work in English (Brown and Yule, 1983: 52-53).

4. COURSE DESIGN FOR SPOKEN ENGLISH

4.1 Learner profiles

Learners' situation is to be introduced in the following table according to Burns and Joyce (1997: 64):

Background	• university sophomore in the first semester, (to complete a two-year EFL study in China and another two-year study in UK) • non-English majors, all are students of engineering, • same language background – Chinese and EFL learners • age ranges from 19-20
Formal learning	• all literate in their first language • high school graduates with at least 6 years EFL learning • one year EFL study (Reading, Writing, listening skills)
Language level	• upper intermediate level in spoken English with some grammar mistakes and limited vocabulary • advanced level in reading, listening and writing • all passed College English Test (Band Four)
Access to spoken English	• limited access to English interactions outside the classroom, • do not venture much to English speaking contexts • all have access to English radio (e.g.: VOA, BBC, etc.) and the internet.
Course details	• 2 hours per week * 16 weeks (a semester) = 32 hours • once per week; 2 hours each time • about 20 students in a class

4.2 A brief course outline designed from texts (adapted from Burns, Joyce and Gollin, 1996: 78-80)

Table a:

Step	Discussion and examples
1. Identify the overall context	University: course focus is preparing students for study at university in UK
2. Develop an aim	To develop the students' spoken and written language and communication skills required to undertake university study and living abroad.
3. Note the language event sequence within the context	These could include: • check in at the airport and claim luggage • asking the way • enrolling at university • discussing course selection • attending lectures • attending tutorials • using the library • reading reference books • writing essays • writing reports • undertaking examinations • participating in casual conversations • going shopping • renting apartment • signing a lease • banking

To be continued

Continued

Table b:

Step	Discussion and examples
4. List the texts arising from the sequence	These could include: • Range of possible written texts, for example: - airport and Customs forms - enrolment forms - renting lease - discipline-specific essays - discipline-specific reports • Range of reading texts, for example: - Customs entry notes, -detailed information such as university directions; overseas students guides, etc. - registration forms - discipline-specific journal articles - discipline-specific books - library catalogues -lecture notes • examination papers • service encounter—checking in and claiming • service encounter—asking for direction • service encounter—shopping, • service encounter—apartment renting • service encounter—banking • lectures • tutorial discussion • service encounter—selecting courses, • service encounter-- library enquiry • genres within casual conversation (e.g. anecdote)
5.Outline the sociocultural knowledge students need	Students need knowledge about: • academic institutions • academic procedures and expectations • social situations • the role of the student (international student)
6. Record or gather samples of texts	• Written texts: Gather examples of essays, catalogues, journals, renting ads, etc. • Spoken texts: need to: - find available recordings - search for some semi-scripted dialogues -record authentic interactions and make transcriptions
7. Develop units of work related to the texts and develop learning objectives to be achieved	Classroom activities should be arranged in units of work to provide students with: • explicit input • guided practice • opportunities to perform independently

One semi-scripted renting-related conversation transcript between Tom Martino, host of a daily “Trouble-shooter Show” and Dan Kaplis (a lawyer), and Greg, a new tenant, whose landlord wants to raise the rent, is used in the classroom activity.

4.3 Classroom activities

Choices of Classroom activities are no easy decisions. Burns and Joyce suggest that the criterion for choosing particular activities is to see if they can help students develop knowledge and skills in using spoken language (1997: 92). It is essential to emphasize that the teacher should not be the only one to be

clear about the purpose of the activities in the classroom; it is also important that the students need to also understand the aim of activities before participating in an activity. This will raise learners' awareness of the learning process and give them an idea of where the lesson is going. It will also guide learners to take over responsibility from the teacher and care more about their own learning (ibid.: 93).

The following is a series of sequenced activities designed with a view to developing language skills related to renting problems based on the methodological framework based on the concept of scaffolding in five categories (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 93-97).

The classroom activities below are organised in two class hours **(100 minutes)**:

4.3.1 Preparation activities

The aim of preparation activities is to put learners into the context of the target interaction situations and make them understand which type of spoken interaction they will produce (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 93). Since all the 20 learners have to be confronted with the situation of renting an apartment, they need to be quite familiar with the process of renting. As background information, every student will sign a legal contract, they need to understand:

the legal terms and conditions of that agreement

tenants' responsibility and rights

what to do if the owner of the property is not able to meet the responsibilities.

The following activities may be used in this situation:

- **Brainstorming:(10 minutes)** ask the students the following questions and make their lists.

Questions:

1. What do you know about renting an apartment?
2. What kinds of questions do you need to ask before you take the apartment?

4.3.2 Activities which focus on language awareness and skills

To facilitate the students to participate in the coming spoken interaction, teachers are expected to design some activities concerning vocabulary and sentence structures (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 94). The following activities may be used:

- **Pair work: information gap (10 minutes)**

Students are expected to work in pairs to work out vocabulary with corresponding definitions. For example: Student A is going to ask student B the definition of the word in his own card. Sample cards are as follows:

Student A's card of new words

landlord
The premises
Get evicted
Eviction notice
waive
manager
tenant
Rent (noun)
Rent (verb)
Lease (noun)
Lease (verb)
Deposit
Late charge
Provision
sue

Student B's card with definitions

An additional cost if the rent is not paid on time
Money which is paid at regular intervals.
Money that given as security
Bring legal action against someone
A contract to occupy property temporarily
The building or property
Supervisor of the building
Give the use of land or property by a written agreement
Condition or exception
Pay for the right to use someone else's property
A person who rents a property: the occupant
A written statement forcing someone to move out
Give up a right willingly
Owner of the property
Be forced to leave

- **Sentence builds: pair work (5 minutes)**

Students are expected to work in pairs to rearrange the word groups into a sentence. Student A first gives Student B a word group, student B builds a sentence based on the word group. Then they change the roles. Sample word groups are as follows:

Group 1: The landlord to raise the rent doesn't have the right

Group 2: to pay the rent be careful on time

Group 3: we all three the lease for 6 months sign

Group 4: among yourselves the rent you are splitting up

4.3.3 Activities which focus on discourse awareness and skills

To prepare students for spoken interaction, transcribing would be a good practice. With the aid of language teachers, learners, who are engaged in conversational analysis, transcribe and analyze spoken data, should be able to:

- “own” their texts, and therefore have a personal affective involvement in the subsequent analysis and related learning outcomes,

- attend to the mechanism of language choice by selective focussing on specific aspects of the text at different levels of cultural and linguistic complexity, which may play a key role in Second Language Acquisition,

- collaborate with each other, both in the creation of the text itself, and in the subsequent reevaluation by peers and teacher of that product

- take responsibility for investigating their own communication difficulties, and share this responsibility with their teachers and their peers.

(Clennell, 1999)

The activity is designed as follows:

- **Transcribing workshop (30 minutes)**

Procedures:

- To divide the students into 5 groups, each group 4 members.

- To give the direction of transcribing and hand out tapes and cassette recorder.

- To guide the learners to transcribe (based on related words and sentences worked out)

- To ask group representatives to report and display their respective transcript on slides.

- To hand out the semi-scripted conversation version and raise students' awareness to compare it with their scripted version.

- **Group discussion (10 minutes)**

- ask the students to tell how people start and end a telephone conversation

- guide the students to do conversation analysis to see how adjacency pairs and turn-taking are organized.

- ask students to work in groups to practice question-answer adjacency pairs.

4.3.4 Interaction activities

At this stage, students are to practice and act out how to complain and consult with rent problems.

- **Role-play (20 minutes)**

Procedures:

Students work in groups to prepare acting from the script (change the telephone conversation into a real face to face dialogue).

Rehearsal period.

Presentations.

4.3.5 Extension activities

This part of activities usually makes language skills and knowledge recycled throughout a language program, help students reinforce what they produced and make them more confident with their performance (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 96). Activities could be:

- Video observation (15 minutes)

Language teachers who have previously videotaped students' role-plays in interaction activities now display some clips in the classroom and give comments in class.

Teachers then present the class a clip of video on the topic of renting abroad to familiarize students with more real situations and discuss the possible solutions.

4.3.6 Assessment

The reason for assessment lies in acquiring feedback to aid learning or achieving a comparable measure of competence (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998: 210). The assessment held in this course falls into a category of proficiency assessment which measures students' oral performance on what they have learned related to "a specific future use" (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 103).

Students' performances will be assessed through the role play in that this activity would engage all the learners into an interaction in a specific situation. However, it is very difficult for teachers to pay enough attention to all the performance at a limited time. So video-taping is a strong supportive device in assessment. Brown and Yule suggest

Taping makes it possible to check afterwards to see whether the first impression is correct.

The tape can be kept as evidence to support the teacher's judgments if students have any problems in it.

Keeping records of students' performances over a period of time, for example, one semester, the teacher can get an idea of whether the student has improved or not.

Tape-recording and playing back encourage the student to pay attention to their own performance instead of taking a test and then forget all about it.

(1983: 105-106)

The following is a description of performance levels (intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced) in oral interactions adapted from Paltridge (1992: 252-253):

Levels	Overall Impression	Accuracy	Fluency
Intermediate	Moderate user. Can get by without serious breakdowns. However, misunderstandings and errors may still occur.	Moderate grasp of lexical and grammatical patterns, enabling the expression of a broader range of meanings.	Can sustain conversation but reformulation sometimes necessary. Moderate range, subtlety and flexibility.
Upper Intermediate	Competent user. Copes well in most situations. Will have occasional misunderstandings or errors.	Competent grasp of lexical and grammatical patterns and functional language use. .	Can generally engage in spontaneous conversation on most general purpose topics. Competent range, subtlety and flexibility.
Advanced	Good user. Copes well in most situations. Can perform competently within own special purpose areas.	Confident and generally accurate use of lexical and grammatical patterns and functional language use.	Can engage in spontaneous conversation on general topics as well as matters relevant to own special purpose interests. Good range, subtlety and flexibility.

Levels	Appropriacy	Intelligibility	Comprehension
Intermediate	Use of language generally appropriate to function, context and intention within a moderate range of situations.	Can be understood without undue difficulty when discussing familiar topics but problems may arise with detailed explanations. Moderate command of a range of communication strategies.	Can generally understand and interpret meanings related to familiar subjects spoken by a native speaker at normal speed.
Upper Intermediate	Use of language generally appropriate to function, context and intention within a range of situations.	Communicates meanings competently in general communication contexts. Competent command of a range of communication strategies.	Can understand and extract information from native-speaker speech at normal speed. Some repetition may be required in special purpose areas.
Advanced	Use of language mainly appropriate to function, context and intention within a good range of situations.	Communicates meanings well in general and within own special purpose areas. Good command of a range of communication strategies.	Can understand and extract information from most native-speaker speech. Will also have some competency within own special purpose areas.

The results of this activity will account for about 5 % in students' final score at the end of the semester.

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Appendix: Transcript of the conversation,

Greg calls Tom Martino about a landlord who tries to raise the rent after the lease was signed:

Tom: Alright, Greg, what's going on?

Greg: Yeah, me and two of my friends, we moved into this place; we signed a lease for six months.

Tom: Okay...

Greg: ... for \$ 625 a month.

Tom: Alright.

Greg: Okay, we've been living there for about a month.

Tom: Now, you all signed the lease, Greg?

Greg: Yes.

Tom: Okay.

Greg: See; let me tell you about that first. First, we ... it was just gonna be two of us signing the lease.

Tom: Uh-huh.

Greg: And that's what she thought.

Tom: Yeah...

Greg: But we all three signed the lease. We had a friend that wanted to move out --- move in with us.

Tom: Okay, now you all signed for the entire lease.

Greg: Yeah.

Tom: It wasn't divided in thirds. In other words, you each signed for \$625 a month.

Greg: Well, no. we've splitting up the rent.

Tom: I know that. You are splitting up the rent among yourselves.

Greg: Yes.

Tom: But as far as the landlord's concerned, each one of you signed a lease which said \$625.

Greg: Oh, yeah. Yes.

Tom: You didn't sign one that said a third of that.

Greg: No.

Tom: Okay, go ahead, Greg.

Greg: Okay, we've been living there about a month, and now she wants to raise our rent to 680.

Tom: Well, how can she do that if you have a lease?

Greg: Yeah! That's what I was wondering. Does she have that right to do that?

Tom: Only if it's written in the lease. Dan Kaplis, again on my panel of experts, and he's here for today helping me out, Dan ...

Dan: How long was the lease for?

Greg: Six months.

Tom: I mean, she can't do it; she can, I mean she can try, but did you say to her, "Hey, we got a lease?"

Greg: Well, actually that's why I'm calling you; I wanted to make sure I had that right to say that.

Tom: Well, we ... now mind you, we don't have the lease in front of us...

Greg: Yeah.

Tom: So does it say anything in three about the right to raise rent?

Greg: Yeah, I ... not that I remember. But ...

Tom: Do you have a copy of that lease?

Greg: That's another thing. I told her to send me a copy, but ...

Tom: GREG!

Greg: I know ...

Tom: GREGGGG!!! Come on, man!

Greg: I know ...