

Managing Talk: The Role of the Chairperson in a Teachers' Meeting

Andrew Boon

E-mail: prufrock@snow.odn.ne.jp

Andrew Boon completed a Masters Degree from Aston University, England in 2003. His research interests focus on teacher development and action research in the classroom. He is currently working at Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Tokyo, Takushoku University, Tokyo and Toyo Gakuen University, Chiba, Japan.

Abstract

This paper uses Conversation Analysis (CA) techniques to examine how the management of talk is accomplished by a Chairperson in a teachers' meeting. The analysis illustrates the role of the Chairperson as it emerges and is oriented to by participants in the meeting, and the various strategies used by the chairperson to control turn-taking and maintain the focus of participant interaction on the business at hand. Although strategies utilized by the chairperson to manage talk are unique to the teachers' meeting, it is hoped that the insights provided in this paper will be of use to material writers, teachers and students alike.

Keywords: conversation analysis, meetings, turn-taking, topic allocation, topic maintenance.

1. Introduction

Meetings involve a number of participants of an organisation coming together to discuss a set agenda and achieve a desired goal within a specified time limit. However, meetings are "by their very nature, talk" (Boden, 1994: 82); a medium of communication which is primarily spontaneous, which allows each participant the right to talk without reference to a fixed set of topics, favours "only two speakers, current and next" (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974: 712) and has the constant threat of the breakdown of one conversation into separate discussions when at least four parties are involved (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Talk in meetings is therefore vulnerable to disruption via the flexibility of participants to vary the turn order, turn size, length, distribution and allocation of speaking turns as well as participants having a certain amount of freedom to

digress from the topic or generate new unrelated topics that may conflict with the accomplishment of the specified agenda.

For talk to operate as a medium through which the specific goals of the organisation can be decided upon, interaction in meetings frequently needs to be controlled via a modification of the scope of options available to a speaker in the basic model of ordinary conversation. Thus, it is usual practice for a chairperson to be designated to manage talk in a meeting. "Who talks when, to whom, and for how long is no casual matter" (Boden, 1994: 82), rather it is the concern of the chairperson who must control turn transition and allocation, maintain multi-party concentration "on to a single-stream of talk and task" (Boden, 1994: 100), move the talk along in time and space to its intended conclusion while simultaneously establishing an environment in which participants relinquish certain conversational rights and orient to the institutional role of chairperson.

This paper utilises the techniques of Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine how the management of talk is accomplished by a chairperson in a teachers' meeting and how the chairperson's role emerges from the sequential and localised interaction of the participants whose conduct in the meeting creates, develops, organises and contributes to its identity and legitimacy. It explores how talk is jointly constructed by the meeting participants to accomplish social actions and orient to the rules, procedures and social identities created therein or to risk being held accountable for conduct which departs from the established framework.

2. Notes on the Meeting

The teachers' meeting took place from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. on the 6th December 2000. The meeting was organised by myself and my trainer to accomplish two objectives; to provide a training and development session in which teachers would be able to gain a better understanding of effective instruction-giving by discussing and reflecting on their successful and unsuccessful experiences in the classroom and to assist my research for a different study (Boon, 2004).

The meeting comprised of seven participants; three native English teachers, three Japanese teachers of English and myself who as organizer was designated as chairperson.

Before the meeting, each participant was sent a survey to complete with various questions about instruction-giving (Appendix 1). The survey doubled as the agenda for the meeting.

3. Notes on Data Collection

The meeting was recorded by using a standard tape recorder. As data were being collected for the purposes of a previous study (Boon, 2004), the participants interacted naturally with the knowledge that the reason for the recording was to capture the content of the meeting and not for CA purposes.

A number of problems occurred whilst recording. Firstly, as I used a C90 cassette tape, I could not record the entire two-hour meeting. Secondly, the microphone did not pick up one of the participants who spoke too quietly. Finally, the recording provides no access to non-verbal interaction such as gesture or gaze direction which through recollection was a primary technique of the chairperson in turn allocation.

4. Data Analysis

The data is analysed to identify normative and deviant patterns of interaction within the meeting. These patterns can establish:

the conduct of participants, the underlying organisation of their activities and how that conduct and its organisation embody orientations to and institutional context and its associated role, tasks and

identities (Heritage, 1995: 407).

By focusing on participant development of turn-taking procedures, turn design, topic management and departures from achieved norms, it is possible to begin to identify the role of the chairperson and the particular strategies which are utilised to manage talk and guide the meeting to its conclusion.

5. Transcription Procedures:

Data is transcribed using the conventional notation developed by Gail Jefferson (Jefferson, 1979). This model attempts to represent as accurately as possible natural spoken data in written form.

The line numbers of each transcription correspond to the actual position of the utterance in the meeting.

6. Meeting Analysis

6.1 Modifying the Turn-taking System

The Chairperson as turn allocator

Talk is usually managed via participant adherence to a turn-taking mechanism which is locally determined and specific to the particular talk (context-sensitive) but capable of being adapted to other circumstances (context-free). This mechanism facilitates the smooth transition of turns between speakers to minimise gaps or overlaps, accommodates the allocation of next speaker in a sequence of interaction and renders participants accountable for “adjusting, altering and even ignoring (the established) rules and regulations” (Boden, 1994: 13). Speakers are entitled to one turn at talk; a ‘turn-constructural unit’ (TCU). At the end of a TCU, a ‘Transition-Relevance Place’ (TRP) comes into effect in which;

1] The turn may be allocated to a next speaker by the current speaker.

If this does not occur;

2] The current speaker may relinquish the floor and a next speaker selects to take the floor.

If 1 and 2 do not occur;

3] The current speaker may continue with a new turn and the process is repeated at the next TRP (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974).

However, in the teacher’s meeting, participants generally relinquished the right to select the next speaker after a TRP and by doing so oriented to the role of the chairperson as the “officially appointed dispenser of opportunities to speak” (Wardhaugh, 1985: 148). This modification of the turn-taking mechanism can be observed in the following extract:

014] **Chairperson:** ...How do you usually initiate procedural instructions (.) in your lessons?
(4.0)

015] **David:** ((cough)) Depending on the activity=

016] **Chairperson:** =Yeah

017] **David:** and the student level (1.0) lo::wer students (0.4) if its using flip cards (1.0) often I’ll take the cards sit down (0.5) do the first one.

018] **Chairperson:** Right

019] **David:** and then they imitate.

020] **Chairperson:** Yeah

021] **David:** take a card (0.6) give me - ask me a question=

022] **Chairperson:** =Yeah

023] **David:** based on the card.

024] **Chairperson:** Right, sure (0.4) so::: with hi-higher level students you give more verbal?

025] **David:** Yeah.

026] **Chairperson:** For lower level more modelling?

027] **David:** Yeah.

028] **Chairperson:** °Ok° (3.0)

029] **Mike:** ((Cough)) I use a combination of verbal and modelling e::rrr (0.5) to say as I'm speaking I gesture with my hands what have you. WELL, obviously lower level more modelling a::n'higher level less. °especially pretty much like dat°

030] **Yasuko:** (2.5) Yeah, same for me as well like basically BUT FOR like maybe LO::W students for you guys maybe for us=

031] **Chairperson:** =Yeah.

032] **Yasuko:** will be a bit different but some lo::w lo:w low level students I will have to::: like use (2.0) well but we use the same thing, ahhhh, errrr, modelling >an' ya know< the gestures and speaking slowly and give simple instructions.

033] **Chairperson:** Right (4.0) So its mainly verbal?

034] **Yasuko:** u:::hhhhhhhhhhhh=

035] **Erika:** =I do modelling al[ot]

036] **Yasuko:** [Uhnenn]

037] **Erika:** I do for students who a::hhh seems to understand what I sa::y (?)

038] **Chairperson:** Right=

039] **Erika:** =Yeah.

040] **Chairperson:** Yeah, when ya start the modelling activity d'you tell them what they're going to do or do you jus:: start the modelling?

041] **Erika:** (2.0) errr(1.0) It depends!

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson describe questions as “the basic component for selecting a next speaker” (1974: 717). In the above extract, the chairperson has the sole right to provide for a next speaker by initiating questions which allocate floor space to participants (Lines 14, 24, 26, 33, 40). The chairperson has the option to include an address form in a question move to direct the turn to a specific participant but elects to leave the floor open to allow participants to volunteer to take the floor (Lines 14-15). The chairperson’s privilege of introducer of the agenda (Line 14) helps to establish him as producer of first-pair part initiation moves which confine participants to responsive second pair-part actions only and construct an environment in which moves that involve participant initiation sequences are accountable (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997). For example:

250] **Mike:** Just a question d’ya guys understand that deer in headlight reference?

251] **Erika:** (0.5)°No°

“Just a question” (Line 250) demonstrates an orientation to an environment where there is no provision for participants to allocate turns to a next speaker. The overall absence of such initiation moves reduces the role of participants to “overhearer” or “next speaker if allocated by chairperson or self-selected by a participant at a permissible TRP in the interaction” (Lines 15, 29, 30, 35). Departures from this role need to be marked:

610] **Mike:** One thing were they actually doing something in that moment of silence(?) or?

611] **Chairperson:** No.

Thus, the chairperson emerges as the one participant who is able to freely initiate and allocate turns in the meeting. These constraints operate to minimise multi-party interruptions and to avoid the breakdown of talk by participants into separate discussions.

The Chairperson as turn co-ordinator

By choosing not to select a specific speaker in line 14 (pg. 5) and creating an open floor, the chairperson and participants adhere to:

a locally initiated selection procedure that converts the talk into a speaking round with a consequent rough pre-allocation of future turns according to seating arrangements (Cuff & Sharrock, 1985: 156).

This movement of turn is managed by participants depending upon completion of what they wanted to say and an established routine of who will respond first or last determined by the dominant and less dominant speakers in the meeting. Although the “round turn” (Cuff & Sharrock, 1985: 156) transition system provides some autonomy in the management of turn transition, it constrains each participant to contribute a response to a chairperson initiated question (Lines 15, 29, 30, 35 – pgs. 5-6). Participants orient to this rule even if they have nothing to add to the business in hand:

455] **Erika:** Well you guys already said what I [wanted to say]

456] **Chairperson:** [Yeah, su:re]

The normative pattern is for each participant to be allowed one multi-TCU response to each question in the meeting. If participants wish to contribute extra turns once talk has passed to a different speaker, they have to seek permission from the chairperson:

203] **Yasuko:** a::::nd er:r one more thing [I:::::::]

204] **Chairperson:** [Yeah]

205] **Yasuko:** e:rrr if the presentation fails then like ((spoken while laughing)) the whole instructions will fa::il.

468] **Mike:** Can I jus: say (?) like when I first got here:: again it was point fo::rm sort a leading questions I can set it all up.

In both instances, participants have already contributed turns at talk but orient to the chairperson as turn co-ordinator before constructing extra turns.

The “round turn” system is effective in so much as it provides every participant with the opportunity to talk and for less asymmetrical direction from the chair. The chairperson, however, can revert to the role of turn allocator and intervene at any relevant TRP to avoid lapses if no participant chooses to self-select and access the floor. In line 33 (pg. 6), the four-second pause allows time for Yasuko to continue her multi-turn by creating a new TCU but as she chooses not to continue and no other participant self-selects, the chairperson directs the turn back to her. Also, the chairperson can intervene to deflect turns in order to make sure everyone has a fair turn and allocate the floor to less dominant speakers:

169] **Chairperson:** ...°Ok(2.0) Toshi(?)° (3.0) Instances of procedural instructions that fail to set up a task or create confusion?

290] **Chairperson:** ...How about °over he::re° (1.0) any tasks done differently?

Back-channelling as a control mechanism

Back-channelling is noticeable in the teachers’ meeting due to its virtual absence in participant talk and its predominant usage by the chairperson. By utilising back-channel response devices to signal he is listening to the on-going talk, the chairperson can exert considerable control over turn-taking procedures. Firstly, back-channelling enables the chairperson to acknowledge the prior utterance and quickly return the floor to the previous speaker so that he or she is given the choice to continue or discontinue the talk (Lines 16, 18, 20, 22, 31, 38 are examples of back-channel response devices which although interrupt the current speaker, encourage him or her to maintain the floor – pgs. 5-6). Moreover, it enables the chairperson to be in a position to receive or appropriate the floor at available TRPs with little or no competition from the prior speaker or other participants by establishing a pattern in which the chairperson has the primary right to occupy the next slot after question and answer sequences (Lines 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 31, 33, 38 – pgs. 5-6) unless he decides to forgo that right (Lines 29-30 – pg. 6).

Both examples of back-channelling can be seen in the following extract:

111] **Yasuko:** So:::: but basically (1.0) It - I will say probably instructions were about (0.5) two minutes at most(?)

112] **Chairperson:** Right, sure=

113] **Yasuko:** =and if during the activity the student is going in the wrong way then I will point out an’ then get back to the way its supposed to be.

114] **Chairperson:** Right. so you - you’re checking=

115] **Yasuko:** =Uhhnn

116] **Chairperson:** all the way through a very long instruction process(?)

117] **Yasuko:** Uhnnn

118] **Chairperson:** Yeah. good (1.5) YEAH ITS A QUESTION THAT I::: I asked (1.0) because I've been recording the lessons to - to pick out instances where I give instructions and (1.0) before, before I asked the question >I would answer the question< maybe e:rr I give verbal short (1.0) or I gesture and then when I began listening to myself >because obviously its very difficult during the lesson to kno< to know exa:ctly what you're saying. I started listening to my recordings I was like oh my God It's a lecture.....

Whereas "right, sure" (Line 112) yields the floor and is understood by Yasuko as an opportunity to continue her talk, "right, so.." (Line 114) is constructed as a pre-start to a longer TCU and allows the chairperson to take the floor, initiate a declarative question (Line 116), constrain the reply to an affirmative or negative response (Lines 115-117) and occupy the next slot in the sequence in which a third back-channelling device, "yeah" (Line 118) and its repetition "yeah" (Line 118) is constructed to be able to shift topics and allow the meeting to move forward.

The exclusive right of the chairperson to initiate back-channel devices assists the management of the turn-taking procedure allowing the chairperson to be omnipresent in the interaction, reducing the number of potential next speakers and enabling turns to return to the chairperson so only he is able to initiate or allocate new turns. It also establishes a single flow of talk between one participant and the chairperson; an environment where current speaker talk is continually addressed to the chair and other participants are reduced to the role of "overhearer" rather than recipient of that talk. As back-channelling devices are usually produced near a TCU (Heritage & Greatback, 1991) their overall absence by participants display an orientation to the restricted rights of who can select to speak first at TRPs and who can be addressed in the meeting.

Deviant cases

On the whole, participants orient to the restrictions of turn-taking created through the role of the chairperson. However, as turn transition and allocation usually occur at the end of TCUs, Coulthard considers:

a speaker (to be) vulnerable at every sentence completion whether he selects next speaker or action or not, and even if he gets past one sentence completion he is equally vulnerable at the end of the next sentence (1977: 61).

The chairperson attempts to minimise this vulnerability by establishing rules of turn allocation and co-ordination. Nevertheless, the chairperson's control over participant action is not always guaranteed and can be challenged at any point in the interaction. For example:

a] The chairperson's role of turn allocator / back-channeller can be undermined:

246] **David:** ...but other times (1.4) e::rrr, I get (0.5) get sort of a deer in headlights look.

247] **Chairperson:** Yeah.

248] **David:** A::hh okay (1.0) a::rrr let me explain again.

249] **Chairperson:** Right, su::re.

250] **Mike:** Just a question d'ya guys understand that deer in headlight reference?

251] **Erika:** (0.5)°No°

252] **Mike:** ((laughs)) I didn't °think so° you guys get it in England [right]?

253] **Chairperson:** [Yeah sure]

254] **Erika:** What's that?

255] **David:** A deer like kind of the animal=

256] **Erika:** =Uh huh.

257] **David:** er:mm when they see a car on the road at night(?) and the lights (?) they can't look away from the lights.

258] **Mike:** They just stop as if ((Mimes facial expression))

259] **Erika:** aa:hh, O::ka::y=

260] **David:** =There's just this total blank look!

261] **Erika:** o::hhh!

262] **Chairperson:** [[It's like e:rrr]]

263] **David:** [[It's very]]

264] **Chairperson:** It's like me in Mcdonalds=

265] **Group:** =((laughter))

266] **Chairperson:** In Japanese if they tell me there's no burgers today.

Although “Just a question” (Line 250) seeks permission from the chairperson to be allowed to initiate a question which clarifies that Japanese participants have understood the prior idiom, the action moves to an unmarked initiation in which Mike addresses the chairperson, the only English national present, through a social identity which orients to the person as a “guy” (Line 252) from “England” (Line 252) rather than as designated chairperson. Thus, the identity of chairperson is temporarily suspended in the interaction. In addition, as selected next speaker (Lines 252-253), the chairperson is constrained to occupy the response slot of a question and answer sequence and concede the role of turn allocator to Mike. Subsequently, the floor is open (Line 254) and enables Erika to initiate a further clarification question which is answered by both Mike and David. What is noticeable in the sequence (Lines 254-261) is the absence of chairperson talk and a brief return to the normal practice of ordinary conversation by participants where current speakers can allocate turns to next speakers and participants are free to vary the turn order by choosing to join in at relevant TRPs and influence the course of the interaction or pass up on the opportunity to speak. Also, participants are able to occupy third slots with response tokens that move the talk along (Line 256 & 261) or indicate that understanding has taken place (Line 259).

The chairperson regains control of the meeting by electing to take the floor (Line 262). At the same time, David chooses to begin a TCU but yields his turn to the chairperson, which orients to the rule that the chairperson has the right to talk first after each speaker and enables the identity of the chairperson and previous constraints on turn-taking to be re-established.

b] Turns allocated by the chairperson do not always ensure the selected speaker a turn at talk:

169] **Chairperson:** ...°Ok(2.0) Toshi(?)° (3.0) Instances of procedural instructions that fail to set up a task or create confusion?

170] **Toshi:** (2.0)

171] **Yasuko:** For most of the time for (1.0) my case (1.0) this (2.0) partly because I was speaking too fast (1.0)

Although Toshi is selected as the next speaker by the chairperson, “turns to speak are valued and sought” (Coulthard, 1977: 61) and his delay in replying allows Yasuko to appropriate his turn.

c] Back-channelling may allow the chairperson to successfully take the floor but not maintain it:

56] **Chairperson:** °Yeah. right. sure.° So making a generalisation here, maybe demonstration moving up to a higher level where it gets more verbal seems to be [the]

57] **Mike:** [Well] >What I’ve done<I’ve just recently started () using a Prep A=

58] **Chairperson:** =Right.

An attempt to appropriate the floor during a TCU can be considered a violation of normative behaviour (Wardhaugh, 1985). In this sequence, the chairperson is interrupted at a point which is not transitionally relevant. The chairperson can choose to reject the interruption by issuing a marked reference to the interruption but here he chooses to yield the floor and encourage the participant to continue his turn (Line 58).

6.2 Managing the Agenda

The Chairperson as topic allocator

Several days before the teachers’ meeting, the chairperson supplied each participant with a survey (Appendix 1). This set of questions determined the various topics that the chairperson wished to discuss in the teachers’ meeting. In ordinary conversation, participants have the right to freely choose the topic to be talked about, however, meetings are carefully structured around an agenda of specific topics. Thus, it is the responsibility of the chairperson in a meeting to keep participants focused on the limited number of topics at hand. In order to achieve the stated goals of the teachers’ meeting, the chairperson directs participant talk to and discourages departures from the fixed agenda by establishing a pattern of question and answer whereby the chairperson can generally monopolise initiating actions and participants role generally reduced to responder of those questions. The chairperson controls the introduction of new topics through the constraining power of the question which forms an immediate context for second actions in a sequence. For example, if we go back to Line 14 (see pg. 5) of the meeting, the chairperson introduces the topic to be talked about which creates the context for David’s response (Line 15 – see pg. 5). The preferred second action of the participant is to provide an answer which has reference to the preceding question.

The Chairperson as topic maintenance co-ordinator

Topics develop turn by turn through actions which are directed to prior talk and form the context for next actions in a sequence. As topic allocator, the chairperson can constrain the immediate next actions of participants after question initiation. However, over a number of turns, topics can drift from the initial intention of the starting question:

(In the following excerpt, Question 7 on the agenda (Appendix 1) was initiated in line 412 and has drifted from the point)

509] **Mike:** But they're right up there GLQ and I: an' with that class >I can jus:< they are very well at abstracting some stuff that I do>I do basically little< so I get spo::iled with that °that's why er:mm° >so that's one thing we should be checking for<.

510] **Chairperson:** So you fi::nd there's less confusion with higher level?

511] **Mike:** ER::RM I WOULDn't say tha::t::.

or topics can continue for too long with one person holding the floor:

(In this excerpt, Mike continues a multi-turn unit that began in line 270)

274] **Mike:** ...an' so I was doing this and he missed the class (1.0) and he steadfastly refused >an' jus: sat there like this< he said I don't see how this helps my English (0.5) and jus: sat there.

275] **Chairperson:** °Right. So° (3.0) Is this maybe (?) group work, working together, is this maybe a cultural difference from Japanese High school? I dunno(?)

276] **Erika:** Er:rr ye:ah it probably is one of the reasons.

or topics can prematurely lapse;

455] **Erika:** Well you guys already said what I [wanted to say]

456] **Chairperson:** [Yeah su:re] (1.5) Something that I'd like t' bring up (0.4) does anybody actually write down what they're go::ing t'sa::y in the instruction-giving process (0.4) as u:rr part of the preparation(?) or do you do it ad-lib?

Thus, the chairperson keeps talk focused on the specific agenda by initiating subsequent questions which can steer participants back to the business at hand (Line 510) or which introduce new topics to be talked about to prevent certain issues dominating the proceedings (Line 275), or avoid potential lapses in the meeting (Line 456) and move the meeting forward.

In addition to the task of topic maintenance in the meeting, the chairperson has the responsibility of co-ordinating the closure of one topic on the agenda and the beginning of the next one:

521] **Chairperson:** Yeah (3.0) good! (2.0) Let's move on to Question Eight Do you repeat or modify procedural instructions?

Deviant cases

Mostly, participants orient to the established role of chairperson as topic allocator. However, there are instances where participants are able to offer items for discussion which become "topicalised" (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) over a number of turns and lead to digressions in the meeting. One example is the 'deer in the headlights' sequence (Lines 246-266 – pgs. 12-13) where talk builds from the issue of the meaning of David's utterance (Line 246) and the chairperson's role becomes "temporarily negotiable and dependent on the other participants' will to reinstate it" (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997: 81).

Another example is the initiation of an ironic comment which briefly delays the start of the meeting;

(While asking participants for permission to record the meeting, the chairperson switches a rather

outdated tape recorder on)

02] **Yasuko:** That's a re::ally nice tape player!

03] **Participants:** ((Laughter))

04] **Chairperson:** ((Laughter)) Thank you!

05] **Participants:** ((Laughter))

06] **David:** (2.4) Did you get that in Akihabara?

07] **Participants:** ((Laughter))

08] **Chairperson:** Ye::ahhh! (1.0) It's err high-tech (0.2) actually, I found it in one of the rooms and it actually picks up the lessons quite well, which is something that I've been doing, er::mmm SO, what are we here to discuss(?) (3.0) I'm looking at procedural instructions...

However, the chairperson is able to provide preferred responses to both of the initiated first-pair parts:

First-Pair Parts: Second-Pair Parts:

ironic compliment (Line 02) acceptance (Line 04)

ironic question (Line 06) ironic answer which plays along with the joke (Akihabara being the central place to buy state-of-the-art electrical appliances in Tokyo)

and use the topic of tape recorder to construct a subtle switch between the joke sequence (the closure of the joke being 'It's err high tech' - Line 08) and the "actual" (Line 08) purpose of the meeting (signalled by the lexical item 'actually', its repetition, 'actually' and the turn-entry device, 'So' - Line 08).

7. Conclusion

Wardhaugh states: "any activity that involves conversation is likely to be further illuminated by any understanding we can achieve of the dynamics of conversation" (1985: 214). In this respect, the paper has identified a number of different strategies employed by the chairperson to manage talk in a teachers' meeting and examined the role of the chairperson as it emerges locally, turn by turn through the various orientations of participants to a constrained interactional environment. By establishing an environment where the chairperson occupies first-pair part initiation moves which constrain the next action of participants, he is able to exercise considerable control over turn and topic allocation to guide the discussion, maintain transition of topic and speakers, focus multi-party participants "on to a single stream of talk and task" (Boden, 1994: 100), and ensure all the items on the agenda are talked about before the close of the meeting.

Although these strategies are unique to the particular teachers' meeting, it is hoped that the descriptions of natural occurrences of language can provide insight into the role of a chairperson in a meeting and the framework of such institutional interaction for material writers, teachers and students alike.

(Approximate word count: 4618)

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Appendix 1

TEACHER SURVEY

EFFECTIVE PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Can you help me?

I am currently researching an aspect of my teaching for the Masters Course in

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. I am examining the use of

procedural instructions in the classroom. ***Procedural instructions*** are instructions

given by the teacher to inform students of what to do at each stage of the lesson. I

would be extremely grateful if you could complete the survey. This will help me complete my research and to find more effective methods of giving *procedural instructions* in the lessons.

PLEASE BE AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE WHEN ANSWERING THE
QUESTIONS!

Thank you for your co-operation and time in completing the survey.

1] How do you usually initiate *Procedural instructions* in your lessons?

(e.g. Verbal - Written - Modelling - Others)

GIVE EXAMPLES

2] To what extent do you explain, as opposed to demonstrate what you want students to do? (If you explain , generally how long are your explanations?)

3] What do you find to be the most effective way to give *Procedural instructions* in your classes? Why?

GIVE REASONS

4] Are there instances of *Procedural instruction* that fail to set up a particular task or create confusion in your class? YES/NO

If YES - How does it fail?

Why do you think it fails?

GIVE EXAMPLES

5] Are tasks always done as you expected or are there instances of tasks being done differently than you expected by students?

If differently - How? Why?

GIVE EXAMPLES

6] To what extent (if at all) do you use Japanese in *Procedural instructions* ?

7] How simple/complicated is your use of the target language in relation to the students' linguistic ability? (Consider a) sentence length b) idiom usage

c) vocabulary d) speed of speech e) other factors)

8] Do you repeat or modify *Procedural instructions* ? YES/NO

9] Do you have instances of student silence after you have given *Procedural instructions* ? YES/NO

If YES - How do you distinguish between student thinking time and genuine confusion by students of what they are supposed to do?

10] How long does it usually take for students to begin a task after you have given *Procedural instructions* ?

11] Do you use any means to check that students have understood the *Procedural instructions* ? YES/NO

IF YES- GIVE EXAMPLES

12] Do students ask clarification questions if they are unsure about the *Procedural instructions* ? YES/NO

13] Do you usually mark the change in your lessons from the end of one task to the next ***Procedural instruction*** ? (For example: Okay, we are going to move on

to) YES/NO

IF YES- HOW? GIVE EXAMPLES

14] Think back to a lesson you have taught recently - How did you give the ***Procedural instructions***?

15] You are organising a role-play in your lesson. You want your students to demonstrate the use of household appliances using sequence markers (first, next, then, after that, finally)

Student A will ask the question *How do I use (this microwave oven)?*

Student B will demonstrate how to use the appliance using sequence markers.

How would you give the ***Procedural Instructions*** to set this task up in your class?

Please answer on a separate piece of paper and GIVE REASONS for your chosen procedure.

THANK YOU

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