

## The organization of turns at formal talk in the classroom

ALEXANDER MCHOUL

*Australian National University*

### ABSTRACT

Beginning with a consideration of some commonsense and professional conceptions of what a formal situation might comprise, this paper goes on to ask the question: where along a linear array which has its poles in exemplars of formal and informal speech-exchange systems, can classroom talk be placed? Its answer is given in part in the form of rules for the taking of turns in classrooms, these being modifications of those, already established in the literature, for natural conversation. These rules allow for and require that formal classroom situations be constructed so as to involve differential participation rights for parties to the talk depending on their membership of the social identity-class 'student/teacher'. The analyses which follow examine some of the applications and violations of these rules found in audio and video recordings of naturally occurring classroom talk (and transcripts thereof) for their orderliness *as orientations* to these rules. It is argued that the rules provide a systematic basis for the 'feelings' of 'formality' that researchers and participants have of such situations and that a decision as to the 'formality' or otherwise of a social situation can be predicated on the degree of pre-allocation involved in the organization of turns at talk in the situation. (Configuration and distance in interaction, conversational analysis, turn-taking systems, classroom language, sociology of education; British and Australian English).

### INTRODUCTION: FORMAL SITUATIONS

As this paper attempts to present just one systematic basis for the 'feeling' of formality we – as either researchers or participants – may often have in certain social situations, I should like to start out with a few remarks about the locales in which we should expect to find that kind of talk which can be characterized as 'formal'. These initial observations concern the relation between the spatial organization of such locales and the kind of talk expectably found there. A commonsense observation would be that formal (as opposed to casual, conversational) talk can be accomplished through the spatial arrangement of the participants to that talk. In particular the configuration of and relative distances between participants might be thought of as significant. Intuitively we tend to

regard 'formal' situations as those in which the persons taking part have allocated positions; the chairperson sits at the head of the members of the board who sit either side of the table; the speech-maker stands elevated above his audience who are ranged in front of him in rows or at random; debaters sit facing one another with the chairperson conducting the proceedings from a 'neutral' position and so on. Recent research into the spatial organization of interaction locales bears out this common-sense conception:

Configurations in which the participants arrange themselves in a circle are probably those in which the participation rights of all the members are defined as equal. In configurations where one or several members are spatially differentiated from the others, so that the pattern approaches a triangular, semi-circular or parallelogrammatic form, participation rights in the interaction are no longer equal. An extreme form of the non-circular configuration would be a lecture in which there is one member at the apex of a triangle, facing all the other members arranged in rows parallel to the base of the triangle. Here the member at the apex typically has the right (and obligation) of sustained speech. Those who are arranged parallel to the triangle's base typically have the right only to listen. Spatial arrangements that are intermediate between this and the circle also tend to be intermediate in the degree to which participation rights are differentiated among the members (Kendon 1973:39).

Apart from matters of configuration, this research also takes into account the distance between parties to interaction:

At intimate distances (. . .) touch, smell and heat senses can all be used in the transmission of information from one individual to another, and each may observe changes in breathing rate in the other, or changes in the state of the epidermal capillaries. At greater distances only vision and hearing can be used, and with increasing distance these become less and less effective for fine detail. *Thus with increasing distance there is a greater reliance upon formal language patterns*, and a decrease in the reliance upon the behaviour of listeners (. . .). (Kendon 1973:41 [My stress]).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the classroom interactions selected as data-sites for this research,<sup>2</sup> the configuration of the parties is such that, from Kendon's remarks, we would

[1] On the distance/kinds of interaction/styles of language nexus of relations see Hall (1963, 1964, 1966) and the review of Hall's work in Kendon (in press: 8-9)

[2] The data employed consists of audio recordings of small group lessons made by the present writer in Liverpool (England) comprehensive schools in 1974 and transcripts thereof and video recordings of lessons in Canberra (Australia) high schools made by J. Mitchell in 1976 and transcripts thereof. I have to thank J. Mitchell of the Canberra College of Advanced Education for the use of videos, the audio-visual section of the School and Institute of Education, University of Liverpool for the use of audio equipment and A. Miller of the Office for Research in Academic Methods, Australian National University for the use of video monitoring equipment.

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expect one such (the teacher) to have greater participation rights than all the others (the students); this in that all the configurations involve the separation out of a teacher who stands at the 'head' of a rectangularly arranged class. Furthermore, all teachers observed had the right to stand facing the class or to move around the class at will while no others had such rights; i.e. they remained seated except on such occasions as when a student was asked by the teacher to come to the board or overhead projector to indicate some aspect of its contents. In all cases the teacher was (at least prior to any movement around the class) set at a greater distance from any one member of the class than any one member of the class was set from another.<sup>3</sup> This was so even for the very small groups (four parties including teacher) studied.

So, at least from within Kendon's analytic framework, we are dealing with situations which can be considered 'ripe' for formal talk in the sense of their having a 'head' or 'director' with maximized participation rights and their involving marked relative distance between that 'head' and all 'non-heads', these latter forming what might be called a partly contributing audience with minimized participation rights.

The point of the following is to extract from the transcripts of the talk that goes on in such locales a systematic basis for the 'feeling' of 'formality' that is experienced in them by the participants and of them by analysts; a basis which turns on looking at how this 'maximized/minimized participation rights (and obligations)' contrast is realized in terms of the taking of turns at talk. From here we are dealing with any classroom situation which may fall under the rubric of 'formality'; it is not suggested however that all classroom interactions whatsoever do fall under this rubric.

#### ORMAL SITUATIONS AND THE ALLOCATION OF TURNS

Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) argue that conversation exists at a polar extreme along a linear array of 'kinds of talk', that array being constructed with respect to the means by which turns at talk get allocated for each 'kind'.

The linear array is one in which one polar type (exemplified by conversation) involves 'one-turn-at-a-time' allocation, i.e. the use of local allocational means; the other pole (exemplified by debate) involves pre-allocation of all turns; and medial types (exemplified by meetings) involve various mixes of pre-allocational and local-allocational means (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 729).

Turning again to Kendon's (1973: 39-41) remarks, it is plainly those situations which - by their spatial arrangement - we regard as 'formal' that occupy the

[3] This may be one source of the 'informal talk within formal occasions' phenomenon which provides a problem for teachers and which is mentioned later as the problem of 'schism'.

pole characterized by pre-allocational means for the organization of turns at talk, where 'pre-allocation' signifies a pre-set format for who shall speak when (and in some cases for what they shall say, e.g. marriage ceremonies). Again it is those situations which we regard – by their spatial arrangement – as 'casual' or non-formal that occupy the pole characterized by local-allocational means for the organization of turns at talk, where 'local-allocation' signifies the management of turns at talk on a here and now basis. And likewise for both Kendon's and Sacks *et al.*'s medial types.

The situation classroom talk occupies with respect to this array (i.e., with respect to the comparative involvement of it in pre- or local-allocational means) is then likely to figure large in a location of the (so far unexplicated) degree of formality that both professional analysts and lay participants in classroom interactions feel to be present in such interactions. The research question for the location of a systematic basis for 'feelings of formality' is then: taking into account the conjecture of Sacks *et al.* (1974:730) that 'other systems on the array represent (. . .) a variety of transformations of conversation's turn-taking system to achieve other types of turn-taking systems', in what ways are the rules of turn-taking management for natural conversation to be modified to account for the organization of turns at talk in the classroom? The following section puts forward an answer to this question and the sections that follow it examine some of the orderly consequences of both applications and 'violations' of the modified rules.

#### RULES

The construction of turns in natural conversation is provided for by the following set of rules:

- (1) For any turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit:
  - (a) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak: no others have such rights or obligations and transfer occurs at the place.
  - (b) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted; first starter acquires rights to a turn, and transfer occurs at that place.
  - (c) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, the current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects.
- (2) If, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional

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unit, neither 1(a) nor 1(b) has operated, and, following the provision of 1(c), current speaker has continued, then the rule-set (a)–(c) reapplies at the next transition-relevance place and recursively at each next transition-relevance place until transfer is affected. (Sacks *et al.* 1974:704).<sup>4</sup>

The potential to non-formality – insofar as we are as yet able to use this term – of these rules is manifest in that they allow an open-endedness which permits all possible permutations of speaker-activity with respect to turn-taking. This open-endedness, then, we shall refer to as ‘permutability’. Further, the rules, as Sacks *et al.* show here and in much else of their work,<sup>5</sup> make for a minimization of gap and overlap.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, they exist as a conversational resource for bringing off speaker transitions in such a way that there is a *co-orientation*<sup>7</sup> on the part of conversationalists to have each speaker take a turn only during the silence of other candidate speakers, i.e. no earlier than the end of one speaker’s turn (no overlap) and to have transitions effected no later than the end of one speaker’s turn (no gap). The following work intends to demonstrate four modifications of these conversational rules for the organization of turn-taking applicable in the classroom speech-exchange system and to demonstrate how these modifications narrow conversation’s open-endedness, i.e. permit fewer permutations of speaker-activity and greater instance of gap while maintaining conversation’s minimization of overlap. It is in this sense that we shall be able to talk of classroom talk as ‘formal’, i.e. as medial between local-allocation (conversation) and pre-allocation.

[4] To explicate the exact ways in which terms such as ‘transition-relevance place’, ‘turn-constructural unit’ and ‘current speaker selects next technique’ are being used would be simply to reiterate ground covered in the early sections of Sacks *et al.*’s (1974) paper. For present purposes, a working knowledge of that paper is assumed.

[5] See, for example, Sacks (forthcoming, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1975: various locations); Schegloff (1968, 1973); Schegloff & Sacks (1973); Jefferson (1972, 1973a, 1973b) and also Goodwin (1975) on the widespread ramifications of this ‘obvious’ feature.

[6] By ‘gap’ I intend silences between turns in which it is expected that some participant in the exchange should be talking. That is, expected on the parts of all concerned within the setting itself. In short, gap is an audibly unfilled ‘slot’. Gap should not be confused with ‘silence’ even though gaps are filled with silence. Oil drums are not confused with oil, especially when empty. The term ‘silence’ may otherwise be reserved for periods when a speech-exchange has not yet begun or has been seen to be closed (see Schegloff Sacks (1973) on the management of closings). By overlap I intend periods when more than one party to the talk is heard to speak at once. An exceptional case is that of schism (see point 3 below).

[7] This term is carefully chosen. By ‘co-orientation’ I seek to gloss what Sacks (forthcoming ch. 1:4 ff.) has called ‘observably oriented to’ features of conversation as opposed to simply ‘observable features’. The term thus preserves a sense of orderliness for examples where, say, there *is* observable overlap and where that overlap can be shown, without contradiction, to be a product of co-orientation to the conversational rules, but where the very existence of overlap as simply an ‘observable’ feature will tell us nothing about the resources for the production of conversation. Schegloff (1973) discusses many such examples. Co-orientation therefore also glosses the massively present phenomenon of repair.

The following rule-modifications have been extracted from detailed transcription and re-transcription, listening and re-listening to the videos and audios mentioned in footnote [2]. I believe them to be the simplest form in which the management of turns at talk for classrooms can be accounted for.

(I) For any teacher's turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructural unit:

(A) If the teacher's turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the right and obligation to speak is given to a single student; no others have such a right or obligation and transfer occurs at that transition-relevance place.

(B) If the teacher's turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then current speaker (the teacher) must continue.

(II) If I(A) is effected, for any student-so-selected's turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructural unit:

(A) If the student-so-selected's turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the right and obligation to speak is given to the teacher; no others have such a right or obligation and transfer occurs at that transition-relevance place.

(B) If the student-so-selected's turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then self-selection for next speaker may, but need not, be instituted with the teacher as first starter and transfer occurs at that transition-relevance place.

(C) If the student-so-selected's turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then current speaker (the student), may, but need not, continue unless the teacher self-selects.

(III) For any teacher's turn, if, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructural unit either I(A) has not operated or I(B) has operated and the teacher has continued, the rule-set I(A)–I(B) re-applies at the next transition-relevance place and recursively at each transition-relevance place until transfer to a student is effected.

(IV) For any student's turn, if, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructural unit neither II(A) nor II(B) has operated, and, following the provision of II(C), current speaker (the student) has continued, then the rule-set II(A)–II(C) re-applies at the next transition-relevance place and recursively at each transition-relevance place until transfer to the teacher is effected.

It should immediately be noted that if, as I am arguing, these rules are actually those which exist as resources for teacher–student interactions in formal classroom situations, then we already have grounds for locating one party to those interactions (the teacher) as 'head' or 'director'. Rules I–IV break down, that is, into a summary rule: *Only teachers can direct speakership in any creative way.*

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While students can direct speakership (i.e. can construct their turns so as either to continue or to select the teacher), the permutability of selectees is of zero-degree; there can be no permutability from one choice. Having permutations open to one can then be taken as the sense of 'creativity'. In short, the rules systematically present the underlying resources by which, what Kendon (1973: 39) calls, differential participation rights are distributed in classrooms, that differentiation of speaker-rights being a feature of common sense and professional conceptions of formal situations.

Further, the differential we have noted generates at least three technical differences between classroom talk and natural conversation. These are listed as points (1), (2) and (3) below and will become the subject of analysis in the next section. Point (2) receives some particular qualification in that, on the surface, it appears that it remains constant across the classroom/conversation division. Hence points (2a) and (2b) deal with the particular ways 'no overlap' gets generated in classroom talk. The list of points is: for classroom talk, by contrast with natural conversation:

- (1) The potential for gap and pause is maximized
- (2) The potential for overlap is minimized in that:
  - (2a) the possibility of the teacher (or a student) 'opening up' the talk to a self-selecting student first starter is not accounted for
  - (2b) the possibility of a student using a 'current speaker selects next' technique to select another student is not accounted for.
- (3) The permutability of turn-taking is minimized.

To deal with each of these points in turn we must have recourse to the data cited in footnote[2].

#### ANALYSIS

*Point (1): The potential for gap and pause is maximized.* In that the rules given above are constructed in terms of 'if . . . then . . .' clauses, we are able to locate, for any particular turn-transition found in the data, a 'path through the rules' which that particular turn-transition follows. For example, the following turn-transitions all share the path 'I(A)-transfer':<sup>8</sup>

- 
- (1)
- T:       Why's that Lois?  
L:       Oh th's just more space out there I s'pose
- (5B7-125/H:135-6)
- 

[8] A list of symbols used in transcription may be found at the end of this paper.

(2)

- T: Yes Denise  
 D: I think that em firstly there prob'ly be residential along the em railway  
 but then . . .

(5B7-125/H:160-2)

(3)

- L: Well [um  
 T: [s'er e- any set *pattern*?  
 L: Well mosta the commercial activities a carried out in the CBD-  
 but there's also . . .

(5B7-125/H:222-5)

However, while such 'simple' cases are massively present in the data, there are certain other paths through the rules that a turn-transition can take which, unlike that given above, maximize the potential for gap and pause. Rules II(A), II(B) and II(C) all deal with the construction of students' turns. Now, in that none of these allows for the student-as-current-speaker to select another student to speak and in that they prevent another student becoming a self-selected first starter, if, under I(A), the teacher has selected a student with a question, it is entirely in the teacher's hands *how long* that student may have to answer the question. That is, once embarked upon an answer, it is the teacher and only s/he who can decide when and if that answer is sufficient. Hence there is a mutual orientation on the part of teacher and selected-student to have that student produce sufficient answers, where the decidability of that sufficiency is a matter for teachers and teachers only. Teachers have the right and obligation to give – once an answer has been produced – a comment on the sufficiency of that answer.<sup>9</sup> What Sacks (1967: October 31) has called 'utterance pairs' include

[9] The absence of such a comment can, thus, be taken as a non-trivial absence. In fact a non-comment is itself a form of comment marking, for instance, that an answer is not satisfactory while not incorrect. It may, then, mark a failure to have produced something recognizable as an answer. For example:

- T: John (C\*\*\*\*\*)  
 (2.6)  
 T: Did the location//of the railroad influence a land use change at all?  
 JC: Well  
 (3.1)  
 JC: Well the railway runs through sah:: CBD  
 (1.0)  
 JC: E::n near the:: industrial areas  
 T: M:/hm::  
 (0.3)  
 JC: And ah  
 (2.8)

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question-answer (Q-A) pairs. In the classroom situation this becomes an 'utterance-triad', question-answer-comment on the sufficiency of that answer (Q-A-C). Examples of C-parts are:

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(4)

T:     What didju call these  
        (1.0) [[indicates on screen]]  
 ( ):     @((whispers)) Sand dunes  
        (2.9)  
 B:     Sa::nd dunes @(     )  
 T:     →Sa::nd dunes alright any other sensible name for it . . .  
(5B7-003/H: 120-3)

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(5)

T:     Yes Denise  
 D:     I think em firstly there prob'ly be residential along the em railway  
        but then - later on that land would increase in *value* and the businesses  
        would prob'ly buy the people out  
 T:     →Very good answer  
        (1.0)  
 T:     →n quite correct  
(5B7-125/H: 160-5)

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(6)

E:     The wa- the zoning one  
        [[moves finger in half-circular movements]]  
 T:     →That's right  
(5B7-125/H: 183-4)

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So, given this mutual orientation to sufficiency of answers and the public marking of that sufficiency (or its lack) and given that, once a turn has been set up for a student's answer, no one other than the teacher can halt its course, a student once embarked upon an answer can be entitled to feel that s/he will be

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JC:     Well  
        →(2.1)  
 T:     Which groups have indicated - a change in the land use along the *railroad*  
        (1.0)  
 T:     Any groups. D'you think this is likely to occur?  
        (3.2)  
 T:     Yes Denise  
 D:     I think that em firstly . . .  
(5B7-125/H: 148-61)

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given a 'reasonable' time in which to produce an uninterrupted answer. That is s/he can allow pauses within his-her turn of fairly long (by conversational standards) duration without fear of being overlapped. Note here that, while we are not yet talking of *gap* (see note [6]) but of intra-turn pauses, the incidence of long and multiplied intra-turn pauses in conversation is much lower than in classroom talk, probably for the reasons set out here.

For teachers, also, and with stronger grounds, we can say that intra-turn pauses will be prevalent. In that teachers, as we have said, are the only parties to classroom talk that can creatively distribute turns, they need not be concerned with having their turns cut off at any possible completion point by any other parties. Hence they may get to points in their turns where (if we were talking of conversation) other parties could take it that those turns are now complete and where those other parties could, under Sacks *et al.*'s rule 1b, self-select as first starters. However, in classrooms, no other parties than teachers have the right to self-select as first-starters. Thus possible completion points (for teachers' turns at least) may be 'ridden over' *without* any of the usual conversational means for doing so, e.g. without speeding up the next piece of talk (Schegloff 1973: 12-13). Intra-turn pauses for teachers, unlike those for conversationalists who are not, e.g. telling a story (Sacks forthcoming, 1970: April 9; 1974), actually serve to prolong turns. A brief glance at some of the data cited here (e.g. (10) and (30)) will show how teachers feel entitled to employ intra-turn pauses of practically whatever length without fear of becoming hearers. This is only some of the evidence which suggests that hearers' responsibilities, for teachers, are relaxed; i.e. they need only attend to others' utterances which they (teachers) have called for.

Returning to the question of *student* intra-turn pauses, some examples are:

- 
- (7)
- T: How did the location of the railroad influence  
(0.3)
- T: land use change on *your* model  
(1.8)
- T: John (C\*\*\*\*\*)  
(2.6)
- T: Did the location//of the railroad influence a land use change at all?
- JC: Well  
(3.1)
- JC: Well the railway runs through sah:: CBD  
→(1.0)
- JC: E::n near the:: industrial areas
- T: M:/hm::  
(0.3)

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JC: And ah

→(2.8)

JC: Well

→(2.1)

(5B7-125/H: 146-56)

(8)

T: What was one particular theory that we – dealt with Elizabeth?

(2.1)

E: Pard'n

T: One theory o::f internal patterns – of cities

(2.0)

E: E::m

→(0.3)

E: Uh::

→(0.2)

E: The wa- the zoning one

(5B7-125/H: 178-83)

Now the way this system operates so as to maximize the potential for *gap* is the following: In that only one student may be selected to answer a question, upon being selected that student may then warrantably take it that no other will start a turn at talk at that transition point. This being the case, he may take, right there and then at a turn-initial position, a 'time-out' to think about the answer he will produce.<sup>10</sup> Normally, for conversation, 'time-outs' have been taken to refer to side-procedures or side-sequences that go on during some other form of talk, that form being resumed at their close (Sacks 1967: November 9; Jefferson 1972, 1973b). Jefferson (1973b: 16) has located 'time-outs' in this way:

(. . .) something which can be seen as the Ongoing Talk is stopped while these events occur, and then resumed afterwards.

For classroom talk, then, we can locate a silent 'time-out' as a piece of silence which occurs as a pause for thought between some pieces of ongoing talk. Examples of time-outs are:

(9)

T: Right 'v you- have you mentioned multiple

(0.8)

T: units

→(0.4)

[10] Hence we have grounds for saying that, in this case at least, the silence is 'owned' – i.e. heard as this-student's-silence.

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J: Yeh - right on the outskirts of the//(( ,, ,, ))  
( ): ( ,, ,,)]

(5B7-125/H: 197-200)

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T: C'n anyone see a - pattern developing for the (10)  
(0.6)  
T: commercial  
(1.7)  
T: activities  
(2.4)  
T: @/M  
(0.4)  
T: Leanne  
→(0.5)  
L: Well [um  
T: [s'er any set *pattern*?  
L: Well mosta the commercial . . .

(5B7-125/H: 217-24)

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T: Now Tom what makes that a region what makes that dist- mor- (11)  
distinctive from the rest a the country  
→(1.2)  
( ) @ ((whispers)) Delta  
Tom: Well the river breaks up n to a delta - so ( )  
(5B7-003/H: 33-6)

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T: If somebody said that's Mount Tom Price where *is* that? (12)  
→(2.5)  
Q: West [ern *Australia*  
R: [Western *Australia*  
(5B5-040: 61-3)

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T: M: (13)  
→(1.0)  
X: ( ) surface water  
T: Not very much surface water  
(5B5-040: 86-8)

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- (14)
- T: Tributaries come into a river what comes away from it  
 →(1.0)  
 ( ): Dis [ tributaries  
 ( ): [ Distributaries
- (5B7-003/H: 43-5)
- 

- (15)
- T: All right – wh- what sort things – mu- give that area distinctive  
 personality Peter?  
 →(1.2)  
 P: M::: e::::r er s- flat
- (5B7-003/H: 81-3)
- 

Such time-outs have involved with them the problem that, if they are heard as 'too long', the teacher may warrantably decide that the student-selected has not heard/understood etc., the question asked, and s/he may go on to repeat the question (in the case of not hearing) or re-phrase the question (in the case of not understanding). This is in accord with rule (III). An example is:

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- (16)
- T: Oh I wouldn't like that. What about these people?  
 G: ( )  
 T: They – d'you think – d'you think they're glad?  
 →(3.0)  
 T: D'you think they're glad?  
 G: [ Yeh  
 K: [ Yeh
- (AU 00 1/2: 564-569)
- 

This is presumably also the case in (7) above where the teacher gives JC a time-out of 2.6 seconds. In this time JC has not begun his answer and the teacher takes this as evidence of his not hearing, understanding, not knowing how to answer, not having an answer etc. The teacher then gets part way through his repeat (just far enough for JC to realize that he is doing a repeat) when JC is able to use a device to show that he is now going to (is able to) produce an answer. (However, see data to note [9]). This device is 'Well'. It shows that an answer has been embarked upon and that JC can then go on to 'take his time' to produce that answer, using the intra-turn pauses for thought we have mentioned.

In the data, we have some evidence of students attempting to shift the 'time-out' from its position as turn-initial to a position which makes it an intra-turn pause. This occurs mostly once a repeat has been faced or is partly begun or

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where the student has had a turn-initial time-out already (e.g. (17)). JC's 'Well' is such an example, he having already had to face part of a first repeat. Leanne's 'Well um' in (10) is another, she possibly having anticipated the first repeat, 'S'er any *pattern*?' having had a turn-initial time-out already. The point here is that if a student is able to show s/he's understood the question through some device which can be pre-positioned on to *any* forthcoming answer whatsoever, the possibility of a (second) repeat is avoided and the time-out thereby side-steps the attribution of the meaning 'hasn't heard/understood/etc.' to the silence which may not be the meaning the student intends it to have. Devices such as 'well', 'uhh' etc., therefore exist as an answer to the problem of the ambiguity of silences, this problem being generated by the following of certain paths through the rules. That such devices do not, as in conversation, function so massively as gap-avoiders (cf., Sacks forthcoming, ch. 2: 9ff.) is evidenced by their occurring largely in the face of first repeats, or once a turn-initial time-out has already taken place, as in the following examples.

---

(17)

T: All right – wh- what sort things – mu- give that area – distinctive  
personality Peter?  
(1.2)

P: →M::: e::::r er s- flat  
(0.8)

P: e:::::r  
(0.5)

P: ts got//s ( ]swampy)

T: Ts flat land]

(5B7-003/H: (81-7))

---

(18)

T: Leanne  
(0.5)

L: →Well [um

T: [s'er any set *pattern*?

(5B7-125/H: 221-3)

---

One use of such a device to *avoid* gap (as in conversation) can be found in N's utterance in (22).

To conclude:<sup>11</sup> silent time-outs appear to be marks of formality, occurring in (and being partly constitutive of) formal situations for members. To attempt to

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[11] Another source of gap in classroom talk, the hand-raising phenomenon, is not dealt with here but is handled in a later section as this phenomenon also figures as a device for minimizing overlap.

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give or gain a silent time-out in informal talk would be, I assume, to introduce a certain formality in that the one 'giving' (in and through the very act of giving) would be setting him/herself up as the director of talk. While it may be permissible, indeed required, in informal conversation that one insist that the party-selected-to-answer does in fact answer in the face of competing answerers, it is my suspicion that to use some device to maintain a gap for a specific other's time-out is, in conversation, to set oneself up as a director of talk. We need only think of what the social identities of the parties to the following, hypothetical, piece of 'talk' could be:

- X:       What do you think Y?  
           (o.3)  
 Z:       Uh, I  
 X:       Not *you* Z  
           (o.2)  
 X:       Y?  
           (o.6)  
 Y:       Well, uh . . .

*Point (2a): The potential for overlap is minimized in that the possibility of the teacher (or a student) 'opening up' the talk to a self-selecting student first starter is not accounted for.* One source of overlapped turns in informal conversation is the frequent occurrence of competing first starters when the current speaker has not selected some *specific* party to take the next turn. Typical occurrences of such 'opening up' techniques in informal conversation are: 'Isn't that a good idea?', 'Aren't I right?', 'Shall we?' At these points, and at any completion point where no one *in particular* is selected, any next starter may begin a turn, this under Sacks *et al.*'s rule 1(b) cited earlier. The usual way conversationalists can repair such occurrences as when two equi-first starters for the next turn begin simultaneously is for one of these starters not to speak to completion, thereby letting the other 'have the turn'. However, given the rules for classroom talk set out above, there should be no occasion for either this phenomenon or its reparative techniques to occur.

Yet there are many instances in the classroom data at hand to suggest that 'violations' of this kind do occur; we have already seen one occurring in (16) for example. But, as we would expect, the particular reparative techniques for dealing with such occurrences are not identical to those used in informal talk. Our expectation is grounded on the following: Sacks *et al.*'s rule 1(b) actually *allows* for situations of equi-first simultaneous starts while our rules for classroom talk are geared to avoiding it. Added to this, we may take into account the fact that the actual *amount* of potential first starters in classrooms is likely to be (assuming we are not talking here of small groups) much greater than that for

informal talk. The one-at-a-time and only one-at-a-time rule has, for classrooms, the added facility of avoiding 'outbreaks' of simultaneous multi-party talk, that is of ten-or-twenty-at-a-time, in short of disorderly discourse. To begin with, then, let us consider a major breakdown of this kind before going on to other 'violations' and their reparative techniques. Nineteen minutes and 54 seconds through the video known as 5B5-040, the teacher having asked the class to give some instances of the recreational activities required for a new mining town, we come across the following piece of data:

- 
- (19)
- Class: [ ((reading out randomly from lists, making up candidate activities.  
Most of the class are talking at once))
- T: So there's  
(4.0)
- T: Up to around ten is there? Ten diff'rent – sorts of ( )
- Class: [ ((continues to read from lists etc.))
- B': (more)
- C': (yes)
- D': (more than that)
- . . .
- T: Yes [[looks at E']] [[raises both arms diagonally and presents palms and outstretched fingers to the class]] *Wait a minute, one at a time*
- E': On the board you need air conditioning because – during December until April it's the a- the air conditioning makes ( )
- (5B5-040: 1s-18s)
- 

The source of these troubles is not hard to locate; it centres around the use of 'you' in English. Often teachers will use 'you' as a generic terms for the whole class. E.g. 'I want you to have a – look at this please' (5B5-040: 2), 'Can you suggest what it is?' (5B5-040: 7), 'Some a the in – interesting points (0.5) th't you should've (2.5) discover'd' (5B7-125/H: 7-9). These utterances can form question prefaces, i.e. they get put into the talk just prior to questions in the form of: 'You see this and this? Well what are the main factors in . . . ?' Now, if these utterances are not carefully handled, e.g. by the insertion of names into the question-part, it can sound as if any student having an appropriate answer may start up and give an answer. This is the case with (19) above where the teacher has asked something like 'What are some of the recreational activities required for a new mining town?'<sup>12</sup> What the teacher then wants to be able to do

[12] The actual question is not available from the materials at hand.

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is to get one or two activities from a few selected students in turn and list them on the board. The absence of the insertion of a name, or names into the question means that the 'you' (intending the whole class) is carried over from the question preface which sets the scene for that question. The result is the 'chaos' we find in (19). Now the interesting thing to note here is that, even prior to the teacher's imploring of the class to return to a one-at-a-time format, the many-talking-at-once finishes: i.e., it ends as soon as that format is returned to through the teacher addressing one selected student with 'Yes [[looks at E']]'. The point is that instructions to return to the format cannot be made until there is an audience for such instructions; the relating of the rules '*Wait a minute, one at a time*' may, if there is not already a suitable silence on the part of the class, not be heard, be taken as a general part of the many-talking-at-once etc. This is indicative, then, for the way repair gets under way in classroom situations. The rule-of-thumb appears to be: Get back to normal procedure as soon as possible by doing something normal (rule guided) rather than by invoking the rule(s) explicitly. The invocation of the rule(s) can then be done as a 'reminder'. (Note also here that the gestural work the teacher does is well placed in that it gets attention without contributing to the many-at-once). In our following analyses we shall be looking at how re-normalizing acts as a reparative technique for 'no overlap' violations.

Prior to looking at some examples, however, it may be necessary to attempt to ascertain what is to count as a violation and what is not. Here we should be mindful of Sacks' (forthcoming ch. 3: 55) warnings about attributions of violations to social actors:

Assertions that participants are engaging in violations are problematic in the ways that assertions that participants are engaging in errors or irrational actions are problematic. They may suffer from the possibility that the asserted failings are ways that an analyst, having himself failed to correctly analyze what has been happening, turns that failure of his into a resource by claiming the failing as that of the actors he is studying. What is to be the evidence one will admit as contrary to one's proposed analyses?

Now what we are looking for initially as a 'violation' is some example of student self-selection as this has been talked of above as a potential prime source of overlapped turns. One way to look for such a violation might be to look through our transcripts to see if, at the end of some turn it appears that a student speaks next without having been selected to do so by the teacher. I now want to suggest that this sort of 'mechanical' procedure will not yield us the desired fruit. Take the following piece of data:

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(20)

T: E:r fire station – which possibly should be – located in the suburbs –  
so y'd be wrong if y' had all y' public buildings in the CBD – y'd

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probably be wrong if y' had e:::r a great dispersal of y' public buildings

Lois: The university also would be away from the s:: city centre (a bit) too

T: Why's that Lois?

Lois: Oh th's just more space out there I s'pose

(5B7-125/H: 129-36)

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Here Lois seems to self-select spontaneously. However there are certain clues in the video which would substantiate the claim that the teacher selects her to speak by non-verbal means, e.g. by pointing, nodding, etc. in response to some claim (again non-verbal) by Lois that she has a point to make, e.g. hand-raising, finger-raising etc. These are: the camera operator appears to be able to anticipate her turn here by including her, towards the end of the teacher's turn, at the periphery of a shot which contains several pupils attending the teacher's turn, but which excludes the teacher himself. Any handraising on Lois's part or nodding on the teacher's part would be unnoticed by the analyst/viewer (but not necessarily by the camera operator). One of the students in view has her back to Lois and is looking at the teacher during most of his turn, but this student then turns round to look at Lois slightly prior to her (Lois's) turn. Various others in view also anticipate her turn in this fashion, though none so obviously as she who turns her head through 180° to do so. In that this student's gaze is directed at the teacher, it must have been he who has given the cue for Lois's impending turn, and he must, likewise, have done it in a way which does not show up on the audio transcript. The present viewer/analyst's interpretation of these evidences is that it is public knowledge *for those on the scene* that Lois is about to take a turn here and that self-selection does not in fact take place; i.e., we are not dealing with a case of violation.

This brings us to the phenomenon of hand-raising generally, to the problems it raises and solves and to its position regarding gap and overlap. The following is not an atypical case of hand-raising:

---

(21)

T: Now without *reading* – the bit on the bottom, some of you can some of you can't, can you suggest what it is? – what's going *on* here  
(1.5) [[hands go up]]

T: Yes

A: Mining

(5B5-040: 6-10)

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Now I presume that there is an interest for teachers in having the attention of their students. One way of doing this is to have students answer questions on the lesson's topic(s), i.e. to have the burden of 'discovering' knowledge distributed

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among those assembled so that any party present will have to attend the lesson's ongoing course in order to be able to answer any question(s) put his/her way. However, the distribution of this burden need not necessarily be random. At the point at which initial or new topics are introduced, there is a certain problem involved in having just *anyone* answer a question. If a teacher intends to set the scene for some topic (say at the start of a lesson), where the answers to questions turn not on the lesson-so-far (i.e. on the relatively 'esoteric' 'new' knowledge presented in it) but on what anyone would expectably know, then there is, for teachers, the problem of getting only one of those with an answer (wishing to answer) to in fact answer. Having someone without an answer (not wishing to answer) forced into providing one may be a lengthy and complex business involving the re-phrasings and repeats we talked about earlier – when, characteristically, scene-setting should go smoothly and uncomplicatedly. Added to this is the embarrassment involved in getting persons to provide 'obvious' answers. We feel that only those prepared to do so should 'have' to do so. Now if a teacher is holding up a picture (as she is at the start of 5B5-040) of a scene which is obviously a mining scene and wants to get the topic 'mining' under way – and further wants to get it under way in a participatory way – then she is faced with the problem of finding out who among 30-odd students is prepared to actually say 'Mining'. Again she can't simply ask the question and await any-comer, for reasons discussed re. (19) above. What she has to find is a knowing-and-willing answerer. This problem can be solved by having those in that category put up their hands and selecting from those hands, sometimes by equally gestural means, sometimes by naming, sometimes by a combination of both, some answerer. This avoids the situation where any-comer from the group 'knowing-and-willing' can be an equi-first starter with any other. It also avoids possible overlaps from answerers who are 'guessing'. Hence the problem of overlapped turn beginnings is by-passed.<sup>13</sup>

Where the answer to the question turns on what is thought to be some piece of esoteric knowledge, the teacher is safer in inviting any-comers and may feel less afraid of having quite so many equi-first starts. Indeed there is most likely the minimal case where the piece of knowledge required is expectably known by only

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[13] The technique of hand-raising, it might be argued, can be seen as a blurring of the sharp (conversational) distinction between the two aspects of the Turn-Allocation Component, i.e. between 'current speaker selects next' and self-selection (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 705). In one sense, the student who raises his hand can be said to self-select, depending on competition from other hand-raisers, but it could just as well be said that, as no actual talk takes place, current speaker (the teacher) selects from the hand(s) raised. On one hand we should have to enter gestural data into the turn-taking rules, on the other we should have to exclude them. On the use of one gestural technique (gaze) in conversational turns at talk see Goodwin (1975). It might be best to treat hand-raising analogously with the picking up of a telephone receiver by one called on the telephone, that is in terms of summons-answer techniques (Schegloff 1968: 1080 ff., 1972: 76 ff.), although this is not the place to debate this issue.

one student. Thus, in this case, 'opening up' is another technique for selecting one and only one (the appending of a name here being optional if the teacher knows which one it is that has the knowledge). In any case, there can be a certain relaxation of the 'avoidance of overlap' rule if only a minimal amount of simultaneous first-starting is expectable. For teachers, the problem with taking this on is that the phenomenon of 'guessing' or 'guessed first-start answers' can lead to more equi-first starts than anticipated. If this occurs then it may be felt best to get back to a normal procedure such as hand-raising, where the group of hand-raisers becomes those now no longer prepared to guess but who have an idea of 'what the teacher has in mind'. The following is an example:

(22)

- T: Where does BHP get its iron ore from?  
 I: [( )  
 J: [( )  
 K: [( )  
 T: *Doesn't*  
 K: (New South Wales)  
 L: (used to)  
 M: Do:/:es  
 (1.0)  
 T: You're *guessing*  
 (2.0)  
 T: How bout South *Australia*  
 (2.0)  
 T: Y' heard of-  
 [[hands raised]]  
 T: Hm:?  
 N: U::m *Iron Knob*  
 T: *Iron Knob* a:::nd?  
 Class: Iro [n *Baron*  
 Class: [ *Iron Baron*

(5B5-040: 39-54)

Now here I presume that the teacher has an interest in co-producing the knowledge 'BHP gets its iron ore from Iron Knob and Iron Baron'. She can anticipate that this is a fairly esoteric piece of knowledge given her 'audience' and that, therefore, the potential for an outbreak of many-at-once is considerably reduced should she open up to any-comer. What happens, however, is that a number of (three) guesses ensues which she is not prepared to let stand as the co-produced knowledge ('*Doesn't*'). This utterance, '*Doesn't*', in fact acts as a repair on the many-at-once occurrence prior to it and the next three utterances

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(those of K, L and M) come in sequence, not overlapped, one of these being a further guess and the other two re-affirmations of some previous guesses. However, repair has not been fully effected yet for K, L and M's utterances stand in breach of the one-and-only-one-student rule. By ignoring these utterances and leaving a gap of 1.0 seconds, the teacher is then able to fully repair all of the utterances of I, J, K, L and M by displaying their position *vis-à-vis* the desired co-produced knowledge ('You're *guessing*'). In order that some student may be able to find 'what the teacher has in mind', the teacher then narrows the range of guessables ('How bout South *Australia*') and is about to remove the stipulation of co-production by giving the answer herself ('Y' heard of-') when a number of hands are raised – a normal procedure acknowledging her previous reparative work – and she can select an answer with 'Hm:?' N (the student selected) then has an interest in not employing any time-out in the face of (a) the competition from other hand-raisers and (b) the previous 'threat' of having the knowledge non-co-produced and so employs a device to maintain his turn, 'U::m', while preparing an answer, '*Iron Knob*'. Now this pair of places (*Iron Knob* and *Iron Baron*) is one of a small set of place-names which come in pairs such that one expectably finds one with the other. It ranks in this respect with many paired names which are not place-names, e.g. bread and butter, fish and chips, house and home, and with the few which are place-names, e.g. *Kalgoorlie/Coolgardie*, *Missouri/Mississippi*. It might also be noted that many of these pair-parts, especially the place-names, have phonetic parallelism binding their association. So, given this particular case in hand, the teacher can then be confident that if she opens up the completion of the pair to any-comer she may get many overlapped beginnings but that these overlapped beginnings will all contain the same content and the possibility of a *disorderly* outbreak of many-at-once is considerably reduced; i.e., she is unlikely to get overlapped beginnings such as '*Whyalla*', '*Port Augusta*', '*Buckleboo*' or '*Kimba*' (given that the class have – and she knows they have – atlases in front of them). Thus, the format which demands completion, '*Iron Knob a:::nd?*', can be considered a minimal case where many-at-once is a 'safe' (orderly) consequence. (Others might be: '*Je parle, tu parles, il . . . ?*', '*John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard . . . ?*'). And, despite some small difference in the timing of the completion, her completion demand does, in fact, prove 'safe'.

Let us now turn to one of the few examples of student self-selection in the data. It should be noted that this example is from a small-group lesson (four parties including teacher) where the many-at-once phenomenon may have less disorderly consequences and where, even from a glancing inspection, the talk appears as far less 'formal' than in large (30+) groups. The reparative techniques we should expect, therefore, would be more of the order of not permitting 'purely' conversational exchanges to take place rather than of actually enforcing 'formal' exchange. Here is the data:

- (23)
- T: I tell you – I promise next week to tell you a ghost story, all right?  
 G: Yes, sir  
 K: Yeh, I'll bring some records  
 T: But we'll have to – we'll have to be – we'll have to be very quiet. Now  
 erm – //erm  
 K: Bring some records  
 T: [ I dunno wha – it depends on whether you – whether we do anything  
 with the records afterwards  
 H: [ Sir, sir]
- (AU 001/2: 763-71)

To begin with it should be noted that one of the orderly consequences of the turn-taking rules for classroom talk is that they permit and oblige the teacher and only the teacher to initially instigate a topic or topics and, from there on, to maintain or change that topic or topics. For conversation, however, any party may take an opportunity to change the 'topic we are on' if the current speaker does not construct his/her turn in such a way as to avoid a topic change. One way to change the 'topic we are on' in conversation is to produce a *topically coherent* utterance which is nevertheless 'on another topic'. An example from Sacks (1968: April 17) is the difference between (a) 'I was at County Line yesterday' and (b) 'I went surfing yesterday'. If I produce an utterance like (a), then the next speaker is far more constrained to talk about surfing (County Line being a place where people characteristically go to surf) than if I produce one like (b). If I produce one like (b) then the topic 'what we did yesterday' is also hearable as the 'topic we are on' and a topically coherent response may be 'I went for a ride yesterday' or 'I was at home yesterday', to give Sacks' examples. Now it appears that while G's first utterance in (23) is both topically coherent and on 'the topic we are on' in that it simply agrees with the teacher's promise as 'an acceptable thing to do next week', K's first utterance is rather like the response 'I went for a ride yesterday' in that it ignores the issue of acceptability/non-acceptability of a ghost-story (demanded by 'all right?') and takes up the topic 'What we are going to do next week'. In conversation this would be a perfectly appropriate thing for K to do, given the way the teacher's turn has been constructed. (Alternatively, we could ground the appropriateness of K's utterance by saying that it *transforms* the non-acceptability response-option by furnishing an alternative 'thing to do next week'; transformations being ways in which conversationalists characteristically display that they have understood (cf. Sacks 1967: November 9 and November 14). However, in the classroom situation, it is a different matter entirely. Not only has K self-selected and overlapped the teacher but he has also introduced a further conversational technique of changing (perhaps through a

transformation) the 'topic we are on' presenting, thereby, a threat to the teacher's control of that aspect of the talk. The teacher must then take control of this 'new' topic (treating it as a side-sequence to the main events of the talk). This he does with the constraint 'But we'll have to be very quiet'. However, before he can return to the main events, 'Now' being a classic technique for doing this, he is cut off by K's instruction to G and H to 'Bring some records'. The way this utterance gets repaired is by the teacher *not permitting a normal conversational practice to take place*; i.e., when given instructions in *conversation* the usual way for the parties-so-instructed to respond is by talking to that instruction, to its acceptability/non-acceptability with such items as 'Okay', 'Yeh we will' or (negatively) 'That's a rotten idea', 'Why?' etc. in the very next turn. However the teacher, as it were, stems the tide of conversational practice (i.e. for G or H to answer would be for one student to have used a 'current speaker selects next' technique to select another) by making the topic 'bringing some records' one relevant to the educational goals in hand and himself (while it was not he who was addressed) taking the (conversational) opportunity to comment on the acceptability/non-acceptability of the instruction ('I dunno'). *Con conversationally*, this is a violational procedure in that one not addressed by an instruction has no such rights or obligations. But, given the exchange system for classrooms, the teacher has greatest rights as first starter, which he here exercises. The peculiar conclusion we must draw from this data is that to move away from a conversation-like exchange system the teacher is obliged to actually do a (con conversationally) violational utterance – i.e., for this case, and some others like it in the small group data especially, two wrongs do in fact make a right.

*Point (2b): The potential for overlap is minimized in that the possibility of a student using a 'current speaker selects next' technique to select another student is not accounted for.* In this section I wish to briefly turn to the question of tag-positioned address terms. The brevity of the remarks is occasioned by the fact that the data at hand contain no actual example(s) of a student using a 'current selects next' technique to select another student; though we should keep in mind K's try in (23). I simply wish to point out that this common source of overlap in conversation (Jefferson 1973a) is minimized in the absence of student-selects-student turn constructions, at least with respect to presently available data, and to examine the overlap-potential of two ways in which it is employed.

That is, when tag-positioned address terms are used in classrooms they are used either (a) by teachers selecting a student to speak next or (b) by students selecting teacher to speak next. Examples of (a)-cases are:

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T: →Why there John?  
(0.4)

(24)

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J: Because erm a man's probably worth more if he's got a lakeside frontage . . .

(5B7-125/H: 84-6)

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(25)

T: What's the other major area  
(0.3)

T: where manufacturing would have developed - at- this point in  
→ time - Lois  
(0.3)

L: Erm p'aps along the railway

(5B7-125/H: 51-4)

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(26)

T: So wha- so then - this area here's broken up by the Reed River  
→ distributaries and what else will it be like Tom  
(3.7)

T: How else would that be diff'rent from surrounding areas

Tom: Would prob'ly be a lot flatter

(5B7-003/H: 47-51)

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See also (1) and (2) above.

Unlike conversational cases of such address terms being tag-positioned, there is, for classroom talk, actual empirical evidence that they do not regularly get overlapped. This for the reason that the teacher's out-going question is, until the arrival of the address term, potentially addressable to any member of the class. (That teachers may construct questions without a recipient in mind during the course of its construction is evidenced by the format 'Question-pause-Address Term', e.g. (7), (25) and the question prior to (24) given below). That is, it is not obvious that any one question will definitely be addressed to a given student. This is even the case where some number of questions are addressed to the same student in turn - which is the case for (24), the teacher having already asked 'Whereabouts on the periph'ry would you be likely to find high class residential (0.8) John?' and John having replied 'I would say erm along the lakes and (the high) areas' (5B7-125/H: 80-3) - for an additional question (e.g. 'why there?') to one already asked can also be re-directed to another student. For example:

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(27)

P: S fairly swampy

T: S fairly swampy yes  
(2.4)

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- T: →Right thuh anything else  
 ( ): Eh the swamp shouldn't (settle to the plain) (5B7-003/H: 88-91)

For students, then, there is the hearer's responsibility of listening to any question-in-production for its being possibly addressed to them. To have to listen for such address terms is to orient away from their overlap. Further the preponderance of tag- as opposed to pre-positioned address terms is explicable via this hearer's responsibility feature of them; i.e., given a pre-positioned address term there is no longer any onus upon the whole class to attend to the content of the ensuing question and the orientation to the co-production of knowledge mentioned earlier is reversed; the production of this particular piece of knowledge now being potentially hearable as a private matter between the teacher and the student addressed.<sup>14</sup> Examples are:

- (28)  
 T: →All right Pete what w'd you call it then  
 (0.3)  
 T: what w'd ya call this area  
 (1.0) [[indicates on slide]]  
 P: (Best) call it the Coastal Swamp (5B7-003/H: 102-4)

- (29)  
 T: →Barb'ra would ya say they are distinctive regio's  
 B: (Yes ah) (5B7-003/H: 116-17)

This format has associated with it the added problem that to slot some privately produced knowledge into an ongoing course of co-produced knowledge is to detract from the provision of constant attention throughout that period of co-production. In short, pre-positioning of these terms can result in some parties 'losing the thread'.

Coming on to some (b)-cases: All student questions in the data to hand are designed for the teacher as their recipient. This can be achieved by tag-positioned address terms, e.g.:

- G: What does he do, sir? Catch witches? (AU-001/2: 198)

by pre-positioned address terms, e.g.,

[14] At least we can say that, given a pre-positioned address term, all students but the one selected have, over the course of the delivery of the question, the choice as to whether or not to attend it. The possibility of there being additional, related and redirected questions slightly reduces the strict +/− aspect of this choice.

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H: Sir, are they true? Or not? (AU-001/2: 56)

or, taking for granted the recipient-design (Garfinkel 1967: *passim*; Schenkein 1972: 363 ff.; Sacks *et al.* 1974: 727), by the absence of any address terms at all, e.g.:

K: In a big pool? (AU-001/2: 621)

Again the evidence points to these (when they are tag-positioned) not being overlapped by the teacher's next turn. This is perhaps an indication of their being regarded as expectably used and heard, though – as for conversation – there is no turn-organizational necessity for their employment. Perhaps the day is passed when the following (hypothetical) exchange and its like have currency:

S: Yes

T: Yes what?

S: Yes sir

Nevertheless, given that throughout the course of a lesson these terms are used at all (which is by no means the case for all the data) they are unlikely to get overlapped.

Finally, incidences of students using a 'current speaker selects next' technique to select another student and of student self-selection may be felt to be a desirable end on the part of those educators and educationalists who would wish to relax the formal restrictions of classroom talk but, in the face of the foregoing, it would seem that this would involve enforcing an entirely different speech exchange system for classrooms based either on the same rules as conversational exchange or on a less modified form of them than that currently in use. At present, for many classrooms, the following exchange reported by Postman & Weingartner (1973: 169) would indeed be regarded as 'subversive', that is subversive of teachers' greatly enhanced participation rights over students:

Instructor: But you enjoyed writing in class

1st student: You didn't say it was a poem

2nd student: You tricked us

Instructor: May I trick you some more?

*Point 3: The permutability of turn-taking is minimized.* Before considering the specific issue of permutability, it should be recognized that the taking of turns is itself at a minimum in classroom exchanges. In many of the classroom interactions (lessons) taken as data for this report, well over 80% of the talk<sup>15</sup> is done by teachers. Much of this is in the form of monologues. As we have noted, teachers are able to indefinitely extend their turns at talk without fear of any

[15] This has not been measured in any strict way – it is an approximation taken from the number of lines per page of transcript occupied by teacher-talk.

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next starter beginning a turn at a possible completion point. Indeed the notion of 'possible completion point' is almost redundant for classroom talk. Added to this is the fact, mentioned earlier, that teachers are able to break up their talk with pauses almost at will. E.g.:

- 
- (30)
- T: So we have a concentration  
(0.2)
- T: of commercial activities  
(0.2)
- T: n the heart of the city  
(0.2)
- T: then of course we must have smaller regional  
(0.4)
- T: er shopping centres or shops  
(0.4)
- T: e::r satisfying customers  
(0.2)
- T: on the outskirts of town  
(0.3)
- T: Right well that finishes our discussion for Portsville eighdeen eighdy  
to eighdeen ninedy  
(0.3)
- T: Now I did ask you f' homework to read Portsville eighdeen ninedy to  
ninedeen hun'red  
(1.2)

(5B7-125/H: 230-40)

---

We must consider that there is a high complexity to the work that conversational participants must ordinarily do in order to be able to take turns of more than one sentence, in length; that is, for example, using techniques to avoid having one's turn seen as transition adequate such as 'if . . . then . . .' clauses, correctional techniques for 'original' utterances which are 'not wrong', insertion sequences and so forth (Sacks forthcoming ch. 4: 25-40) or making a special announcement that one's turn will go beyond the first sentence with such things as story prefaces (Sacks forthcoming ch. 4: 40-2, 1970: April 9, 1974). In the face of this considerable work for conversationalists, of its absence for teachers and of its irrelevance for students-as-speakers, we are able to locate some evidence for how a tendency to the pre-allocation of turns at talk in classrooms marks a distinct differentiation of participation rights (and obligations) across the boundary of social identities 'teacher/student'; and equally, therefore, some evidence for how the 'formality' of classroom situations is systematically based.

Coming on to permutability: within the systematics explored by Sacks *et al.* (1974), it is a requirement that next speaker may be chosen from – in the case of ‘current selects next’ techniques – all the available parties; or else – in the case of self-selection – any party to the conversation may choose to speak next. In this sense, turn-taking for natural conversation is locally managed. That is, managed from *within* the precincts of, at the time of and by the parties to the conversational work in hand. To take an extreme example of the permutability this allows we can look to an effect of natural conversation permitted by the conversational rules which is out of the question in classroom settings. This effect is known as ‘schism’. Here, in (for example), four-party conversation, a split occurs so that parties Y and Z may converse separately from W and X although having initially been parties to a conversation involving all four (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 713–14). It is almost insulting to any (present or former) student or teacher to remind them of the repair mechanisms usually performed on the incidence of schism in classroom talk: ‘Are you two at the back talking?’ etc. The reply to this may be ‘No’, ‘Who me?’, silence, etc., but the counter-question (Schegloff 1972: 76–9 *et passim*) ‘Are you?’ might be taken as subversive of the teacher’s enhanced participation rights. The orientation to the co-production of knowledge we have mentioned is also intimately bound up with the avoidance of schism in classrooms:

If there is an interest in retaining in a single conversation some current complement of parties (where there are at least four), then the turn-taking system’s means for realizing that effort involve ‘spreading turns around’, since any pair of parties not getting or taking a turn over some sequence of turns can find their mutual accessibility for getting into a second conversation (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 713).

So great are the modifications to an original conversational system – allowing for (indeed requiring) a high degree of permutability – which we have found to be necessary in dealing with classroom situations that they instigate a speech-exchange system which is pre-allocated to a large extent; although local management exists minimally by comparison with the polar extreme of debate. Massively in the data, the teacher begins a ‘talk-unit’ (lesson) and almost any deviation from the pattern ‘Teacher-Student-Teacher . . .’ is seen to be in need of repair; and even some permutations within this pattern may be repaired if they are not teacher-organized (e.g. K’s second turn in (23)). The closedness of possible sequencings in classroom talk that these rule-modifications generate is partially analogous with the possible sequences generated by pre-constituted game-rules and the expectations on the part of participants in classroom talk with respect to such possible sequencings is equally analogous with those in game-situations:

‘To say, for example, that a player assumes the rules of ticktacktoe that players move alternately A,B,A,B . . . means the same thing as saying that his

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actions are governed in their course by the normative sequence of events A,B,A,B . . . What a person is said to 'assume' is equivalent to what he is said to 'assume about the possible fall of events' which is equivalent again to saying that his actions are governed by a restricted way in which possible events can occur. What he is said to 'assume' therefore consists of attributed features of events that are 'scenic' to him. He attends their sense as a restricted frame of alternative specifications of the scene of events. The actor is therefore capable of experiencing 'surprises' when actual events breach these expectancies (Garfinkel 1963: 209).

We should, however, add the rider that for classroom turns, unlike ticktacktoe turns, the turn-transitions are additionally 'policed' by a *head or director* (teacher) for normativeness outside the simple sequencing pattern 'Teacher-Student-Teacher . . .' and that 'surprise' can only occur if the expectancies should not only be breached *but also* go unrepaired.

What we are dealing with then is a heavily pre-allocated system in which the locally managed component is largely the domain of teachers, student participation rights being limited to the choice between continuing or selecting the teacher as next speaker.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to address the significance of a turn-taking system – produced as a modification of that for natural conversation – for identifying at least one of the systematic bases of the common sense intuition of classrooms as formal situations. A number of violational and non-violational turn-transitions have been examined for their orderliness with respect to the system. It was found that the social identity contrast 'Teacher/Student' was expressed in the system in terms of differential participation rights and obligations. This differential was found to depend largely on teacher's exclusive access to the use of creative 'current speaker selects next speaker' techniques, thereby corroborating Sacks *et al.*'s (1974: 718) predictions regarding the turn-taking/social-identity nexus of relations:

A formal characterization of how participants' social identities are made relevant, and changed in conversation, does not now exist, though work is proceeding on that problem. It is clear enough, that some 'current selects next' techniques are tied to the issue with which such a formal characterization will deal ( . . . ).

It is hoped that this paper may be seen as partly contributing to such work and that the rules and analyses related herein be seen as an attempt at such a formal characterization of just one formal situation which is routinely encountered by

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persons (in those societies which make provision for schooling) at some point in their lives.

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### APPENDIX: SYMBOLS USED IN TRANSCRIPTION

/	upward intonation
//	point at which following line interrupts
(o.n)	pause or gap of n tenths of a second
[	simultaneous utterances when bridging two lines
]	(at end of simultaneously started or overlapped talk) indicates point at which utterances end <i>vis-à-vis</i> one another
T:	Teacher. All other identifications of speakers refer to students
( ):	identity of speaker not ascertainable
(word)	probably what said, but not clear
(Roger):	probably who is speaking, but not clear
( )	something said but not transcribable
(, ,,)/(, ,,)	unascertainable speech but the same sound is evidently produced by the speaker(s)
<i>but</i>	accentuation by volume or by intonation
=	latching, i.e., no gap between 'end' of one and 'start' of another piece of talk (used as a transcription facilitator)
-	untimed pause (generally less than (0.2))
?	questioning intonation (i.e., not a grammatical marker)
::	prolongation of syllable preceding. The length of prolongation is given by the relative amount of colons used
-	cut off of prior sound
@	following words spoken quietly
(( ))	contains audio materials other than verbalization, e.g. ((cough))
Class:	either all students or a large amount of students talking at once
[[ ]]	for gestural, non-verbal information transcribable from videos, e.g. [[sits down]]
.	
.	indicates the multiplicity of a feature or of speakers
.	
[	long left hand brackets indicate the continuation of audio materials given in (( ))s, e.g. that in (19) of this paper