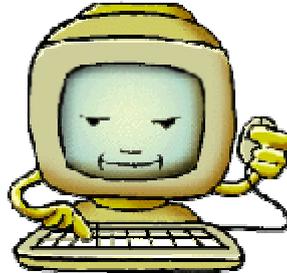


# Producing ‘local order’ at the computer: ‘Requests, offers and threats’

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## Abstract

This paper examines some transcript from an ethnographic study of CSCW<sup>1</sup> in the primary school classroom. It discusses how children organize the ‘local order’ of CSCW by managing group positions through categorical work, which Sacks calls ‘operative identities’. (Sacks 1970) This is made explicit in their naturally occurring talk.

The work for completing CSCW tasks is accomplished through the negotiation of identities. These ‘transient identities’ (Perry 2000) are not personal identities but ‘identities transformed by a series of identity changes that progressively provide further transforms at the various rejection points’ *in talk (my insert)* (Sacks 1970).

Within this collaborative work children challenge one another for positions in the group in order to establish themselves as ‘first orderer’ (Heap 1992) at the computer by firmly making a request, but cannot completely take over the operation because the group order has already been established. An ‘offer’ or a ‘request’ is made for what that particular member wants to do, relative to how they assume that they stand in regard to the way that other pupils have categorized themselves relative to the group order. As Sacks says ‘when an offer is rejected another offer is made and maybe changed in some particular way’, in which case that member changes the request to a more assertive insistence which now becomes a possible threat to the already established order of things.

This paper shows that children’s collaborative work at the computer is a transient ordering of ‘operative identities’ for getting the work done which draws on the membership categorization of culture and identity and not on *Institutional Talk per se*.

## KEYWORDS

CSCW (Computer Supported Cooperative Work/Computer Supported Collaborative Work), Ethnography, AEM (Applied Ethnomethodology), Classroom Interaction, CA (Conversation Analysis), MCA (Membership Categorization Analysis), ‘Transient’ and ‘Operative Identities’

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<sup>1</sup> CSCW refers to both Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Computer Supported Collaborative Work. The former is often a preferred term in use in studies of the workplace (*cf.* Luff *et al* 2000) and the latter being more commonplace in studies of classroom interaction (*cf.* Littleton and Light 1999).

**The first section of this paper introduces and presents ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and membership categorical work as an interpretive approach to classroom ethnography both past and present, the second section of the paper describes the research situation and discusses the phenomena of Institutional Talk and ‘ordinary classroom talk’, the third section presents and analyses the data and the last section presents the conclusions drawn from the analysis and poses a question for further research.**

This paper is an extended version of a paper I presented at the IEMCA ‘Producing Local Order’ Conference, Manchester, UK, July 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

### **1.1 An introduction: ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and membership categorization**

Ethnomethodology does not look for structural determinants, but rather its inquiries are concerned with how members interactions produce and reproduce an organised orderliness of their every day affairs which is contingent on locally situated occasions within a socially constructed framework that these members actions have made manifest

As Garfinkel (1967) says, ‘Ethnomethodological studies analyze everyday activities as members’ methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., ‘accountable’, as organizations of commonplace everyday activities.’

Therefore the following study ‘is directed to the tasks of learning how members’ actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analyzeable; and of discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions, ‘from within’ actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings.’

Garfinkel was a radical empiricist who advocated that ‘one cannot make inferences about the world based on any kind of report. One must go and look for oneself, and one must include oneself in the observation.’ (Collins 1985)

In 1967 Garfinkel acknowledged the past decade of ‘a group of increasing size’ who had been carrying out ‘ethnomethodological studies as day to day concerns’, such as ‘Egon

Bittner, Aaron V. Cicourel, Lindsey Churchill, Craig MacAndrew, Michael Moerman, Edward Rose, Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, David Sudnow, Lawrence D. Wieder and Don Zimmerman.’ Here he particularly mentions Harvey Sacks ‘because his extraordinary writings and lectures have served as critical resources.’ (Garfinkel 1967). Indeed, the ethnomethodologists from this list are oft’ quoted today and to be sure the writings of both Sacks and Schegloff are unquestionable. At that time both Sacks and Schegloff were able to fully exploit the new technology of the portable tape recorder and develop a new field of empirical research, Conversation Analysis. This obviously made a big difference to ‘participant observation’ where previously the ethnographer had to rely on memory and hastily written down field notes. Now it was possible, by using a special transcription system developed by Gail Jefferson (1974)<sup>2</sup>, not only to record every word that was spoken but also to record pauses in utterances, silences, intonation of voice and all the other sounds such as coughing, laughing, singing, sighing etc. that make up *talk-in –interaction*. This clearly has other advantages in that the actual recordings and transcript of the data is then available to others for their interpretation and analysis.

From studying recordings of conversations Harvey Sacks proposed that members conduct conversations in particular methodological constructs, thus producing the next interaction or response through next utterances, these next utterances being contingent on the previous utterance. Sacks further proposed that members do this through *Membership Categorization* (subject to certain rules of application), and *Standard Relational Pairs*<sup>3</sup> and *Adjacency Pairs*<sup>4</sup> in *sequential talk*.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. Appendix for transcription symbols

<sup>3</sup> Standard Relational Pairs are such category pairs as *parent/child; husband/wife ;brother/sister*

<sup>4</sup> Adjacency Pairs are sequential utterances such as *question/answer; invitation/reply; complement/acceptance*

The simplest illustration of membership categorization is Sacks now classical example of the child's 'story' 'The Baby Cried. The Mommy Picked it Up' (Sacks1966). In Sacks analysis of these two simple sentences 'baby' and 'mommy' are both 'family' categories, that is they are *membership categories* of the *membership category device* or collective of 'family'. Categories, according to Sacks, display a *category boundedness* or exhibit *predicates* (Eglin and Hester 1992), that is, the predicate of the category baby is crying as that is what babies mostly do, the predicate of the mommy is picking the baby up as that is what mommies usually do on hearing a baby cry. The category bound activity of crying enables the correct categorization of baby, in this particular case as a small infant homo-sapien, as this is an activity that babies normally do, rather than 'baby' as a member categorised as an adult being addressed by a term of endearment as in the utterance 'Hey, baby d'ya wanna come out t'night?' or 'baby' as a member categorized as acting out of context referent to age as in the utterance 'Oh, you're such a baby behaving like that!' Therefore the *predicate* or the *category bound activity* and the context in which it is used enables members to categorize other members relevant to the particular situated occasion encompassed by a particular text or extract of conversation in use at that time. There are two rules of application for these analyses, the Consistency Rule in that if a category from a category device is used to categorize a first member then categories from that same device may be used to categorize further members of the population, and the Economy Rule in that a single category from any device can be referentially adequate for categorizing further members of the population.

### **1.2 Ethnomethodology as an interpretive approach: classroom studies past and present**

Using EM as an interpretive approach the phenomena of educational activities as and in classroom lessons are locally produced and accomplished by members as participants *in situ*.

To study members' methods for doing this, collected observations are ordered according to

the relationships between categories, categories that are in place ‘as socially sanctioned ways of describing events which take place in that setting’ (Sharrock and Button, 1991). *De facto* these methods of interpretation must apply to both the researcher and the researched.

Ethnomethodological inquiry ‘pays close attention to the details of activity organization not to establish exactly what happened, but to make a case for the possibilities with regard to how such activities can be organized.’ The ways in which these activities are ordered and organized ‘can only be known from within a culture, by being, or becoming a member.’

(Heap 1988)

### **1.3 Sequential talk in the classroom**

Applied Ethnomethodology (AEM) as interpretive work explicates the interruptions or ‘repairs’ as methods of assessment by the teacher towards task competence and task achievement. This is normally done as I-R-E’s (Mehan 1979a) in the classroom and has been found to have a slightly different structure of I-C-R-E’s/D-C-R-E’s at the computer (*cf.* Perry 2000 and Wegerif 1994; 1995). The classical study by Mehan (1979a)<sup>5</sup> was concerned with the learning of classroom structures as a means of social organization that was beneficial to the teacher and the pupils. The four part structure of I-C-R-E’s/D-C-R-E’s is discussed further in sub-section 1.4.

Mehan posed that the goal of ‘constitutive ethnography is to characterize the organization of teacher- student interaction in classroom lessons.’ The ‘characterization’ of this organization as constituted through sequential utterances was shown by Mehan to have a three part structure of teacher Initiation- pupil Reply or Response- teacher Evaluation of response, or I-

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Also Mehan 1979b, “*What time is it Denise?*”: *asking known information questions in classroom discourse*

R- E. That is, the teacher asks a question as an Initiation, the pupil(s) Respond with an answer and the teacher makes an Evaluation of that response ie. indicates whether the answer is correct or not.

Mehan's concept of I-R-E was not new, indeed Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) in reference to Pearce (1973) remark that sequences of "Initiation- Response- Feedback" were found to be inappropriate to deal with all categories of discourse and that "alternative structures were considered." (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, p.117.) However Sinclair and Coulthard imply that "speech acts are complete in themselves; that one need not look beyond the boundaries of the speech act to determine its meaning." (Mehan, 1979a, p.63.) For Mehan 'initiation-reply-evaluation' acts of teacher-student interaction' in lessons are not autonomous speech acts but share 'prospective' and 'retrospective' features, as explicated by Schutz (1962) Garfinkel (1967) and Cicourel (1973), in that 'any given act has a range of potential meanings', and the 'meaning resides in the reflexive assembly of initiation, reply, and evaluation acts into interactional sequences.' (Mehan 1979a)

#### **1.4 The genesis of CA and MCA approaches to classroom interaction**

Mehan's study may be taken as a departure point in respect of the genesis of a conversation analytic approach to teacher evaluation in reading lessons. It can be argued that the ensuing ethnomethodological classroom studies that exhibit conversation analytic approaches are a steady progression of Mehan's thought and analysis. More recent classroom studies show in increasingly rich and rigorous detail, by way of CA and MCA, how children's social organization of classroom lessons are accomplished through the ordering of identities that are made relevant through and in their talk. (*cf.* Danby and Baker 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Heap 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1992, 2000; Macbeth 2000). Indeed, these are referent to many

previous ethnomethodological studies and approaches to classroom order and understanding children's cultures in this field. (cf. Heap 1978, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1980d; Macbeth 1991, 1992, 1996; McHoul<sup>6</sup> 1978).

The classroom research conducted by Mehan (1979) differed in many respects from conventional ethnography. Indeed, Mehan argues that "constitutive ethnography" is advantageous in many ways that conventional ethnography lacks. The data used for analysis is highly retrievable because it has been collected either through audio and/or video recording. In this way it is possible to preserve and present the original data on which the analysis has been conducted. Further, this allows for a comprehensive treatment of the data, which should be a comprehensive treatment of the entire corpus of the data rather than focussing on correlations and looking for 'co-occurring phenomena'. Constitutive ethnography aims to ensure that the perspectives of the researcher and participant members of the research converge in respect that the 'normative order' of the classroom is made visible by providing accounts for absences of expected forms of interaction in the entire corpus of the data.

However in lessons that are conducted as interactions with the computer interface in place of or in collaboration with the teacher, I-R-E's in computational terms can be seen as:

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<sup>6</sup> McHoul was the first, according to Heap, to analyze "formal talk in the classroom" sequentially in reference to the work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Heap's grounds for criticism were made salient from the observations of his own empirical classroom research with Brackstone and Horn in 1976 & 1977, as part of a long term study in 1978 of the social organization of reading activities at the Primary Level. Basically they argue the issues of the "generality claimed for his rules" for the organization of turns at formal talk in the classroom. "McHoul's teacher rule is argued not to account for.....undirected questions and overlapping answers. His student rule is shown to be unable to handle student-student repair sequences." Further, "his rules are immune to data because they define what counts as formal talk in the classroom." (Heap 1979, Abstract). It is therefore important to differentiate between the organization of classroom talk *per se* and the organization of formal talk in the classroom, as *formal talk* conceives speakers as *rule governed* whereas *classroom talk* conceives speakers as *rule users*. Finally, Heap concludes "while the rules are seen as being context-independent, their use is conceived to be context-sensitive. This context-independent/context-sensitive character of rules and their use is central for Sacks et al (1974: 700), but is absent from McHoul's formulations." (Heap 1979, p.14).

I – Initiation as an instruction from the program running on the machine

R – Response as interaction by the user with the text or graphics as displayed on the interface of the VDU screen

E – The Evaluation of the response of the pupil by the program being used which is displayed on the VDU screen.

*Ipso facto*, it was found that interaction at the computer interface amongst groups of children had a four part structure rather than a three part structure. The four part sequential structures found in the IT setting of ‘*instruction-compliance- request for evaluation or affirmation of compliance- evaluation or affirmation of compliance*’ (I-C-R-E’s) consist of two consecutively sequential *adjacency pairs* of which the second pair is a procedural consequentiality of the first pair.(Perry 2000). Wegerif (1994;1995) found the same sequential structures in the SLANT data but identified them as ‘*directive- compliance-request for evaluation-evaluation*’ (D-C-R-E’s). These final evaluative assessments of the I-C-R-E/D-C-R-E structure act as the initiators of ‘repairs’ that are done by the pupils themselves, whereas in the I-R-E structure explicated by Mehan the teacher uses this evaluation as a resource for doing ‘repairs’<sup>7</sup> which will be salient in the next *Initiation* utterance. In other words if the pupils did not respond in the expected way thus producing a correct outcome then the teacher has to allow for this and reformat the question.

In the IT setting ‘repairs’ are routinely carried out by pupils during word processing as intentional acts. An act is carried out with the intention of the predicted or expected outcome in accordance with a pupils anticipation of a co-pupils action and how that pupil anticipates that the co-pupil will interpret the anticipated outcome. Hence ‘repairs’ are done as the

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<sup>7</sup> cf. Schegloff (2000) *When ‘Others’ Initiate Repair*, in which he says, ‘In these instances, an unproblematic sequel begins a next turn-some sort of receipt of prior turn or stance toward it-but either after it’s completion or aborting it, it is followed by an other-initiation of repair.’ p.231

interaction unfolds as an ongoing evaluative practice.

Recipient designed and task oriented interaction will be different in a group and will be oriented towards a group understanding and an expected group hearability. In collaborative computer tasks the designated writer or 'first orderer' (Heap1992)<sup>8</sup> may be 'self' or group appointed through the negotiation of social identities, which are contingent on the assumed rights and obligations and thus membership categorizations by members, of co- members to the interaction, and how those members perceive that those co- members categorize themselves and them.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.5 Categorical work: The 'transient' ordering of 'operative identities'**

Co-operative work at the computer is done as talk, as what is 'inputted' is 'normatively' spoken out loud by the 'first orderer' (Heap, 1992) at the keyboard. Collaborative practices which orient to 'other' pertaining to 'rights' and 'responsibilities' ( Sacks 1975) can be said to operate within the parameters of 'normative' orders. The normative order and practical reasoning in the organization of CSCW are constituted as utterances. These predicate on presuppositions of news worthiness and tellability, which are referent to indexicality and reflexivity in context and serve as unrecognised functions<sup>10</sup> facilitated by such practices

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<sup>8</sup> cf. footnote 12, p.16

<sup>9</sup> Garfinkel (1967) puts this more simply, 'for the *conduct of his everyday affairs* the person assumes, assumes the other person assumes as well, and assumes that as he assumes it of the other person, the other person assumes it of him, that a relationship of undoubted correspondence is the sanctioned relationship between the actual appearances of an object and the intended object that appears in a particular way. For the person conducting his everyday affairs, objects, for him as he expects for others, are as they appear to be. To treat this relationship under a *rule* of doubt requires that the necessity and motivation for such a rule be justified.'

<sup>10</sup> 'Unrecognised functions' are known to be there and taken for granted, but not physically 'seen' or 'heard' and, it can be argued, act as enabling devices for self-directed learning of which children collaboratively take 'ownership'.

literacy and IT skills and social communicative skills which in turn are facilitated by collaborative tasks.<sup>11</sup>

Work at the computer keyboard as a collaborative enterprise in successfully accomplishing a task as set, is locally managed and socially organized through the ordering and managing of social identities, which are contingent on membership categorization as previously explicated above. Within negotiating identities for collaborative practices the members of the group are mediating between the group 'frame of reference' and their individual 'frames of reference'. Previous analysis (Perry 2000) has shown that children work in collaboration with one another towards the accomplishment of task achievement and completion by the membership categorization work of the negotiation of identities, or positions, through the interpretive work of a 'discourse machinery' (Heap 1992). Heap's 'discourse machinery' which he describes as '(soft) machinery for the production of discourse and action' and relates it to Sacks et al (1974) *A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation*, 'can be used for a wide variety of tasks'. Heap states that 'the actions accomplished by means of the discourse-action machinery of collaborative computer editing include speech acts.' 'These acts are primarily devices for fostering the accomplishment of non verbal acts' (Heap 1992, p.130) as in a running commentary of what is going on. In their two papers 'Terror by Categorisation in a Preschool Classroom' (2001) and 'Escalating Terror: Communicative Strategies in a Preschool Classroom Dispute' (2001) Susan Danby and Carolyn Baker refer to Sacks notion of how children 'set up flurries of talk' to highlight the collaborative work that children do to make 'witnessable... the talk and

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<sup>11</sup> This has already been established in my previous research, that in order to be able to complete collaborative tasks at the computer that demonstrate literacy and IT skills children need social skills for that collaboration to be successful

conduct of a member of whatever social category they are intending themselves to appear as’.

In the setting up of ‘flurries’, which according to Danby and Baker, includes members repetition of similarly sounding words such as ‘bash’ and ‘smash’ for providing a ‘running commentary’ for their actions, individual children are making their claims to membership of the group ‘hearable’ to the others of that group. However, as Danby and Baker show, ‘the talk and the actions... may remain the same, but membership may differ; the players and their roles may differ from moment to moment.’ (Danby and Baker 2000, p.10)

As is shown in this research, that children in order to organize their work collaboratively ‘negotiate identities’ or operate within a series of ‘transient identities’. To elucidate this further it is necessary to refer to the relevant Sacks lecture, ‘Poetics; Requests, offers, and threats; The ‘old man’ as an evolved natural object’ (vol. 2, p. 322) in which Sacks talks about ‘flurries’ and also talks about the ‘changing of *operative identities* (as evolved natural objects), where the identities they end up with are the identities they have in the world, but that they weren’t employing earlier on.’ (p327). That is, the identities that are adopted are contextually and situationally relevant to the occasion in hand.

## **2.1 Situating the research**

This research emerged from two earlier ethnographic studies of collaborative work at the computer in the primary school classroom. In these two previous studies it was found that (1) children’s IT usage, task competency and task accomplishment relied on their social organization in the negotiating of identities and (2) that the structure of talk in interaction with the computer interface was different from the structure of (a) ordinary conversation and (b) ordinary classroom talk.

The school in which this research was conducted is a small village school with an approximate number of one hundred and eighty pupils attending. The village grew around a

quarrying community, but in spite of this very Welsh background it is extremely Anglicised.

The classroom lessons *per se* are conducted bilingually in English and in Welsh but the computer sessions are conducted in the medium of English.

The small group in this study were from a class of mixed ability with an age range of 9 to 11 years.

The transcript data was obtained from audio recordings and field notes were taken in direct observation of classroom interactions. The data is analysed from an ethnomethodological perspective using a conversation analytic approach and refers to the membership categorical work of the late Harvey Sacks ( Sacks 1992,1995).

## **2.2 Institutional Talk, is there such a phenomena?**

I use the term ‘ordinary classroom talk’ and will refrain from using the term ‘institutional talk’ because this has been recently contested in McHoul and Rapley (2001), in which Hester and Francis contest ‘institutional talk’ *per se*. They maintain that whilst such conversational structures of the ‘sequential ordering’ of ‘relational pairs’ as in ‘questions and answers’ may support some of the activities engaged in during institutional talk, these same structures do not make ‘institutional’ interaction instantly recognisable or necessarily available. Indeed, the ‘recognisability’ of any phenomena, institutional or otherwise, ‘is a *situated accomplishment*, and involves a reflexive relationship between utterances, situated identities (*my emphasis*) and other circumstantial particulars.’ (Hester and Francis 2001).

However, this is not an original insight regarding this phenomena, Heap (1979) said much the same thing in his criticism of McHoul (1978), that it is important to differentiate between the organization of *ordinary classroom talk* and the organization of *formal talk/institutional talk* in the classroom, as *formal talk* conceives speakers as *rule governed* whereas *classroom talk*

conceives speakers as *rule users*. Finally, Heap concludes ‘while the rules are seen as being context-independent, their use is conceived to be context-sensitive. This context-independent/context-sensitive character of rules and their use is central for Sacks et al (1974: 700), but is absent from McHoul’s formulations.’ (Heap 1979, p.14).

Watson (2000), however, explains this in much finer detail in his response to Hester and Francis’ similar article ‘Ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and ‘institutional talk’, in *Text* 20(3)(2000). As Watson says, the issue of bringing CA/ITP (Institutional Talk Program) and EM into a closer alignment with one another rests on the considerations of ‘membership categorization analysis *in relation to* rather than in opposition to sequential analysis, such that consequences may be seen as informed by and realizations of categories. Thus categories may be recognized as built into sequences and sequences may be recognized as, *inter alia*, categorical realizations.’ That is, the one informs the other. I totally agree with Watson in this respect in that ‘the tacit assumption of categorical identities works as one of conversation analysis’s and the institutional talk program’s actual *techniques* of privileging sequence. Watson’s criticism appears to be that Hester and Francis’ ‘characterization of categories as ‘circumstantial’ presupposes (my emphasis) ‘a separation of ‘category’ and ‘sequence’ and that ‘categorical concerns, as and when they arise’ should ‘be treated as integral.’ Further, Watson suggests that ‘a respecified version of membership categorization analysis, utilizing, *inter alia*, some of Sacks’s later formulations such as, again, ‘turn-generated categories’ might assist us in treating categorical order as integral to sequential order in talk (Sacks, Vol.2, 173-73, 360-366 and 542-553). Unless, as he says, we do not ‘explore all the options within conversation analysis as initially set out by Sacks’ we will be left with ‘an approach that is a reduction even in terms of conversation analysis (and by extension, of the institutional talk program).’

### **3.1 Examining the data: ‘mapping on’ categories**

The extract below came from some sequences of talk that had taken place among the computer group that I was studying prior to the teacher setting the task to be completed. This extract has been included because it was felt that it has a particular bearing on the way that the children managed the ‘operative identities’ in order to organize the collaborative work, or the ‘local order’ of getting the task done. How they turn this phenomenon into a resource for the interaction is shown later in section 3.3 extract 3.

**R= Researcher**

**P’s 1, 2 &3 = Pupils in the computer group**

#### **Extract 1**

01. P.2. Hello microphone= ((speaking directly into the recorder))

(0.3)

02. P.2. =how are you doing today?

03. P’s. 1,2, & 3 ((laughing and giggling))

(0.2)

04. P.2. Hello there microphone (0.2) hello microphone(.) again

05. (0.3) he, he, hello microphone you’re not recording me (.) at all

This pupil is particularly aware of being recorded and performs to the microphone, whereas the other two do not appear to take any notice, although they must obviously be aware by virtue of pupil 2’s performance, and indeed this is made apparent in the next utterance.

06. P.3. ((addressing researcher)) Is that light on when you’re recording it? ((the micro-recorder has a red light showing when it is in recording mode))

In this utterance pupil 3 is exhibiting his awareness that they are being recorded.

07. P.2. Oh, no, he, he

08.R. It doesn't matter

09. P.2. That's what you think!

((I explain to them that I'm writing my thesis and need to write 100,000 words about how they learn in the classroom with computers, although this had already been explained to them by their teacher))

Sacks (1969) also refers to this phenomenon in which the members of a group, who are part of the research, are aware of being recorded and consequently turn it into a resource for the interaction. Sacks describes the situation in this way,

'So, they're in a situation where they're talking to each other, not to the observer, and while talking to each other they're being listened to by somebody to whom they are not talking. That somebody is legitimately listening to the talk of others who are not talking to him is a fairly peculiar situation, i.e., one does not normally have rights to overhear, nor does one normally have to bear being overheard.' (Sacks 1969, p.108)

The interaction that Sacks is referring to was the beginning of a group therapy session in which the participants were being audio recorded and observed, and about which he says,

'What happened was approximately this: I came a little early and got introduced to the guys, and they were informed that I would be there. I was in a room, sitting behind a one-way mirror, and they were in an adjoining room. We met in the observation room and then they went out because it was a little early, then came back into the adjoining room. There was a microphone in the ceiling, and the following took place:

*Roger:* Turn on th' microphone.  
(1.0)

*Al:* T(h)esting,

*Roger:* We're about to sta(hh)rt. Hehh hh heh  
((thump))

*Al:* We ah gathuhd heah(h), on this day (hh),' (Sacks 1969, p.104)

The interest that this fragment had for Sacks 'turns on the way in which its use involves the

exhibiting of an attention to the presence of observers.’ It can be asked both of Sacks ‘fragment’ and of ‘extract 1’ in ‘exhibiting an attention to the presence of an observer, why do they do it in the way they do?’ Sacks asks why, in his fragment, ‘do they do it in a play-like fashion; ‘play’ having two different senses’ both of which Sacks says are appropriate: ‘play’ as in a game, and ‘play’ as in a performance.’ (Sacks, p.105) ... ‘with regard to the type of sequence it is, it’s ‘a piece of play’, again in the two senses of a game sequence and a performance.’ Sacks goes on to say that these characters have picked the analogy of a theatre performance and ‘mapped’ on ‘its categories of performer/audience to patient/observer.’ In the same way then, it can be argued that in ‘extract1’ the pupils have also picked this analogy and have ‘mapped’ on it’s categories of performer/audience to pupils/researcher, although the difference is that pupil 2 is also performing to and interacting with an inanimate object, i.e. the micro recorder in lines 01- 05. However, later in the analysis in section 3.3 extract 3 it will be shown how this analogy changes to that of a film set and its categories of film director/actors are ‘mapped’ on to that of pupil ‘first orderer’/pupils ‘helpers’<sup>12</sup>.

### **3.2 Setting the task: situating the action**

The members of the class and the teacher had gone outside into the playground with the class digital camera in order to take pictures of themselves and the surrounding scenery with the intention of saving them to the hard drive of the teacher’s laptop computer, transferring them to ‘A’ drive (saving them to ‘floppy’), transferring them to the hard drive of the class computers and incorporating them into their work, which was for each group to create a web

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<sup>12</sup> In Heap’s study he found that the writer at the computer assumed the rights and responsibilities to be the ‘first orderer’ and maintained the sole rights for inputting, whereas the ‘helper’ can only assert the right to arrange under conditions when the writer does not object. Heap suggests that ‘the relation between the rights and responsibilities for arranging’ during collaborative word processing ‘can be seen as an organization of ordered options. (Heap 1992, p.128)

page. The collective aim being to create a school website to be put on the Internet.

The class gradually return and start to form into groups of threes, fours and fives around the five computers that are in the classroom. The teacher returns last of all with the digital camera. There is an interactive whiteboard at the back of the classroom that is connected to a laptop computer which is situated in front of it. The class computers are placed around the perimeters of the classroom as in the diagram below. (Diagram 1)

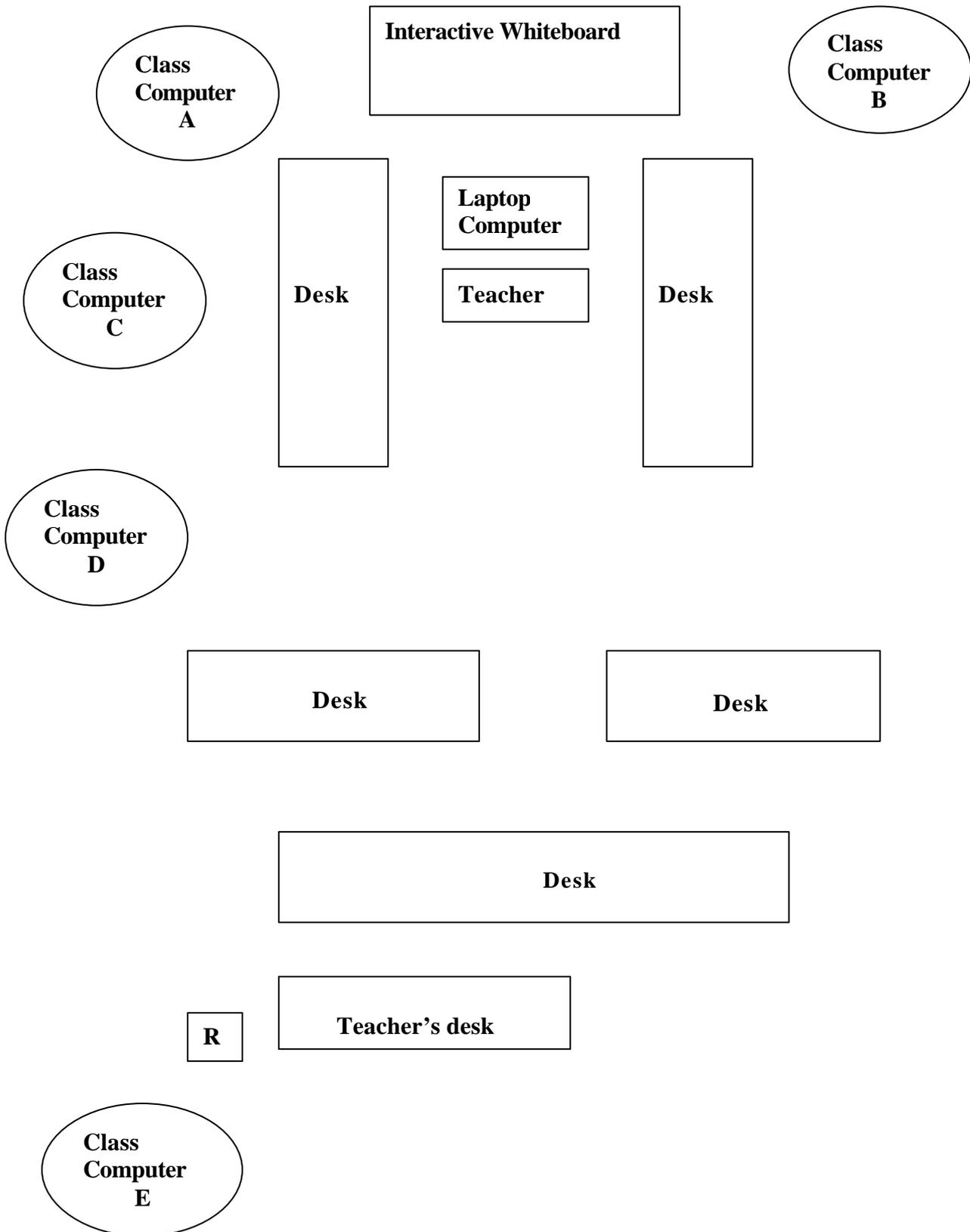
The computer group under observation in this research are situated at computer E next to the teacher's desk with the researcher/author of this paper seated behind them. For most of the time the teacher is standing in front of the laptop computer.

The teacher addresses the whole class and uses the interactive whiteboard and laptop computer to demonstrate what he expects each computer group to do and thus sets up the task that is to be completed.

### **Pupils at the keyboard**



**Diagram 1.** The layout of the classroom



### 3.3 Analogies and language games

**R= Researcher**

**T= Teacher**

**P's= Pupils 1,2&3 of the computer group** (the names have been changed in the transcript for the sake of the ethical practices of anonymity)

In extract 2 below the teacher sets the task.

#### Extract 2.

26.T.= Ok<sup>↑</sup>, now on the back of this laptop=

((he points and touches the place on the back of the laptop computer))

27. T.= there's a special place called the USB port (.) right<sup>↑</sup> an' all you do is you

28. plug it into the back=

((the teacher shows them the place at the back of the laptop computer))

The teacher is taking them through the procedure, which as Levinson (1992) says in 'the setting of a task done as requests to follow a procedure, the teacher takes them through the process, making them familiar with the process and introducing them to the 'language game' ( cf. Drew and Heritage (1992) *Talk at Work*, pp. 91-94)

(0.2)

29. T.= an' you use this lead=

((he holds up the lead to show them))

(0.2)

30. T.= an' put it into your photo or into your camera (0.3) I've installed the software

31. on this computer already (0.2) it's alre::ady<sup>↑</sup> on it (.) ok? (.) So, if I switch this

32. on<sup>↑</sup> now =

(0.2)

33. T.= If I switch the function of the camera on (0.2) you'll see wha' happens (0.4)

34. on there are (.) are the functions of the camera displayed yeh? (.) followed by

35. the pictures that you have taken, all↑ forty↓ nine↓ of them (0.6) ok? So they are

36. all on there↓ = (0.2)

37. =Now, what I want you to↑ do↑ =

(this is done as a request to follow a procedure that he has already outlined)

38. = I want to give you a blank disc for you to sa↑ve your picture on to (.) right? I'll

39. call you all here in a second to this laptop and I want to go through how you

40. save your picture on to a disc. (0.3) You have then↑ to transfer ((louder)) your

41. picture that you've got on disc on to the computer=

(0.2)

Here the teacher is defining the rationality of the procedure towards the goal activities, which

are 'to create your web or page' in lines 43 and 44.

42. T.= that °you're using° [(0.2) ok? And then you're going to create your web (0.2)=

43. P.2. [((whispering (0.2)))

44. = or page around it (0.1) ok?↑

By presenting analogies different 'language games' can be introduced<sup>13</sup> so that a

relationship can be built up between the language used and a pupil's view of the world. A

teacher must present a line of argument or a connectivity so that the pupil's answer or actions

will be able to contribute to the validity and verification of the statement of fact thus securing

similar verbal relations. This determines the role that language will play to impart and

organize knowledge which may be done by drawing out important parallels and imparting

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<sup>13</sup> i.e. The teacher provides a connectivity between 'page' presented as what they already know as a page in Microsoft Publisher because they have done this before, and 'web' as in 'webpage' as part of a website which is a new thing for them to do, in the utterance 'to create your web or page'.

abilities. (Levison 1992). As is seen in this extract the teacher is in control of the ‘task setting’ and ‘turn-taking’ and hence controls the rationality of the procedure towards the goal

activities in which detailed features of activities are organized as ‘derivative structures and

pedagogical strategies’ (Levinson 1992). This seems to hinge on the different definitions and

the characterizations within the teacher’s utterances to explore the pupils levels of understanding and their different abilities to take part in ‘language games’ in which they will

orient to roles presented that are relative to what they already know from their cultural backgrounds. This corresponds with that which Heap (1980) found, that it cannot be predicted that a ‘task’ outcome will necessarily display skills of task competency or task

accomplishment because it cannot be known that the situational and interactional conditions

have produced this. Therefore, as Heap, says ‘organizational assessment problems’ (Heap

1980) may arise, because it can not be known that a pupil has specifically understood the task that has been set. Bearing this in mind, are correct answers artefacts of task organizations (Heap 1980)? Indeed, Doug Maynard (2003) also refers to the fact that there are differences between correct answers and correct relevant answers and thus different strategies may be employed to obtain them. Therefore outcomes should not be used as defining criteria for claims about knowledge if the task accomplishment is due to pupils having access to external cultural knowledge resources.

What does an incorrect or insufficient task outcome display? Is this a reflection on the pupils’ competence or the teacher’s? According to Heap (1980) there is always the possibility of other reasons such as those fostered by the test or task itself. Whether

the outcome is successful or not rests on how it is managed, as in the next extract of data. How the task is managed, particularly how pupil 2 manages the rest of the group in extract 3 below, is contingent on both the setting up of the task and the 'language game'

of the 'camera', 'photo', 'picture', resulting in the 'mapping on' of categories, in light of

Sacks analysis and premised on the utterances that had taken place previously in section 3.1

extract 1 concerning the 'microphone' and being 'recorded'. (lines 01-09)

### **3.4 'Requests, offers and threats'**

#### **Extract 3**

51.P.1. I've go' a pho'o ((looking at the image on the VDU screen))

(0.3)

Pupil 1 has 'self selected' (Sacks *et al* 1974) to be in charge and takes ownership of the page,

because it is his photo that he has transferred from the 'floppy' and imported into the document in 'Microsoft Publisher' that they are working on.

52.P.2. I'm the director

(0.2)

In this utterance pupil 2 contests pupil 1's position and takes on the *operative identity* of a

film director which it can be argued, stems from his previous performance in section 3.1

extract 1 with the microphone. However pupil 1 makes a further claim to ownership in line

53 because after all it is his photo that is displayed on the computer screen.

53.P.1. I'm in the pho'o

(0.2)

54.P.2. I'm, I'm the director

Pupil 2 is not going to accept this and intends having the final say in his identity as 'director'

about how this is going to be managed in line 54.

55.P.1. I'm in the word ((he starts to type in his name at the keyboard))

Meaning, well the text is going to be about me because it's my photo. Then pupil 3 joins in, and this interaction is crucial to how the interaction continues from this point on.

56.P.3. Danny?

57.P.1. I'm looking at

Pupil 1 is referring to his picture and the text that he has typed in and is pointing to it on the

computer screen.

(0.4)

58.P.3. Danny?DANNY?look what Danny done

Pupil 3 is drawing pupil 2's attention to the fact that he's not happy with what pupil 1 is doing because pupil 1 is now filling in borders around his picture and thus taking ownership of the page.

59.P.1. I, I made ((inaudible (0.2)))

(0.4)

60.P.3. Look ?what Danny done, Ben, ?look ?what Danny done?

Pupil 3 is negotiating with and appealing to pupil 2 to direct the operations and at the same time he is using this strategy as a 'subterfuge' to issue a warning to pupil 1 that he's

not happy with him taking on the identity of that which Heap (1992) refers to as the 'first orderer'.

61.P.1. ((inaudible (0.3)))

62.P.2. Edit, (.) undo (('offer'))

In line 62 pupil 2 is making an *offer* of advice to change what has been done. This is done in response to pupil 3's warning in lines 58 and 60 and is suggesting that pupil 1 should

get rid of the borders that he has put in place and his photo and the text as well.

63.P.1. ?go? away? g::o? away?? ((*'rejection point in talk'*))

Pupil 1 rejects pupil 2's offer in line 63

64. P.2. Look, edit undo, edit undo ((*makes the 'offer' again as a 'request'*))

In line 64 pupil 2 takes over in his identity of 'director' again and he makes a definite request to carry out this action which then becomes an insistence because he does it.

65.P.1.(0.5) ??thuanks?? ((said sarcastically))

This is said in response to pupil 2's action because he has now taken the mouse and carried

out 'edit undo, edit undo'

66.P.2. No? ?shit!?

In this utterance pupil 2 is making an evaluation of what he has done and line 66 is said as an

expletive of this assessment because he has now deleted the whole page with an extra 'edit,

undo'.

(0.2)

67.P.1. Look, look? all he did, yeh? was

Pupil 1 has physically regained control of the mouse and has reconfigured the page, so that what is going on now is a contest about whose picture and text is put on the page.

68.P.2. Edit, undo (caps lock agen') ok an' then edit, undo ok? yeh but look?

Pupil 2 has taken the mouse and has 'undone' all of pupil 1's previous actions, and at this

point pupils 1 and 2 are physically fighting over the mouse.

70. P.3. Danny .hh, Danny (.) don't do anything, ok, ok?

Pupil 3's warning now becomes more of a threat which is indicated by the urgency and emphasis of the utterance and the intonation of voice and he is now telling pupil 1 that he does not want him to carry out any actions at all.

71. P.2. Ok, the director says what goes on, the trouble with you Danny is that you

72. won't take ?orders?

It can also be said that pupil 2 is '*resuming*' (Turner 1968), in lines 71-72, the *operative*

*identity* of 'the director'. Turner argues that 'when a person engages in 'doing resuming' he

therefore offers an identification.' (*original emphasis*). In doing this pupil 2 is collaborating

with pupil 3 in the 'issuing of a threat' by putting pupil 1 in his place and implying that he

should take orders from him as 'director'. In '*resuming*' the *operative identity* of 'the director' pupil 2 is giving the threat an 'authority for action' which is further corroborated

and reiterated in the next utterance of pupil 3 in line 73 below.

73. P.3. Now we definitely decide what goes on, ok

In this particular case it is as Turner describes, 'that socialized members are able both to 'see'

the identification which the style of entering an encounter proffers each other, and that they

are able to make the same assessment concerning third parties.' Their assessment being of

pupil 1, who in their eyes is the third party to the interaction and the 'actor' who is expected

to do as the 'director' tells him. In the utterance of line 73, pupil 3 collaboratively agrees that

‘ok now we are definitely going to carry out this threat’ and take over the direction of the

actions. This then poses the question as to who is the ‘first orderer’ in this instance, pupil 2

or pupil 3, or are they both ‘first orderer’ in collaboration?

#### **4.1 Conclusions: ‘resuming’ and collaborative identities**

In switching identities, which Sacks calls ‘operative identities’ (Sacks 1970) or ‘transient identities’ (Perry 2000), pupils positions at the computer are managed and transformed by ‘a series of identity changes that progressively provide further transforms, at the various rejection points (ie. rejections of offers made) in order to proceed one has to find not simply another offer-form to proceed with which is usable for and by the one to whom you are offering. Offers are made under the various relationships that parties might have to each other.’ (Sacks 1970) These are ‘done’ by the

virtue of a series of positions’ that a member has ‘relative to the place’ and the co-members

present and how they see themselves in relation to other.

When an offer is rejected, another offer is made and maybe changed in some particular way,

it may be offered in a more acceptable form or as a different version. So, how does an ‘offer

become a ‘threat’? ‘In some situations’, Sacks says, an ‘offer is simply the first version of

getting the person to do something’. Therefore as Sacks says, ‘an offer ’is seen ‘as something different than a ‘request’ or a ‘warning’ or a ‘threat’ rather there is an *ex-gradibus*

progression in which a rejected offer then becomes an insistence which is more likely to be

accepted. A rejected insistence or a request, ie. ‘would you like to do ‘X?’ becomes ‘please

do 'X'! and can then become a 'warning' as in, 'do 'X' or else...' implying that 'if you don't

accept this then I shall have to adopt this strategy. In turn a rejected warning may then become a 'threat', ie. if you don't comply then I shall do 'Y', which is more likely to instigate a compliance with the original request.

It can be seen from these sequences that in managing the 'local order' at the computer pupil 1 initially takes charge of the task organization but this is overtly contested by pupil 2 through the categorical work of the identity transforms of his *operative identity* of 'director'. Pupil 3 also contests pupil 1's management of the task

organization by covertly negotiating pupil 2's position and attaining a collaborative agreement through implying 'requests, offers and threats' which he 'manages' pupil 2 into

carrying out. However, bearing in mind Turner's notion of *resuming* that pupils 2 and 3

'are able both to 'see' the identification which the style of entering an encounter proffers each

other, and that they are able to make the same assessment concerning third parties' and that in

line 73, pupil 3 collaboratively agrees that 'ok now we are definitely going to carry out this

threat' and take over the direction of the actions, it can be asked who is the 'first orderer' in

this instance, pupil 2 or pupil 3? I would suggest that in this particular case pupils 2 and 3

have both taken on the identity of 'first orderer' in collaboration. This has obviously

generated a topic for further research and requires a more detailed analysis for which there is

not scope for in this paper.

#### **4.2 Conclusions: culture and identity**

Culture hinges on the social heritage of a community represented by systems of symbols, ideas, beliefs and aesthetic perceptions, values etc; demonstrable through distinctive forms of behaviour which is embedded in our collections of mental and spiritual artefacts.(Bauman 1999) Wetherell (2003) asks, 'How do children and adolescents categorise others, recognise and represent difference and develop local practices in relation to social category based identities in nurseries, schools, colleges and in family settings?' Wetherell also states that, 'Little is known about children's identity cultures (*my emphasis*) (Wetherell 2003). To reiterate Heap, the ways in which these activities are ordered and organized 'can only be known from within a culture, by being, or becoming a member.' (Heap 1988) and as Bauman (1999) indicates, 'the identity of a society is ultimately rooted in a more or less invariant network of social relations; the 'societal' nature of the society consists above all in a web of interdependencies developed and sustained by and through human interaction.'

What is already known and taken for granted, that is, what members have culturally derived, becomes apparent in 'members' everyday practices. So what provides for these 'cultural dimensions' in members everyday interactions? In this particular case the physical artefacts of the digital camera that was being used and built into the actual lesson as part and parcel of the practical demonstration as the teacher's instruction, and the audio recorder which was part of the research action, in that the children were aware of being part of the research and used it as a resource to perform and interact as part of it. This was 'done' by way of the categorical work of 'mapping

on' categories to transform from their current identities to usefully *operative* identities in a *transient* manner as described by Sacks which in part answers Wetherell's inquiry and serves to make Watson's point more salient that sequential talk, ie. I-C-R-E's (*formal talk/institutional talk*), is reliant on the realization of categories, categories that draw culture and identity.

### **Appendix: Transcription conventions**

These transcription symbols are taken from those described in the appendices in George Psathas (1995) and is based on the system developed by Gail Jefferson for use in Conversation Analysis

- ( ) word(s) spoken but not audible
  - (was) best guess for word(s) spoken
  - (( )) transcriber's description
  - but emphasis of word
  - Edit emphasis of letters, thus certain sounds within the word
  - BUT** louder emphasis, almost shouting
  - [no the point at which an overlap occurs
  - [[no the point at which multiple overlaps occur
  - = latches on to next line s a continuation of utterance
  - not rising intonation
  - orders? lower intonation
  - °up° talk that has a noticeably softer volume than the surrounding talk
  - do::on't extended sound
  - (h) or .h an in-breath, as in a gasp or sobbing
  - hh. an out- breath, as in a sigh or laughter
  - (0.3) pauses, timed in tenths of seconds
  - (.) pause, one tenth of second
- Punctuation marks do not denote grammatical correctness, they indicate speech inflection
- please? a question mark indicates a rising intonation

away!                    an exclamation mark indicates an animated tone

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Note: This paper includes incorporations of ideas in developmental stage, as expressed in an earlier paper *What Counts as Reading When Reading Counts: Toward a Sociology of Reading* presented at the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association annual meeting New Brunswick, May 1977.

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