

LEA – LEFE a.a. 2008-09

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1. What is conversation?
2. Are there differences between written English and spoken English?
3. Is written English more important than spoken English?
4. What is a text? Are texts written or oral?
5. What is the purpose of discourse analysis?
6. What is the role of context in discourse?
7. Does it influence *form* and *meaning*?

A little experiment...

Listen to the story your friend has to tell and then try to answer the following questions:

- Is the story embarrassing?
- Is the story funny?
- How is your friend feeling at the moment? Embarrassed? Amused? Sad? Happy?
- How do you know?

Some other considerations...

- How do you know what is appropriate and what is not?
- Do we speak always in the same way no matter what the situation is?
- How do we learn about *appropriateness*?

Another little experiment...

The following remarks are all likely to be spoken by parents attempting to teach young children the finer points of conversation. Consider them and discuss the rule of conversation they could be asking the child to learn...

- Don't interrupt me while I'm speaking
- Speak when you're spoken to.
- What's the magic word?
- Don't tell me what to do.
- Don't say that in front of your Gran.
- Don't say 'what', say 'pardon'.

Another experiment...

Think about all the conversations you had today. They need not be about extremely important matters. Even trivial conversational exchanges must be considered. Choose some of the conversations that you had and try to decide what their purpose was. What did you hope to achieve? For what do you value conversation most?

Another experiment...

Look at the following examples of spoken language. Decide what type of conversation or genre you feel the example has to come from. Explain what linguistic feature helped you define the nature of the conversation.

- Guess what I did at the weekend!
- Thank you very much for listening and if there are any questions, we'll just take them now.
- I put it to you that, at the time of the accident, you were doing in excess of the speed limit.
- Good morning. Barnet Leisure Centre. How can we help you?
- Hallo number one, what's your name and where do you come from?
- Right, we're going on, come on, shush please, we're going on today to look at...
- How do you do?

### **Summing up...**

We revised the first part of the course. We discussed about general features of conversation through practical activities. We pointed out how conversation is more than words. It has a structure (partly conventional), it serves certain purposes which shape conversation itself, also by reason of the context. Conversation can be classified according to its conventionalised structure and to its purpose.