

## Replicating features of natural discourse in the preparation of dialogues for B1 learners

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### 1. Preamble

There appears to be a discrepancy between the language that is presented to learners in textbooks and that which they are likely to encounter when communicating in that language in a real-world L2 situation. These contrasts concern the pragmatics of language as communication rather than as academic subject. As most students hope to be able to use their English outside the classroom, they need not only grammatical structures and the vocabulary necessary to fill them, but also a range of communication skills which go beyond the simple learning of word forms. The importance of this is highlighted in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (see especially 108-130), where communicative competence in a linguistic setting is defined as “knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated.” (ibid. 109). It is worth stressing that “well-formed” and “meaningful” are not the same thing, and that language teaching’s tendency to focus on the former has created a gap between what students are taught and what they are in fact required to know. Wong makes the point that

[I]f one of the goals of language education is to teach our students to be communicatively competent, perhaps we ought to consider whether our textbooks model for language learners the sorts of discourse patterns and sequence structures that recur in ordinary [...] interaction. (Wong 2002: 38)

The movement towards using authentic materials in EFL is having some effect, but authentic, natural language samples are on the whole restricted to the advanced levels. Naturally-occurring language<sup>1</sup> is complex, challenging and confusing, to an extent that is deemed counter-productive for lower-level students; and yet they too need exposure to language in use.

Complete naturalness is probably impossible in the classroom, but the feeling that one is engaging in an authentic activity is important to the learner, as is the feeling that one is being taught authentic and naturally

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<sup>1</sup> *Naturally-occurring language* is created to achieve some communicative end, and contrasts with language which is constructed for illustrative purposes in a teaching context.

occurring structures and vocabulary to use in simulations of real-life talk.  
(McCarthy 1991: 145)

This article will focus on service encounters – semi-structured conversations which a student is likely to encounter in the L2, comparing textbook depictions with naturally-occurring examples from the British Spoken sub-corpus of the Bank of English<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Features of spontaneous conversation

The starting point for writing (scripted) listening exercises for language learners has to be the analysis of spontaneous spoken production, if the end product is to display any real semblance to natural language. There is no shortage of literature on the subject, but let us limit the discussion to some of the more general points. In the first place, it is useful to distinguish between monological production and conversation. While monologue can be substantially pre-rehearsed, conversation necessarily involves interaction. The speaker is therefore thrust into a situation in which s/he must cope with the unexpected, in the form of the speech and other responses of his/her interlocutor. This unavoidable element can be predicted to a degree, especially in the case of service encounters where the discourse is largely conventionalised, but it remains a matter to be negotiated in real time.

Leech (1998) presents a useful model of “the conditions operating in conversation which help explain *why* the characteristics of conversational grammar are as they are” (ibid. 6), articulated under seven headings. These will be discussed briefly and illustrated with corpus examples of service encounters.

*1. Conversation takes place in a shared context.* Interlocutors make reference to each other and information and/or objects that are contextually relevant. In a service encounter, contextually relevant information tends to involve products and services, payment and, typically in English, discussions regarding the weather. In the example below, a shop assistant (F01) and customer (M0X) are discussing the virtues of credit cards over cash, the matter having arisen because of the customer’s wish to pay by credit card:

<F01> Mind you **it's** probably safer with **that** though isn't it?  
<tc text=laughs> **Really you know.**  
<M0X> Well there you go yeah that's one way of looking at it  
I suppose. <tc text=laughs> Yes.

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<sup>2</sup> The author expresses her gratitude to HarperCollins/ The University of Birmingham for permission to use this data.

Leech (ibid: 6) includes in this category the use of personal pronouns and substitute forms (pronouns such as *it* and *that*; generic verbs such as *do*), as well as ellipsis (see also Carter & McCarthy 1995: 145-148 on this point), and non-clausal material (*Really you know*).

2. *Conversation avoids elaboration or specification of meaning.* The shared context of situation that a conversation presupposes allows the interlocutors to relying on visual cues and implicit understanding. Leech defines this feature in terms of its low lexical density (Stubbs 1996), short length of phrases, and the use of filler adverbials (such as *sort of* and *like*). In the following extract the conversation is taking place in a tourist information office. It can be surmised that *one* is taken to mean “a brochure”, though this word is not mentioned.

<F01> We've run out of **the waterways one**. Which **other one** did  
you want?  
<M0X> **The one on railways. That one**  
<F01> The coal railway.  
<M0X> The coal. Yeah. <tc text=pause>

3. *Conversation is interactive.* This statement, like the first, may seem self-evident. This category includes interaction that is not strictly related to turn-taking, as demonstrated in the use of backchannels (*Yeah right okay*) and other responses (*thank you*), and discourse markers (*I was going to say*) (Leech 1998: 6-7). This example occurs in the same conversation as that for statement 1 above, and the topic of conversation is still the credit card.

<F01> <tc text=pause> **Can you press on it pretty hard** 'cos  
sometimes they don't go through.  
<M0X> **Yeah right okay** I'll <tc text=pause>  
<F01> **Thank you.**  
<M0X> I think that should have gone through.  
<F01> **I was going to say** it looks like it.

Again, knowledge of the situational context allows us to decipher the first turn as directed at the shop assistant who is running the card through a magnetic reader. This is an indirect imperative; imperatives and questions too being characteristic of conversational interactivity (ibid: 7).

4. *Conversation is expressive of personal politeness, emotion and attitude.* Much of the content of conversation revolves around the use of formulaic language, and this is especially the case in service encounters where greetings and phatic communion are commonplace. The usual polite formulæ (*thanks a lot, Thank you kindly*) and exclamations (*Lovely*) are present. An indication of

the friendly and informal nature of the conversation can be found in the presence of laughter (<tc text=laughs>), and there is a humorous response (*Oh get in there*) which appears to be a response to an extra-linguistic gesture. Other indicators of emotion or attitude that Leech mentions (ibid. 7), which are not present in this excerpt include interjections (*ooh, wow*), expletives (*bloody hell*) and familiarizing vocatives (*love, mate*).

<F01> <tc text=laughs> Right thanks a lot.  
 <M0X> **Lovely. Thank you kindly.**  
 <F01> Thank you. <tc text=pause>  
 <M0X> **Oh get in there.**  
 <F01> <tc text=laughs>

5. *Conversation takes place in real time.* The real-time processing of speech gives rise to disfluency (pauses, filler phrases, repetition, incompleteness [*Oh I thought*], and so on), contracted forms (*I wouldn't*), prefaces and end tags (ibid. 7). The example provided here also illustrates turn-taking to finish off sentences (indicated by square brackets on the transcript), and the extra-linguistic real-time feature of the weather as a constant in phatic communion.

<F01> Cold out there still.  
 <M0X> No it's not bad at all really.  
 <F01> **Oh I thought** [...  
 <M0X> **[It's not that cold.**  
 <F01> Oh.  
 <M0X> Or it might be just me I've just finished training so  
**[I wouldn't**  
 <F01> **[Oh you'll be a bit hot then.** <tc text=laughs>  
 <M0X> **[I wouldn't feel the cold.**

6. *Conversation has a restricted and repetitive repertoire.* Formulae are by no means restricted to greetings and other social pleasantries. Leech cites *can I have a* (ibid. 8) as a typical example of formulaic language in conversation, and service encounters are especially likely to feature this phrase. The highly restricted vocabulary featured in this example, and in those above, testify to Leech's claim that "[c]onversation has the lowest type-token ratio" of all text types, tending to use "a few 'favourite' items." (ibid. 8).

<F01> Two eighty-six love please. **Thank you.**  
 <F0X> **Thank you.** <tc text=pause>  
 <M0X> And erm **can I have** er **a packet of** Old Holborn **please** the  
 three seventeen.  
 <F01> Three twenty-two please.  
 <M0X> **Thanks.**  
 <F01> **Thank you.**

7. *Conversation enjoys a vernacular range of expression.* The spoken language is the natural home of ungrammatical and non-standard forms. Leech cites morphological forms (e.g. *innit* and *ain't*), morphosyntactic forms (e.g. *don't* with a third person subject), and syntactic forms (e.g. double negatives) (ibid. 7). The service encounters analysed in the corpus data did not show a great many non-standard forms; in the example below *thank you* is rendered as *ta*.

<F01> Seventy-nine love please. Thanks.  
<MOX> Actually I'm going to have something else <ZGY>  
<F01> <ZGY> <tc text=pause> **Ta**. Fifty-five.

Leech's statements are not stand-alone items, as may have been gleaned from the commentary above. The categories overlap and interconnect, and together constitute what he calls "a special grammar of conversation" (ibid. 9). But how do these categories and the examples used to illustrate them compare with the kind of language that is presented to language learners? Section 3 will critique a number of excerpts from service encounters found in some of the most widely-used English language textbooks at B1/ intermediate level, contrasting them with comparable excerpts from Bank of English corpus in order to highlight their shortcomings. Ways in which their content might be rendered more natural sounding. are suggested.

### 3. Textbook service encounters

The data-set for this critique constitutes all the scripted service-encounter dialogues in the following intermediate-level course books, all of which are easily obtainable and enjoy widespread popularity with EFL teachers: *Headway* (Soars & Soars 1996), *English File* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig 1999), *Reward* (Greenall, S. 1994), and *Cutting Edge* (Cunningham & Moor 1998). The dialogues in *Clockwise* (Forsyth 2000) do not appear to be scripted – although this may simply be due to good scriptwriting – and have not been included for this reason. The dialogues were analysed in the context of the exercise in which they were presented, taking account of all the extra-linguistic information provided to set the scene and identify the participants. The dialogues presented in this section appear in the form of short citations but can be traced in full, with their respective exercises, by following up the references provided.

The most evident difference between the textbook dialogues and those in the corpus lies in the amount of information provided. Despite the fact that all the listening exercises have pre-listening tasks and information about the context in which the conversation occurs, usually featuring photographs in addition to text, there is a highly unnatural level of lexical repetition to be found in the

dialogues. Listening exercises tend to attempt to do too much, combining exposure to the spoken language with rehearsal of the grammatical forms and lexis under study, as well as an introduction to cultural norms. These things are all important, but their incorporation in a listening exercise is not always appropriate. Their presence is dictated by the task that the student has to complete – usually involving some form of gap-fill exercise (see especially 3.1 below), in which the objective is to identify and reproduce information and/or language items. Such an exercise requires these items to be reinforced by means of repetition which all too often results in exchanges such as:

Sales assistant	Right, and how would you like to pay, sir?
Customer	<b>I'd like to pay by credit card, please.</b>

(Cutting Edge: exercise p 99, transcript p 164)

The repetition of *would like to pay* reinforces the structure, but it is unnatural to repeat a structure in this way: the typical answer to this question is not a full sentence but simply the adverbial phrase *by credit card*, as here:

Booking office	How would you like to pay?
Pieter	<b>By credit card. Visa.</b>

(English File: exercise p 90, transcript p 158)

Although it is generally unnecessary to specify both *credit card* and *Visa*, this extract provides a valid alternative between the over-specified, EFL English and a naturally-occurring example such as:

<M0X>	<b>Er do you take Visa?</b>
<F01>	We do yeah.

Certainly, the *English File* version is the most useful one for a student to hear, learn and subsequently use, and it is precisely this latter criterion that must be at the fore in a listening exercise. The reason for teaching this kind of language is that the student is expected to need to be able to use it in the real world. The student is not in a position to be able to judge what is natural and what is not, so this responsibility must necessarily lie with the teacher and the textbook, which are for most students the only points of contact with the language that they are learning. If the language presented as a model sounds stilted, the student adopting it will lack fluency and sound foreign. This only perpetuates Sinclair's assertion that

Sentences which are not natural do occur. Typically they occur in text composed for purposes other than direct communication, and in the speech and writing of non-native speakers. (Sinclair 1984: 203)

Over-specification is not restricted to language items. All too often the dialogue,

written for a task, provides information for the task which would be out-of-place in a real-world situation. The following example from *Cutting Edge* is intended to serve as a model for students to subsequently adopt in a situation-based production exercise. It is accompanied with a colour photograph of the family (mother, student son and young daughter) at the museum ticket desk; there is a notice on the front of the desk which is too small to be legible, but it is likely that it refers to ticket prices and eligibility for concession rates, this being quite standard practice in museums and galleries. Given this information, we would expect the mother to ask how much it costs to enter the museum, and that the seller would assume she meant for herself, her son (of student age) and young daughter (obviously of child concession age). Instead, we are presented with a dialogue in which not only does the mother feel she has to specify *the entrance* and *the tickets*, but she also has to make the point that her son is a *full-time student*, again over-specifying, as in the UK it is taken for granted that students are full-time.

Mother	Excuse me, how much is <b>the entrance</b> ? How much are <b>the tickets</b> ?
Ticket seller	It's £5.50 <b>for adults</b> .
M	£5.50 ... okay ... tell me, is there a <b>reduction for students</b> ? My son is a <b>full-time student</b> , you see.
T	Yes, it's £2.75 for <b>full-time students with a student identity card</b> ... and it's free for <b>children under twelve</b> .

*(Cutting Edge: exercise p99, transcript p164)*

It is only at the end of the dialogue, just before paying, that she remembers to mention that her daughter too is eligible for a concession fare.

M	[...] Here's the card – <b>oh, my daughter's ten so she goes free</b> .
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*(ibid. 164)*

The dialogue reflects this type of situation inaccurately: the interlocutors' linguistic behaviour is stilted and formal, and the 'model' structures presented are unnatural – *How much is the entrance?*, rather than *How much is it?*, a *reduction for students* instead of a *student discount*. This surely cannot be helpful to a student who hopes to be able to use English in a similar situation. Additionally, the reiteration of *full-time student* is unnecessary in the dialogue, as it is a piece of cultural information that would be more usefully included in a note for the teacher: it is not the job of a listening exercise to be a cultural mediator, when this can be done by the teacher as and when necessary.

The shift away from everyday situations and the language they habitually generate has as much to do with pragmatic reality as the linguistic. The

following two excerpts contain gaffes that may well go unnoticed by teacher and students alike. In the first excerpt, the woman is offered traveller's cheques in Italian lira, when traveller's cheques are known to be issued only for the main world currencies which can then be exchanged for cash at the appropriate exchange rate. She is then asked for proof of identity, again anomalous in such situations in the UK<sup>3</sup>. In the second, the Visa number has 13 rather than 16 figures. These are mere details, but they contribute to an overall impression of detachment and isolation from the reality of language in use.

- Woman I'd like two hundred pounds worth of **Italian lira**, please.  
Cashier **Traveller's cheques or cash?**  
W Traveller's cheques.  
C **Could I have your passport, please?** Thank you.  
*(Reward: exercise p11, transcript p113)*
- Customer OK. It's a Visa card, number **4929 502 428 508**  
*(Headway: exercise p23 transcript p128)*

### 3.1 Task-based learning?

The authenticity of text goes hand in hand with the authenticity of a task. In many listening exercises, the content of the task is at odds with the text type. The example brought here is not atypical. The dialogue takes the form of a service encounter in a Greek café, but the task that the student has to complete is a "Tourist office visitor's survey", completing the customer's personal details. These include the location and period of his visit, his reason for visiting the country, his marital status, nationality, occupation and employer. (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig 1999: 90). At first glance, it is difficult to imagine how all this information could be contained within the setting of a service encounter. In fact, the service encounter acts as a frame for an informal chat between the journalist and the waiter. This in itself is not so very unusual, but in common with the textbook examples already discussed, this dialogue falls prey to over-specification and information overload. The short exchanges that Leech (1998: 6) tells us are characteristic of conversation, and that we would especially expect in conversations between strangers, are generally present, but for the fact that contextually irrelevant information has to be introduced in order for the student to complete the tourist survey task. The second full turn of the dialogue is reproduced below:

- W Of course. ... Here you are, sir. Is this your first time **in Athens?**

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<sup>3</sup> This practice is now becoming more common in response to an increase in international crime, but this was not the case when the dialogue was written.



J No, no, I've been here many times **but not at this time of year, because my wife doesn't really like the heat, and there are so many tourists. This is the first time I've been here in August, though.**

(English File: exercise p93, transcript p158)

As the dialogue proceeds, the student will indeed discover the journalist's reason for visiting, his nationality, and so on. The information is reiterated and increasingly specific (*travel article, travel writer, journalist*, rather than simply *article, writer*, end of turn; and *The Times, American, The New York Times, The Sunday Times, British*, rather than *The Times, American, British*).

J I'm here to write a **travel article**.

W So, you are a **travel writer** then?

J Well, a **journalist**. I work for **The Times**.

W You are **American** then?

J No, not **The New York Times, The Sunday Times**. I'm **British**.

(*ibid.* 158)

This is a model dialogue precisely because the listener is given the opportunity to hear all the information required to complete the task. Yet the form of the discourse is unnatural and contextually more appropriate to an interview situation than to a service-encounter. The format of the task – a questionnaire for specific information regarding tourism – sits uneasily on the format upon which the dialogue is based, introducing topics which otherwise would not appear, and suppressing others that would be more likely, such as the weather and other contextually-appropriate subjects. As Warren tells us:

[C]ontext-dependent language is a feature of naturalness in conversation. Conversely, failure to employ context in conversation produces a discourse which is unnatural. (Warren 1993: 37)

The waiter-journalist dialogue is unnatural precisely because it does not address expected topics, i.e. those which are expected as a matter of pragmatic relevance and not in the context of the task set. The corpus examples of service encounters, on the other hand, abound with references to methods of payment as well as the very British topic of the weather:

<MOX> Er it's starting to chill down again tonight.

<F01> Is it?

<MOX> Mm.

<F01> Oh dear.

### **3.2 Discussion**

The various incongruities in text-book service-encounter dialogues that have been expounded upon in 3 and 3.1 may be considered by some to be petty details that can be overlooked with no damage being done. Yet in so doing, a very serious issue is dismissed. Students look to the language that they have been exposed to in order to orientate themselves in the foreign-language setting. If they have listened to dialogues which misrepresent the reality of that setting, they are bound to fall into linguistic and cultural traps. At best they will produce stilted utterances; at worst they will embarrass themselves or others. It is only fair, then, that the language they are exposed to reflects authentic discourse as accurately as possible. This is a simple matter for advanced students who can cope with spontaneous speech at native speed, but for learners at Threshold level, it is more complicated. Some sort of compromise has to be reached between the messiness of natural speech and the regular orderliness that tends to make up the vast majority of listening materials for students at this level. Section 4 will address this, with reference to materials devised by the current author for self-access language materials in CILTA's ALTAIR<sup>4</sup> project.

### **4. Service encounters for self-access students**

It can be seen that the features of conversation that Leech notes (c.f. section 2) are barely adhered to in the textbook examples observed in sections 3-3.2. There is over-specification rather than under-specification and ellipsis, distinct turn-taking with no backchannelling, exclamations or interruptions, and none of the normal disfluency that one would expect to come across in everyday conversations. Although there are good reasons not to include all of these natural elements all of the time, given the linguistic noise that they generate, it is important to introduce some of them some of the time, in order to expose students to the forms, and to give them an insight into how real conversations work. In particular, it is very useful for students to realise that disfluency is common in native speaker discourse as well as that involving non-native speakers; so too is misunderstanding and/or mishearing. By providing models relating to these specific aspects of listening, students are given an extra tool to aid them in their first-hand experiences of using the language: listening and speaking are, after all, inextricably linked.

Materials written for the self-access centre have to take into consideration that the students using them may not have any contact at all with a teacher, and that

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<sup>4</sup> Auto-apprendimento Linguistico Tecnicamente Avanzato In Rete (cf. R. Rossini-Favretti, this volume).

those materials may well be the only exposure that they will have to the language. For this reason it is paramount that the language presented is as natural as possible. In writing dialogues for B1 self-access modules, a conscious effort was made to imagine the dynamics of the situation to be represented, and to reproduce the linguistic interaction as faithfully as possible; in short, a reflective approach was taken, based on personal experience of using and hearing the language in native-speaker settings. This approach stemmed from dissatisfaction with textbook listening materials, and a desire to improve the quality of the product that CILTA could offer its students. The dialogues could be further improved with more detailed reference to corpus examples and corpus-based studies, but are reproduced here in their original form.

In 3 (above) a number of exchanges relating to credit card payment were reproduced. Of course, these assume that the most common form of card payment is indeed the credit card. For a student, however, it is the debit card *Switch*. This form of payment is introduced in the student shop dialogue, where it is more contextually-appropriate than *credit card*. A hypertext link to a cultural note explains that *Switch* is the UK equivalent of *Bancomat*.

Sylvia: Can I pay **by Switch**?  
Assistant: **Only for purchases over five pounds**. Have you got enough in cash, love?  
Sylvia: Erm... Yeah.

The assistant's formulaic reply has a formal ring to it, but he is simply repeating verbatim the shop's (written) policy on card payment: he immediately switches back to the vernacular, finishing off with what Leech (1998: 7) calls a "familiarizing vocative": *love*.

The bank module again focuses on formulae, but allows the personal interaction of customer and cashier to develop. There is some collaborative work in the following exchange where Sylvia is buying traveller's cheques (in Euros):

Sylvia: Maybe I should get some cash too...  
Cashier: How about three hundred and fifty in €50 cheques, and the other fifty-five in notes?

International textbook publishers are wary of possible offence that language materials may cause to their prospective students and teachers. It is therefore rare to find people depicted buying cigarettes or alcohol, even though these are everyday activities in Anglophone culture. With the target audience of ALTAIR no such cultural problems arose, so buying cigarettes was included in the student shop encounter, introducing the appropriate linguistic formula:

Sylvia: [...] And **ten Marlboro lights**, please.  
Assistant: I'm afraid we only stock **twenties**. Is that OK?

Knowing formulæ for buying cigarettes, beer and lottery tickets is not essential to the language learner, but it is reassuring for a student to know that s/he can make these requests appropriately. Such actions are part and parcel of the student experience, and there is no point being moralistic about the content, nor assuming that a student who already knows how to ask for a cup of coffee will know how to ask (appropriately) for a packet of cigarettes or a drink in a pub.

A further situation that can and does arise is this:

Sylvia: Do you have *The Guardian*? **I couldn't find it.**  
Assistant: Oh, I think **we've sold out.**

Although it is assumed that the newspapers are laid out so that the customer can scan them, as is standard practice in the UK, this customer was unable to find the one she wanted and therefore had to ask the shop assistant. It is thus necessary to specify *I couldn't find it* – making the turn contextually relevant. The response is then to assume that there are none left, and also introduces a useful expression *we've sold out* which is picked up in one of the exercises on following pages. As happens in real life, customers ask for information as and when it is required, and shop assistants do not tend to offer unsolicited information. This fact of pragmatic reality is often forgotten when writing materials for learners.

Finally, the fact that native speakers are imperfect speakers of the language is brought to the fore. This not only reassures language learners that they too are allowed to be imperfect, but gives an example of repair strategies and clarification. The example provided here starts with a question that the customer was not anticipating, with relevant responses, and is followed up by specification (*The apple. Granny smith?*):

Assistant: That's a granny smith, is it?  
Sylvia: **What? Sorry?**  
Assistant: **The apple. Granny smith?**  
Sylvia: Oh, yes, I think so.

The examples shown here provide an overview of what can be done with listening materials to make them sound native-like, while still being controlled for learners. One of the most important features has in fact been the scripted use of pauses and backchannels, which make the rhythm of the language appear more natural. Textbook dialogues rarely feature these, preferring fluent sentence-length turns and clear turn-taking. While these tactics aid students in

the task of listening, they do little to prepare them for the language that they will encounter in analogous situations.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

It is important to note the structures and formulæ that native speakers use. The discrepancies that arise between EFL materials and the real world are all too often caused by a lack of reflection, on the part of the materials writers, of how they themselves behave linguistically in given situations. It can be profitable to engage in a little strategic eavesdropping in order to take into account the language use of native speakers, to counter the effects of over-exposure to the distortions of textbook materials. Spoken language corpora too can aid and inform the realisation of natural-sounding text, because "...native-speaker intuitions about the language are not necessarily sufficient for the development of naturalistic textbook materials." (Wong 2002:54).

If a native-like dialogue is to be created, it must be based on observation of natives in action, and adapted in a way that limits the distracting linguistic noise that students have yet to learn to filter out. Backchannels and pauses should be included, because they help split up the flow of speech into information-bearing chunks. Lexical items should not be repeated often but rather substituted by vague language (*stuff, thing*), pronouns and deixis wherever possible. Repetition of the same item within a text may well make it easier for the student to hear and recognise a word, but it is more helpful to supply a native-like text which can be listened to an unlimited number of times, in whole or in part, as is the case with the mp3 files used in the ALTAIR materials.

Information should not be anticipated artificially, as is all too often the case in listening exercises. Natives expect information to become more specific as a conversation progresses. They will make requests for clarification when necessary, as will they contradict and/or correct. Natives speaking in real time instinctively know how best to present given and new information, and this follows a logic that students are able to follow with no difficulty. Shared knowledge and contextual information that is essential to the understanding of the dialogue should be outlined in the accompanying text rather than within the dialogue itself, as the student is in a better position to understand the content of the dialogue if s/he has some knowledge of the situation in which it is occurring, and native speech rarely specifies information about the context of situation in which it occurs.

By reconnecting course materials to language as it is used by natives, students can be taught to cope with and in the L2 outside the educational environment.

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