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A comparison of textbook and authentic interactions

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Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation into the discourse features of seven dialogues published in coursebooks between 1981 and 1997, and contrasts

them with comparable authentic interactions. It finds that the textbook dialogues differ considerably from their authentic equivalents across a range of discourse features: length and turn-taking patterns, lexical density, number of false starts and repetitions, pausing, frequency of terminal overlap or latching, and the use of hesitation devices and back-channelling. The implications of the inclusion or absence of these features in textbooks are discussed with reference to materials writers, teachers, and learners. Finally, these results are contrasted with figures from more recent coursebooks which suggest that contrived dialogues are beginning to incorporate more natural discourse features.

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