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Exploring Thai EFL Undergrads' Challenges in Constructing and Sequencing Turns to Make Friends

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Abstract

To identify challenging areas to be addressed in English conversation lessons, this study examines how Thai EFL learners construct and sequence their turns in making conversation to fulfill the social goal of making friends. Twelve non-English major undergraduates enrolled in a selective English conversation course were engaged in unscripted role-play conversations where they had to introduce their friends and made small talk before parting. Their conversations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed via the lens of Conversation Analysis (CA). Close analyses of the turn and sequence organization of these conversations revealed the students' challenges in four areas: including (1) completing an opening sequence, (2) introducing others (3) offering relevant information to establish a social relationship, and (4) ending the conversation. An abrupt, unsignalled initiation of a new topic was found in the opening part of the conversation which could disrupt its flow. In the centering part, student mediators failed not only to offer the name of the person introduced to recipients but also to expand their turns to build a rapport and show interest in the conversation partner. Lastly, in the closing part, they ended the conversation swiftly without any pre-closing sequences. These findings shed light on interactional skills these EFL learners need to master in addition to skills in manipulating linguistic resources to improve their conversation abilities and to make the interaction flow more smoothly and effectively.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis (CA), EFL Interactional Skills, English Conversation Lessons, Introduction Sequence, Thai EFL Learners

1. Introduction

English has been a very important medium for interaction among people across the globe in both formal and informal situations. Many countries have long made English a compulsory course in school curriculum. Thai undergraduates have in particular started taking English lessons since the age of six or seven or in grade 1 (Prathom 1) (Thai Ministry of Education, 2016). They have learned all the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing as well as grammar for over 10 years; nevertheless, the English proficiency of the majority of Thais has not yet ranked at a high level according to various test measures. Waluyo (2019), for instance, reported that the English proficiency level of the majority of university students remains only at A2, considered basic users in the

global scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This means they are able to understand mainly simple sentences and commonly used expressions and communicate mainly on routine matters. Furthermore, English First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) in 2022, calculated from test data of over 2-million test takers worldwide who did the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) online, shows that Thailand was in the very low proficiency band (EF EPI scores less than 450). This suggested that these test takers could only introduce themselves in a basic way, give easy directions, and comprehend simple expressions. In addition, Education Testing Service (ETS) (2021) revealed that the average score of Thais taking the TOEFL IBT between January - December 2021 was 83 out of 120, regarded as an intermediate level of proficiency on the TOEFL scoring scale. When compared with other countries, the Thais seemingly struggled most with reading and speaking skills.

Speaking has in fact proven the most challenging productive skill for most Thai EFL learners to master. Suwannatrai et al. (2022) reported that Thai learners did not feel confident when engaged in real-time talk-in-interaction. Their level of anxiety was reportedly rather high when speaking English to both foreigners and classmates (Imsa-ard, 2020). The learners were found to experience difficulties in many areas, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Chema et al., 2023). Just as argued in Liu (2011) and Seedhouse (2004), it will be helpful to pinpoint areas in which EFL learners struggle to participate in English conversation. Teachers can then design more successful interventions to help them become more confident and potent communicators, enhancing both their communicative and interactional competence.

While most studies have examined learners' challenges in using linguistic resources in conversation, there has hardly been any research examining how they manipulate interactional resources such as turns and sequences when engaged in such an ordinary social activity as making new friends. Therefore, this study, conducted as a component of a larger study examining the efficacy of a Conversation Analysis (CA)-informed approach to EFL conversation teaching, aimed to examine how Thai EFL learners construct and sequence their turns to accomplish this common social goal. CA, the framework established by Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff, was adopted to examine these learners' turn construction and sequential organization of talk and challenges they faced when performing social actions involved in this social activity in the target language. Undeniably one of the most powerful tools to dissect conversation, CA has its main goal of uncovering the interactional order and organization of genuine talk-in-interaction (Liddicoat, 2007; Markee, 2009; Seedhouse, 2005). With this invaluable tool, we can learn how talk participants methodically understand, interpret, and respond to each other in order to achieve their interactional objectives. Additionally, CA provides insights into the way social meaning is constructed through language use in everyday interaction (Goodwin, 1981; Heritage & Clayman, 2010). In language teaching, EFL teachers can genuinely benefit from employing CA to disclose how their students use L2 in real-life interaction (Barraja-Rohan, 2011) and to design English lessons to enhance their conversation skills.

1.2 Interactional Practices in Conversation

The method of Conversation Analysis (CA) allows for the revelation of interactional practices, including turn-taking, sequencing, overall structuring, and repair practices, as described by Wong and Waring (2010). These practices provide a holistic and detailed insight into how language is used and interpreted during communication at a detailed level. Here are the central practices pertinent to the application of CA in this study.

Undoubtedly, one of the most fundamental and crucial components of talk-in-interaction is the turn-taking system (Schegloff, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010). It involves the creation of turn-constructive units (TCUs) which serve as the building blocks for completing communicative acts through the use of various language resources, including speech sounds, vocabulary, grammar, and melody. These TCUs can be in different forms, such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or even audible sounds, as demonstrated in Example (1) at lines 4, 3, 6, and 1, respectively.

Excerpt (1) [CA ASI 2004 data—modified]

01	→ ((ring))	(an audible sound)
02	(5.0)	
03	Shelley: → District attorney's office.	(a phrase)

- 04 Debbie: → Shelley:, (a word)
 05 Shelley: Debbie,=
 06 Debbie: → ↑what is the dea::l. (a sentence)
 07 Shelley: what do you ↑mean.
 (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018; Wong & Waring, 2010)

TCUs also possess allocational properties evident in the occurrence of a transition relevance place (TRP) at the end of each TCU that enables the exchange of speaker roles. Thus, the ability to project TRPs is a crucial skill for EFL learners to navigate successfully through natural conversation. In order to have this skill, they require mastery of phonological, grammatical, and pragmatic resources in the target language. For example, they must be capable of identifying the beginning, continuation, or end of a turn based on prosodic cues, including leveling, rising, or falling intonation. Additionally, they must be able to recognize the completion of sentences, clauses, phrases, or words with grammar knowledge. Lastly, they also need to realize actions performed by speakers' utterances such as invitations, offers, or requests.

However, in talk-in-interaction, there might be some situations where it may not be feasible to wait for a TRP to initiate a turn. Thus, it is also vital for learners to acquire and develop skills related to early turn entry as well as next-speaker self-selection, including practices such as (1) overlapping, (2) using turn entry devices, (3) recycling turn beginning, and (4) making a nonverbal start (Wong & Waring, 2010). Seedhouse and Weninger (2019) affirmed that the ability to appropriately use these turn-taking practices can help learners to enhance their interactional competence and promote successful interaction in the target language.

Speakers can particularly use overlap to start their turns early in a conversation. It is very important to be able to overlap at the right time by closely monitoring TRPs through various linguistic cues. For example, a speaker can start their turn just right before the end of the previous speaker's final sound, known as transitional overlap. In Excerpt (2) provided below, Bette starts speaking at the same time as the final sound of the word "taxed" is pronounced in line 02.

- Excerpt (2) [Jefferson, 1983, p.3, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]
 01 Andrea: The first bit of income isn't tax[ed
 02 Bette: → [No: that's right,
 03 mm;

Another example of overlap can be seen in the following excerpt, where Ann starts accepting Bella's invitation by uttering "I would like to." in line 02 as soon as the possibly turn-ending word "times" is produced by Bella in line 01.

- Excerpt (3) [Heritage, 1984, SBL 10:12]
 01 Bella: Why don't you come and see me some [time.
 02 Ann: → [I would like to.
 03 Bella: I would like you to.

Occasionally, speakers may initiate their turn as soon as they perceive the gist of the previous speaker's statements, referred to as "recognitional overlap." As demonstrated in Excerpt (4), Heather promptly commences his turn in line 02 right after he grasps the content of Steven's upcoming remark.

- Excerpt (4) [Jefferson, 1983, p.18—modified, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]
 01 Steven: A very ha[ppy New Ye]ar. (to the-)
 02 Heather: → [Thank you:] a nd a happy ().

In addition to the overlap, speakers can also employ various turn-entry devices or turn-initial items such as "well", "but", "and", "so", "you know", or "yeah" to enter a turn space. These devices not only help minimize the negative impact of an overlap but also soften the abruptness of the overlap, and facilitate the smooth transition to the next turn without impairing the beginning of a new turn (Schegloff, 1987; Wong & Waring, 2010). As exemplified in

Excerpt (5), Ellen applies the turn-entry device "well" to introduce her overlapping turn in line 04, allowing her to become the next speaker after Tamar has completed her turn in line 03.

Excerpt (5) [Wong & Waring, 2010, p41 - Waring seminar data]
 01 Tamar: so that could be related to the oral tradition how you
 02 tell a story not just to how you process the
 03 infor[mation.]
 04 Ellen: → [Well] that' why it's narrative structure
 05 we're talking about discourse knowledge?
 06 Tamar: Yeah.

Another essential practice employed by the next speaker when initiating a turn in an overlap circumstance is use recycled turn beginning, wherein the words or phrases buried in the overlapped talk are repeated. As illustrated in Excerpt (6), K repeats R's words that were overlapped in line 04 in the turn in line 05.

Excerpt (6) [Schegloff, 1987, p.75]
 01 R: Well the uhm in fact they must have grown a
 02 Culture, you know, they must've- I mean how long-
 03 he's been in the hospital for a few days, right? Take
 04 a[bout a week to grow a culture]
 05 K: → [I don't think they grow a] I don't
 06 think they grow a culture to do a biopsy.

Apart from overlapping, using turn entry devices, and recycling turn beginning, nonverbal signals such as gaze, facial expressions, head movements, coughing, or throat clearing are also essential devices for making early turn entry in conversation (Schegloff, 1996). It is therefore important for EFL learners to become proficient in using them since they can facilitate smooth and effective early starts in conversation. For instance, Mondada (2007) stated that a pointing gesture towards documents on a table can be used as a self-selection tool for initiating turns in a meeting.

Furthermore, introducing sequencing practices to EFL learners is just as important as making them aware of these turn-taking practices since it will enable them to comprehend the social actions being performed and how to respond appropriately to it. To achieve this, EFL learners should receive training and become proficient in three key related areas: (1) generic sequencing practices, such as adjacency pairs and preference structures; (2) type-specific sequencing practices; and (3) response tokens.

An adjacency pair refers to a sequential pattern of two turns consisting of a first pair-part (FPP) followed by a second pair-part (SPP). For instance, a greeting usually requires a response greeting. As demonstrated in Excerpt (7) provided, the utterances in lines 03 and 04 form an adjacency pair. Hyla's FPP in line 03 sets the expectation for Nancy to produce a specific type of response as SPPT in line 04.

Excerpt (7) [CA ASI 2004 data, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]
 01 ((ring))
 02 Nancy: H'lo:?
 03 Hyla: → Hi:.
 04 Nancy: → ↑HI:.

Preference organization or preference structure is a type of generic sequencing practice that explains how actions in social interaction are systematically designed to either strengthen or weaken social solidarity. Preferred actions, characterized as natural, normal, or expected, are strategically employed to mitigate face threats, maintain social cohesion, and avoid conflicts (Heritage, 1984). Three criteria are employed to determine what is considered preferred: (1) its regularity of occurrence, (2) its potential for closing a sequence, and (3) its unmarked turn shape (Wong & Waring, 2010). Preferred actions typically align with what is commonly observed or practiced, and are performed straightforwardly and without delay (Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). In Excerpt (7) provided above,

the responses in lines 02 and 04 are considered preferred as they are usually expected after the FPPs in lines 01 and 03.

Self-identification through offering information in getting acquainted interactions is another example of actions preferred over requests for recipients to identify themselves (Pillet-shore, 2001, 2018) because it aligns with the social norms and expectations of providing relevant personal details when introducing oneself. According to Pillet-Shore (2011), when a know-in-common person immediately initiates introductions, it is considered one of several strategies to demonstrate their adherence to social norms and their orientation towards social expectations. As illustrated in Excerpt (8) below, two women, Astrid and Lilly, showed up in the living room where three men, Joe, Duncan, and Lance, were sitting on a sofa. From lines 1 through 16, they engaged in an opening sequence in which they exchanged repeated greetings and how-are-you ("How's it going"; "What's up").

Excerpt (8) [FG a-1, as cited in Pillet-Shore, 2011]

01	Joe:	↓Hello,
02	Ast:	hehh! huh huh.hh! ↑Hello::,
03		(.)/(Joe lifts drink and bows head to Ast, Lil)
04	Dun:	H[ey,
05	Ast:	[How's it goin[:'\'',
06	Lil:	[↑Hi[llo: :ǝ
07	Ast:	[HE::(h)yǝ = Wh(h)at's (h) up guys, = .hh
08		Hhh! Huh huh hah hah hah
09	Lil:	[Hi:.
10	Ast:	[.hhhh! hhuh h[ah hah .hhh!
11	Dun:	[heh heh Wh[(h)at
12	Lil:	[huh heh heh hih hih
13	Ast:	.hhhh!hho::[hh!
14	Lil:	[What's ↓u:p.
15	Dun:	What's u:[p,
16	Lan:	[What's up,
17	Lil:	→ I'm Lilly,
18		(0.4)
19	Joe:	I' [m Joe ((raises left hand, palm displayed to Lil))
20	Dun:	[I'm Duncan ((raises right hand to Lil))

Following the opening sequence, Lilly made the choice to initiate introductions with the three men in line 17 as a way of respecting a social norm related to the preservation of personal information. Goffman (1971) explained that this social norm requires individuals to demonstrate respect for each other's privacy by avoiding direct requests for personal information. Instead, Lilly could have explicitly requested the recipients' names by asking, "What's your name?", but such a direct inquiry is considered a dispreferred action.

In contrast, dispreferred actions are performed with hesitation, mitigation, or the provision of accounts. In Excerpt (9), prior to delivering a dispreferred response in line 03, signaled by a pause, Graham uses a hesitation token ("tuh-uh"), offers an apology, and provides an account for his refusal in line 4. Through the utterance in line 05, he obviously shows his willingness to accept the invitation under other circumstances, indicating his orientation towards maintaining an ongoing cordial friendship with James.

Excerpt (9) [Liddicoat, 2007, p. 118 - Tools]

01	James:	How about going out for a drink tonight
02	Graham:	→ (0.2)
03		tuh- uh sorry b' d I can' make it=c' z
04		Jill has invited some' ve her friends over.
05		Perhaps some other time

In addition to understanding general sequencing practices such as adjacency pairs and preference structures, it is very crucial for learners to be familiar with type-specific sequencing practices that occur in social interactions,

such as agreement and disagreement, news announcement, complaint, invitation, offer, request, and introduction. To effectively participate in social interactions, learners must become proficient in organizing and navigating these sequences, particularly those that can be complicated and lead to awkward or conflictual situations. For example, before delivering a news announcement, learners should first assess whether the news is worth sharing and proceed through the pre-announcement phase. Additionally, news recipients must know how to respond appropriately, whether with enthusiasm, disapproval, or neutrality (Maynard, 2003; Wong & Waring, 2010).

Another example of general sequencing practices is an introduction sequence. A learner who plays a role as mediator (a known-in-common person) in multi-party encounters should assess if an introduction is appropriate to be launched by applying the pre-introduction utterance such as "Have you two ever met before?". If it is not the first time face-to-face meeting among parties, the development of an introduction will not occur as demonstrated in Excerpt (10) below.

Excerpt (10) [PT.02.TR.03.22.00 (simplified), as cited in Pillet-Shore, 2011]

01	Ted:	→ .hh this ih- Have you= ((Ted points to Roc))
02	Ted:	=m[et?
03	Mar:	[I tell ya,=
04	Ted:	=Roche[lle; ((Ted sustaining point toward Roc))
05	Roc:	[Ye(h)ah hh Hi there hah hahh
06	Lil:	[Yea::h. I ha:ve, I:'ve me::t ['er::
07	Roc:	[.hhh!

In Excerpt (10), Ted, acting as a potential mediator, initiates an introduction between Mary and Rochelle, hinted by his utterance "This ih-" in line 01 just right before he makes the pre-introduction remark "Have you met?". However, this introduction does not proceed as planned, since Mary and Rochelle had already met each other, thereby disrupting the introduction process.

In addition to the generic and type-specific sequences, it is important for learners to be familiar with the use of response tokens for different purposes. These tokens serve various functions, such as acknowledging prior statements, e.g., "mm hm", encouraging continuation, e.g., "mh hm", "yeah", providing assessments, e.g., "great", indicating a desire to move on from a previous speaker's persistence, e.g., "no no no", "alright alright alright", and signaling an intention to speak, e.g., "yeah." Mastery of these response tokens is particularly valuable for enhancing active participation and engagement in conversations.

Learners should also understand the structure of starting and ending a conversation. For instance, when making a phone call, there are typically four sequences that take place, namely, (1) summons-answer; (2) identification-recognition; (3) greeting; and (4) how-are-you patterns. Excerpt (11) provides an example of these patterns.

Excerpt (11) [Schegloff, 1986, p.155 – modified, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]

01		((ring))	} summons-answer
02	A:	Hello,	}
03	C:	Hello, Jim?	} identification-recognition
04	A:	Yeah,	}
05	C:	It's Bonnie.	} identification-recognition
06	A:	Hi,	} greeting
07	C:	Hi, how <u>are</u> yuh.	} greeting + first <i>how are you</i>
08	A:	Fine, how're you,	} second <i>how are you</i>
09	C:	Oh, okay I guess.	
10	A:	Oh okay,	
11	C:	Uhm, (0.2) what are you	anchor point
12		<u>doing</u> New Year's Eve.	

Additionally, in everyday conversation, issues such as false starts, mishearings, and misunderstandings frequently occur (Jefferson, 1973; Schegloff, 1987). Therefore, to tackle these issues and maintain a smooth conversation, learners should learn how to manage repairs. Wong and Waring (2010) suggest four types of repairs that learners need to understand: (1) self-initiated self-repair; (2) self-initiated other-repair, (3) other-initiated self-repair, and (4) other-initiated other-repair. Mastering these repair strategies will help learners to handle the difficulties that arise during conversations.

Self-initiated self-repair is a specific way to deal with a problem that arise during a conversation where the speaker identifies and corrects the issue themselves. An example of Shelley's self-initiated self-repair is provided in Excerpt (12). In line 03, Shelley recognizes a potential trouble source in her statement and takes the initiative to address it herself by sharply cutting the word "just" off just before correcting it to continue with her turn.

Excerpt (12) [CA ASI 2004 data — modified, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]

01 Shelley: alright well I talked to him earlier and I told
 02 him I didn't know what the scoop was and
 03 → now: I don't know.hh if I should jus- if I
 04 should blow off u:m tha:t stupid trial thing
 05 or what I mea:n (.) I don't know.

Alternatively, self-initiated other-repair involves the speaker recognizing a problem in another person's speech and taking the initiative to help them correct it as shown in Excerpt (13) below. B faces challenges in recalling a name, as evidenced by the utterance of "W- whatever k-" in line 01, along with the statement "I can't think of his name." However, in line 04, A assists B by providing the name.

Excerpt (13) [Schegloff *et al.*, 1977 – BC:Green:88, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]

01 B: He had dis uh Mistuh W- whatever k- I can't
 02 think of his name, Watts on, the one that
 03 wrote [that piece,
 04 A: [Dan watts

Next, other-initiated self-repair refers to a type of problem remedies in conversation where a recipient identifies a difficulty in understanding the speaker's utterance or seeks clarification. The speaker then provides a repair of the misunderstood utterance as shown in Excerpt (14) below. Joy is experiencing difficulty understanding the meaning of Harry's words in lines 01-02. To seek clarification, Joy utters "Wha'¿" in line 03, prompting Harry to provide clarification in line 04. This other-initiated self-repair process also helps maintain smooth and effective communication.

Excerpt (14) [Liddicoat, 2007, p.189 – Lunch]

01 Harry: Aren't you suppose to go up there with John
 02 though?
 03 Joy: → Wha'¿
 04 Harry: Aren't you goin' up there with John.
 05 Joy: Na:h that fell through weeks ago.

In the final type of repair, called other-initiated other-repair, the recipient of a conversation identifies and fixes a problem in the speaker's talk. In Excerpt (15) below, Roger treats Ken's utterance "the police" in line 01 as problematic in some way, thus replacing it with "the cops!" in line 04, which is then taken into Ken's response in line 05.

Excerpt (15) [Jefferson, 1987, p. 93—modified, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2010]

01 Ken: → Well- if you're gonna race, the police have said this
 02 to us.
 03 Roger: That makes it even better. The challenge of running

- 04 → from the cops!
 05 Ken: → The cops say if you wanna race, uh go out at four
 06 or five in the morning on the freeway...

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

Twelve non-English major students from several faculties, including food industrial technology management, management sciences, engineering, science, and liberal arts were randomly chosen as participants. The average English proficiency level of the learners was at A2, measured with General English Language Assessment, an English proficiency test online from <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/test-your-english/general-english/> before the class began. The test contains 20 multiple-choice questions.

The participants were asked to form four groups of three and perform unscripted role-plays based on the situation prompt as shown in Appendix A. After 10-minute preparation, their unscripted roleplay performances were video-recorded for subsequent close analysis.

2.2 Data Analysis


A close CA analysis of the recorded conversations was conducted to (1) explore Thai EFL undergrads' designing and sequencing turns at talk to accomplish such a common social goal as making friends, and (2) unveil challenges they faced when engaged this type of social activity. The recorded conversations were transcribed using the Gail Jeffersonian transcription convention, adopted by Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998) and shown in Appendix 2.

3. Results and Discussion

To explore Thai EFL undergrads' designing and sequencing turns at talk to accomplish such a common social goal as making friends and to uncover the challenges they faced when engaging in this specific type of social activity, recorded sample conversations were obtained from four groups of three non-English major students whose English proficiency level was at A2. The transcribed conversations were closely examined through the lens of CA and the students' interactional challenges were identified in four areas including (1) completing an opening sequence, (2) introducing others (3) offering relevant information to build up a social relationship, and (4) ending the conversation. The transcript in Excerpt (16) below revealed how three parts of the conversation; namely, opening (from lines 01-08), central (from lines 09-18), and closing parts (from lines 19-20), were sequentially organized by the students. The conversation in this excerpt happened as student G and student PM, who were best friends, ran into student WM, who was an old friend of student G. After the exchange of greetings, student G introduced student PM to student WM before parting.

Excerpt (16) Making friends – 01

- | | | | | |
|----|-----|---------------------------------|---|--------------|
| 01 | G: | Hello | } | Opening part |
| 02 | WM: | Hi | | |
| 03 | | (.4) | | |
| 04 | G: | How are you? | | |
| 05 | | (.2) | | |
| 06 | WM: | I'm fine. | | |
| 07 | | (.2) | | |
| 08 | | and you? | | |
| 09 | G: | (.) Ah:: this is new my friend. | } | Central part |
| 10 | WM: | Ah | | |
| 11 | | (.4) | | |
| 12 | | Ah | | |
| 13 | PM: | My name is PM. | | |
| 14 | | Nice to meet you. | | |
| 15 | WM: | nice to meet you too? | | |
| 16 | | My name is WM. | | |

17	PM:	((noping his head))	
18		(.5)	
19	G:	Bye bye	
20	WM:	Bye bye	

3.1. Opening Part

It was found that two groups out of four opened the conversation by only saying “hi” and “hello” to greet each other before jumping into an introduction sequence in the central part of the conversations as shown in lines 01-04 in Excerpt (17) below.

Excerpt (17) Making friends – 02

01	Nab:	→	↑Hi::
02			(.3)
03	Pha:	→	Hi Nabee
04	Nab:	→	↑Oh Hi Nang-Phar,
05	Nab:		This is my (.2) ah friend,
06			she names (.2) Ton,
07			↑Oh Ton? (.2) this (.) she- (.) Umm my friends,
08			She name Nang-Phar.
09	Ton:		Nice to meet you ((raises right hand, palm displayed to Nang-Phar))
10	Pha:		Nice to mee you, Ton. ((raises right hand toTon))

On the other hand, the other two groups additionally applied the how-are-you sequence; however, they failed to offer a relevant turn to complete its return sequence shown in line 8 in Excerpt (16) above. In line 9, student G abruptly shifts to introducing her friend, instead of responding to the preceding first pair part (FPP) of the question-answer adjacency pair in line 08 by saying, e.g., “I am great.”; “Not bad” or “Okay.” Illustrated in line 05 in Excerpt (18), Liddicoat (2007) noted that the question “how are you?” after a greeting sequence is treated as a question about the current state of the participant rather a greeting, thereby being designed to get an answer before moving on to other matters.

Excerpt (18) [Liddicoat, 2007, p. 241 - Tell9:1-4]

01	Will:		H'llo.
02	Val:		Will?
03	Will:		Oh hi. How're things,
04	Val:		Okay n how're you.
05	Will:	→	Okay=
06	Val:		=That's good.

3.2. Central Part

In the central part in Excerpt (19) from lines 9-18, student G, as a mediator, engages the interlocutors in an introduction sequence, introducing student PM to student WM. As seen in line 9 in Excerpt (19) below, after the how-are-you sequence, student G initiates the introduction sequence between student PM and student WM by using an opening utterance of “This is ...”.

Excerpt (19) (continued) Making friends - 01

09	G:	→	(.) Ah:: this is new my friend.
10	WM:		Ah
11			(.4)
12			Ah
13	PM:	→	My name is PM.
14			Nice to meet you.
15	WM:		nice to meet you too?
16			My name is WM.
17	PM:		((noping his head))
18			(.5)

The fact that student G does not offer student PM's name to student WM in line 9 brings about the problem student WM is experiencing in turn construction indicated by the fillers and the micropause from lines 10-12 in Excerpt (19) above. This also prompts student PM to initiate his own self-introduction to student WM in line 13, followed by a first-meeting greeting token "Nice to meet you" in line 14. In line 15, student WM reciprocally responds to student PM with the same type of token before offering a self-introduction in line 16, treated as a dispreferred action in three-party mediator-initiation interactions (Pillet-Shore, 2011).

In contrast, as a different scenario in Excerpt (20) below unfolds, a mediator-initiated introduction is launched from lines 05-10. Student Nab takes on the role of a mediator and initiates an introduction sequence in line 05. She does this by stating "This is my friend," which sets the stage for the introduction between student Ton and student Pha in lines 06 and 08. According to Pillet-Shore (2011), mediator-initiated introductions can be considered as preferred over self-initiated introductions in three-party mediator-initiation interactions because it aligns with the social norms and expectations of providing relevant personal details when introducing others. In addition, it is considered one of several strategies to demonstrate their adherence to social norms and their orientation towards social expectations.

Excerpt (20) (continued) Making friends - 02

01	Nab:	↑Hi::
02		(.3)
03	Pha:	Hi Nabee
04	Nab:	↑Oh Hi Nang-Phar,
05	Nab:	→ This is my (.2) ah friend,
06		→ she names (.2) Ton,
07		↑Oh Ton? (.2) this (.) she- (.) Umm my friends,
08		→ She name Nang-Phar.
09	Ton:	Nice to meet you ((raises right hand, palm displayed to Nang-Phar))
10	Pha:	Nice to mee you, Ton. ((raises right hand toTon))

As can be seen in Excerpts (19) and (20), the students designed and sequenced their turns to make new friends without offering any information for establishing personal relations with each other after the self- and other-introduction. To facilitate smooth and effective communication, the students should be taught the exchange of personal information after self- and other- introduction. Pillet-Shore (2011) stated that the speakers should offer relevant information about the person to help recipients make sense of unfamiliar persons. Furthermore, acting as mediators, according to Pillet-Shore (2018), speakers can employ their understanding of both individuals being introduced to assist in rapidly establishing a social relationship and common ground.

Apart from the exchange of personal information, forms of conversational humor, such as teasing, mockery and quip, can also be used for rapport-building (Haugh, 2011; Haugh & Pillet-Shore, 2018; Haugh & Weinglass, 2018; Mullan, 2020). However, students should also be made aware of some humor that probably could be offensive and undermine the relationship-building (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Svennevig, 1999, 2014).

3.3. Closing Part

As shown in lines 19-20 in Excerpt (21) below, the speakers end the conversation by immediately exchanging good bye in the terminal sequence. It is clear that the learners do not apply any pre-closing sequence signaling to others that the conversation is going to end (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Excerpt (21) (continued) Making friends – 01

13	PM:	My name is PM.
14		Nice to meet you.
15	WM:	nice to meet you too?
16		My name is WM.
17	PM:	((noping his head))
18		(.5)

19 G: → Bye bye
 20 WM: → Bye bye

To make a smoother and more appropriate ending, a pre-closing sequence should be employed since pre-closing turns, according to Liddicoat (2007) and Schegloff & Sacks (1973), signal to interlocutors whether the conversation could move to closure, or a new topic should be introduced instead.

As shown in Excerpt (22) below, Bee applies the announcement of closure such as “I’ve gotta go now” treated as a pre-closing FPP in line 01 to signal to Dee that the end of the current conversation is going to happen. Because of the announcement, opportunities to introduce a new topic of talk are passed up. Accordingly, Dee accepts the announcement by uttering “Oka:y” treated as a pre-closing SPP in line 02. This leads to the exchange of “bye” in the terminal sequence in lines 03-04.

Excerpt (22) Liddicoat, 2007, p. 260 – BD:II:6

01 Bee: W’ll honey I’ve gotta go an get to this meeting.
 02 Dee: Oka:y
 03 Bee: Bye bye
 04 Dee: Bye:

In contrast, the pre-closing nature of the announcement can be rejected by a recipient as demonstrated in Excerpt (23) below. Fay’s FPP (“I’ve gotta go.”) in line 01 is deployed to signal to May that a closing action is a relevant next turn. However, May resisted the closing action by introducing another topic of discussion which was relevant to the current conversation (SPP) in line 02.

Excerpt (23) Liddicoat, 2007, p. 260 – MF:2:IV

01 Fay: Okay, W’ll I’ve gotta go.
 Just’ before you do, =have yuh deci:ded about what you’re doing
 02 May: Fri:day,

4. Conclusion

The paper explored the challenges faced by Thai EFL undergraduate students enrolled in a public university in southern Thailand in designing and sequencing their turns at talk to accomplish the social goal of making friends in English. The analysis of recorded sample conversations highlighted specific areas of difficulty faced by the majority of students examined, with the A2 level of English proficiency, including completing an opening sequence, introducing others, offering relevant information to build a social relationship, and ending the conversation.

In the opening part of the conversation, a brief exchange of short greetings was found along with failure to respond to a question in the how-are-you sequence without any accountability, which would have made it inappropriate in real-life situations. Therefore, to open the conversation more smoothly and effectively, these EFL learners should be made aware of the importance of paying close attention to the previous speaker’s turn and taught how to take responsibility for providing an appropriate, relevant response to it.

The examination of the central part of the conversations revealed that a student mediator failed to offer other-introduction, considered as a preferred action in multi-party interactions (Schegloff, 1996, Sinkeviciute & Rodriguez, 2021). Additionally, the exchange of personal state enquiries after self- or other- introduction to establish a social relationship did not occur at all, which would have helped recipients know new persons met better (Pillet-Shore, 2011). Thus, to facilitate smooth and more effective communication, strategies used for building a social relationship, including an exchange of personal information and perhaps some form of conversational humor should also be taught in English conversation classes.

The closing part of the conversations often lacked pre-closing sequences, resulting in abrupt conversation endings. It is therefore necessary to teach students how to construct pre-closing turns to signal to their coparticipants that

the conversation is going to end shortly so that they can get ready for the conclusion of a topic, helping to end the conversation or to shift to a new topic more smoothly and appropriately (Liddicoat, 2007; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Therefore, to help the learners become more confident and potent communicators, not only linguistic but also interactional resources such as sequencing practices (Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Kasper & Rose, 2001) should be taught in formal classroom settings. These resources play an essential role in not only developing EFL learners' fluency and accuracy but also facilitating successful communication (Richards & Rodgers 2014; Seedhouse, 2004). Nguoi and Ahmad (2015) suggested that teachers provide learners enough linguistic resources and pair lower proficiency ones with those higher so that they can benefit more from the communicative task used.

Further research should not only expand the sample size and diversity of the sample group examined, but also explore students' challenges in performing other everyday social activities, such as making an invitation, delivering good/bad news, and expressing opinions. In fact, it is important to seriously investigate not only specific problems associated with the undertaking of these social activities in the target language but ways to effectively address them in an English conversation curriculum. The development of some form of CA-informed pedagogy is highly recommended.

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Appendix A**Situation Card (Making friends)****Situation Card (Making friends)**

You and your best friend accidentally run into one of your old friends on the way home. You introduce your best friend to your old friend, and three of you make a small talk before leaving.

Appendix B**The Gail Jeffersonian Transcription Convention**

Symbol	Meaning
(0.5)	The number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot enclosed in a bracket indicates a pause in the talk of less than two-tenths of a second.
=	The 'equals' sign indicates 'latching' between utterances.
[]	Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.
.hh	A dot before an 'h' indicates speaker in breath. The more h's, the longer the in-breath.
Hh	An 'h' indicates an out-breath. The more h's the longer the breath.
(())	A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity, or double brackets may enclose the transcriber's comments on contextual or other features.
-	A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound.
:	Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter. The more colons the greater the extent of the stretching.
!	Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone.
()	Empty parentheses indicate the presence of an unclear fragment on the tape.
(guess)	The words within a single bracket indicate the transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance.
.	A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the end of a sentence.
,	A comma indicates a 'continuing' intonation.
?	A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question.
*	An asterisk indicates a 'croaky' pronunciation of the immediately following section.
↓	Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.
<u>a:</u>	Less marked falls in pitch can be indicated by using underlining immediately preceding a colon.
<u>a:</u>	Less marked rises in pitch can be indicated using a colon which itself is underlined.
<u>Under</u>	Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
CAPITALS	Words in capitals mark a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.
° °	Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
Thaght	A 'gh' indicates that the word in which it is placed had a guttural pronunciation.
> <	'More than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably quicker than the surrounding talk.
→	Arrows in the left margin point to specific parts of an extract discussed in the text.
[H:21.3.89:2]	Extract headings refer to the transcript library source of the researcher who originally collected the data.