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## Managing rapport in the context of classroom talk: A case study of a London secondary school

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### Keywords

Classroom talk;  
conflict;  
conversation analysis;  
Mandarin class;  
rapport management.

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### Abstract

Recently, the research on classroom conflict talk has attracted much attention from applied linguistics scholars. However, how the teacher uses language to effectively resolve conflict while striking a balance between achieving their own and their students' objectives, has not been fully researched to date. Acknowledging this gap, this paper investigates a conflict classroom talk between a teacher and a group of students in a Mandarin lesson at a secondary school in London. Its analysis drew on the framework of rapport management to explore how the teacher and students negotiated and achieved their respective goals and tasks while maintaining the teacher-student relationship within this particular institutional setting. For the purpose of this study, Conversation Analysis, as a very fine tool, was employed to present diverse features and in-depth details, such as redirection and minimal acknowledgment. It found that although a perceived unbalance of power exists between teachers and students, students in this study broke the asymmetry and made themselves heard, which in turn became what the teacher valued highly in the class.

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## 1. Introduction

Several studies have investigated classroom talk in terms of the teacher's exercise of control over topics and speaking rights in class (Cazden, 1988; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Lemke, 1990; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997). More recently, conflict within classroom talk has prompted much interest among applied linguistics scholars (Emanuelsson & Sahlstrom, 2008). That said, how the teacher uses language to effectively resolve conflict, while striking a balance between achieving their own and their students' objectives, has not been fully researched to date (Waring, 2015). This paper seeks to address this knowledge gap by analysing conflict dynamics typically found in classroom talk.

In the process, the paper draws on rapport management as a relevant theoretical framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) for any investigation into this field. By applying this framework, the paper will answer the main research question about how the teacher and students negotiate the achievement of their respective goals and tasks, while managing rapport within this particular institutional setting. In order to achieve this, a case study of a Mandarin class in a London secondary school is presented. Teacher-student interaction is also examined by employing conversational analysis (CA), which highlights the linguistic features of spontaneously and naturally occurring conversation in great detail (Liddicoat, 2007; Sidnell, 2010), while revealing strategies that speakers use to manage rapport during talk (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, 2005, 2008).

## 2. Literature Review

Classroom talk is usually understood as a type of institutional<sup>1</sup> talk, which is distinguished from ordinary conversation (Markee & Kasper, 2004). Conversations between the teacher and students are asymmetrical as they are constrained by institutionally oriented factors, such as goals, roles and norms (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

Teachers are traditionally viewed as facilitators who exercise control over the whole class, for example, by providing feedback, asking questions and initiating discussion. That said, some research into classroom discourse has found that students pose several challenges to teachers, including in term of maintaining face or promoting understandings (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Lemke, 1990; Mehan, 1979). Recently, analytic researchers have focused their attention on the unexpectedly chaotic or disorderly nature of self-selection in the context of classroom talk.

Li's study (2013) explains how a teacher, who is teaching a class for Chinese as a second language, tries to maintain her authority, while coping with a learner's challenging responses, but fails in achieving some pedagogical goals. Fagan (2012, 2013), meanwhile, compared a novice teacher and an experienced teacher in how they confronted students' vigorous engagement and difficult questions by closely analysing turn-taking. Waring (2013b) explains how a teacher tries to manage the chaos of the self-selected 'voice', while pursuing a specific educational goal. By focusing on students' turn-taking in various situations, Waring (2013a)

also identified some general linguistic formulas applied in the conversation between a teacher and students, such as 'minimal acknowledgement + redirection', where the teacher minimally acknowledges students' responses without focusing too much attention onto them, followed by redirecting their attention onto other matters.

Analysing turn-taking in conversation, therefore, can meticulously describe the dynamic process in which the teacher's management of this phenomenon and students' respondent behaviour are addressed. In other words, classroom talk is an example of how language is used to transfer information and maintain social relationships in an institutional setting.

For Brown and Yule (1983), maintaining social relationships plays a more important role in all communicative situations. Numerous theoretical explanations have given for how language is used to manage social relationships: Leech (1983) identified six politeness maxims based on Grice's (1975) cooperative principle; Lakoff (1973) proposed a 'politeness principle', which governs conversations; Fraser (1990) discussed conversational contracts; Culpeper (1996, 2005) explored impoliteness, in terms of how language causes offence. Among all the theoretical contributions in this field, the politeness model by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) has received significant attentions. According to this model, everyone has a sense of 'positive face' (i.e., a desire to be approved, liked, understood) and 'negative face' (i.e., a desire to be unimpeded). Any speech act that affects a person's dual 'face' is regarded as a face-threatening act (FTA). Alongside this theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed universal politeness strategies: bald on-record (e.g., saying 'Get out!'); positive politeness (e.g., minimizing the threat); negative politeness (e.g., attempting to avoid imposition); off-record (e.g., using hints or hedges); not doing the FTA. However, this model's weaknesses have been highlighted in recent decades, such as the overgeneralization of indirect utterances (Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003), the dichotomization of politeness and impoliteness (Locher & Watts, 2005), and the failure to address impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996).

Considering these arguments, Spencer-Oatey (2008) proposed a modified framework, known as rapport management, involving the management of harmony and disharmony among people (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). It is based on three interrelational components: *face sensitivities*, *interactional goals*, *sociality rights and obligations* (see Figure 1).

*Face* is understood as "the positive value (e.g., dignity, honor, reputation) a person effectively claims for himself" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 13). This value reflects personal traits and is closely connected to one's sense of identity (including individual, group/collective and relational identities). Any speech act threatening this sense of identity could

<sup>1</sup> The term institution refers to a large entity with professionals working within it (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999). Institutional talk is closely associated with the goals and constraints of professionals, as well as the roles and rules they must comply with (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Gunnarsson et al. (1997) describe institutional talk as "talk between an expert representing some authority and a layman" (p. 7).

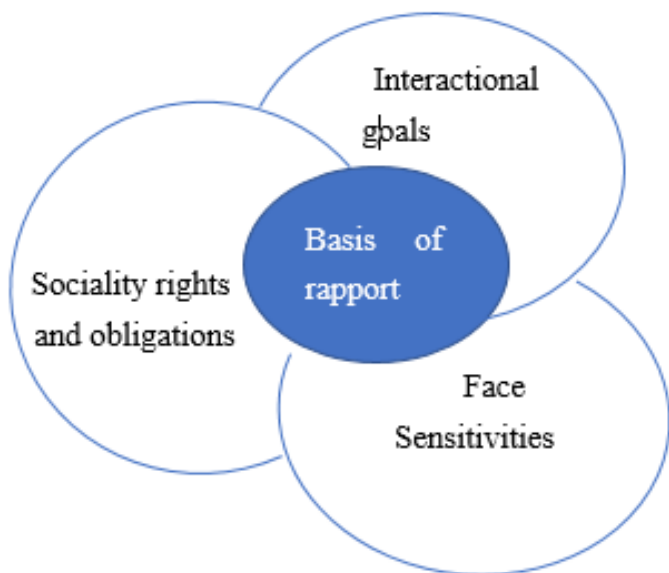


Figure 1: The basis of rapport.

be regarded as face-sensitive. *Interactional goals* usually comprise a relational goal and a task-focused goal, with the failure to achieve these goals also posing a threat to rapport. *Sociality rights and obligations* usually refer to social expectations, specifically, others' concerns about 'fairness, consideration and behavioral appropriateness' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, pp. 13-14), whereby interpersonal rapport may be affected if these rights and obligations are unfulfilled.

The rapport management framework is used in this study to facilitate a comprehensive account of the data in order to understand language transfer and social relationship management in a classroom. Rapport management covers both speech acts (e.g., orders and requests, apologies, compliments) that are primarily regarded as FTAs, and features of speech acts that play a vital role in maintaining social relationships through communication (Spencer-Oatey & Xing 1998, 2004, 2008). Overall, these speech acts are categorized into five domains, as shown in Table 1 below.

Domains (main elements)	Strategies (related research)	Research status
Illocutionary domain (e.g., orders and requests, apologies, compliments)	<b>Main semantic components or formulas</b>	Systematically researched
	<b>Degree of directness and indirectness when making requests</b>	
	<b>Downgraders/upgraders associated with requests and apologies</b>	
Discourse domain (discourse content and structure: topic choice, topic management, the organization and sequencing of information)	Phatic talk (Pavlidou, 1994)	Less systematically researched
Participation domain (turn-taking, including/excluding people, use/non-use of listener responses)	Turn-taking (Wieland, 1991)	
Stylistic domain (tone, genre-appropriate lexis and syntax, terms of address)	Spencer and Xing (1998)	
Non-verbal domain (gestures, other body movements, eye contact, proxemics)	Spencer and Xing (2004)	

Table 1: Five domains of speech acts.

According to the above table, attention is mainly given to illocutionary domain. Three important features in this domain (main semantic components/formulas; degree of directness and indirectness when making requests, and the downgraders and upgraders associated with request and apologies) are discussed below.

### 1) Main semantic components/formulas.

According to Olshain and Cohen (1983), people usually select either one or a few semantic components found in communication from a range of semantic components. For example, in expressions of gratitude: 'Thanks ever so much for lending me your car (1)'; 'It was really extremely kind of you' (2); 'I very much appreciate it' (3); 'If I can ever help you out like that, be sure to let me know' (4). The main components in these expressions are, respectively, the head act (1), complimenting the other person (2), the expression of appreciation (3), and the promise of repayment/reciprocation (4).

### 2) Degree of directness and indirectness

Request-making has been broadly investigated in research on speech acts. According to Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), request-making can be categorized by the extent of directness. Directness strategies include: mood derivables (e.g., 'Stop talking'); performatives (e.g., 'I'm asking you to rewrite that paragraph'); hedged performatives (e.g., 'I would like you to give a talk'); obligation statements (e.g., 'You'll have to meet him'); want statements (e.g., 'I really wish you'd stop chatting'). Indirect strategies are further categorized as conventional or non-conventional. Conventionally indirect strategies include suggestory formulas (e.g., 'How about singing a song?') and query preparatory modals (e.g., 'Could you stop talking, please?'). Non-conventionally indirect strategies include strong hints (e.g., 'You've made a lot of mistakes in that paragraph') and mind hints (e.g., 'I get a headache when other people are talking loudly').

### 3) Downgraders and upgraders usually associated with request and apologies

According to Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), for requests and apologies, downgraders decrease/weaken the force of a statement, while upgraders increase/strengthen the impact. Upgraders and downgraders are embodied in syntactic and lexical or phrasal situations. For example, in the request, 'Can you tidy up your desk a bit?', a 'bit' is used as a lexical downgrader to mitigate the force of the request.

The use of these linguistic strategies in communication is consciously or unconsciously affected by rapport orientation, contextual variables, pragmatic principles and conventions (see Table 2). It is also noteworthy that the power, distance and participants in contextual variables are considered as the main elements mediating the use of strategies.

Having reviewed the relevant literature and identified the key terms and concepts appropriate to this study, the next section sets out the methodology used to obtain the data on the case study.

Factors	Specified types	Further illustration
Rapport Orientation	Rapport enhancement orientation	
	Rapport maintenance orientation	
	Rapport neglect orientation	
	Rapport challenge orientation	
Contextual variables	Participants and their relations	Power; distance; interrelationship between power and distance; participants
	Message content: cost-benefit consideration	
	Social/interactional roles	
	Activity types	
Pragmatic principles and conventions	Overall assessment of context	

Table 2: Factors influencing strategy use.

### 3. Methodology and Data

The data for this study were gathered during two three-hour audio recordings of a Mandarin class in a secondary school in London.

Before I started to collect the data, I obtained permission from the school authorities, explaining to them the aim of the audio recordings. Consent forms (see Appendix) were collected from students and teachers, as well as parents if students were under 13 years of age. Information sheets (see Appendix) were also provided. All participants in this study are referred to by pseudonymously. The language used for communication in this class was English. The data were recorded using my iPhone, with the aid of voice recording apps. As the iPhone was located on the teacher's desk at the front of the classroom, the voice of some students on the recordings is not as clear as the teacher's. However, this did not significantly affect the quality of the data.

During the recordings, 28 students were working on a group presentation about a Chinese city. There were about five students in each group. The tasks for each group were to select a project manager and identify a Chinese city for their project.

The conversation data were transcribed and analysed by the system developed by Paul ten Have (2007). The goal was to cover all the dynamic elements in the recorded conversations, such as tones, pitches and turn-takings. By analysing linguistics features, this study is able to further reveal the strategies used by participants in rapport management. The main question concerns how the teacher and students negotiate their goals and realize a specific task while managing rapport in their institutional settings.

### 4. Analysis

The data below were selected from the recordings. It covers an entire conversation between the teacher and 'Group 5'. The whole process is divided into five extracts. Extracts 1-3 are concerned with the first task, i.e., choosing a project manager for the group. Extracts 4-5 refers to the second task, i.e., deciding which city to examine. Each extract contains

a repeated enquiry raised by the teacher, which is marked by an arrow in the data and underscored in the analysis. Moreover, each extract will be analysed with Conversational Analysis (CA) and the rapport management framework.

Before this extract, all students were informed that the project managers should report back on decisions.

(T=teacher, Group 5 members: R=Rita, S1, S2, S3, S4; other students: SS).

#### Extract 1

1 T: Right (0.8) um: >we are going to group< um: (2.3) five ↑

2 S1: Um: So Basically um: we chose the (syl syl syl) (0.3)

3 >because Rita (° doesn't want to do it ° ) <

4 and Tylor found (syl syl syl syl° they are not allowed° )

5 and then ( 0.3 ) I've got selected

6 and then ( 0.3 ) >we looked up the province<-

7 T: But wha-: wha-:

8 how did the situation arise=

9 → why the team found it very DIFFICULT to find [one person]?

10 R: [We didn't]

11 >We didn't find the person<(0.2)

12 so we just both want to do it [together QUICKLY]

13 S3: [ Yeah ]

By saying 'we' (Line 1) rather than 'I am', the teacher is trying to narrow down the social gap between himself and the students, which is beneficial for building teacher-student rapport. As S1 picks up the turn-taking (Line 2), this indicates that she is the project manager, which is further confirmed by her subsequent responses (Line 5). Her voice is very slight, such that it is sometimes rather difficult to hear what she is saying (Lines 2 and 4). This poses a striking contrast between S1 and Rita, who is a member of Group 5. Rita's talk (Lines 10-12) has a great deal of strength and high pitch. The reason why they are so different may be because Rita is always the most outstanding student in the whole class, meaning that she often seems to have a priority status compared to the others.

Returning to S1's feedback: S1 uses 'we' first (Line 2) in order to claim in-group membership, while precisely keeping to the point of the teacher's enquiries. Then, she gives details on how the decision was made by referring to the name of other members in the group (Lines 3-4). Again, she confirms that she is the 'project manager' by using the first-person pronoun (Line 5). Moving onto the selection of a Chinese city, which is the second task in this activity, she uses 'we' (Line 6). The pronouns 'we' (group) and 'I' (individual) shift from time to time (Lines 2-6).

Schnurr (2012) pointed out that speakers usually have to "find and negotiate ways of portraying themselves as members of a large group while at the same time emphasizing their uniqueness" (p. 114). In S1's talk, she uses the group pronoun when she refers to the group's decisions,

but uses the individual pronoun to portray and foreground herself as the project manager. In terms of relationship management, the use of pronouns, as a large number of studies has maintained, is affected by power and solidarity in participants relations (e.g., Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this situation, S1, as the project manager, maintains the power endowed by the group to lead this project while representing the team as a solidary image. As this leadership is not likely to change once reported, confirming her leadership identity is a critical first step.

To gain further insight into how the project manager was chosen, the teacher challenges S1 by interrupting her talk (Line 7), as the teacher previously noticed that some problems arose during the decision-making process in that group (Lines 8-9). However, rather than referring to S1's name directly, the uses of 'one person' obscures the referee. Within the rapport management framework, this strong hint is an indirect strategy used by a speaker to mitigate his/her request.

However, Rita immediately denies S1's feedback on the leadership issue and confirms that there was a problem: '[We didn't] >We didn't find the person<(0.2)' (Lines 10-11). The overlapping in Line 10 strengthens the contradiction within the group. By using the collective pronoun and in-group marker 'we' (Lines 10-11), Rita gives the impression that she is expressing disapproval on behalf of her group, rather than her own opinion. Conversely, in Line 12, Rita states that she was expressing her and S1's wish (both); 'just' is used here as a downgrader to mitigate the force of her statement.

As this is task-focused interaction, the students are trying to achieve the goal of the tasks, specifically, the decision on a project manager and the choice of Chinese city. By denying S1's feedback and thus denying the achievement of the institutional goal, Rita poses a threat to the basis of rapport between the teacher and students; as Spencer-Oatey (2008) points out, any failure in this regard could cause frustration and annoyance (p. 17). Rita's negative feedback indicates that S1 is not the leader, which prompts the teacher to make further enquiries. In other words, a negotiation between the teacher and his students begins.

Extract 2

13 S3: [ Yeah ]  
 14 T: Okay>bu- bu-but the guideline on the project< is [very CLEAR]  
 15 R: [we selected ]  
 16 T: we [have ONE] project ma: [nager]  
 17 S2: [ we decided ]  
 18 S3: [ Sir: ]  
 19 T: what is the-  
 20 I UNDERSTAND  
 21→but wha- was >what did the group find it< so:: DIFFICULT to accept about the RULE?  
 22 S4: because we found out >it would be a more equal society< and then (bla bla bla).  
 23 T: So this is not a project for you then  
 24 R: >We already have <(0.3) we selected the person so-

The interpersonal rapport is affected because Rita holds a different view (Lines 10-12). On Line 14, with the minimal acknowledgement of 'Okay', the teacher responds to Rita but without any substantial reciprocity (e.g., reformulating, analogizing, exemplifying) (Waring, 2002). This is preceded by speech perturbation ('bu- bu-but'), which may suggest that the teacher's attention is deliberately moving away from Rita (Waring, 2013), with the teacher redirecting his focus on

the project instructions (Line 14) (minimal acknowledgement + redirection). Meanwhile, 'very' plays the role of a lexical upgrader to strengthen the force of enquiry (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Then, the students randomly respond to his enquiry with a process of self-selection (Lines 15 and 17), and the situation falls into chaos (Lines 17-18). Again, the teacher displays minimal acknowledgement ('I UNDERSTAND'), before reiterating his initial question (Line 21). The lexical upgrader 'so::' and the emphatic stress of 'DIFFICULT' strengthen the impact of his request. Student S4 answers this challenge by employing the syntactic downgrader 'would be' in order to mitigate the force of her different opinion (Line 22). Compared with the teacher's strong enquiry and S4's mitigated statement, the contrast between linguistic features is striking. This reflects the typically operationalized power in teacher-students relations. As Brown and Gilman (1960, 1972) states, "one person has power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other" (p. 225). The teacher controls the topic of this negotiation, with the students in an inferior position.

Extract 3

24 R: >We already have <(0.3) we selected the person so-  
 25 T: Yeah  
 26 I know  
 27 But EVE::NTUALLY  
 28 but (· are there· ) big name  
 29 but did you think (0.2) > this is something your team couldn't work on<(0.4)  
 30 >Would you rather prepare to come another project<? (0.7)  
 31 R: So Sir We just want to work as one group  
 32 T: Well all >everybody is working as a group<  
 33 >We are TRYing to work on<  
 34→ what keep you so:: lo::ng (0.3)>to come up with the decision<  
 35 to >find one project manager<?  
 36 What was the problem between two people?  
 37 R: >It wasn't a problem<  
 38 >that was the whole point<  
 39 >we didn't wor-<  
 40 >there wasn't a problem that-<.  
 41 SS: \$[OH DEAR dear]\$  
 42 SS: \$ [[(laughter)]] \$  
 43 T: Okay (0.4) OKay >so we won't call it a problem<  
 44 but there was some difficult [ did you have]  
 45 R: [ there wasn't a difficult]  
 46 T: So um::m (0.2) so just remind of us how yo:: how you got voted?

While some students stress their desire to work as a group (Lines 12 and 22), the teacher tries to figure out why they are violating the guideline for this project, which is that every group must select a project manager (Lines 14 and 21). Continuing with this theme, Extract 3 concerns the negotiation between the teacher and the student Rita. Answering with minimal acknowledgement - 'Yeah' (Line 25), 'I know' (Line 26) - the teacher tries to guide the students towards focusing on his questions (minimal acknowledgement + redirection). Prefaced with the alerter 'But' (Lines 27-29), the teacher raises his request (Lines 29-30). The suggest 'did you think' (Line 29) and the query modal '>Would you rather' (Line 30) are conventionally indirect strategies, as previously mentioned, which are used to mitigate the directness of the requests made to Rita. In turn, Rita immediately claims the in-group membership by stating 'We' (Line 31) and also expresses the group's point of view ('just want to work as one group'). Starting with 'Well', which is the teacher's minimal acknowledgement that

also functions as a dispreferred marker in relation to Rita (Pomeranz, 1984), the teacher stresses his viewpoint that '>everybody is working as a group<' (Line 32) and restates his initial question (Line 34). This is the third time that the teacher tries to clarify the same question. The 'problem' reaches a tense crescendo as a result of the shifting referential nomination from the collective pronouns 'everybody' and 'we' to singular pronoun 'you', 'one project manager' and then 'two people' (Line 32-36). This prompts the next turn-taker Rita to explain the 'problem' at an increased speed without stopping (Lines 37-40). The unfinished utterance (Line 39), which is brought to a stop by the speaker herself, further indicates that she is quite nervous and struggling with her explanation of the 'problem'. The intensive moment and unique atmosphere are confirmed by the background voices, which are infused with a sense of chaos and laughter (Lines 41 and 42). Realizing this, the teacher responds with stressed acknowledgement - 'Okay (0.4) Okay' (Line 43) - and deploys the syntactic downgraders - 'won't' to mitigate the intensiveness. Although another interaction touches on 'some difficult' (Lines 44-45), the disagreement is no longer important, as the teacher changes the topic to 'how you got voted'. This seems a decisive turning point.

Based on the research conducted by Spencer-Oatey and Xing (1998, 2004), topic change and management in language use play important roles in interactions and hence rapport management. In this situation, the teacher changes the topic and guides the students towards the next attention, which makes the intensiveness decreased to a significant extent, as highlighted in Extract 4.

#### Extract 4

47 S4: · We didn't got· -  
 48 T: Oh you didn't get voted (.) so what happen?  
 49 S4: · we compromised· -  
 50 T: A COMPROMISE  
 51 · okay·  
 52 >so you had a COMpromise<  
 53 S4: Yeah, we did that [ an-]  
 54 SS: [ ((hush)) ]  
 55 S1: [ We chose ] Guangdong province because we found it INTERESTING  
 56 and then we looked at -  
 57 T: SO SOMEONE in your team (0.2)  
 58 told you A:LL that this is interesti:ng  
 59 because the others are bo:ring (0.7)  
 60 so [your DECISION on province] based on-  
 61 SS: [Oh sir]  
 62 R: [SIR WE DON'T-]  
 63 SS: [(we bla bla bla)]  
 64 T: So you found the problem INTERESTING  
 65 Uh:: >because interesting means something was bo:ring<  
 66 >I am just questioning them (0.2) how they found them< ?  
 67 R: we would like to (.) [I never thought (bla bla)]  
 68 S2: [we (bla bla)]  
 69 S3: [we (bla bla)]  
 70 T: OKAY OKAY >I am not really sure who I am talking to< (0.2)  
 71 → whether it's the team or the project manager  
 72 SS: [Oh::]  
 73 SS: [Sir::]

In this extract, the teacher guides the students' attention back to the main point of the activity, which is how the

group 'votes' for the project manager (Line 46). Another student takes a turn using a slight voice (Line 47); however, as it is not clear whether he wants to say that the group has not voted or that it has not selected a project manager, the teacher cuts off his talk (Line 48). Being directed by the teacher's question, this student answers quietly that 'we compromised-'. On hearing the keyword 'compromise', the teacher restates it with emphasis at a high volume (Line 50). In lines 50 to 52, the shifting of the tone, from a raised volume ('A COMPROMISE') to a calmer voice ('okay'), then to half-raised tone ('COMpromise'), suggests that the teacher accepts the student's answer and is stressing the main point in this dialogue. Although this student wants to explain in more detail (Line 53), he is encouraged to keep quiet by the other students. The non-verbal hint in Line 54 shows that they are all concentrating on the primary issue that the teacher is interested in. It may also suggest that they want to end this enquiry, as S1 picks up the turn and changes the topic to the second task, which is about their choice of Chinese city. When the teacher notices the students' stress on 'INTERESTING', he further enquires as to how they find choosing a city to be interesting. That said, rather than asking 'what' or 'how' questions, the teacher raises a 'yes or no' question (Line 60) by imaging the deciding process (Lines 57-59), with emphatic stress on 'SOMEONE' and 'A:LL'. The exclusive nature of 'someone', compared with 'all', threatens the teacher-student rapport (Oatey, 2008). Students notice it and immediately refute this (Lines 61-62) in a display of self-selected chaos (Line 63). Listening to their unclear statement, the teacher reiterates his points again (Lines 64-66) at an increased speed. The syntactic downgrader 'just' (Line 66) mitigates the requests made to the students. As they take a turn randomly, it is hard to hear what they are saying (Lines 67-69). Facing with this situation, the teacher tries to regain their attention by using the acknowledgement 'OKAY OKAY' in a raised volume. The mild hints '>I am not really sure who I am talking to<', a non-conventional indirect strategy, mitigates the force of the teacher's request (Lines 70-71). This is the fourth time that the teacher requests a project manager to be chosen. But, soon after, the students devolve into chaos (Lines 72-73).

#### Extract 5

74 T: RIGHT  
 75 OKAY  
 76 but THANK YOU  
 77 because >this is what all is about<  
 78 this is EXACTLY what a:ll is about  
 79 and I VALUE all the DYNAMICS  
 80 Right  
 81 → >Does the project manager< on the team want to say anything else?  
 82 (3.5)  
 83 S: [((noise))]  
 84 SS: [ ushi ]  
 85 T: HELLO  
 86 NO  
 87 OK  
 88 Right  
 89 So we are going to now go to um:: the another team which is um::  
 90 (2.1)  
 91 S: GROUP ONE  
 92 T: Oh  
 93 Yeah  
 94 Group one

This extract comes at the end of the conversation between the teacher and Group 5, as Lines 74-79 indicate. Note that the teacher again exercises the 'minimal acknowledgement + redirection' formula. After the brief 'Right' (minimal acknowledgement), the teacher deliberately withholds any acceptance of different opinions/utterances by saying 'OKAY', which is a complete marker in this case. Then, the teacher redirects the students' attention onto the next topic. Lines 76-79 cover the main point of the teacher's enquiry and the feedback on the group's work. It also highlights the main semantic components of the speech acts of 'gratitude'. Specifically, the teacher firstly expresses an explicit 'THANK YOU' (Line 76), followed by explaining why he is making such a complimentary statement (Line 77), after which he reiterates and reinforces his reasoning (Line 78). Line 79 shows a re-appreciation of the reasoning, while 'Right' on Line 80 marks the end of the complimentary talk. This is the last time the teacher tries to identify the project manager of Group 5 (Line 81). After waiting for a while (Line 82) until nobody answers (Lines 83-86), the teacher turns to the next group (Line 89).

## 5. Discussion

By analysing the conversation between a teacher and a group of students, this paper explains how they negotiated with each other to achieve the goals they were tasked with: to identify a project manager and select a Chinese city for a project. Applying CA to examine the data has revealed the presence of some language features, such as minimal acknowledgement and redirection. These features further show how the teacher and students managed their rapport across all extracts, especially in the situation where the student Rita posed a threat to rapport management and the teacher's capacity to make enquiries by raising some challenging questions. The rapport between the teacher and students gradually became intensive; when the intensiveness had reached a crescendo, it was deliberately controlled and mitigated by the teacher. Towards the end, the teacher indicated that he had highly valued the dynamic discussion with the students, which made the rapport between them more positive.

However, there were some limitations to this study, which could be addressed in future research. Firstly, as this study involved audio recordings, no gestures or facial expressions were recorded. If possible, it would be better to analyse gestures and facial expressions as well. Secondly, due to the space constraints, only one group's discussion with the teacher was analysed. By analysing other groups' interaction with the teacher, we could have identified more linguistic features and in turn the general strategies used by the teacher in managing rapport.

## 6. Conclusion

The whole interaction from the case study highlighted the beginning of a negotiation, followed by a peak of intensiveness and ending with the finalized negotiation. The entire process was divided into five extracts, with each

one indicating the teacher's enquiry about the selection of a project manager (as underscored in the analysis and prefaced by an arrow in the data). The first extract introduced the group tasks, which were to choose a project manager and a Chinese city for the purpose of a group presentation. This prompted disagreement about the project manager's selection from Rita. The way in which the problem in this group was raised threatened the rapport between the teacher and his students. The second extract involved a process of further enquiry about choosing a project manager. Based on Rita's intervention, the teacher challenged the students on the project manager issue. The third extract presented a conversation between the teacher and another student (Rita) about negotiating the 'problem' in Group 5. This was also the third time that the teacher has made enquiries in this regard. The intensiveness between the teacher and the students then reaches its apex. To mitigate the intensiveness, the teacher changed the topic of discussion to the second task, which involved selecting a Chinese city for the purpose of a group presentation. Extract 4 was concerned with the Group 5's selection of a Chinese city, while Extract 6 came at the end of this conversation, in which the teacher provided positive feedback and attributed value to this dynamic interaction.

For these kinds of data, CA is a productive approach for presenting certain details about language. It was also beneficial in the context of this paper's case study in highlighting rapport management during the interaction between the teacher and his students, specifically in terms of how the teacher challenged the students and mitigated the intensiveness, as well as how the students threatened their rapport with the teacher.

Furthermore, this paper represents a small, but important, step in expanding the knowledge on chaotic and disorderly talk and relationship management in the classroom. Although the power between a teacher and students is asymmetrical, students can challenge this asymmetry and become what the teacher most values. By posing difficult questions, the teacher can encourage students to critically think and verbally express themselves, which presents the larger pedagogical goal that the teacher wants to achieve.

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## Appendix: CA transcription notations

(.)	a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.
(0.0)	elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds.
<u>underline</u>	stress.
CAPS	very emphatic stress.
.	sentence-final falling intonation.
?	yes/no question rising intonation.
,	phrase-final intonation (more to come).
-	a glottal stop, or abrupt cutting-off of sound.
:	lengthened vowel sound (extra colons indicate greater lengthening).
* words*	relatively quieter than the surrounding talk
[ ]	overlapped talk.
> <	increased speed.
(words)	uncertain transcription.
(bla bla)	unclear utterances.
(syl syl)	number of syllables in unclear transcription.
\$words\$	spoken in a smiley voice.
((words/laughter))	comments on background, skipped talk or non-verbal behaviour.

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