"Applying Principles of *Conversation Analysis*
to the Facilitation of Student-Participation in Classroom Discussions",
A Talk by Dr Eric Miller

TLC Day 2012, First Anniversary of the Teaching and Learning Center, Thursday 23 August,
Multi-purpose Hall, Central Library

A class of students could be divided into groups of 2, 3, 4, or 5. Students in each group could be requested to

> Attempt to solve a problem / question / puzzle (it might be best if there might be multiple possible solutions). Make a list of possible answers, solutions, approaches.

> Discuss their reactions to something that has been presented to them.

> Discuss a case study. Discuss ways in which a particular challenge was, or might be, handled.

> Discuss how a goal was achieved, a process was done, or a challenge was overcome. People like having examples to follow and/or improve upon.

> Tell stories to each other (personal-experience, historical, news, imaginary, etc, stories).

> Role-play characters in a situation (act-out an episode of a story).

> Teach each other about something, or how to do something, etc. This facilitates students absorbing, digesting, thinking through, and "owning" material.

> Think silently for a minute (reactions, suggestions, etc) relating to material that has been presented to them. Then share thoughts -- with a partner, or with the entire group.

> Write a one-minute-paper (reactions, suggestions, etc) relating to material that has been presented to them. Then share thoughts -- with members of a small group, or with the entire group.

"Arising within Sociology, Conversation Analysis (CA) emerged from the *Cognitive Revolution* that swept across the social sciences in the 1960s, and placed a new emphasis on participants' orientation to indigenous social and cultural constructs. CA seeks to describe the underlying social organisation -- conceived as an institutionalised substratum of interactional rules, procedures, and conventions -- through which orderly and intelligible social interaction is made possible" (Goodwin and Heritage 1990, p 283).

Key CA concepts include: 1) Bids to introduce new subjects into conversations, based on claims of Relevancy, 2) Adjacency Pairs (utterances and responses); 3) Turn-exchange Points; and 4) Conversation Repair.

This *Cognitive Revolution* (also known as the *Socio-Linguistic Moment*) involved a Paradigm Shift in the perception and study of Communication: from Communication as a top-down, one-to-many announcement (broadcast, publication); to Communication as an interactive social event, in which the receiver of a message must signal his/her reception of the message, and his/her emotional/intellectual response to the message, before a Communication event could be considered complete.

In the field of Education, one way the Paradigm Shift has occurred has been in these terms: from consideration of the process of Teaching, to Teaching-and-Learning.

We need to design, to engineer, social situations in which students are drawn in, and speak, in classroom discussions.

One type of Teaching-and-Learning Cycle is: Each part of this Cycle could last approx 10 minutes:
1) Lecture; 2) Small-group activity; and 3) Entire-group discussion (to process what has been heard and said, to help students integrate the material). We need to develop methods of leading Guided Conversations, Guided Discussions in the classroom. This may involve the use of Open Questions (all sincere answers have value).

Regarding Story and Storytelling -- listeners may interact with the material through Identification, Projection, Empathy, Imagination, and Imitation. Every step of the way, listeners are asking themselves, "If I were in that situation, might I do it that way, or differently?"

Links to writings on *Conversation Analysis,* etc -- www.storytellinginstitute.org/120.htm .

Notes for today's talk -- www.storytellinginstitute.org/121.htm .

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