

The context and the situation

Hymes (1972) established seven different criteria that affect discourse and are to be taken into consideration when analysing discourse:

- **channel**
- **setting** (when and where)
- **participants** (who)
- **purpose** (why)
- **key** (the atmosphere of a communicative event)
- **message content** (what)
- **message form** (how)

Task 1

In pairs think of different ways and contexts in which **someone tells another person to sit down**. For each different expression think of all criteria established by Hymes listed above.

Task 2

In pairs think of different ways and contexts in which **someone thanks another person**. For each different expression think of all criteria established by Hymes listed above.

Can you find equivalents in your mother tongue for each of them? Remember to take into account the context in which the phrases are used.

Task 3

Catching a train

Imagine a crowded railway station in London at 10 one morning. The following message comes over the public announcement system: *The train at Platform 5 is the 10.30 to Edinburgh*. The message is the same for everyone at the station but it is interpreted in many different ways. For many listening to this announcement will be of no importance and they will give it little attention; their travel plans do not involve Edinburgh or Platform 5. Among those who attend more carefully are three individuals. Here is what they say to themselves when they hear the announcement:

Passenger A: *Ah, so it's Platform 5 I need.*

Passenger B: *So this is the Edinburgh train. Where does mine go from then?*

Passenger C: *Right. So I've got half an hour then. Time to get off and buy some coffee.*

From their interpretations, what do you know about each passenger? What do you think they do and do not know before the announcement is made? What piece of information in the same message is important for each passenger?

Passenger A:

Passenger B:

Passenger C: