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Preface

This book arises out of our research into English casual conversation, and is the culmination of the many hundreds of hours we have spent together talking about conversation.

Although every section of the book was discussed in detail with each other, and some chapters were jointly written, other chapters were primarily the responsibility of one author. Chapters 3 and 5 extend and develop Suzanne Eggins' PhD research on the description of the micro-interaction of casual conversation; Chapters 6 and 7 derive from work in Diana Slade's PhD thesis. The work on humour was developed by Suzanne Eggins for two conference plenary talks; the work on attitudinal meanings in text has been developed by Diana Slade in her PhD-related research and by Suzanne Eggins in her work on interpersonal semantics.

As we both have many people that we would like to thank we have decided to write separate subsections to this foreword.

The work of Michael Halliday, particularly as it has been extended into areas of discourse analysis by Jim Martin and colleagues, provides a theoretical framework within which it has been possible to ask interesting questions about casual conversation. Michael Halliday's recognition of the fundamental importance of casual talk as social semiotic encouraged me to listen more carefully to chat, and Jim Martin's willingness to discuss ideas and analyse transcripts has been instrumental in my attempts to come up with some answers. His encouragement to keep working on casual talk over the years, and his general support for my work, have made writing this book not quite the overwhelming task it could have seemed.

My thanks to Rick Iedema for feedback on ideas and drafts, and to Gillian Fuller, Helen Joyce and Lorraine Murphy for editorial rescue missions.

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It was with great sorrow that I learned in early 1996 of the death of Blair Munro, a student in the School of English at the University of New South Wales. Blair's intelligence, interest and enthusiasm for linguistics provided a rare reminder of just how rewarding teaching about language can be, and how meaningful are the everyday interactions we so casually take for granted.

Preface

Finally, I would like to thank George Kozakos for getting me to the finish line in both the Sydney Marathon and in the marathon of writing this book.

Suzanne Eggin's

My interest in conversation began over ten years ago as an applied concern about how best to teach conversation to adult ESL learners. It was, however, only when I started teaching in the linguistics department at Sydney University that ways into the analysis and description of casual conversation became evident. There are three colleagues from this early period who inspired me to work in this area. First, Michael Halliday, who from the beginning encouraged me to pursue research on casual conversation and not to feel too daunted by its complexity. I feel extremely privileged to have been able to work with him before he retired. He has been a major source of inspiration for my work as he was with many others before me. Second, to Jim Martin for the many discussions over the years on the analysis of casual conversation. And third, to Christian Matthiessen, for his unfailing support and generosity, and for the detailed and insightful discussions on the analysis of casual conversation in English.

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The greatest debt I owe to Philip Clark who selflessly supported and encouraged me throughout the period of writing this book. He never begrudged the lost weekends and often sole parenting of our children. I wish to thank him for his patience and consideration, and his interest in my work.

Diana Slade

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