Among the differences between spoken and written discourse that are exemplified in this extract are:

– Lack of clear sentence definition: while most written text consists of clearly defined sentences, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop, speech is far less clearly segmented. For example:

*Just knew she was about my age and what she looked like just from looking at her and and uh so I asked my friends about her like what they knew about her and stuff.*

For this reason, it is often easier to analyse it in terms of tone units, utterances or speakers’ turns.

– Lack of clause complexity: utterances are often strung together and joined with co-ordinating conjunctions (*and, but, so, etc.*), rather than showing the kind of internal complexity typical of much written language, where subordinate clauses are often frequent.

– Lack of phrase complexity: similarly, phrases tend to be shorter on average and less complex.

– Vague language: e.g. *what they knew about her and stuff; this place; and go to like a club.* Since speaking usually takes place in real time, there is a lot of pressure on speakers to get their message across without too much time spent searching for the most accurate term or expression.

– Repetition and re-phrasing (*in a near town town slash city*); filled pauses (*And um so*); false starts and self-repair (*we’d go we’d hang out*) and grammatical inaccuracy (*so I can go see her*). Again, these are effects of real-time planning pressure.

– Ellipsis, i.e. the omission of elements that can be ‘recovered’ from the context: *[I] Just knew she was about my age.*

– Formulaic language (see below): *never said a word; did my homework; dance the night away.*

An obvious difference (and not apparent in this transcript) between speaking and writing is, of course, the use of prosodic devices such as stress, rhythm and intonation.

2 *right*: this is an all-purpose question tag; tags are added at the end of a clause and typically ask the listener for confirmation – sometimes called a ‘response getter’.

*Cool*: an evaluative ‘insert’: inserts are stand-alone elements that are common in spoken language and have a variety of functions.

*Yeah*: another type of insert, this time functioning as a positive response to the previous utterance.

*Mm-hmm*: A ‘back-channel’ device, i.e. a way that listeners indicate they are following the conversation but, for the moment, are not intending to launch a turn. *Great, Okay, Wow, Phew* (later in the conversation) are also back-channel devices.

*kinda (kind of)*: indicates lack of assertion or vagueness.

*y’know*: an appeal to shared knowledge, often serving to engage with the listener.

*Oh my gosh*: Another insert, signalling the speaker’s appraisal of what follows.

*like*: like *kinda*, this indicates that what follows is not exact.

*I mean*: a common monitoring device, whereby the speaker corrects or re-phrases what they have just said; on its own it can register surprise or indignation.
*That’s crazy:* An evaluative backchannel device – evaluating what the speaker is saying is an important listener role.

*But:* Another insert – the listener is signalling the contrast from ‘That’s crazy’ to ‘Good training’.

**Good training:** the listener sums up the gist of the previous speaker’s turn in order to demonstrate understanding and to show empathy.

3 a The discourse markers and backchannel devices are: *So* = introducing new topic; *Oh, really?* = backchannel indicating interest; *Yeah + I bet* = backchannels indicating understanding; *So … anyway* = transitioning from one topic to the next; *Oh* = signalling new or surprising information; *Really?* = backchannel indicating interest; *Nice* = positive backchannelling; *Well, anyway* = signalling closure.

Note that many discourse markers have more than one function: *so* can indicate a topic initiation, but in other contexts it might be a sequencing device: *So then I … .*

b One way of highlighting these markers might be to make a version of the dialogue with the markers omitted; play both versions and ask the learners if they noticed any differences, and what the effect of having no discourse markers might be. They could then complete transcripts with the markers omitted, either while listening or from memory. Practising dialogues of their own along similar lines, while trying to incorporate at least some of the markers, would be an obvious follow-up activity.

4 a The adjacency pairs are:

- **How can I help you ~ I’d like to do a fitness class** = Offer – response
- **Your card, please? ~ Sorry – it’s at home.** = Request – response
- **What’s your name? ~ Leo.** = (Information) question – answer
- **What’s your surname? ~ Seymour** = (Information) question – answer
- **And what’s your address? ~ 18 New Street.** = (Information) question – answer
- **18 New Street. ~ Yes, that’s right.** = Confirmation check – confirmation
- **So, a fitness class? ~ Yes.** = Confirmation check – confirmation
- **What time’s the next one? ~ It’s at twenty past seven.** = (Information) question – answer
- **Sorry? ~ 7.20.** = Request – response.
- **Is it a big group? ~ No, only ten people.** = (Information) question – answer
- **Can I book a place? ~ Of course.** = Request – response.
- **And where’s the class? ~ It’s in Studio 1.** = (Information) question – answer
- **So that’s 7.20 in Studio 1? ~ That’s right.** = Confirmation check – confirmation
- **Thanks for your help. ~ You’re welcome.** = Thanks – response.

b Other two-part exchanges that can usefully be taught to elementary students include:

- **Service encounters:**
  - **A:** Can I help you?
  - **B:** Yes, have you got a map of ... ?

- **Offers and invitations:**
  - **A:** Would you like to go to the movies?
  - **B:** I’d love to.