

**“Just say something and we can all  
argue then”: Community and identity  
in the workplace talk of English  
language teachers**

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## Abstract

“Just say something and we can all argue then”:  
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This thesis addresses the professional talk of English language teachers. In doing so, it differs from the vast majority of the previous research by focussing on naturally occurring professional interaction *outside* the language classroom. Teacher meetings were recorded in two different settings: 1) the English department of a public university in México and 2) a private language school in Ireland. In all, approximately 3.5 hours of data, c. 40,000 words, were transcribed and analysed. The principal research question focuses on how the existence of community and identity can be linguistically codified. To address this question, the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework is operationalised. The tripartite CoP criteria, *joint enterprise*, *mutual engagement* and *shared repertoire* are used to provide an over-arching narrative for the quantitative findings generated by using corpus-based tools and the qualitative insights provided by exploring these findings in depth using discourse analytic methods, particularly conversation analysis (CA). Pragmatic analyses provide a further, crucial scaffold in the interpretation of the data. Analyses explore everyday language that has taken on specialised meaning within the community and how the professional knowledge encoded within it is representative of a vast and intricate shared repertoire. This repertoire is constructed, ratified, reified and continually re-negotiated through regular, mutual engagement in the joint enterprises of the community. The nexus of personal and professional identities, evidenced in the complexity of reference within *you*, *we* and the particular reference encoded in *they*, instantiate the construction of professional and community identity. Issues of power and solidarity are explored through the prism of politeness theory and the phenomenon of hedging. Humour and laughter are shown to provide a frame within which to vent frustrations, resist institutional strictures and even criticise students without compromising the teachers' professional code.

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# Introduction

*Peter: So maybe a little introduction to it...*

C-MELT01

## 1.0 Introduction

This study arose out of a question of identity or, to be more precise, a crisis of identity. As the English department I worked in wrestled with the nuances of implementing a new system of assessment, our discussions returned with striking frequency to the tangential position of the department within the university and the department's negative professional image. At the time, this recurring theme, a sort of professional inferiority complex, seemed to reflect a larger 'conversation' about the image and identity of English language teaching (ELT) that I had been involved in ever since my first job. It was this that provided the impetus to delve deeper into professional practices in ELT; the more authentic the practices, the better.

ELT is a multi-faceted profession, and foreign language teaching a 'unique art' in Hammadou and Bernhart's terms (1987: 305). The raw material of language teaching, language itself, is slippery and mutable, 'as large and as complex as life' and perhaps, like many things, impossible to ever really be master of from the point of view of subject expertise (Palmer, 1998: 2). Language teachers grapple not merely with how to present aspects of this target language, but how to present them in a manner that will motivate and facilitate communication. In this context of teaching, language is both the medium and intended outcome of instruction (Long, 1983; Willis, 1992; Walsh, 2006), a characteristic of the profession that makes it distinct from many other forms of teaching. It is, contrary to folk assumptions, a highly skilled job. As Hammadou and Bernhart assert:

Being a foreign language teacher is in many ways unique within the profession of teaching. Becoming a foreign language teacher, too, is a different process from that which other future teachers experience. This reality is rooted in the subject matter of foreign language itself. In foreign language teaching, the content and the process for learning the content are the same. In other words, in foreign language teaching the medium is the message.

(1987: 302)

Senior (2006: 37-39) summarises some of the frustrations and rewards of being a language teacher and refers to these as 'push and pull' factors. Many language teachers find themselves in schools which are entirely profit-driven though the teachers themselves are very poorly paid and public misconception of language teaching as unskilled or low status is a major issue. Balanced against these are the

indisputable rewards of language teaching. Language teachers in the private sphere are rarely constrained by a national curriculum and have great freedom and scope for creativity with regard to the materials and activities they use in the classroom. All language teachers have the privilege of working with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as the opportunity to live and work in different countries themselves. No matter what subject is taught, teaching is a complicated activity, a process of ‘becoming’ that ‘continues beyond initial teacher training and goes on throughout an entire career’ (Kelchtermans, 2000: 19). The present study focuses its attention on how teachers in two very different locations go about the business of not just ‘being’ language teachers, but performing some of the less immediately obvious activities that make up the business of the profession.

### **1.1 What do we call what we do: TEFL, TESOL or ELT?**

Howatt and Widdowson (2004: xv-xvii) attempt to trace the origin of the many different terms used to refer to the profession of English language teaching: *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL), *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL), *English as a Second Language* (ESL), amongst others. This may depend to a degree on the context of the teaching; English as a second language usually refers to the teaching of learners who are living, studying or working in the country the target language is spoken, and are therefore learning English in order to get along in the culture. English as a foreign language often refers to the teaching of English in a country where English is not the first language and learners have various different, perhaps mainly instrumental, reasons for learning the language. There is a suggestion that speakers select nomenclature according to their own perceptions of the profession (*ibid.*). Perhaps the selection is also based on geography: in 1966 the professional association TESOL was established in the USA (*ibid.*: xvii). In recent years, UCLES (the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate) rebranded part of its organisation as Cambridge ESOL, so perhaps a preference for this comprehensive description of the profession is emerging. In this study, the generic terms *English language teaching* (ELT) and *English language teacher* are used. It is more than possible that this choice mirrors a related set of beliefs about the profession on the part of the researcher, and this is important to acknowledge. For example, in Ireland, I believe, the term *TEFL* has been degraded by a stereotype of the enterprise being

peopled with unprofessional dilettantes, hence my quite conscious choice to refer to *English language teaching*. In a similar vein, Pennington (1992: 9) bemoans the erroneous perception of English language teaching ‘as a type of work that nearly any native speaker can perform or claim to perform’ (Senior, 2006: 236-237, also notes this stereotype). The status of the profession has been the subject of controversy and debate (Pennington, 1992; Maley, 1992; Ur, 1997; Nunan, 1999; Eayrs, 2000; Nunan, 2001; O’Keeffe, 2001); however, though it is important to continually assess and re-assess the state of any profession, an *a priori* assumption of its status *as* a profession is sufficiently eloquent.

In 2007, the journal *Language Teaching* published an article entitled ‘Forty years of language teaching’ to mark its fortieth year of publication. They invited academics, who had embarked on their teaching careers in one of the preceding four decades, to reflect on the state-of-the-art in language teaching as it had appeared to them then. Starting in the 1960s, the contributions create a multi-authored narrative reflecting on theories and trends in language teaching as seen through the eyes of those who experienced them first-hand, in some cases from the inner circle. For example, Elaine Tarone describes her graduate experience in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh University in 1968. At that time, Henry Widdowson was advocating teaching English by taking into consideration students’ reasons for learning, thus anticipating the communicative approach and, as Tarone indicates, becoming one of the first to argue for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes. The article provides a fascinating overview of the profession of English language teaching and its intellectual points of reference; discussed, *inter alia*, are Chomsky’s generative-transformational theory of grammar, theories of Second Language Acquisition and the rise and fall of various pedagogical approaches to the teaching of language. Contributions by Michael Swan and Luke Prodromou highlight the personal experiences of English language teachers working in these times. Swan refers to the ‘confused eclecticism’ espoused by many teachers in the face of the ‘bewildering’ array of theories and approaches on offer. Prodromou describes how language teaching, which he had supposed would be a ‘stop-gap’, became a career. This is a trajectory that surely strikes a chord for at least some English language teachers. Overall, what is reinforced is the innate complexity of the English language teaching enterprise.

Canagarajah (2006: 9), in *TESOL Quarterly*'s consideration of the TESOL organisation at forty, cautions against a 'state-of-the-art' type approach to overviews of language teaching, suggesting that an over-arching metanarrative may serve only to 'define what is legitimate knowledge in the field', and thus impose itself as 'the new orthodoxy'. He revisits the TESOL narrative in terms of its focal points: the learner, subject matter, methodologies and social and geopolitical issues. Reflecting on TESOL as an organisation located in the broader field of English language teaching, he suggests that:

We have lost our faith in finding final answers for questions of language acquisition and learning. We have given up our march towards uniform methods and materials. More important, we have become aware that assumptions about English and its teaching cannot be based on those of the dominant professional circles or communities...our internationalism has been questioned, and so has everything else in the profession. What we have now are not answers or solutions, but a rich array of realizations and perspectives.

*(ibid: 29)*

Manifest within this provocative thesis is the idea of a constant questioning of the profession and its practices. It is within this frame of questioning practices that the rationale for this study can best be elaborated.

## **1.2 The rationale of this study**

As previously mentioned, the genesis for this study was professional curiosity about the nature of the workplace talk I experienced outside the classroom as a practising English language teacher. Kelchtermans (2000: 21) has commented on what he calls the 'political' dimension of teaching. The 'political' concerns he highlights frame quite neatly the accompanying rationale for this study. He states that:

The focus of training is almost entirely on the classroom level, but once a teacher starts her career she becomes a member of the school organization and has to find her way in it, deal with its traditions, its implicit norms and value systems, its complicated web of human relations and interests.

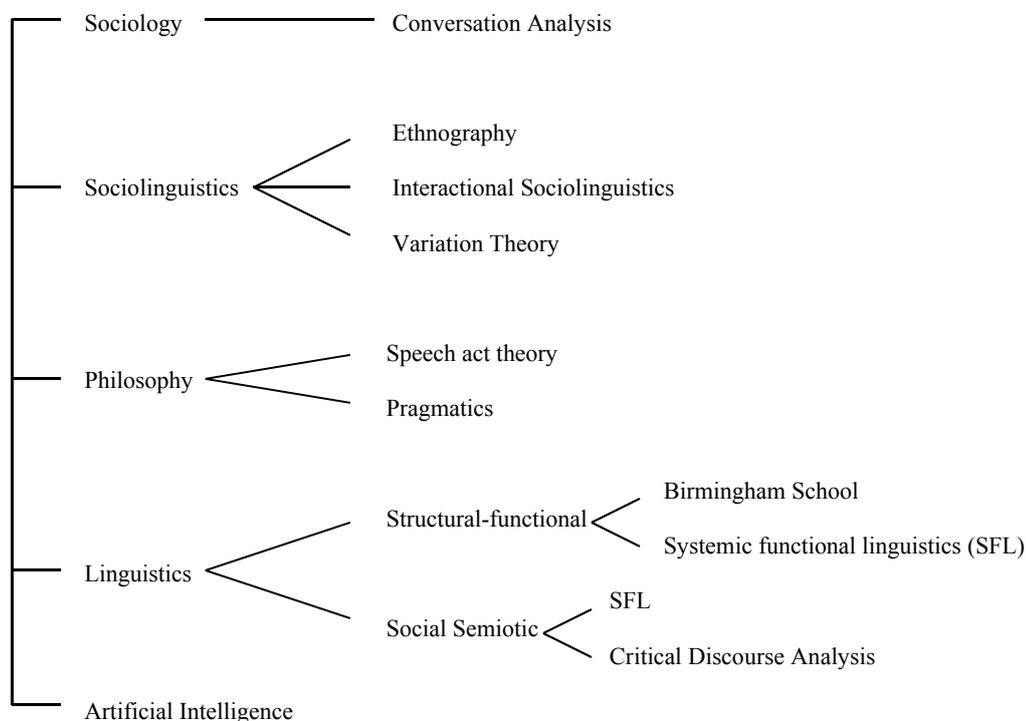
It is with an eye to the 'complicated web' of language within the teaching organisation that this study evolved. A large proportion of research into teacher language examines interaction inside the classroom, or what could be referred to as the *frontstage* (Goffman, 1971) forum of English language teaching, that is to say teacher talk or

teacher-student interaction (e.g. Cazden *et al.*, 1972; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Brock, 1986; Nunan, 1987; Chaudron, 1988; Bailey and Nunan, 1996; Thornbury, 1996; Cullen, 1998) or student-student interaction (e.g. Mori, 2002; Olsher, 2004; Hellerman and Cole, (forthcoming)). Research beyond the classroom has tended to situate itself in the area of mediated interaction which has as its goal the facilitation of professional development (e.g. Edge, 1992, 2002) and reflective practice (e.g. Farrell, 1998; Kullman, 1998; Stanley, 1998; Crandall, 2000; Walsh, 2002, 2003, 2006; Atay, 2008). The analysis of novice teacher language within the context of language teacher education (LTE) has also been a focus for research outside the classroom, for example, Reppen and Vásquez (2007), Vásquez and Reppen (2007), Farr (2005a, 2005b) and Urzúa and Vásquez (2008). Qualitative enquiry into the professional and personal journey from novice to skilled practitioner is documented by collections of papers by Bailey and Nunan (1996) and Freeman and Richards (1996). The present study grew from a desire to investigate the professional language of practising English language teachers outside of the classroom, or *backstage* in Goffman's terminology, within an authentic context of workplace language use (these twin notions of *frontstage* and *backstage* are explored in more detail in Chapter Three).

Although teaching may not always be collaborative, most teachers meet and talk together in the course of their working day. In the department and school that this study draws on, meetings are common, if at times unpopular, fora for the discussion not only of what happens in the classroom, but teachers' duties outside of the classroom. It is for this reason that they are considered as providing a snapshot of what happens in real time as part of an English language teacher's professional life. This picture includes the margins of practice, what Richards (1996) refers to as 'opening the staffroom door'. This study aims to look beyond the staffroom, to look beyond language that is mediated or overtly directed towards professional development, and to look instead at the language which occurs unrehearsed in the staffroom when the 'gloves are off'. The present study is based upon recordings of authentic professional talk in two language teaching institutions, in two different countries, México and Ireland. In all, six meetings were recorded and transcribed (details of the dataset are provided in Chapter Four).

### 1.3 Locating this study

Although this study invokes theoretical perspectives from a number of interrelated disciplines, its over-arching assumption is that the two groups of teachers who talk together in the meetings that comprise the data are *de facto* members of institutional and professional communities, and perhaps even share membership of a larger, more international, community. As an analysis of authentic, naturally-occurring language texts that have been recorded and stored as computer files, the study can best be characterised as ‘corpus-based’ (this aspect of the study is discussed in Chapter Four). The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpus requires reference to findings from studies which describe, in the broadest possible sense, analyses of discourse. As McCarthy *et al.* (2002: 55) assert ‘life is a constant flow of discourse – of language functioning in one of the many contexts that together make up a culture.’ This discourse is studied from the theoretical viewpoint of many different disciplines, and though these disciplines may differ in their classifications, they are united in that they analyse naturally-occurring language, as opposed to abstract formulations. Figure 1.1 below illustrates some disciplinary approaches to the analysis of discourse.



**Figure 1.1: Approaches to the analysis of discourse according to disciplinary origins<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Eggins and Slade (1997: 24) by McCarthy *et al.* (2002: 60).

This study draws on work from many of these fields, for example from interactional sociolinguistics in its consideration of the way in which identities are linguistically realised; from conversation analysis' bottom-up approach to context and from the pragmatic field of politeness for the analysis of, for example, how humour functions in the workplace. Key findings and theoretical constructs from these areas and how they intersect with the rationale and stated purposes of the present study are addressed in Chapter Two.

#### **1.4 The primary research questions**

The present study focuses on lexico-grammatical features of talk in the workplace in an attempt to deconstruct the text producer's (or teachers', in the case of the present study) representation of 'what is going on?' (Halliday, 1985). It aims primarily to propose the framework of *community of practice* as a meaningful prism through which to view and interpret the professional and institutional discourse of two separate, though related, teaching communities. With this in mind, the principal research question is:

- How do these teachers use language in order to effect the explicit and/or esoteric business of teaching?

The related question that is implicit within this is:

- What aspects of this language use are indicative of the existence of a community?

And its ancillary:

- How is the *community of practice* linguistically realised?

These primary research questions are elaborated in Chapter Three with respect to the theoretical framework which informs the analysis chapters that follow.

# Chapter Two

## Literature Review

*Jenny: Shall we start?*

C-MELT02

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.0 Introduction

One of the most significant characteristics of the present study is that it is situated in a workplace environment. Many types of communicative practices (verbal/non-verbal, written/spoken, the placement and use of physical artefacts) are embedded in the culture of the workplace (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999: 1) but the research lens here is primarily trained on verbal interaction. Findings from studies which focus on language in the sphere of work will therefore be of key importance. Equally pertinent is our concentration on one specific discursive genre within workplace, or institutional, discourse as a whole: spoken language in meetings. As discussed in Chapter One, the study focuses on two cohorts of English language teachers engaged in interaction, and so literature that connects language use to the professional practices of teaching will also be relevant. Research studies that are directly equivalent to the present one are scarce to say the least, and perhaps inevitably so for such a specialised case. We will consider, therefore, institutional discourse and characteristics that have emerged from its investigation, findings from the analysis of meetings in different settings, and the nature of research into teacher language.

In Chapter One, we saw McCarthy *et al.*'s (2002: 60) visual representation of approaches to the analysis of language above the sentence, or discourse analysis (DA), and how these approaches have spread, tentacle-like, from their disciplinary origins in areas such as philosophy, sociology and linguistics (to name but a few). It is fortunate that workplace discourse has been the object of diverse research paradigms and interdisciplinary research but this does raise the issue of framing the findings in relation to these paradigms, as well as acknowledging theoretical constructs which have emerged from research within these various paradigms. As the research has taken place at the confluence of many different disciplines and approaches, this review will highlight, where necessary, paradigms that have made workplace discourse their object, and present findings from hybrid studies in relation to their conceptualisations of the nature of discourse. Conversation analysis has been particularly influential in this respect, and is presented in section 2.2 below. The issues which underpin the present study, context and identity, will also need to be teased out. Of course, these also provide the rationale for the analyses that follow, are deeply embedded in this research and

therefore are dealt with, where appropriate, in more focused detail in the analysis chapters that follow. What is presented here is at once a review of the relevant research and what is intended as a principled, albeit eclectic, representation of how some fundamental concepts in discourse analytic traditions inform them.

## 2.1 The notion of ‘context’

The types of setting within which institutional research has been located are diverse, not least in terms of profession. These settings include legal settings (e.g. Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Maynard, 1984; Manzo, 1993), broadcast media (e.g. Heritage, 1985; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Hutchby, 1991; Clayman, 1992; O’Keeffe, 2006), business organisations (e.g. Lerner, 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1995, 1997); medical settings (e.g. Robinson, 1998; Lutfey and Maynard, 1998; Heritage and Stivers, 1999), emergency dispatch centres (e.g. Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987; Whalen *et al.*, 1988; Zimmerman, 1984, 1992) and counselling sessions (e.g. Peräkylä, 1993, 1995; He, 1995). Institutional discourse has also been the object of research into genre (e.g. Koester, 2006; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1995, 1997) and of empirical studies of lexis specific to workplace discourse (e.g. McCarthy and Handford, 2004). All of the studies in the workplace setting have in common a meticulous sketching of the setting, or ‘context’, within which the talk occurs and therefore the idea of context, and how identities are made relevant within contexts, is fundamental.

Halliday (1978) explores the notion of context in *Language as Social Semiotic*, a collection of his classic work. He highlights how we cannot ascribe a ‘use’ or function to any specific utterance as in any given utterance a speaker may be ‘using language in a number of different ways for a variety of different purposes’ (*ibid*: 28). As a way of expounding upon this, he references Malinowski’s ‘context of situation’: the notion that language only comes to life when functioning in some environment. As Halliday puts it: ‘we do not experience language in isolation...but always in relation to a scenario, some background of persons and actions and events from which things are said to derive their meaning...this is referred to as situation, so language is said to function in “contexts of situation”’ (Halliday, 1978: 28). He is careful to point out that context of situation does not refer to ‘bits and pieces of the material environment’

but to features that are *related* to the interaction, whether these features are abstract or concrete (*ibid*: 29). He goes on to typify how linguistic situations vary according to 1) what is taking place, 2) who is talking, and 3) what part the language is playing; it is the details of these variations that determine the forms of utterances and the meanings that are ascribed to these utterances, or, as Halliday dubs it, the ‘at once very simple and very powerful’ idea of *register* (*ibid*: 31). Register is both ‘... a name given to a variety of language distinguished according to its use...’ (Halliday *et al.*, 1964: 87) and:

... a form of prediction: given that we know the situation, the social context of language use, we can predict a great deal about the language that will occur... the important theoretical question then is: what exactly do we need to know about the social context in order to make such predictions?

(Halliday, 1978: 32)

Halliday summarises what these exigencies are under three headings: 1) Field of discourse, 2) Tenor of discourse, and 3) Mode of discourse (*ibid*: 33). The *field of discourse* refers to the setting in which the talk takes place and what Levinson might refer to as the ‘activity type’ (1992 [1979]) – a culturally recognised activity, such as a job interview, an English class or a business meeting. *Tenor* refers to the relationship between the participants, including degrees of closeness or distance. Finally, *mode* denotes the medium of communication, such as (but not pertaining exclusively to) whether it is written or spoken. Bhatia (1993), in a study of language in professional settings, underscores the benefit of this perspective in describing the relationship between lexico-grammatical features and varieties of language. In order to gain greater insights into the relationship thus described, Bhatia employs *genre analysis* to arrive at what he calls ‘significant form-function relations’ (p. 11).

### 2.1.1 Genre

The notion of *genre*, and what we mean when we invoke it, is essential to the understanding of how language works in context. Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1986/1999)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The work quoted here by Bakhtin was translated from the Russian and published in 1986. It is reprinted in Jaworski and Coupland (1999); where page numbers refer to the Jaworski and Coupland publication, this is distinguished as 1986/1999.

pioneering work on the notion of speech genres, both oral and written, provided an early working definition of genre:

Language is realised in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) ... each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call speech genres.

(Bahktin, 1986/1999: 121, emphasis in original)

Bahktin also suggests that the organisation and style of utterances depend on the person to whom the utterance is addressed. This conception of the addressee also identifies a speech genre (Bahktin, 1986/1999: 132). Genres are crucial as:

Speech genres organise our speech in almost the same way as grammatical (syntactical) forms do. We learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length (that is, the approximate length of the speech whole) and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole...if speech genres did not exist...if we had to...construct each utterance at will for the very first time, speech communication would be almost impossible.

(Bahktin, 1986: 78-79)

Swales (1990) in his analysis of genre in academic and research settings has integrated these considerations, and defines genre as comprising...

...a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre [...] *In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience.*

(Swales, 1990: 58; emphasis added)

Ventola (1989) reviews studies concerning genre, and their often diverse perspectives, and has proposed a model of service encounters which has inspired work on generic modelling within the area of institutional discourse, for example, Bettyruth (1988) on legal discourse and Samraj (1989) and Swales' own work (1990) on academic discourse. Bhatia's (1993) aforementioned study of written language in professional settings outlines genre analysis as a system of analysis that is organised into three parts: lexico-grammatical, text-patterning and structural. He is concerned with broadening the scope of linguistic analysis to incorporate not only linguistic

description, but also socio-cultural and psycholinguistic factors (*ibid*: 39). Clearly, this has resonance for the present study, concerned as it is with how language produced within a community is indexical of both the community and its identity. The socio-cultural aspect of the present data is addressed through our broad-based, layered adherence to context as a major factor that shapes the discourse. This has various implications. For example, in an investigation of specialised language and terminology within organisations, Taylor (1987: 5) suggests that

...terminology which may originally have been no more than a handy abbreviation now fulfils several additional functions: it promotes cohesion within its user-group, helps maintain necessary attitudes among existing members, and instils such attitudes in new entrants.

In addition, structural and stylistic choices ‘sign-post’ a genre; in fact, in a study of spoken discourse markers in written texts, McCarthy (1993: 175) has pointed out ‘just how genre-specific the distribution of linguistic forms can be.’ In order to investigate the potential for discourse markers (such as *so, well, now, you know* etc.) to evoke a spoken mode, informants were presented with decontextualised strings of words which were variously taken from spontaneous speech and written sources; the informants were then asked to judge whether the string came from a spoken or a written text. One of the samples, *...opportunities in Space. Well, not strictly in Space, but in Space Research...*, was assigned to the category of ‘speech’ by almost 100 per cent of the informants. This particular string had been part of a written advertisement, however, and McCarthy suggests that the element of after-thought (*Well, not strictly in Space...*), arising perhaps from a self-correction or interlocutor challenge, is more readily identifiable with a spoken rather than a written register.

Swales and Feak (2000) identify various different written genres that it is important for doctoral students and junior researchers to master, for example, the conference abstract, the literature review and so on. Two of the genres, academic communications in support of a research process and academic communications in support of a research career, constitute what Swales (1996: 46) has described as *occluded genres*, or genres whose exemplars are private and confidential (Loudermilk, 2007: 191). This is an interesting notion with regard to conceptualising the data we consider here: interaction from the ‘hidden’ aspect of teaching work, not focussed on the teacher’s role in the

classroom but outside it, engaged in the complex business of being a teacher in a teaching institution. Within the broader context of institutional discourses, the genre of meetings tends to represent an archetypal occluded genre. Furthermore, within the context of language teaching research, the spoken genre of teacher meetings rarely appears and seems to be part of the ‘invisible’ work of the language teacher.

### 2.1.2 Context and institutional discourse

In order to frame how the notion of context has been problematised within literature on what could broadly be described as the *genre* of institutional discourse, it is apposite to preview aspects of the conversation analytical view of language through Drew and Heritage’s (1992: 3-4; emphasis added) definition of what constitutes ‘institutional interaction’:

Institutional interactions may take place face to face or over the telephone. They may occur in a designated physical setting, for example a hospital, courtroom or educational establishment, but they are by no means restricted to such settings. Just as people in a workplace may talk together about matters unconnected with their work, so too places not usually considered “institutional,” for example a private home, may become the settings for work-related interactions. *Thus the institutionality of an interaction is not determined by its setting. Rather, interaction is institutional insofar as participants’ institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged.*

Firmly rooted in the conversation analysis tradition, they assert that talk is institutional so long as its topical focus is the activity of work, although other researchers such as Holmes (2000a), Koester (2001, 2004, 2006) and McCarthy (2000) have shown how relational talk occurs at the interstices of transactional talk in the workplace, and therefore blends with it (see section 2.3 below for more on this type of talk and its significance in the institutional setting). What is perhaps more interesting is Drew and Heritage’s assertion that talk is institutional insofar as the identities of the participants are made relevant to the activities that they are involved in at work, and how this creates the workplace context. Heritage (2005: 111) proposes the goal of CA is to illustrate how ‘context and identity have to be treated as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed, and, by extension, transformable at any moment’. This view underlines a classical CA approach to context as emergent and not contingent on exogenous factors; as Schegloff (1987: 219) declares ‘...the fact the they [social

interactants] are ‘in fact’ respectively a doctor and a patient does not make these characterisations *ipso facto* relevant.’

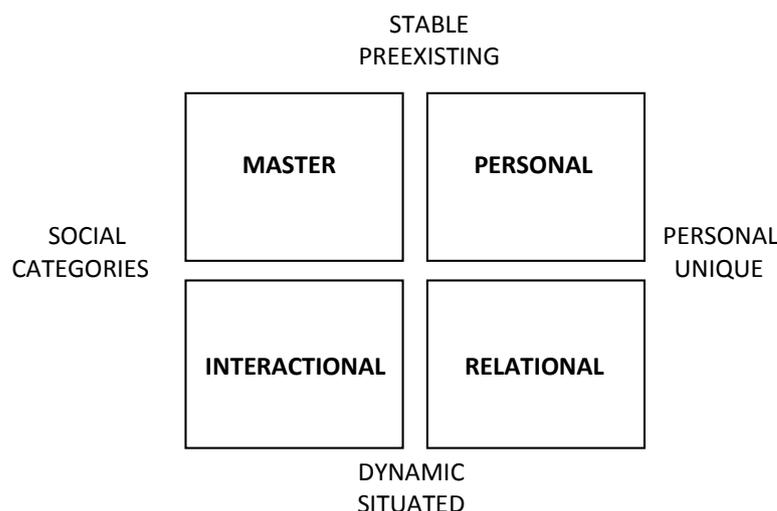
Heritage (1984) affirms a duality to utterances and the way they, and the social actions they enact, contribute to the creation of context. Utterances are *context-shaped* in that they are part of a larger sequence of actions and attain coherence in their reference to the preceding actions, and equally, *context-renewing* in that it will create the ‘contextual framework in terms of which the next action will be understood’ (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 18). This view of context as an endogenous variable, immanent in the interaction and often exclusive of the exogenous situation, is often considered a defining element of conversation analysis. This position would appear to answer Goffman’s rebuke regarding language analysts’ ‘happy-go-lucky’ typology of social situations ‘...drawn directly and simply from chi-squaredom’ (1964: 134). If one is analysing the language of respect, then the ‘social situation’ becomes the ground where status relationships are enacted. Arminem (2000) shows how this orientation to context is valuable in an attempt to eschew ‘arbitrary invocation of a countless number of extrinsic, potential aspects of context’ (p. 437) and it is this aspect of the endogenous approach that is particularly valuable. However, despite the indisputable increased internal validity that this brings to any analysis, ‘...the analyst’s context-sensitive knowledge may allow a fine-grained account of the institutional practice, which would not be gained without a reference to a wider context, or to background knowledge’ (*ibid*: 440).

Whilst Holmes and Stubbe’s specific focus in their 2003 study is on how power and politeness are enacted in discourse strategies and choices in the workplace context, as part of their orientation to this focus they elaborate the various levels upon which they conceptualise the notion of context. They acknowledge the emergent nature of context in talk as described above. However, they also encompass a social constructionist approach to context in their reference to how social roles impact on or are evident in the linguistic choices of the participants in workplace interaction. Additionally, they consider the physical setting of the interaction relevant (as they point out, talk in a boardroom may have interesting similarities and differences to talk on the factory floor) as well as the broader social context in which the interaction occurs (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 9-10). This multifaceted view of context and the

way in which it is assimilated into the analysis of their data is something the present study aspires to, particularly with regard to identifying how social roles and identities are embedded in the data.

### 2.1.3 Identity, identities?

As we have discussed, the warp and weft of context is in the interplay of the interactional situation and the way in which speakers orient themselves and their identities to this situation. What it is exactly we mean when we invoke a speaker's identity, or aspects of their identity, is another interesting conundrum. Tracy (2002) provides an insightful overview of different layers of identity and the way in which they interact (see Figure 2.1, below).



**Figure 2.1** Conceptualising identities (Tracy, 2002: 20)

Tracy (2002: 18) hypothesises identities as ‘...stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular situation, *and* are dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, changing from one occasion to the next. Similarly, identities are social categories *and* are personal and unique.’ Allowing for these apparent contradictions (dynamic *vs.* static; social *vs.* personal) admits four aspects of identity. Our *master* identity is that part of our identity that is stable and fixed (though admittedly not totally impervious to change). This includes characteristics such as gender, age and national/regional origins. Tracy suggests that though we can gloss these characteristics as ‘stable’, what they mean across situations may differ: being ‘young’, ‘old’,

‘American’ or ‘Irish’ may be modified across time and interactional situations. A person’s *interactional* identity refers to the way in which people take on various social roles in different communicative contexts with regard to others in that context, hence ‘Elaine’ may be teacher, friend, partner, employee, daughter, student and so on. *Personal* identities, Tracy suggests, consist of personal attributes and characteristics: being an art-lover (or not), being modest, fair, reasonable – the sample permutations are infinite. This aspect of our identity is not necessarily accepted by others without question and we may often find ourselves being challenged (‘Well, I think you’re being unreasonable’). *Relational* identities, as the term would suggest, concern the type of relationship that we perform with our conversational partners and our interactional identities may be implicated. For example, within the workplace (or when workplace tasks are being accomplished) an employee-employer relationship may be expected to be unequal; however, outside of these tasks or situations, say, for example, having a drink in a pub, the relationship may be on a more equal footing. While Tracy’s classifications are presented here in order to highlight the complexities of describing what identity/identities contain for the analyst, it is imperative to add that she does not present them as distinct in and of themselves. Each layer of identity may influence or be influenced by any or all other aspects of identity, and even the most stable aspects of our core identities may have different implications depending on the situation we find ourselves in: in other words, context impacts on identities (and vice versa).

De Fina *et al.* (2006) take an explicitly social constructionist view of identity, in that they focus on social action rather than pre-determined or psychological constructs in their exploration of it. Again, the emphasis is on the process of identity-building rather than on ‘identity’ as a stable construct; indeed, they also highlight how interactional circumstances ‘yield constellations of identities instead of individual, monolithic constructs’ (p.2) which do not ‘emanate from the individual but are constituted through negotiation and entextualisation’. They suggest that, in regard to institutional identities, by turning our attention to the Goffmanian notions of face and face-work (an orientation to presenting and preserving an image of ourselves) we can ‘interpret the presentation and enactment of particular identities not so much as expressions of “self”, but rather as constructions that take into account both the objectives of interactional practices, and the constraints of institutional structures’ (*ibid*: 9). Face

and face-work are dealt with in more detail in Chapter Seven and particularly in Chapter Eight.

Finally, in a work that gives a formidable, interdisciplinary overview of discourse and identity, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) critically assess how the notion of 'institutional identity' can be related both to the micro-context of talk and the macro-context of the setting in which the talk occurs. To do this, they consider two analytical approaches, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and conversation analysis as inhabiting diametrically opposed ground. CDA starts from the assumption that macro-social forces, such as the realities of institutional power, are reflected in the way that people interact. Conversation analysis, as previously discussed, takes the view that features such as 'institutionality' or 'power' are emergent properties of talk. Both positions yield essential interpretive information; to return to Arminen's (2000) assertion by blending both, fine-grained analysis is made possible.

## **2.2 Conversation analysis and institutional talk**

It is difficult to separate any consideration of institutional discourse from conversation analysis (CA), an approach that has produced a rich set of key theoretical constructs for studies of talk at work. The main concern of the studies of institutional talk within CA has been to bring under the microscope '...how particular institutions are enacted and lived through as accountable patterns of meaning, inference and action' (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 5). CA has its theoretical roots in ethnomethodology, a hybrid research approach which presupposes people have a reserve of common-sense knowledge regarding their activities and how those activities are organised within enterprises. It is this fundamental reserve which makes the knowledge orderable (Garfinkel, 1967). Ethnomethodological research is thus concerned with revealing what it is that we know. As Schiffrin asserts in relation to the CA paradigm, 'knowledge is neither autonomous nor decontextualised; rather, knowledge and action are deeply linked and mutually constitutive' (1994: 233). Furthermore, participants continuously engage in the interpretive activity of negotiating and creating knowledge during the course of their social action, this action and interaction in turn generates the knowledge by which further activity can be created and sustained. Therefore, 'social action not only displays knowledge, it is

also critical to the creation of knowledge' (*ibid.*). Cutting (2000) highlights the complexities of unpacking what is referred to as 'common knowledge' and therefore how this reserve of shared knowledge is created and referred to by the communities we consider here is crucial. One way in which knowledge manifests itself publicly is in our utterances. According to CA, these utterances are designed to occur in particular sequential and social contexts. The origins of CA lie in Howard Sacks' investigation into calls made to a suicide prevention centre which had formed part of a programme intended to increase the effectiveness of the service (Drew and Heritage, 1992). From the data collected during this investigation and subsequent data collected in group psychotherapy sessions as well as calls to the police (Schegloff, 1967, 1968), Harvey Sacks and Emmanuel Schegloff began to develop the focus of conversation analysis: an attempt to bring into relief the sequential organisation of talk in interaction. The epithet 'conversation' analysis is a misnomer to a certain degree (Psathas, 1995: 2), as '...its broader provenance extends to ... the disposition of the body in gesture, posture, facial expression, and ongoing activities in the setting...' (Schegloff, 2002: 3). In addition, the area does not restrict itself specifically to 'casual' conversation. Schegloff (1987) coined the term *talk-in-interaction* as a more accurate substitute.

Heritage (1984: 241) lists three assumptions of CA:

- (a) Interaction is structurally organised;
- (b) Contributions to interaction are contextually oriented, and
- (c) These two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order of detail can be dismissed *a priori* as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant.

What is said not only constitutes data for analysis but also the basis of the development of hypotheses and conclusions for CA as a discipline. CA holds that interaction (conversational or otherwise) is 'structurally organised'. In spoken interaction each utterance is produced by speakers in relation to the preceding (and following) utterances, or as Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998: 1) express it:

Talk is not seen simply as the product of two 'speaker-hearers' who attempt to exchange information or convey messages to each other. Rather, participants in

conversation are seen as mutually orienting to, and collaborating in order to achieve, orderly and meaningful communication.

CA articulates this structure through the isolation and analysis of certain features of conversation, for example, adjacency pairs. Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 295-296) define adjacency pairs as two-part sequences, ordered as first part and second part. The presence of a first part requires the corollary presence of a second part, or one of an appropriate range of second parts. In other words, the first part of a pair *predicts* the occurrence of the second: ‘given a question, regularly enough an answer will follow’ (Sacks, 1967, cited in Coulthard, 1985: 69). Adjacency pairs are integral to the turn-taking system in conversation (discussed below) and the absence of a second part is noticeable in conversation, if only for practical reasons (an unanswered question may stall the development of the conversation). Further work in analysing adjacency pairs (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Levinson, 1983; Pomerantz, 1984; Frankel, 1990) has developed the notion of preferred and dispreferred second-parts. For example an invitation first part ‘prefers’ an acceptance second part, as opposed to a refusal (even when this refusal is not a ‘flat’ refusal, but tempered with an ‘account’ of the refusal). Hoey (1993) glosses ‘adjacency pairs’ such as ‘hi/hi’ and ‘how are you/fine’ and defines them as ‘frozen exchanges’; there is no need to actively process this type of interaction, though they are necessary procedural preambles to the development of the interaction.

The most fundamental aspects of the *sequential organisation* of conversation are, according to Schegloff (2002: 4-5):

- (a) *Turn-taking* (the organisation of participation);
- (b) *Turn organisation* (forming talk so that it is recognisable as a unit of participation);
- (c) *Action formation* (forming talk so that it accomplishes one or more recognisable actions);
- (d) *Sequence organisation* (deploying resources for making contributions cohere, for example, topically);
- (e) *Organisation of repair* (dealing practically with problems in interaction, for example, problems in hearing and/or understanding);

- (f) *Word/usage selection* (selection, usage and understanding of words used to compose the interaction);
- (g) *Recipient design* (all of the above as they relate to our co-participants in talk-in-interaction).

Clearly, the turn-taking system is of immediate concern to any analysis of talk in general, and of course institutional talk in particular. CA attempts to explain how participants in talk decide who talks, how the flow of conversation is maintained and how gaps and overlaps are avoided. It has posited ‘...a basic set of rules governing turn construction, providing for the allocation of a next turn to one party, and co-ordinating transfer so as to minimise gap and overlap’ (Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 12). Probably the most significant aspect of these turn taking rules (‘taking’ in its literal sense) is the ability of participants to identify and seize upon *transition-relevance places*, i.e. points in the interaction where it is possible and/or appropriate to take or resume a turn, so that the interaction runs smoothly, for example, the end of questions/statements, where a speaker has lengthened a final syllable (*so:*), a gesture or making eye contact with an interlocutor (Tracy, 2002: 118).

Another of the above aspects that is particularly relevant to the present study is recipient design – the design of utterances or turns with a view to our co-participants. Tannen and Wallat (1987), for example, have studied how a paediatrician selects and switches between different linguistic registers according to whether she is addressing the mother or the child during the consultation. In institutional talk, recipient design may not only be an asymmetrical phenomenon where we, consciously or unconsciously, consider what the effect of our contributions on our superiors will be, but also of consideration in maintaining and enhancing our institutional and social profiles with regard to our colleagues. CA’s comprehensive bottom-up analytical stance and minute analyses of relatively small quantities of data have provided some of the most penetrating accounts of how things ‘get done’ in the workplace. These characteristics of discourse that have been isolated throughout the influential research history of CA inform the qualitative interpretation of the data in the present study; much of its metalanguage is embedded in the findings and these findings owe a great deal to its scholarship.

### 2.3 Characteristics of talk in the institutional context

Before discussing previous research in the domain of institutional talk, it is expedient to refine how ‘talk’ and ‘institutional talk’ are distinguished within it. As previously mentioned, the grounding of CA was in the study of naturally occurring talk. Sacks *et al.* (1974) suggest that if we take ‘casual’ conversation as a ‘speech-exchange system’ baseline, then it will be possible to identify other speech-exchange systems by contrasting their characteristics with those of conversation. They distinguish two principal types of talk: institutional talk and informal talk, or ‘casual’ conversation. This distinction is refined by Dingwall (1980) who proposed three categories: mundane conversation (another term for casual conversation) orchestrated encounters, and pre-allocated encounters. These last two refer to institutional interactions. ‘Pre-allocated’ uses a term coined by Atkinson (1979) in a study of courtroom procedures. Turns and contributions are strictly pre-allocated and the participants and the nature of their contributions are constrained by rigid procedural rules. The ‘orchestrated encounters’ that Dingwall describes occupy the middle ground between the ‘laissez-faire’ system of casual conversation and the rigidity of pre-allocation. He uses tutorial group meetings as an example of orchestrated encounters as they are clearly less rigidly proscribed than the courtroom setting, and yet not so casual as mundane conversation. Hutchby (2005) also observes how institutionality exists on a continuum, from the highly restricted speech-exchange system, such as courtroom discourse, to the relatively freer exchange systems that imitate casual conversation, such as radio phone-in.

Habermas (1984) has described institutional talk as an example of *strategic discourse* which he differentiates from *communicative discourse* in much the same way the conversation analysts distinguish between talk at work and casual conversation. Communicative discourse is characterised by its participants attempting to achieve mutual understanding in a symmetrical context (Thornborrow, 2002: 2). What Habermas calls strategic discourse is imbued with, and distinguished by, asymmetry – it is ‘power-laden and goal-directed’ (*ibid.*). Levinson (1992) characterises institutional talk as goal or task orientated. In addition to this aspect, he sees it as constrained in terms of what is considered a legitimate contribution to the achievement of that goal or task. Not only does institutional talk have this constraint



‘anything but superfluous, frivolous, secondary, or irrelevant to the analysis of the main stream of talk’ (McCarthy, 2003: 34). Most discussions of small talk as a phenomenon have regarded it as just that – ‘small’, purposeless interactionally, unconcerned with information. However, Holmes (2000a) suggests that small talk in discourse cannot be dismissed as ‘peripheral, marginal or minor’, rather that ‘small talk is one means by which we negotiate interpersonal relationships, a crucial function of talk with significant implications for on-going and future interactions’ (pp. 33-34).

Identifying small talk in the workplace was not a simple or straightforward task in Holmes’ data; it was frequently embedded in more ‘purposeful’ interaction. She conceptualises talk at work as located on a continuum. At the one end is ‘core business talk’ – characterised as on-topic, maximally informative, transactional and context-bound. At the other end is ‘phatic communion’ (Malinowski, 1923) – talk characterised as atypical, minimally informative, context-free and social (Holmes, 2000a: 36-37). The exchanges within her data were characterised by ‘drift’ along the continuum. Within meetings, for example, small talk marked boundaries in institutional interaction (in its ‘strictest’ sense), and was typically situated at the beginning and end of specifically work-related talk, though it also surfaced within work encounters as digressions. She notes that after work-related interaction ‘small talk served to re-orientate people to their personal rather than their role relationships’ (*ibid*: 43). Finally, she focuses on the phenomenon of small talk as a discourse strategy in its own right, where its management was indexical of power in institutional interaction. ‘The superior [within the organisation] has the right to minimise, or cut off small talk and get on to business’ (*ibid*: 53). The concept of power in interaction and how people ‘do power’ in talk has also been addressed by Watts (1991), Holmes *et al.* (1999), Thornborrow (2002), Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Locher (2004) amongst others and will be a significant analytical focus here in the consideration of institutional roles, how they are invoked, and how they might be identified. Holmes’ work on language in the workplace is an extremely important benchmark for the present study particularly as it orients itself to the relational features, rather than specifically transactional features of institutional talk. She has also researched humour and laughter in the workplace from an interdisciplinary perspective. Humour, like small talk, is frequently considered as on the margins of, or a distraction from, the institutional nature of the interaction. This interactional

feature is analysed in Chapter Eight from the point of view of its relationship with power and solidarity in the workplace, and the relevant literature is detailed at that point.

#### **2.4 Features of meetings as a discursive context**

According to Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 4) ‘in an important if obvious sense, no “organisation” exists prior to communication: organisations are talked into being and maintained by means of the talk of the people within them and around them.’ This statement correlates strongly with the ethnomethodologists’/conversation analysts’ idea of conversation constructing and maintaining social order. Boden’s (1994: 51) ethnomethodological study of meetings shows how ‘talk at work is merged with talk *as* work’ in her understanding of verbal interaction as constituting and re-constituting organisations. Johnsson (1990: 318) asserts with relation to the institutional context ‘if person-to-person interaction is prototypical dyadic communication, so meetings are probably the prototypical form of multiparty communication’. Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 56) echo the ‘crucial contribution of meetings to the achievement of workplace goals’ and as sites for ‘...the manifestation of politeness, respect and disrespect, collegiality and solidarity...’ or what Spencer-Oatey (2000) calls ‘rapport management’.

Cuff and Sharrock (1985: 158) argue that there is no need to define what constitutes a meeting as we can all ‘commonsensically recognise a meeting when [we] see it’; however, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 208) in a later study offer a general definition of meetings as ‘explicitly task-oriented and decision-making encounters’ as well as presenting a scrupulous demarcation of formal and informal meetings:

A formal meeting is defined as a scheduled, structured encounter with a fixed agenda presided over by a nominated Chair, and normally taking place in a purpose-built venue such as a conference room. By contrast, an informal meeting is more loosely planned and conducted, with a flexible agenda and a Chair whose nomination may emerge spontaneously at the beginning of the proceedings. The venue of informal meetings is usually a participant’s office.

(Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997: 207; underlined in original)

Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 59) have focussed more specifically on the function of the interaction in their definition of what constitutes a ‘meeting’ with reference to their analyses of data collected under the aegis of the New Zealand Language in the Workplace Project (LWP). They use the term “meeting” to refer to ‘...*interactions which focus, either indirectly or directly, on workplace business*’ (italics in original). They also found that prearrangement (or planning) was not criterial and showed that the definition of meetings within their corpus was flexible in nature. They describe the variable characteristics of meetings within their data, and how the description of these characteristics enabled them to compare across the different types of meetings what kind of discourse practices occurred and under what institutional circumstances. Their dimensions for comparing meetings are presented in Figure 2.2.

<b>Formal</b>	<b>Informal</b>
Large in size	Small in size (2-4)
Formal setting	Unplanned location
Starting time specified	Occurs by chance
Finishing time specified	Finishes ‘naturally’
Participants specified	Open to anyone
Formal procedures	Informal style
Explicit structured agenda	‘Rolling’ agenda
Tightly integrated group	Loosely connected
Mixed gender group	Same-gender group

**Figure 2.2: Language in the Workplace Project – Dimensions for comparing meetings (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 60)**

The fact that meetings are such a prototypical form of institutional discourse has, naturally, made them fertile ground for research, linguistic or otherwise. The majority of the relevant studies in relation to the present study have focussed on meetings insofar as they are considered negotiations (Putman and Jones, 1982a, 1982b; Donohue and Diez, 1985; Firth, 1995; Lampi, 1987, 1990; Neumann, 1991, 1994; Dannerer, 2001) or as sites of intercultural contact (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1995, 1997; Poncini, 2004; Rogerson-Revell, 2007a).

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) have summarised some of the more pertinent findings of previous research on meetings, where the notion of negotiation has been a

primary concern. Lampi (1990) looks at the status of information manipulation in the form of agendas and posits that parties bring into negotiations ‘hidden agendas’. These agendas can be subdivided into ‘shared hidden agendas’ and ‘individual hidden agendas’. Lampi has analysed acts, moves and exchanges (cf. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, the major points of which are summarised in section 2.6) as showing potential for strategy (in its business sense) realisation. Lampi asserts that there is no possibility from a strategic point of view of *not* producing an act. Non-verbalisation only succeeds in producing a ‘silent act’ – given the context of negotiation ‘silence is taken to have strategic significance’ (Lampi, 1980: 207).

The pragmatic field of politeness also provides a useful framework within which to analyse the relationship between the context of language, and the type of language that is produced. Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) model of politeness, which is predicated on Erving Goffman’s (1955) notion of face, forms the cornerstone of many of these studies. The notions of face, face-work and politeness theory are discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight, but we will briefly summarise the approach to politeness taken within these studies. Face, as glossed by Brown and Levinson (1978: 66), is ‘the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for himself [sic.]’ Face for Brown and Levinson is a dualistic notion which comprises a positive and a negative aspect. Positive face relates to a person’s need to be appreciated and approved of by others, while negative face relates to a person’s need to have freedom of action and be unimpeded by others. Janney and Arndt (2005: 28-29), in fact, consider negative face the need for ‘personal face’ and positive face the need for ‘interpersonal face’, and suggest that to negotiate between the two requires ‘tact’ and behaving in a way that is ‘interpersonally supportive’ (*ibid.*: 23). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) construe linguistic politeness, a response to the inherent face-threatening nature of much interpersonal communication, in terms of its positive and negative aspects. Positive politeness addresses the hearer’s positive face needs by using linguistic strategies that communicate solidarity with the hearer’s self image (Conlan, 2005), for example, terms of endearment. Negative politeness is aimed at minimising interference and imposition by using linguistic strategies that communicate speaker restraint, self-effacement or formality (*ibid.*) and is realised in linguistic strategies such as, for example, hedging and indirectness (Clancy, 2005). In terms of politeness

research in the institutional domain, Donohue and Diez (1985) have found that face-threatening acts, for example, criticisms or directives, take place not only where there is a discrepancy between interactant's goals in negotiation and personal involvement is high, but also – more significantly – within more flexible negotiation procedures and when participants are quite familiar with each other. Pearson's (1988) study of power and politeness at church business meetings analyses how speakers use politeness strategies to negotiate support for their opinions, and how the nature of these politeness strategies (whether they are *positive* or *negative*) are indicative of power roles. Pearson found that the 'higher a speaker's inherent status, the more effort is made to accommodate (through deferential and solidarity-promoting language), and the greater his expression of power' (1988: 76). This sort of insight is particularly useful in analysing how hierarchical power is manifested and handled linguistically. 'Power' roles are not always explicit within the teaching institutions in the present study but by looking for typical 'powerful' linguistic markers, they can be uncovered.

From a principally CA perspective, Arminem (1998) has studied how participation is organised in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. In AA meetings extended turns are pre-allocated to participants. Recipients of the turns (the other members of AA at the meeting) acknowledge the right of the speaker to hold this extended turn by withholding from conversational responses. This respect that the rules of turn-taking are given in these meetings by the speakers, recipients and officials enable the meetings to flow smoothly despite the remarkably emotional subject matter.

Arminem also states that for the participants, the opening rituals of the meeting serve to mark the boundary between mundane conversation and the institutional nature of what is to follow. The meetings are an interactional achievement as turn taking is not an external condition (unlike, say, courtroom interaction) 'but a vehicle used for the organisation of the whole speech event' (1998: 87). The fact that the participants orient themselves specifically to this institutional context CA analysis would classify as the participants ratifying and, in a more complex sense, creating the context of the meeting. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1995) also note this and other transitions in meeting talk during Italian and British management meetings. The identification of these phases, or boundaries to use Arminem's terminology, is important in analysing the overall structure of the meeting, and is interesting in how participants orient themselves to the meeting genre. Minoggio (1998) analyses institutional talk in

referral meetings for pupils identified as ‘learning disabled’ by the class teacher. These meetings were attended by the parents, the class teacher, the pedagogical support teacher and, in some cases, the pupil. This study looks principally at the thematic contents of the meetings, how these themes (or topics) are introduced and taken up during the meetings. Further to this, Minoggio identifies who is responsible for the introduction of topics and the switch from one topic to the next. The identification of topics and how participants shape the interaction they are involved in adds another dimension in the linguistic description of meetings, and the roles of the participants within them.

The members of the Language Studies Unit (LSU) at Aston University in England have taken a different, more action research approach to studying professional discourse. Realising that their weekly meetings were inadequate in terms of time and scope for extended discussion of what was on their agenda, they devised different types of meetings in order to investigate ‘the perceptions individual colleagues have about existing and potential opportunities for professional talk’ (Mann, 1998: 1). They are specifically concerned with *how* they talk together as professionals, and what sort of discourse choices they currently have and are working towards. The types of meetings they participate in have evolved from this desire to study how they interact, and the basic hypothesis is that ‘group talk’ is a valuable and essential part of individual and group development (see also Mann, 2002).

## **2.5 Analysing the language of specific groups**

Whilst the studies above zone in on research that foregrounds meetings as a forum for talk, I would like to focus on two comprehensive studies of particular import for the present one. What they have in common is that they orient to meetings in an informal or formal way whilst spreading the interactional net a little wider, and including office talk or informal chat. They are Richards’ (2006) study of language and professional identity and Cutting’s (2000) study of a community of postgraduate students and how the linguistic resources of this community change over time. Richards (2006) looks at the interaction of three separate cohorts in different, though related professions: a small language school (teachers), a unit in a university (academics) and an independent

research unit that is part of a larger organisation (researchers). While the staffroom is the hub of the interaction, the type of interaction he describes is broader than the present study in that he takes in break-time and office talk as well as staff meetings. The analytical focus here is on language and its relationship with professional identity. As he points out:

Identity, whether group or individual, is never merely a matter of assuming or assigning a label; it is something that is formed and shaped through action. As with individuals, the identity of a group might be described in any number of ways, both formal and informal, private and public: the professional designation, 'computer section', might be at the same time 'that bloody bunch of reactionaries down the corridor' and 'the ones we depend on to stay in business'.

(Richards, 2006: 3)

As part of the goal of uncovering orientation to identity, he analyses how arguments are negotiated, how the 'other' in relation to the insider group is created and how workplace narratives contribute to group cohesiveness. One of the phenomena he studies, humour, is of particular interest. Humour is a recurrent feature and is threaded through much of the interaction, for example:

**Extract 2.2**

001	Harry:	The amount of del <u>iberate</u> misunderstanding
002		that goes on in this staffroom=
003	Annette:	=heheh=
004	Keith:	=HEHEH HEHEH!
005	Harry:	Heheh
006	Paul:	What do you <u>mean</u> by that.

(Richards, 2006: 138)

We will return to humour in Chapter Eight, and have already mentioned it as an interactional strategy in relation to issues of power and solidarity. Richards posits humour as a defining characteristic of the groups he analyses and illustrates through the use of interviews how the participants in the study also consider a sense of humour important to their professional life. One of his interviewees asserts that 'the ones who make it here are the ones that don't take themselves too seriously' whilst another accounts for why a previous teacher did not fit in to the organisation by saying 'he always looked so bloody miserable. That was the problem with him' (Richards, 2006: 138). Richards acknowledges that in analysing the construction and reaffirmation of identity in already-established groups, we do so without knowing how these identities

were originally developed, though ‘traces of them will be detectable in the talk of the group, in the ways its members orient to one another and those outside’ (*ibid.*). This is a limitation of the present study though not an unusual feature of research on workplace discourse. However, a study that is notable for its diachronicity is Cutting’s (2000) research on the in-group language of a community of postgraduate students. The data for the study comes from casual conversations between six students, members of the 1991-2 cohort of the MSc in Applied Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. Samples of spontaneous conversation were recorded once a week, in the first half of each of the three terms of the MSc, from October to May.

What is particularly pioneering about Cutting’s (2000) study is its focus on the *process* of language development rather than the language of the group being examined as a *product* at a given time. This means that the analyst is in a position to identify features of the language of the in-group – from the point of view of grammar, lexis and interactive meaning – and trace how the features themselves ‘combine over time, to contribute to implicitness and impenetrability of the in-group’s language’ (*ibid.*: 2). Cutting isolates in-group markers such as informality encoded in ellipsis, slang and expletives; humour; shared interpersonal knowledge; in-group grammatical features such as non-anaphoric reference, including degrees of explicitness, and specialised lexis. Whilst other studies of in-group language (including Richards’) assume that the more common knowledge speakers share, the more elliptical and inexplicit the language that they use to refer to this knowledge will be, Cutting is able to quantify and show how this repertoire of common knowledge develops and is encoded in the language the speakers use. This is of particular interest for the present study, as some of the features she isolates – reference, in-group specific lexis, the use of humour – are also significant aspects of the language used by the group of teachers whose meetings we analyse here. Both of the studies mentioned briefly here will be returned to in subsequent chapters; now we turn our attention to studies that specifically consider the language used by teachers.

## 2.6 Research on teacher talk

In 1975, Sinclair and Coulthard published a seminal paper describing a structural approach to the description of classroom discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). The data they analysed was from traditional teacher-fronted lessons in England, the teacher asking ‘display’ questions (i.e. questions to which they know the answer) and the pupils answering these questions when nominated by the teacher. Below is an extract typical of the data they analysed (Extract 2.3):

### Extract 2.3

T = Teacher      P = any pupil who answers

T:      Now then. I’ve got some things here too. Hands up. What’s that? What is it?

P:      Saw.

T:      It’s a saw. Yes this is a saw. What do we do with a saw?

P:      Cut wood.

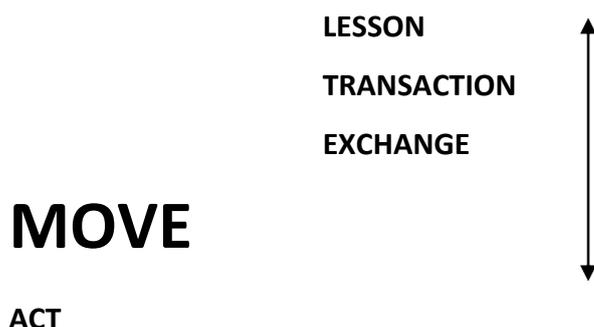
T:      Yes, you’re shouting though. What do we do with a saw? Marvette?

P:      Cut wood.

T:      We cut wood.

(Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975: 93-94)

The boundary of the lesson is realised in ‘Now then’, these boundaries are categorised as *transactions*. Sinclair and Coulthard called the question-answer-feedback sequences (underlined in the extract) *exchanges*. These exchanges are made up of different *moves*, a questioning move, an answering move and a feedback move. Finally, within these moves, we can see individual actions, such as the nomination of a student to answer a question, or an instruction to the students to raise their hands, even an admonishment to the pupil who shouts his or her answer, these they classified as *acts*. The status and relationship of moves and acts in discourse is very similar to that of words and morphemes in grammar (Coulthard, 1985: 125) ‘whereby words combine to make groups, groups combine to make clauses and clauses combine to make sentences’ (Hoey, 1993: 115). In this respect, Sinclair and Coulthard draw heavily on the early descriptive work of Halliday (1961). This is very clearly evidenced in the model they developed to describe how these smaller units combine with other units of the same size to form larger units, a rank-scale model:



**Figure 2.3: Sinclair and Coulthard Model of the Exchange (1975)**

Sinclair and Coulthard see the exchange as the heart of classroom discourse (Hoey, 1993: 116). A three move structure was proposed for exchanges – Initiation, Response and Feedback (*IRF*). They posited that all exchanges will feature *Initiation* and *Response* but not necessarily *Feedback*, later *Follow-up*. As Hoey observes (*ibid*: 118) ‘feedback is uncommon in some interactive genres, while in others, like classroom discourse and quiz show, it is virtually compulsory.’ They distinguish between free and bound exchanges and teaching and boundary exchanges, which mark the boundaries of the major sections of the lesson. Stubbs (1983: 146) suggests that Sinclair and Coulthard’s model is most suited to what he calls ‘relatively formal situations in which a central aim is to formulate and transmit pieces of information’ and so is ideal when analysing the structure of classroom discourse, doctor-patient interaction, service encounters, or indeed, business meetings. However, not all conversation is highly structured and the general aim of casual conversation could be said to be a phatic or social one rather than the transmission of information. Stubbs (1983) and Hoey (1991, 1993) took Sinclair and Coulthard’s model and developed it from the point of view of analysing less structured casual conversation. What they suggested is that exchange structure in everyday, naturally occurring spoken discourse is more complicated than the simple three-part exchange of Initiation → Response → Feedback. Hoey (1991: 74) states that

Just as most naturally occurring sentences are complex, that is, constructed out of one or more clause, so also most naturally occurring exchanges are complex –the result of combining two or more simple exchanges. The simple exchange is characterised by having a single initiation and response, while complex exchanges have one or more of each.

Hoey claims that speakers combine exchanges and in doing so make discourse more complex and flexible. An example from a corpus of family discourse (Clancy, 2000), Extract 2.4, illustrates this complexity. In this extract, two family members, a mother and a son, are discussing whether or not you can use a steam cleaner to clean a car:

## Extract 2.4

M=Mother, S=Son

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>S:</b> Handy now if you had a what d'you ma call it? You know if you got a second hand car or anything like that.              | Initiation                            |
| <b>M:</b> You're not supposed to be able to use it on a car on the outside of a car.  | Response                              |
| <b>S:</b> I mean on the inside of it.   | <b>Feedback treated as Initiation</b> |
| <b>M:</b> Oh yeah. It'd   it would clean the inside of a car no bother. But it's supposed to be too hot for the outside of a car. | Response                              |

(Clancy, 2000: 35)

Here, *Feedback* is treated as *Initiation* and therefore the listener treats the *Feedback* as if a new exchange has been started. The discrepancy between the ad hoc nature of this tiny sliver of casual conversation and the excerpt from Sinclair and Coulthard's data is conspicuous. As Walsh (2006: 47) points out there is, furthermore, a major discrepancy between the context of the 1960s primary school classroom and the contemporary language (L2) classroom, which displays far more 'equity and partnership in the teaching-learning process' (*ibid.*). Despite the fact that it has been shown to be perhaps too rigid for modern classroom discourse, and certainly for less orchestrated institutional discourse, Sinclair and Coulthard's model still has resonance for discourse analysts. Their theorising of the components of the exchange has been highly influential, and no discussion of teacher language would be complete without it.

To an extent, as our concern is teacher language outside the classroom findings from the classroom context are not necessarily or perhaps directly relevant. Nevertheless, a brief consideration is extremely helpful in constructing a picture of the aspects of teacher language that have been prioritised. What is more, this sphere of research highlights how central understanding teacher language is in connection to how classrooms work, and how the profession considers its practices within them

reflexively. Walsh (2006) reviews and summarises the major features of teachers' classroom language in the L2 context as follows:

- teachers control patterns of communication in the classroom;
- the classroom is dominated by question and answer routines;
- 'repair' or correction of learner errors is a prerogative of the teacher;
- teachers typically modify their speech to accommodate learners.

Walsh's own research posits a framework (*Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk*, or *SETT*) to aid teachers in their description of language used in the L2 classroom context and as a conduit for understanding the complex interactional processes that occur within it (*ibid*: 62-92).

Findings from the field of language teacher education (LTE) are also illuminating in terms of the professional concerns of language teachers. In the initial stages of LTE, the development of trainees' language awareness is obviously a priority. Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson (2002) highlight practical concerns in language education for trainees, such as meta-linguistic awareness, target language proficiency and pedagogical skills with regard to teaching language. Whilst these concerns take centre stage, concepts such as language as a social institution, as verbal and reflexive practice and its position as the medium of classroom communication are considered neglected, though essential, aspects of teachers' language awareness. An example of the extent to which trainee teachers are required to be reflexive in their awareness of language and its use in the classroom is evident in Extract 2.5, which is taken from Farr's (2005a) analyses of trainer-trainee interaction in LTE (see also Farr, 2003, 2005b):

**Extract 2.5**

**Tr=Trainer Tee=Trainee**

- Tr: ...now one area that I want you to try a difficult area to work on+
- Tee: My voice is it? I noticed.
- Tr: The sounds you know the pronunciation of the T H sounds+
- Tee: Mmhm.
- Tr: +ah don't don't do you ever use them correctly? You're from Cork are you?
- Tee: Killarney.
- Tr: Killarney.

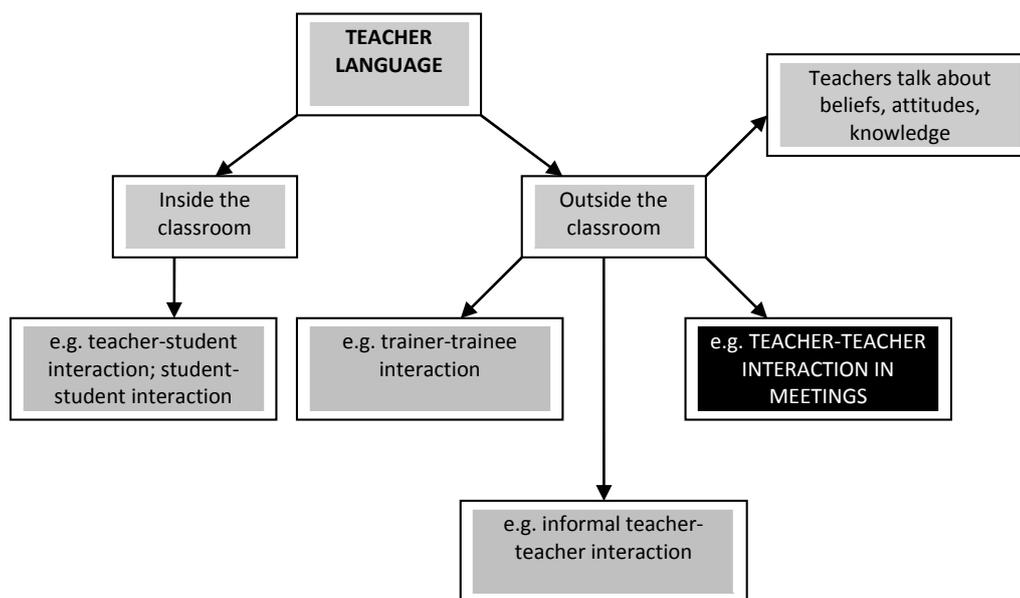
(Farr, 2005a: 198)

Focus on the discourse of teacher training is obviously an interesting dimension in the research from the point of view that it provides us with another locale of teacher language. This setting is focussed on a specific event, feedback meetings on trainee's observed classes, an event which is inherently face-threatening (Reppen and Vásquez, 2007: 16). This is manifestly evident in the extract from Farr's data above: here the trainer is required to criticise the trainee's regional accent, and contrast it with the 'correct' pronunciation she/he should be modelling for her/his students. Also in the teacher training context, Vásquez and Reppen (2007) report on collecting a corpus of post-observation meetings. In their workplace, an intensive English programme on which their MA in TESL<sup>3</sup> students gain practical ESL teaching experience, the reflective rather than evaluative model of post-observation feedback is favoured. With this in mind, the supervisors/mentors approached the feedback meeting as a discursive space for trainees to reflect on their teaching practices (*ibid*: 159). However, analyses of participation patterns indicated that, in practice, the supervisors/mentors did more of the talking than the trainees. This insight led to a change in practices for the supervisors/mentors involved: by increasing the number of questions they asked the trainees, they were able to turn the floor over to the trainees more effectively and give them the tools to use the discursive space for reflection.

We have progressively narrowed our focus in this overview in order to adequately position the present study. The schematic below (Figure 2.4) shows some of the directions that research on teacher language has taken. With regard to the classroom setting, research has focussed both on how teachers interact with their students and how students interact with one another. Where research on teacher language occurs outside of the classroom, some very interesting work by, for example, S. Borg (2003, 2006) and Woods (1996), has focussed on how language teachers conceptualize the work they do and aims to describe the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge that underpin these conceptualisations. The language of language teacher education has provided another rich seam for understanding the profession as has informal teacher-teacher talk. We focus here on the workplace meetings of English language teachers, highlighted in block capitals.

---

<sup>3</sup> TESL = Teaching English as a Second Language.



**Figure 2.4 Dimensions and locations of research on teacher language**

As we turn to the framework within which the complex interplay of interactional features will be considered, let us first summarise the touchstones of the study, and where it stands in relation to the findings from the previous, central studies of relevance.

## 2.7 Conclusion

It is imperative to emphasise that there is not only a significant lacuna in the literature with regard to how teachers interact with one another outside of the classroom; there is an identifiable mismatch between the multifaceted nature of the activities that teachers engage in and those that are represented in the research literature. Though more contemporary studies such as Farr (2005a, 2005b), Reppen and Vásquez (2007), Vásquez and Reppen (2007) and Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) are bucking this trend, it has made for a hitherto unjustifiably limited picture of what the professional life of a language teacher is composed of. The present study contributes to a research literature that pushes the boundaries of what linguistic genres are taken to represent the profession; language teaching professionals interact formally and informally, directly, at work and at conferences and remotely, in the pages of academic journals, via informal blogs and formal websites and so on.

Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 1) point out that understanding the workplace as a social institution ‘where resources are produced and regulated, problems are solved, identities are played out and professional knowledge is constituted’ requires a thorough description. That is to say, a description that includes at one end of the research spectrum ‘fine-grained’ linguistic analysis, and at its broader end ‘ethnographic description and wider political and ideological accounts’ (*ibid.*). Having problematised the underlying theoretical constructs that inform the literature on institutional discourse, we are left with a distinct impression of multiple interpretations, liquid constructs and overlapping terminology and therefore the following assumptions, and their ensuing lines of enquiry, are key to the present study:

- The ‘raw material’ of the present study is the language that is produced by a community of language teachers;
- Language is produced in, and should therefore be interpreted in, specific contexts. As a primarily linguistic study, the notion that context is immanent in discourse is useful in the systematic selection of features for analysis. However, a broader view of context is taken in the interpretation of these features;
- Meetings are assumed to be an individual genre, part of a wider range of discursive genres that make up the contexts in which the institution operates, and as such the interaction is considered as part of this generic event;
- Language is produced by individuals who collectively operate as a community and each of the individuals orient variably towards a shared group identity;
- The talk that is thus produced is locally managed and sequentially organised.

In the introduction to the present study, its defining characteristic was presented as being the situated language and practices of two local communities of teachers who form part of a larger, global community. As a researcher, I am more than conscious that analysing the present data means attempting to ‘contain’ all of the characteristics that attest its authenticity and value – its busy, chaotic and mercurial nature. It is important, therefore, not to dull the insights the present data can offer with too blunt an instrument or limit it with too specific a mandate. The analysis that follows will

view the data through the conceptual prism of the community of practice; a theoretical framework that is loose enough to account for a multiplicity of features whilst being considered enough to allow them to create a clear picture of what is going on. The communities of practice framework is presented and explored in depth the chapter that follows.

## Chapter Three

# Frameworks of Community

*Barry: We're the poor cousins.*

*Jack: Yeah and we know that.*

C-MELT02

### *3. Frameworks of community*

#### *3.0 Introduction*

In Chapter Two we distinguished this study insofar as it attempts to capture a location of teacher language that is missing in the literature. In the broader terms of research on institutional talk, CA or otherwise, there is a bias towards ‘insider-outsider’ talk in the professions (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Richards, 2006), for example, doctor-patient interaction (as opposed to doctor-doctor interaction). Although a rich vein of interactional data, this does not capture the full institutional realities of these professions. One way of characterising the study, therefore, has been the way in which it attends to teacher interaction that can be described using Swales’ (1996) concept of ‘occluded genre’. We must therefore ask the question: *occluded in comparison to what?*; this pre-theoretical issue is addressed by exploring briefly Erving Goffman’s (1971 [1959]) metaphorical conceptualisation of front and back regions in social life in general, roughly commensurate here with public or private institutional language behaviour (see section 3.1).

Chapter One emphasised the idea of *community* as critical to both the way in which the data is conceptualised and also analysed. Therefore, this chapter has a pressing theoretical issue to explore: what has *community* meant for discourse analysts (amongst others)? The existing theoretical frameworks of direct significance are those that consider the language of the individual or group under analysis in terms of variety, genre and common practice. These are the *speech community*, the *discourse community* and the *community of practice*. They are considered as co-existing on a definitional cline, with each accommodating the conceptualisation of the other in relation to the present study. I will start with the most established (though not operationally unproblematic), the speech community (section 3.2), continue with the notion of discourse communities (section 3.3), and round off the discussion with the concept of communities of practice (section 3.4). What these frameworks yield in terms of understanding the distinct communities, united by a common practice,

represented here will be explored and a broad sketch of how the framework will be operationalised provided; a more detailed outline will be provided in Chapter Four.

### **3.1 Frontstage and backstage studies**

The idea of teaching as ‘performance’ is an enduring paradigm of instructional communication (Pineau, 1994) and it provides a useful starting point for conceptualising the uniqueness of the interaction we consider here. Where the teacher-student interaction in the classroom is hypothesised as the main arena of professional performance, or *frontstage*; its counterpoint, *backstage*, is hypothesised as the staffroom, or indeed anywhere outside of the classroom. The terms *frontstage* and *backstage* are used after Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor; in the late 1950’s, Goffman suggested that all interpersonal communication could be characterised in terms of performance. Individuals and groups perform for each other when they meet; their meetings take place on the stage, or frontstage. Their performance is prepared, and previous performances considered and modified backstage (Goffman, 1971 [1959]). Sarangi and Roberts (1999) have extended this metaphor to the workplace domain and from this perspective many studies are explicitly frontstage, for example, examining the institutional talk of lawyers by analysing samples of courtroom discourse. Another type of study might take samples of discourse from lawyer-lawyer interaction, perhaps in an informal meeting to discuss a case, and perhaps we could consider this more or less backstage, as the participants’ are not on their official workstage. One of the pitfalls of using the metaphor in this context is its inherent reflexivity, although the participants are ‘off stage’, they may still wish to strictly maintain their frontstage identity. Indeed, in the case of teachers, their frontstage may actually be meeting their colleagues and maintaining a professional identity, while backstage may be their classroom persona. The best solution to this is to consider frontstage those studies that are located in the natural domain of the professional, however arguable this may be, and set this as a clear boundary. For example, the defence lawyer’s is the courtroom, the doctor’s is his clinic and for the teacher, it is the classroom. In all these cases, a physical location is proposed, even taking into consideration the fact that talk does not have to be ‘on site’ to be

institutional (cf. Drew and Heritage, 1992). From this perspective it is evident that most studies have indeed been frontstage studies:

Mainstream discourse analytic studies seem to have identified prototypical sites of investigation. As with the focus on the clinic in medical discourse, there is more focus on courtroom interaction than between lawyer-client interaction outside the courtroom (or lawyer-lawyer talk for that matter); more focus on teacher-pupil interaction inside the classroom rather than what happens outside the classroom (or teacher-teacher talk, for that matter).

(Sarangi, 2002: 106)

By retraining the research gaze to rest on teacher-teacher interaction outside of the classroom as they perform some of the other duties that make up the profession, we become privy to some of the unseen work of the teacher and, from the perspective of this study at least, more importantly, other discourses of language teaching.

As previously stated, the groups of teachers who participate at the meetings that make up C-MELT are conceptualised as being members of local, institutional communities as well as of a (hypothetical) global, professional community. We turn now to how discourse analysts and social theorists have described and codified the idea of community.

### **3.2 Speech community**

The notion of speech communities though well established comes with a plethora of descriptions. These descriptions can be tracked in order to illustrate how they have subsumed or rejected elements of each other. However, the concept of the speech community has remained pervasive because as Hudson (1996: 24) notes if speech communities can be delimited, they can be studied and it may be possible to find interesting differences between communities which correlate with differences in their language. Hence many sociolinguists in particular have tried to arrive at an optimal description of the term. The concept of cohesive communities as prototypical language sites is an interesting one, and some of the descriptions of how the term has developed (though not necessarily chronologically) and its implications for this study are discussed below.

Speech community is now arguably native to the area of sociolinguistics and it is within this area that it has been most thoroughly discussed, theoretically at least if not as a specific object of study. Its origins lie in the origins of the sociolinguistic discipline itself: historical linguistics, early structuralism, dialectology, philosophy of language and anthropology (Patrick, 2002: 577). Leonard Bloomfield, a structural linguist, though not the first to consider the idea of ‘community’ in this context, was one of the first to dedicate significant space to theorising on the notion of speech community, in his hugely influential work *Language* (1933). An earlier article had included speech community as part of his overall theoretical framework:

Definition. An act of speech is an utterance. 2. Assumption. Within certain communities successive utterances are alike or partly alike ... 3. Definition. Any such community is a speech community.

(Bloomfield, 1926: 153-154)

The 1933 text expands on this initial theory of speech community and states simply but significantly that ‘a speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech’ (1933: 42). These perspectives suggest that it is a common *tongue* (in the most general possible sense, a similar language) that defines the speech community, and it is delimited thus. This overall ‘classic’ perspective on language community has also bequeathed two problem constructs for later definitions of the speech community:

- 1) *Linguistic uniformity*: If the group of people interact by means of speech, mutual intelligibility is implicit, so ‘how alike must utterances be, and in what ways, to constitute their speakers as sharing a speech community?’ (Patrick, 2002: 578);
- 2) *Community*: The idea of ‘community’ itself was also somehow ‘smuggled in as an unquestioned prime’ without much discussion of how community is constituted or defined, leaving it a somewhat ‘fuzzy’ concept (*ibid.*).

The classic standpoint on speech communities is echoed as late as 1970 by Lyons and had been defined unambiguously by Hockett (1958: 8): ‘Each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language.’

This equation of the speech community and language as synonymous is an idea which is later challenged, particularly by Hymes, discussed below. Also challenged routinely is the Chomskyan assumption of ‘an ideal listener-speaker in a completely homogeneous community’ (1965: 3). Outside the realm of theoretical linguistics this type of homogeneity is rare, especially given the linguistic diversity of modern society. Obviously, applying these types of caveats to a group of English language teachers yields little. Language teachers share a *tongue*, though they are not necessarily ‘first language’ speakers of it. Even taking the contexts represented by the groups in the corpus, it is clear that they are in no way ‘completely homogeneous’ in Chomsky’s terms. Given that Chomsky’s concern is with theoretical linguistics and therefore, by definition, dealing in idealised postulates, for this study more may be gleaned by looking at what sociolinguists have used the notion of speech communities to suggest.

Gumperz and Hymes have had a huge influence on sociolinguistic discussion and research, and have both adapted and refined the idea of speech communities through various treatments. They have both tackled head on the classic conundrum of ‘linguistic uniformity’ and the basic meaning of ‘community’ as mentioned above, as well as establishing their own theoretical contingencies. Gumperz (1962) started by recasting the speech community as a ‘linguistic community’, characterised by linguistic variables. In a later publication (1968), he emphasises that there must be specifically linguistic differences between one speech community and the next but retains the element of ‘frequent interaction’. Gumperz also focuses on ‘linguistic peculiarities’ (1972: 219) of speech communities though they are also predicated on a ‘regular relationship between language use and social structure’ (Patrick, 1999). He states that the varieties of speech within a speech community are systematic due to a shared set of social norms (1971: 116).

This view is mirrored by Hymes (1977: 51) when he states that a speech community is defined by sharing rules for ‘the conduct and interpretation of speech, and the rules for the interpretation of at least one language variety’ and stresses that *both* conditions are necessary. What the cumulative thrust of these ideas of the speech community thus far has in common is the focus on both a linguistic and social component, with social organisation as a starting point. While Gumperz has included in his definition

stipulations on ‘frequency of interaction’, Hymes is more concerned with the social component of the interaction, and tends to dismiss ‘frequency of interaction’ and other aspects of previous definitions. Hymes challenged the notion handed down by Bloomfield and propagated by Chomsky that ‘speech community’ and ‘language’ were synonymous, as he felt this was a reductionist stance that made the term itself redundant. Hymes moreover considers ‘speech’ as representative of more than just verbal behaviour and states that one can participate in a speech community without necessarily being a member of it, though the lines of demarcation of a speech community may be fluid, one bar to membership of a community for example might be having the ‘wrong’ accent, or perhaps using non-standard linguistic forms might actually signal membership of another. He cites the work of the Prague School linguist, Neustupný, to expound upon his own particular conceptualisation of the speech community.

Neustupný coined the term *Sprechbund* to parallel the older term *Sprachbund*, where *Sprachbund* denotes the larger ‘language’ area, or ‘relatedness at the level of linguistic form’ (Romaine, 1994: 23). Neustupný’s *Sprechbund* involves ‘shared ways of speaking which go beyond language boundaries’. Hymes considers as equally important his ideas of *language field*, *speech field* and *social network*. Individuals may speak more than one language; that is to say they have knowledge of a) more than a single form of speech and b) more than one set of norms as to speaking. Their knowledge of forms of speech enables them to move within a language field, and their knowledge of norms of speech enables them to move communicatively within a speech field. He stresses that the two are distinct. Within the speech field, he further elaborates a speech network as the ‘specific linkage of persons through shared knowledge of forms of speech and ways of speaking’ (Hymes, 1977: 50).

A different description of speech community which has been equally, if not more, influential is that of Labov, who shares Hymes’ focus on shared norms, but extends upon it explicitly:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms: these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the

uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.

(Labov 1972a: 120-121)

Labov's conception of the speech community is based on results from his own research. He concentrates on shared attitudes to knowledge – the 'overt types of evaluative behaviour' cited above. His was the first definition to focus in on this above linguistic uniformity, though with attention given to the latter in due course. When choosing samples for his work in New York, Labov first applied only social criteria. He focussed on a geographical area (the Lower East Side) because it was representative in terms of classes and ethnic groups, because it was a centre of social mobility and local loyalty, as well as other attributes of the sample which allowed for interaction between different social groups. It was when he found a good deal of convergent behaviour amongst the groups that he ventured to call New York City a 'speech community'. Labov's work has provided a replicable research template for subsequent studies as it was careful in the sampling stage and was empirical in nature. Labov's work has been criticised, for instance, for excluding non-native speakers of English (Britain and Matsumoto, 2005) but it has also been adapted for more qualitative, ethnographic studies (e.g. Saville-Troike, 2003).

Most studies in sociolinguistics have at least referred to speech community whether or not its various definitions were considered valid. Some have avoided use of the term altogether (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985), some, like Guy (1980), have completely rejected the larger notion of a pre-existing community for a conceptualisation of a community which is constituted from the bottom-up by individuals who feel themselves to be part of one. Homogeneity is no longer the default position, yet the usefulness of the concept for sociolinguistics is still important, as Eckert (2000: 3) states, 'because sociolinguists' treatment of language focuses on heterogeneity, they seek a unit of analysis at the level of social aggregation at which it can be said the heterogeneity is organised'. Where my study is concerned, and when considering whether or not speech community is a relevant framework for it, it is interesting to look at what the objectives of work in this area have been. It is clearly the realm of variation studies (e.g. Labov 1966, 1972a), code-switching (e.g. Blom and Gumperz, 1972), language shift and attrition. Although inevitably the social nature of the language used by the participants will be relevant,

the fact that each participant brings a multitude of linguistic and social identities to the discourse may not *ipso facto*, have any bearing on the flow of discourse, or their contributions to it. It can reasonably be assumed that the participants' institutional identities will be more directly relevant and the speech community paradigm does not allow for this feature. Paradigms which foreground the actual activities and institutional identities of the participants in the discourse will be discussed now as more likely to fit the data under analysis, *discourse communities* and *communities of practice*.

### 3.3 Discourse community

From the definitions of speech community above it is clear that membership of a speech community is more a matter of birth than of choice, and even that one may not explicitly choose to 'join' a speech community with any degree of success without certain bars to membership being present. Membership of a speech community is a primarily sociolinguistic grouping and indeed could be seen in terms of its ultimate purpose, as the sociolinguistic equivalent of stratified sampling. There is also the argument that it does not explain the full range of linguistic behaviour enacted by different groups. John Swales, using a term coined by Bizzell (1982), proposed the concept of 'discourse community' as an alternative to speech community and sees it as distinct conceptually and in terms of purpose. 'In some obscure but powerful way, in a speech community, the community creates the discourse, while in a discourse community, the discourse creates the community' (Swales, 1988: 212). He extends this metaphor of the two concepts serving different but somewhat reciprocal functions by describing speech communities as centripetal, tending to absorb people into their general fabric and discourse communities as centrifugal, tending to separate people into occupations or speciality interest groups (Swales, 1990: 24). If a discourse community recruits its members then this would certainly encompass these groups of English language teachers, but Swales also sets forth a set of six defining characteristics (Swales, 1988: 212-213), which are presented below (in section 3.3.1), and discussed as they pertain to these workplaces. These are: (a) communality of interest; (b) mechanisms for intercommunication; (c) information exchange; (d)

community-specific genres; (e) specialised terminology, and (f) a critical mass of members with a high level of expertise.

### 3.3.1 Applying the criteria of the discourse community

In order to explore what the idea of discourse community might have to offer, we apply Swales' (1988) more elaborated conditions for discourse community membership to the groups of teachers in this data. As previously mentioned, Swales presents six criteria and these are explored individually.

*(a) The discourse community has a communality of interest; i.e. at some level the members share common public goals. The common public goals may not be that apparent on **surface** level.*

The communality of interest here can be seen simply as the area of teaching English as a foreign language, and the common goals as the efficient instruction on a day to day basis of English as a foreign language. This communality is evident at the level of the worldwide discourse community of English language teachers and at institutional level.

*(b) The discourse community has mechanisms for intercommunication between members. The participatory mechanisms may be various: meetings, telecommunications, correspondence, bulletins and so forth.*

The English language teaching community has the full range of mechanisms for intercommunication, including meetings at institutional, national or international level, conferences, message boards on websites, academic and pedagogical journals.

*(c) In consequence of (a) and (b) the discourse community survives by providing information and feedback, even if that information is itself used for various purposes.*

This is probably the most problematic to interpret in terms of ELT (English language teaching), where the participants or teachers themselves have primacy, then this

could be interpreted as referring to the information and feedback provided by teachers to students and vice versa. It could also be interpreted as taking in the information and feedback provided by the mechanisms of communication available to the teachers and other practitioners in the field of ELT. In its broadest sense, it could be interpreted as referring to an ongoing professional interaction by virtue of (a) and (b).

*(d) The discourse community has developed and continues to develop discursal expectations. These may involve appropriacy of topics, the form, function and positioning of discursal elements, and the role texts play in the operation of the discourse community. In so far as 'genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them' (Martin, 1985), these discursal expectations create the genres that articulate the operations of the discourse community (Swales, 1985).*

Clearly, appropriacy of topics can be interpreted as referring solely to the object of the community, in this case all topics considered relevant to pedagogical practice and theory. With regard to the role texts play in the operation of the discourse community, these texts may be spoken as well as written, where the written texts that are implicated in it could be class textbooks, journal articles, even written examinations – insofar as there are certain discursal expectations attached to them. In spoken terms, at classroom level, there are certainly expectations with regard to the basic structure a teacher should be following. Meetings would be prevalent in some types of teaching, teaching in state schools for example, parent-teacher meetings, staff meetings and so on, but this is not necessarily the case for many private language institutes.

*(e) As a result of all of the above, the discourse community possesses an in-built dynamic towards an increasingly shared and specialised terminology. Nowhere is this more evident than in the development of community-specific acronyms and abbreviations. It may also develop a tradition of 'in-jokes' and so forth.*

As part of the discourse community of teaching English as a foreign language, there is a specific lexis to be acquired. Acronyms abound, *ELT* (English language teaching), *ESL* (English as a second language), *PPP* (presentation practice production), *TPR* (total physical response), to name but a few. There is also the

necessity of learning other community-specific lexis, where such lexis may have a specific meaning in the field, for example, *elementary*, *pre-intermediate*, *proficiency*, where these terms refer to the placement of students in levels appropriate to their language ability.

*(f) The discourse community has a mass of members with a suitable degree of relevant discursal and content expertise. Discourse communities have changing memberships; people enter as apprentices and leave, by death, or in other less involuntary ways. However, the survival of the community depends on a reasonable ratio between experts and novices.*

It is evident that this ‘reasonable ratio between experts and novices’ presupposes that there are entrance requirements to the discourse community and those experts that have the power to permit or deny entry. The issue of suitable degree of content expertise is debated in ELT circles; however, there is a minimum criterion for entry into the *official* community of ELT.<sup>4</sup> Discourse community, for the purposes of this analysis then, is a more appropriate framework, and for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is relatively unproblematic in terms of its delimitation; definitional chaos seems endemic where the concept of speech community is concerned. Secondly, it focuses expressly on linguistic features, and in terms of the genres implicit in and revealed by these features. Thirdly, the concept is functional, goal-directed, unconstrained by space and time, and altogether more neutral than speech community (Swales 1988: 211). The members of the community actively pursue its goals. Cutting (1999, 2000) uses discourse community as a framework in her analytically rigorous, diachronic analysis of the casual conversations of a group of university students working towards an MSc in Applied Linguistics. The group constituted a discourse community insofar as the group had common goals, intercommunication mechanisms, particular genres and specific lexis. Her goal was to bring to light how the language used in the community evolved over time and what features of grammar, lexis and interactivity constituted the evolving ‘in-group code’: the

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in Ireland, the Department of Education and Science’s regulatory body for ELT schools and training provision, ACELS (the Advisory Council for English Language Schools), states that candidates for a Certificate in English Language Teaching must meet a certain number of requirements in order to be accepted onto a course (e.g. a minimum ordinary level Bachelor’s degree). Thereafter, the course must be of at least four weeks duration (and a minimum of 120 hours) including at least 360 minutes of supervised and assessed teaching practice.

elliptical, implicit language impenetrable to those outside of the discourse community (Cutting, 2000, 2001). Homogeneity is not assumed for the group in Cutting's study (rather unity of purpose: working towards the MSc); however, discourse community is not without its criticisms and one major criticism has been its assumption of consensual, fuzzy, homogenous groups (see Prior, 2003).

In addition, discussions of discourse communities have pointed out that though *shared* goals were crucial to the conceptualisation of discourse communities that the stipulation that they be *shared* was not as plausible as it might have seemed. Johns (1997) and Porter (1986) have suggested that though discourse communities may share interests but not necessarily common goals. In addition to this, Swales refers to a 'mass of members' (1988) and 'a threshold level of members' (1990), but there is no explicit reference to how large (or small) a discourse community can be (E. Borg, 2003). There is also the question of how stable discourse communities, and by extension the genres they display as:

...if discourse communities are seen as stable, with experts who perform gate-keeping duties, then their genres are normative, and novices must conform to the expectations of the community in order to enter it.

E. Borg (2003: 400)

This is intended to convey the criticism that this will create an asymmetrical power dynamic within the community (Canagarajah, 2002) and also, perhaps, that the genres of the community are constant and unchangeable. Swales has already anticipated this and suggests that 'some [discourse communities] will be extremely conservative ('this is the way we do things here') while others may be constantly evolving' (1988: 213). Later, Swales (1998) distinguishes between *place* discourse communities and *focus* discourse communities.<sup>5</sup> Place discourse communities are organised locally, are involved in some mutual project, though roles within and the purposes of that project are not necessarily consensually defined. The idea of focus discourse communities resolves Swales' (1990) café owner problem<sup>6</sup> by

<sup>5</sup> Wenger (1998: 126) makes a similar distinction between communities of practice and constellations of practice to explain discontinuities provoked by a lack of closeness.

<sup>6</sup> Swales (1990) suggested that three café-owners, A, B and C, could not reasonably be said to constitute a community if they had no contact with one another; living in the same road, sharing the same clientele,

foregrounding a community of members with communality of purpose, even given that they may be remote in terms of time, language or geography, for example.

These criticisms do not necessarily create any major issues for the present study, however. The concept of discourse community, where the genres that emerge constitute and reconstitute it, is an apt and appropriate paradigm where the actual place of discourse (or talk) of the participants is concerned. On the whole, however, the tradition in discourse community research has been on written texts and their production (though Cutting, 1999, 2000, 2001, represents a notable exception). The idea of discourse community is a powerful one in terms of explaining how and why communities develop genres. There is undeniably an issue of where other parallel or competing social or institutional identities are relevant within the discourse community and how these can be reconciled within it. The various identities a speaker may invoke during the interaction is a significant aspect of any interaction, and a more recent model, not necessarily derived from discourse community but based on the proposition of community, has encompassed this construction of social identity: the *communities of practice* model.

### **3.4 Communities of practice**

The communities of practice (CoP) model has been adopted by some researchers as an alternative to discourse community and speech community in equal measure. It is in some ways more flexible and can be applied to many groupings, social or institutional. The idea of a community of practice was established by Lave and Wenger (1991) in relation to the learning of apprentices, and then much further elaborated by Wenger (1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) wanted to establish a concept of learning that was positioned in what they term ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ in a community of practice. Novices to the practice, or apprentices, through observation of practices, and participation in gradually more complex activities, progress towards full membership

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reading the same business press or sharing the same supplier notwithstanding. Any *de facto* assumption of community membership in these circumstances would not address ‘the logical problem of assigning membership of a community to individuals who neither admit nor recognise that such a community exists’ (*ibid*: 25).

of the practice. What is key to Lave and Wenger's theory of learning is this notion of participation in practices as crucial to enculturation, rather than the rather narrower view that this occurs through observation and imitation. Furthermore, it is not only the newcomers, or apprentices, proficiency with the activities that solidifies their membership of a community, but their understanding of the culture that surrounds these practices (see also Paechter, 2003):

From a broadly peripheral perspective, apprentices gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice. This uneven sketch of the enterprise (available if there is legitimate access) might include who is involved; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk, walk, work, and generally conduct their lives; how people who are not part of the community of practice interact with it; what other learners are doing; and what learners need to do to become full practitioners.  
(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 95)

Penelope Eckert, a sociolinguist, effectively introduced the term to her field in her study of social identities of the students at an American high school (1989, 2000). She identified, through observation of the students and the groups they formed themselves into as well as informal talks with the students themselves, a complex variety of groups; in Eckert's research, the *burnouts* and the *jocks*. The concept of community of practice proved a suitable paradigm, mainly because the focus on social categories as understood by the participants themselves, as opposed to the more abstract categories of class or gender (Holmes, 2001: 188).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) have defined a community of practice as generally 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour...practices emerge in the course of the endeavour'. Wenger (1998) identifies three criteria that must be met in order for a CoP to be said to exist. These criteria are summarised by Meyerhoff (2002: 527-528) and will be discussed in connection to the groups of teachers this research is concerned with in much the same way as the criteria for the discourse community were discussed above.

*First, there must be **mutual engagement** of the members. That is, the members of a CoP need to get together in order to engage in their shared practices. Wenger (1998: 77, 85) points out that mutual engagement may be harmonious or conflictual, so a CoP is not necessarily a group of friends or allies.*

Teachers must routinely co-operate in the workplace. Whether or not this is formalised (regular meetings) or informal (staffroom chat) is not as important as the fact that the members feel that they are involved in shared practices, thus extending the discourse community idea of shared goals by emphasising shared practices and by stipulating that the members are mutually engaged. It overcomes the conflict inherent when methods of practice are divergent or conflictual, by suggesting that these practices are not necessarily harmoniously achieved. However, the stipulation remains that ultimately the community must be in agreement as to the essence of the practice (see Meyerhoff, 1999, 2002). Hyland mediates a similar reality in relation to what he calls disciplinary cultures, suggesting that these communities ‘...can be pluralities of practices and beliefs which accommodate disagreement and allow subgroups and individuals to innovate within the margins of its practices in ways that do not weaken its ability to engage in common actions’ (2000: 11).

An academic community could be seen as being made up of a variety of different communities of practice, for example, the engineering students’ community of practice, the French language teachers community of practice, a group of people from the university who socialise together and use their time together to talk out successes or frustrations at work could also, perhaps, be legitimately called a community of practice. Groups of staff from different language schools in this same way slot into this definition of community of practice, though their micro-practices may be different, their macro-practices converge.

*The second criterion for a CoP is that members must share some **jointly negotiated enterprise**. This negotiation creates circularity in the identification of the enterprise: members get together for some purpose and this purpose is defined through their pursuit of it.*

The second criterion suggests that it is necessary for members to gather together to actively pursue their goals, and that the members, as a collective, jointly negotiate these goals. Again, the teaching enterprise, and how far members have to negotiate in the pursuit of this enterprise may be variable from institution to institution. Decisions may be handed down from a senior member, who may or may not be a member of the CoP, which need to be operationalised by the teachers. An ideal example of this criterion in a school might be a group of teachers who voluntarily gather each week

to talk about their experiences as practitioners in general, or who have agreed to discuss their teaching week and reflect upon it collectively, sharing ideas and offering advice or support to each other. Wenger additionally proposes that this enterprise creates a relationship of *mutual accountability* amongst the members (1998: 77-78).

*Third, a CoP is characterised by members' shared repertoire. These resources (linguistic or otherwise) are the cumulative result of internal negotiation.*

This *shared repertoire* may be verbal or non-verbal, in the case of the high school students of Eckert's study, this was evident in the way that the *burnouts* identified each other; this was not necessarily a recognition in the way that they talked, but broader, the places they chose to stand or sit in the yard, the clothes they wore and the activities they engaged in outside of school. Meyerhoff (2002: 528) suggests that 'an analysis can focus on the variables that members of a CoP are actively negotiating as currency in their CoP'. This would be one of the analytical concerns of positioning the present study in this framework, an attempt to identify what shared repertoires exist amongst the members of the groups of teachers. This may overlap with one of the criteria discourse communities are delimited by, teachers share specific genres for example of writing (e.g. lesson plans) and lexical repertoires that are specific to the profession.

While Gee (2004: 77-78) considers CoP a valuable notion in relation to situated learning, he has highlighted some fundamental concerns with the idea of community itself which can be summarised as follows:

- as an essentialist notion, community carries connotations of 'belongingness' and personal ties, which may be slightly incongruous (or at least, not the best 'fit') for a workplace situation, for example;
- Gee doubts whether 'membership' is a particularly useful concept, given that it can be interpreted in multiple ways;

- as an all-encompassing notion, community (and by extension, CoP) may be reductive, with the danger of ‘missing the trees for the forest’ (*ibid*: 78).

A deeper, potentially more serious criticism that Gee (2000) highlights relates to the way in which CoP has been absorbed into the promotion of capitalist work policies. While this may be the case, in the context of the present study at least ideological reservations are subservient to the robustness of the concept for institutional discourse, with particular reference to its foregrounding of local lores and repertoires (McCarthy and Handford, 2004).

### 3.5 Operationalising the CoP

The present study aims to operationalise aspects of the CoP, that is to say the triumvirate of *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise* and *shared repertoire*, with particular focus on the latter. It is clear that there is considerable overlap between the criteria for speech community and discourse community, and discourse community and CoP. The overlap between discourse community and CoP is particularly palpable. Nevertheless, distinctions have been made between the two, with Pogner, for example, suggesting:

The crucial question is: Does production of discourse, i.e. of coherent units of oral and written texts, serve as a *means* of knowledge production (as in a community of practice) or is text production also an important *aim* of knowledge production (as in a discourse community)?

(Pogner, 2005: 10)

The distinction is not pursued here, but it is certainly important to acknowledge why the CoP is a more appropriate framework of community for the analysis and discussion of the data in the present study and how it will be operationalised. I should also acknowledge that while I have shown how the communities of teachers represented in the present study are positioned in relation to the criteria for both discourse community and CoP, this is obviously not the same thing as operationalising the frameworks.

With regard to speech community and CoP, Skårup (2004) reveals an important distinction: should one or two members of a speech community leave (voluntarily or involuntarily), this makes little difference to the speech community; however, should one or two members of a community of practice leave, on the other hand, the dynamic of the group could be substantively affected. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 174) discuss what the CoP framework offers to sociolinguistic researchers in comparison to traditional notions of community, such as social network theory and speech community, by highlighting not only its dynamism and complexity but also its emphasis on *practices*. It is this emphasis on practices that makes CoP a more appropriate framework for the present study as one of the research questions proposes to view the relationship between how teaching practices are either implicitly or explicitly reflected in language use. Davies (2005: 560; emphasis in original) notes how the appeal to practices is part of the attraction of CoP and suggests:

The core of the community of practice concept resides in the importance of *doing* and, more particularly, doing things in a way which reinforces membership in that community of practice. It is about local meanings, and individuals' management of their identities.

This is the reason that CoP is used as the overarching framework of community for the explication of the data in the present study; discourse is prioritised, however, and this means that the idea of discourse community is also apposite. Handford (2007) offers a neat distinction between the discourse community and CoP which perfectly encapsulates how their overlap can be reconciled: the discourse community offers a top-down view of the community, while the CoP offers a bottom-up, constitutive view of the community (which, of course, is what Wenger (1998) emphasises). This bottom-up, constitutive view that CoP provides also means that not only can the groups of teachers in the meetings be considered members of their institutional and professional communities of practice, but the meetings themselves can also be viewed as CoPs in and of themselves. Therefore, the 'interactional architecture' (Seedhouse, 2004) of the meeting is a factor in the analysis in the sense that in Wenger's terms CoPs are "'about" something' (1998: 4) and so this can be broadly

viewed as the enterprise of ‘teaching’ or narrowly viewed as the enterprise of the meeting; CoPs, ultimately, are ‘the locus of “real work”’ (*ibid*: 243). Indicators of Wenger’s criteria for a CoP are described in relation to the linguistic and interactional features that facilitate their discussion below.

- **Mutual engagement:** The teachers in the present study are engaged in two ways: firstly, they have frontstage engagement in teaching in the institution; secondly, they are engaged in workplace meetings which are the backstage site for mediating practices related to this frontstage identity. The meetings that take place in these different workplaces facilitate engagement: in Wenger’s terms they enable “community maintenance” (1998: 74). Language use that orients towards the maintenance of the community is therefore evidence of this engagement; linguistic strategies of community maintenance are identified throughout but specifically evident in the use of *linguistic politeness strategies* and meeting management phases such as *openings*, *topic management* and *turn management*. The ecology of the meeting is an important locus of this investigation of mutual engagement.
- **Joint enterprise:** Features of language which underlie the negotiation and management of the community’s enterprise are isolated where possible. A major issue in understanding a community’s joint enterprise involves an appreciation of the context of that enterprise: the broader local and global environment it takes place in. *Referential practices* in language reveal the CoP’s relationship with its context but also how the CoP is indexed, created and re-created in real time. Pertinent *participant roles*, in this case those of the institution, the teachers and the students, and how they are expressed bring a sense of what the CoP is about.
- **Shared repertoire:** Where the history of the CoP can be traced in language, shared repertoire is by far the most obvious linguistic seam. This is (arguably) a superordinate criterion for any language analyst working from the perspective of transcribed data alone, in that aspects of mutual engagement and

joint enterprise are retrievable from the linguistic practices, which are also the shared repertoire, of the CoP. A history of mutual engagement creates the shared repertoire. Wenger (1998: 83) states that the repertoire of a CoP includes ‘routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions’, a vast range of indicators. The way everyday language has been appropriated into the *professional lexicon* and become imbued with highly specific, professional meaning is investigated as quintessential evidence of shared repertoire.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In relation to models in applied discourse analysis and academic and professional writing in particular, Swales (2002) reflects on various structural models that account for genres in discourse and what makes models ‘good’. He quotes Murray S. Davies’ suggestion that a good model is ‘interesting’ and accounts well for the data it is applied to (*ibid*: 67-68). This is true of the CoP framework, which has the added virtue that it is portable across disciplines and data; it is at once compact and robust. CoP fits language data well without constraining it and it is this, in particular, which led to its adoption as the exploratory framework for the present study given that a framework which would not impose a methodology and complement the corpus analytic methods used was essential.

The data and methods used are described in the next chapter, which also gives a more detailed description of the analysis chapters that follow.

## Chapter Four

# Data and Methodology

**Barry:** *Just say something and we can all argue then.*

**Julia:** *Right.*

*<\$E> laughter <\\$E>*

**Peter:** *We'll all go against it.*

*<\$E> laughter <\\$E>*

**Kate:** *Maybe we should start with one two and three.*

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## **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the raw material of the present study, meetings of English language teachers recorded and transcribed, is discussed in greater detail. As has been previously mentioned, the way in which the data is approached from an analytical perspective is principally with relation to paradigms that can be broadly positioned in the more general field of discourse analysis (DA), most particularly conversation analysis (CA) and the nature of perceptions and insights from the rather broader field of pragmatics. In recent years, the tendency for each distinctive research discipline within discourse analysis to stay within its own theoretical and analytical territory has been replaced with a movement towards the blending of methods and theoretical perspectives (see Carter and McCarthy, 2002 or Stubbe *et al.*, 2003). One of the most interesting synergies has been the blend of CA, which deals with small amounts of highly contextualised data (as described in Chapter Two), and corpus linguistics (CL), an approach to authentic language data that has largely relied on large samples of language (see Carter and McCarthy, 2002 and Walsh and O’Keeffe, 2007 for thoughtful exemplars of this particular synergy). The present study can best be described from a methodological point of view as an investigation of discourse that uses corpus-analytic methods, the main aspects of which are described in this chapter and used to outline the analysis that follows. Ädel and Reppen (2008: 1) have noted this movement towards the adoption of corpus-analytic methods in discourse analysis as in its (relative) infancy and a very recent development. In addition to this, the present study aims to operationalise the community of practice framework using these blended methods; the structure of the analysis chapters that follow are elaborated the conclusion to this chapter.

### **4.1 Corpus linguistics**

It has been suggested that the origin of what is known as ‘corpus linguistics’ (at least *computer* corpus linguistics) was in the 1960s when the computerisation of the Brown Corpus (of American English, drawn from printed sources published in 1961) was finished (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; J. Aarts, 2002). The use of this type of data did not become popular (or ‘gain some respectability’, in J. Aarts’ view) until the late seventies or early eighties. Chomsky (in an interview with B. Aarts, 2000) famously

claimed that CL does not exist. McEnery and Wilson (2001: 2-12) suggest that pre-Chomskyan linguistics was corpus-like in its approach to language, and explore the arguments made against corpus-based analysis and CL in general by examining Chomsky's criticisms in some detail. Where corpus-based analysis is empirical and relies on naturally-occurring data samples, Chomsky advocated a more rationalist approach which would base linguistic modelling on competence rather than performance. Competence, he argued, is the internalised knowledge of a language, while performance is the externalised enacting of that linguistic knowledge; performance can be affected by a number of factors, and is therefore an unreliable source of data. The Firthian tradition within British linguistics explicitly rejects this as we see with Firth's claiming of 'attested language' as the 'focus of attention for the linguist' (1957: 29).

McCarthy (1998: 15-18) reviews the status of the spoken language in applied linguistics and highlights the (understandable) bias in favour of written data, with the notable exception of work by Palmer and Blandford (1969 [1924]). From the point of view of focus in CL, spoken data, which had been previously largely ignored in favour of written data for a variety of reasons (see, for example, McCarthy, 1998; this issue is also discussed in section 4.4 below), has become a central area of research. Spoken and written data have been contrasted, and the differences between the two have raised many questions regarding the nature of extant linguistic theory. Not only can intuition now be put to the test, many cherished assumptions regarding language as it is used have been debunked. Despite the fact that CL is now established, its exact position in the topography of linguistics, or even applied linguistics, is still disputed, and this has been one of the main discussion points. Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 1) sees its relationship to applied linguistics as a 'pre-application methodology'. McEnery and Wilson (2001: 2) claim that CL is not a branch of linguistics in the same sense as, for example, semantics or sociolinguistics; however, owing to its use as a methodology by linguists within sub-fields of these larger disciplines, we have *corpus-based semantics* vs. *non-corpus-based semantics* etc. Questions of methodology have also come to the fore in recent years (Leech, 1991, 1992; J. Aarts, 2002), and Tognini-Bonelli (2001) in particular has articulated

very lucidly the theoretical and methodological issues that now concern corpus linguists.

According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 47-48), there have been three main stages in the 'penetration' of the computer corpus in linguistic work. At first, it was seen simply as a tool, a method of amassing linguistic data in quantities that would have been impossible before. Expanding on an observation by Leech (1992), she suggests that through this proliferation of evidence and speeding up of the process of enquiry, the corpus was developing its own qualitatively distinct methodological frame. McEnery and Wilson (2001: 17) note this also in relation to the development of the digital computer which transformed CL from pseudo-procedure to practicable methodology. In the nineties, it became increasingly apparent that insights supplied by corpus evidence challenged underlying assumptions behind many well-established theoretical positions with regard to language use. As Tognini-Bonelli observed in 2001: 'what we are witnessing now is the fact that corpus linguistics has become a new research enterprise and a new philosophical approach to linguistic enquiry' (p.1).

The question of what constitutes a *corpus* is also scrutinised by Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 53) and this proves an interesting conundrum. The definitions she considers intersect in their basic assertion that a corpus is a collection of language text, 'though not necessarily texts' (*ibid.*). J. Aarts (1991: 45) suggests the criterion of 'running' text, Sinclair (1991: 171) integrates the idea of the text being 'naturally-occurring', while Francis (1982, 1992) introduces the term 'representative'. This notion of representativeness has proven contentious (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 53) and this will be discussed further in section 4.2 below. Crystal defines a corpus as 'a representative sample of language, compiled for the purpose of linguistic analysis' (1997: 414), and Biber *et al.* (1998: 4) characterise a corpus as 'a large and principled collection of natural texts'. Perhaps the default definition should now be Tognini-Bonelli's own inclusive definition:

A corpus is a computerised collection of authentic texts, amenable to automatic or semi-automatic processing or analysis. The texts are selected according to specific criteria in order to capture the regularities of a language, a language variety or sub-language.

(2001: 55)

She emphasises the distinction between *corpus-based* and *corpus-driven* approaches to using a corpus for linguistic analysis. Any analysis that uses a corpus can be said to be corpus-based. However, as a methodological distinction, a corpus-based approach uses evidence from a corpus to validate or expand upon existent theories and description available pre-corpora. The description of language is not derived from the corpus. The corpus-driven approach, on the other hand, is concerned with deriving its theories from evidence presented in the corpus. ‘The general methodological path is clear: observation leads to hypothesis leads to generalisation leads to unification in theoretical statement’ (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 85).

Biber *et al.*’s (1998: 4) summary of the corpus-based approach to language analysis is useful here. They characterise it as:

1. empirical, in that it analyses patterns of language use in natural texts;
2. using a corpus, or ‘large and principled collection of natural texts’ as the basis for this empirical analysis;
3. making extensive use of computers for analysis, ‘using both automatic and interactive techniques’;
4. depending on ‘both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.’

This study can be defined as corpus-based on these terms. Above all, corpus analysis should not be confused with quantitative analysis (Baker, 2006: 8), but as employing both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques as Biber *et al.* suggest above. McCarthy *et al.* (2002: 70) propose that, in fact, the practice of CL may be approached in two ways, qualitatively and quantitatively. They suggest that:

The quantitative approach usually looks for the largest corpus possible...data are then analysed computationally and the output comprises sets of figures that tell the discourse analyst about frequency of occurrence of words, phrases, collocations or structures...for the discourse analyst, statistical facts raise the question ‘*Why?*’, and answers can only be found by looking at the contexts of the texts in the corpus.

Computer-assisted quantitative techniques, as described in section 4.5, will be used in tandem with more fine-grained qualitative analysis. Before describing the methods

for analysis, we will turn first to the issues of spoken corpus size, representativeness and collection.

## 4.2 Spoken corpora and corpus size

The issue of how large a corpus should be, or even how small a corpus *can* be, has been a bone of contention. There does not appear to be an upper limit on corpora: the British National Corpus (BNC) contains 100 million words, the American National Corpus (ANC) (currently 22 million words) when complete will also have 100 million words and the COBUILD Bank of English stands at a massive 450 million words. The Cambridge International Corpus (CIC) is even more of a behemoth at over one billion words. These corpora represent a mixture of spoken and written texts, though not necessarily in equal proportions, for example, the BNC consists of 90% written text and only 10% spoken text. In his overview of the context in which the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) was designed and built, McCarthy gives a detailed synopsis of the development of spoken corpora (1998: 5-7). At five million words, he suggests that CANCODE might be considered a 'rather puny enterprise'. He counters this with the assertion that spoken corpora present significant difficulties with regard to collection, and presents the rationale behind the carefully planned, generically stratified design of the CANCODE corpus. In fact, at five million words, CANCODE is one of the larger spoken corpora. The 500k London-Lund corpus is the spoken component of the one million-word Survey of English Usage (SEU, see Svartvik, 1990). The Longman Spoken American Corpus contains one million words, as does the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English, both of which represent specific varieties of English. Similarly, the International Corpus of English (ICE) brings together one-million-word samples from eighteen countries which have English as their first or official language, with 60% of each sample consisting of spoken texts, although some of these texts are scripted and/or monologues. LCIE, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English, consists of one million words of naturally-occurring casual conversation (Farr *et al.*, 2002).

Domain-specific spoken corpora have also been compiled, for example the Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English (MICASE), which contains 1.8 million words of spoken English from a range of encounters in academic settings. The BASE (British Academic Spoken English) corpus was developed as a companion to MICASE, and has approximately 1.6 million words. The Limerick-Belfast Corpus of Academic Spoken English (Li-Bel CASE) is currently under development and it holds one million words, of which 500k are available at this time. The Corpus of Spoken Professional American English (CSPA) contains approximately 2 million words. Corpora have been compiled for the study of specific social groupings, for example the Corpus of London Teenage language (COLT), as well as the study of dialects in English, FRED, the Freiburg Corpus of English Dialects, was built to aid research on dialectal variation in the British Isles.

Thus spoken corpora vary in size and purpose, but many hold one million words or more (for example, CANCODE) and tend to be smaller than written corpora (Aijmer, 2002: 4). Representativeness within a corpus, 'or the extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population' (Biber, 1993: 243), is another issue. Biber proposes strata and sampling frames for representative corpus design based on register, or situationally defined text categories such as 'fiction', 'news article' etc., and linguistically defined text types, such as various written or spoken modes. With regard to sample size, his previous research on 1,000-word samples from the London-Lund and Lancaster/Oslo/Bergen corpus concluded that these relatively small samples yielded similar functional and grammatical findings (Biber, 1990).

The corpus being used for this study is much smaller than the corpora mentioned above at approximately 40,000 words (see section 4.3 for details of the corpus) but this need not be a drawback. Biber (1990) has shown that even very small samples of language can reflect comparable patterns for high frequency items. Nevertheless, care is taken throughout this study to qualify all quantitative findings in particular against larger corpora and the authoritative research findings based on these corpora. As this corpus stands at approximately 40,000 words, and is therefore significantly smaller than all of the spoken corpora described above, when frequency comparisons are made they are based on 'normalised' occurrences per million words, which is

common practice. For example, for the present corpus, *the* has a raw frequency of 1,364. In order to normalise this per million words, this raw frequency is multiplied by 25 (as one million words is 25 times the size of this corpus), giving a normalised frequency of 34,100. We can then compare this to occurrences of *the* in a written corpus of five-million words, 56,835 (as reported in O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007: 36) and see that there is a large disparity. However, if we compare our normalised frequency with occurrences of *the* in another spoken corpus, for instance, LCIE (a one-million-word corpus mentioned above), we see that the result for LCIE is 35,190. We can further compare it with results reported for CANCODE (*ibid.*: 35) where there are 33,867 occurrences for *the* per million words, which suggests that the results for the present study are valid in relation to spoken corpora. Given the very specific domain of the study, there are no directly comparable, commercially available corpora; however, it is possible to compare and contrast both qualitative and quantitative findings against established corpora, for example, LCIE (the Limerick Corpus of Irish English) (Farr *et al.*, 2002) or the CSPAE (the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English) (Barlow, 2000). A final word on the collection of domain-specific corpora and size: McEnery *et al.* (2006: 5) make an interesting observation in their discussion what constitutes a corpus:

If specialised corpora which are built using a different sampling technique from those for balanced corpora were discounted as ‘non-corpora,’ then corpus linguistics would have contributed considerably less to language studies.

Although not all corpora are balanced in the same way, the way in which they are collected and compiled is ‘rarely haphazard’ (Leech, 1992: 116). The texts collected for the present study do not purport to be representative in the statistical sampling frame sense; in any case, defining a population [P] of English language teachers would be problematic to say the least. The data assembled for this study does, however, have a unifying frame – the genre ‘meeting’ – and its collection and description is described in more detail below.

## 4.3 Corpus of Meetings of English Language Teachers (C-MELT): Description

### 4.3.1 Collection

A distinguishing feature of small corpora is their domain specificity, and corpus size, at least in relation to spoken corpora, seems to increase or decrease in inverse proportion to how difficult the domain itself is to access. Gaining access to the meetings that make up the corpus under investigation in this study was a sometimes delicate task (for more on access to professional sites of discourse, see O'Barr, 1983 and Sarangi, 2002). McCarthy and Handford (2004: 171) anticipated several barriers in the data collection phase of the Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC): confidentiality, the impact of recordings on employee performance in the meetings and the issue of reciprocal gain: certainly, the academic stakeholders would benefit from the research, but would the companies? In initial approaches to companies, it was found that where the lead researcher did not have a personal contact, access was 'consistently unfruitful' (*ibid.*). For the present study, the three meetings which comprise *Sub-corpus 1* were recorded in the English department of a public university in México where the researcher was employed at the time; the researcher was present and participated at two of these three meetings. Physical access in this case was relatively straightforward; recording oneself and one's colleagues, however, is not necessarily a straightforward venture. Obviously, this context of language use is extremely sensitive, and consent was obtained in the first instance from the Director of Studies (DoS) to approach the teachers for recordings, and then from the teachers themselves.

The meetings that make up *Sub-corpus 2* were again accessed on the basis of a personal contact, this time through a colleague of the researcher's. The researcher was present for one of the meetings, and the teachers agreed to record two more themselves. As the teachers had been approached via the Director of Studies, they were not aware that the researcher was also an English language teacher, and, though at that point working and studying part-time at the university, still identified strongly with this self (as teacher). After this teaching background had been discussed, when the researcher returned to the school at another point for some speaker information, the additional recordings were made and returned by the participating school very quickly (they had

been some months delay prior to this). Even though this is anecdotal, and by extension, of course, subjective, it does reflect how the barriers that we encounter whilst collecting sensitive spoken data can be overcome, simply through genuine disclosure of research purpose. In my case, I explained that I wanted to compile a corpus of English language teachers in meetings in order to understand how English language teaching (ELT) as a profession works outside the classroom and how English language teachers communicated in the practice of their profession. One reciprocal benefit, as one of the teachers put it to me, was ‘having ELT taken seriously and studied as a profession’. Curiosity about how the profession worked in practice was certainly one of the motivating factors for the study. As Sarangi (2002: 116) points out, how the researcher is perceived by the participants is as crucial as how the researcher manages his/her presentation of self. Careful and, in this case, open, management of the researcher’s identity can engender different levels of trust and involvement for the participants.

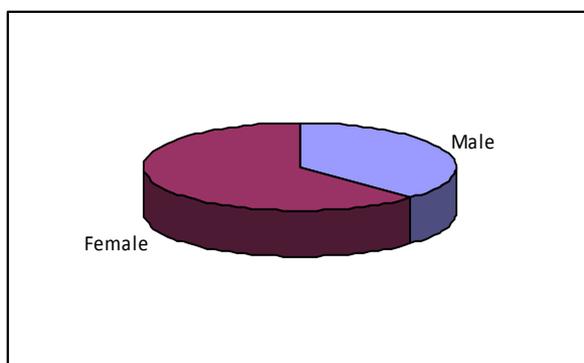
In all, approximately 3.5 hours of data, or just under 40,000 words, was transcribed and analysed, and stored together as the Corpus of Meetings of English Language Teachers (C-MELT). Where appropriate in the analyses that follow, C-MELT was broken down into its two constituent sub-corpora.

#### **4.3.2 Participant information**

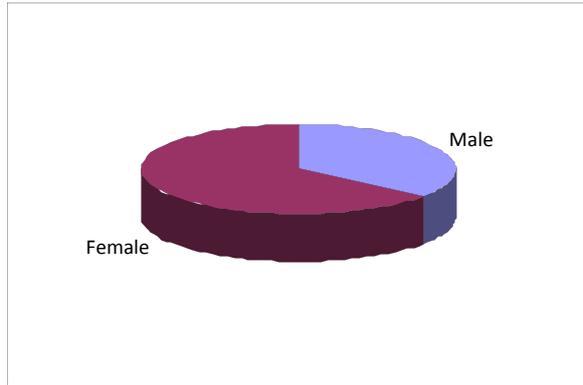
The participants in this study have complete access to the transcripts, and in the latter stages of the study have had the opportunity to delete any transcribed material they do not want included. However, none of them wish to do so, and so the transcripts provide an unexpurgated representation of each of the meetings. It should also be noted also that the final transcripts represent complete meetings, from beginning to end, rather than being partial meetings or particular stages of meetings. The participants are all qualified teachers, with a minimum of three years’ experience. From the English language department in México, Sub-corpus 1 comprises three meetings with an average duration of thirty-five minutes. The teachers are all native speakers of English, although there are a variety of nationalities – American, English, Scottish, Irish, Ugandan, Jamaican and Canadian. There are also three meetings in the corpus from a private language school in Ireland (Sub-corpus 2); however, the

length of the meetings varies fairly dramatically as is reflected in the number of words in each meeting (see Table 4.1). The majority of the staff at this location are speakers of Southern Irish English.

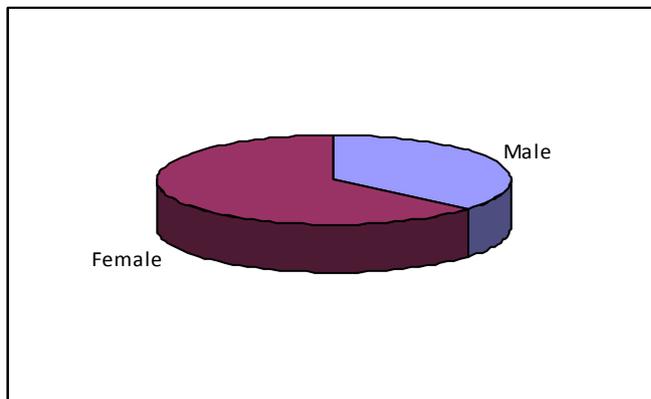
Interestingly, whilst the majority of the teachers are female, the Director of Studies or Head of Department was nearly always male. This is a trend that has been observed by the researcher for many language departments/schools, but given the lack of systematic, empirical information on the organisational make-up of language schools/departments nation- or world-wide, the observation cannot be given comprehensive substantiation beyond this study. Information about the gender of the participants is provided in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. There are 33 teachers in total, 24 of whom are in their 20s or 30s, 6 in their 40s, 2 in their 50s and 1 is in the 60s age-bracket (see Figures 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6). In Sub-corpus 1, the Head of Department (HoD) is male; for Sub-corpus 2, during the first recording, the Director of Studies (DoS) was female. As this member of staff left, an acting DoS was appointed until the post was advertised and filled. For the remaining two recordings, the acting DoS was male.



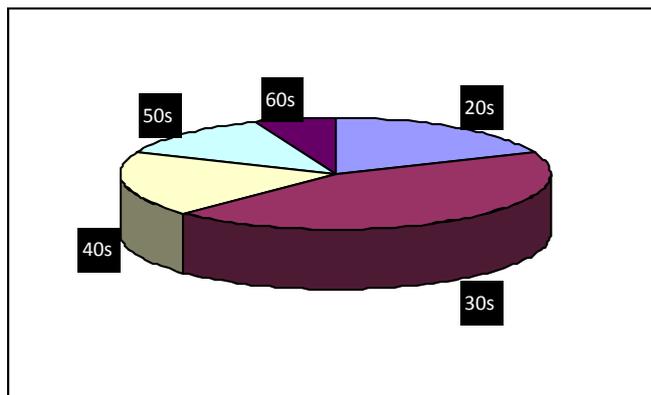
**Figure 4.1** Participants by gender: Sub-corpus 1 [México]



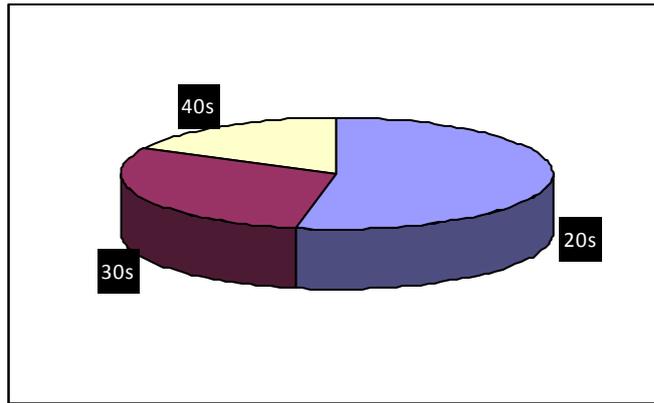
**Figure 4.2 Participants by gender: Sub-corpus 2 [Ireland]**



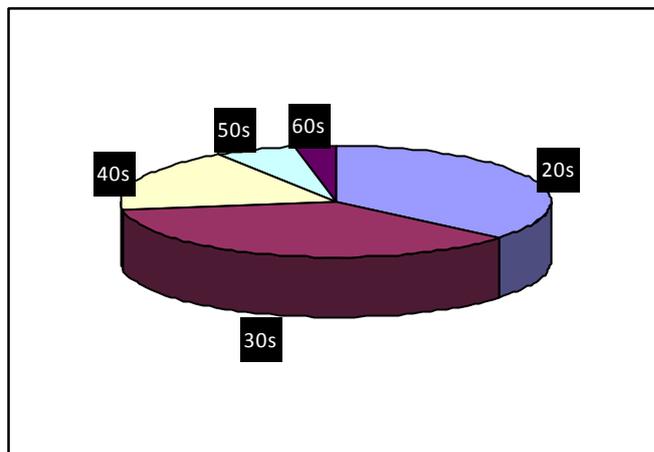
**Figure 4.3 Participants by gender: Combined**



**Figure 4.4 Participants by age: Sub-corpus 1 [México]**



**Figure 4.5 Participants by age: Sub-corpus 2 [Ireland]**



**Figure 4.6 Participants by age: Combined**

### 4.3.3 Corpus details

Table 4.1 below gives a summary of the sub-corpora, number of participants at the meetings, and the number of tokens each meeting represents. A more detailed description of the corpus with additional speaker information can be found in Appendix A. Where relevant, information such as position within the organisation (Head of Department, administrator etc.) was recorded within this database, and all pseudonyms are supplied. Pseudonyms are consistent across the sub-corpora (see section 4.4 for transcription details).

**Table 4.1: Description of the Corpus of the Meetings of English Language Teachers (C-MELT)**

	Meeting	No. of participants	No. of tokens	Total
<b>Sub-corpus 1 Public university, México</b>	C-MELT01	10	12,784	
	C-MELT02	11	7,163	
	C-MELT03	10	9,876	29, 823
<b>Sub-corpus 2 Private language school, Ireland</b>	C-MELT04	9	3,707	
	C-MELT05	11	3,604	
	C-MELT06	14	2,841	10,152
			<b>C-MELT Total</b>	<b>39,975</b>

Despite the fact that the data was collected with the co-operation of teachers from meetings which took place in very different countries, under very different working conditions, there is much convergence in the type of topics the teachers discuss. This is perhaps unremarkable, but the first reading of the transcripts was completed with the aim of ensuring that there was a sufficient similarity in the concerns of the meetings to justify a professional comparison between the two sites. The general topics that are discussed in these meetings are presented in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Overview of topics discussed in the meetings**

<i>Topics</i>
Administration
Assessment/examination
Classroom issues
Extra-curricular activities
Future meetings
Pilot courses
Placing students
Professional development
Student attendance
Student motivation

Returning to McCarthy's (1998: 8-11) description of the generic principles of data collection for the CANCODE corpus is extremely useful from the point of view of characterising the C-MELT sub-corpora. He describes how the CANCODE data

collection was based on the type of relationship among the participants and five broad contexts were identified:

*Transactional* (e.g. a service encounter in a shop/restaurant etc.);

*Professional* (e.g. meetings);

*Pedagogical* (e.g. teacher-student interaction);

*Socialising* (e.g. dinner party talk, talking to someone on a train);

*Intimate* (e.g. conversations between family members).

More importantly, for each of these categories three typical *goal-types* in conversation are outlined: 1) provision of information, 2) collaborative tasks, and 3) collaborative ideas. With *provision of information*, the talk is ‘uni-directional’ (*ibid.*: 10) with one speaker communicating information to others; one or more speakers may take on the role of information-giver during the interaction. *Collaborative task* is defined as speakers ‘interacting with their physical environment while talking’ (*ibid.*), for example, a family talking to one another as they put up a Christmas tree. *Collaborative idea* refers to the ‘interactive sharing of thoughts, judgements, opinions and attitudes’ (*ibid.*). Of course, the C-MELT data as a whole falls unproblematically into the *Professional* context-type but the goal-type taxonomy helps to frame the most significant difference between the interactional features of the meetings in the sub-corpora. While all of the meetings can be said to be to a greater or lesser extent characterised by the collaborative idea goal-type, in two of the meetings from Sub-corpus 1 the provision of information goal-type more accurately describes a great deal of the interaction, for example, in one meeting three teachers are reporting back on a pilot programme; in another, one teacher is charged with the responsibility of informing the rest of the staff about class timetabling arrangements for the coming semester. In Sub-corpus 2, although the teachers cannot be said to interacting with their environment in any physical way, what they are doing is so much a ritual teaching task, it could indeed be classed as a collaborative task. For a great part of these three meetings, the teachers are primarily talking about whether, based on linguistic ability, students should stay in the class they are in or go to a higher/lower level. These meetings in Sub-corpus 2 are therefore shorter, and more task-focussed, than the meetings in Sub-corpus 1.

From the point of view of genre then, the two corpora are comparable and their shared professional context is evidenced in the domain specific language derived from the wordlist generated by combining them as one corpus (see table 4.4). There are, however, notable differences between the two sites, and not simply from the point of view of geographical location, that should be acknowledged. The institutions themselves are of different types – a private language school and a public university – with all of the related idiosyncratic norms and practices that this engenders at the level of each individual institution. In addition, there are a total of thirty-three different individuals participating in the interaction, all with unique personal histories, professional experiences, and multifaceted beliefs and attitudes that they bring with them to their professional communities. The participants also differ in terms of age and gender. Care is taken in the combination of these corpora for quantitative analysis. The discrete items that emerge as salient in raw frequency counts are analysed qualitatively and careful and qualified interpretation related to the individual contexts of the private language school and public university from which they are taken provided. In Chapter Three the idea and theory of communities was explored and it is argued here that by taking a theoretical approach that emphasises the community rather than starting from the individual, these notable differences between not only the corpora, but the individuals that participate in the interaction, can be mitigated. The approach taken by the present study emphasises the community over the individual and the factor that unifies these two separate institutional sites is a shared profession. However, it is important to acknowledge that factors such as age and gender undoubtedly do have some impact on the interaction despite the fact that they are not included as variables for analysis here.

#### **4.4 Transcription**

Rühlemann (2007: 13) uses an interesting analogy to characterise a major tension for the analyst of authentic, naturally-occurring spoken data: in order to study the properties of fluid water taken from a spring (spoken language), as opposed to ice made from tap water (written language), researchers find themselves first purifying the water, putting it into the freezer and only when it is completely frozen are they in a position to commence their analysis. It is important to acknowledge that in

recording and transcribing spoken language, a vibrant phenomenon, ‘...is transformed into a static artefact, the written text’ (Varenne, 1992: 30) and there are limitations associated with this. However, the era of multi-modal, digitised spoken corpora, though burgeoning, is by no means established and, at the time this present study began, analogue recordings of naturally occurring spoken text, which were then transcribed, still the norm.

McCarthy (1998: 6) and Baker (2006: 35) both point out inherent difficulties in collecting and transcribing spoken corpora respectively, and whilst the transcription of both written and spoken data can both be time-consuming, without a doubt spoken data transcription presents the more daunting challenge. Audio recording quality may be an issue; the meetings in this study were recorded using a basic analogue Dictaphone. Although digital media unquestionably provide superior quality, the audio quality of the recordings was quite good. Even where audio quality is not an issue, spoken corpora are typified by speakers talking together and overlapping which cause major problems for the transcriber. Not only that, in multiparty interactions such as those represented in the C-MELT corpus, a meeting may lose focus and degenerate into five or six separate, simultaneous interactions.

In the case of domain-specific corpora, once access has been negotiated, the next barrier that may appear is unfamiliarity with specialised lexis, professional jargon etc. In retrospect, being a member of the professional community as well as being present at some of the meetings served to remove at least some of these problems. The meetings were transcribed using a broad approach; speakers are given pseudonyms and, as mentioned in section 4.3.2, these are consistent across the transcripts. In Sub-corpus 1, as the researcher was a member of the community distinguishing between speakers was unproblematic given their familiarity. For the meetings that make up Sub-corpus 2, the researcher was a participant observer for the first meeting and the participants themselves recorded the final two. The researcher also visited the school between recordings, and so there was also the benefit of meeting with the teachers individually. Thus, a certain degree of familiarity with the speakers in Sub-corpus 2 was also possible. Where the speaker cannot be identified, their identity was either guessed based on familiarity with the participants or entered as an unknown speaker

<\$M> (male) or <\$F> (female). When speakers refer to a person by name (other than a student) who is external to the organisation, this is transcribed as <\$FX> (female name) or <\$MX> (male name). Table 4.3 shows the transcription system utilised here in detail; the system is adapted from that used for CANCODE (see McCarthy, 1998). As the participants in this context frequently refer to individual students by name where this occurs pseudonyms are substituted and aligned with nationality: in order to preserve the authenticity of the texts, if a student was Spanish then so was the pseudonym. In addition to this, all references which could potentially identify the precise location of the institutions were removed. Removed also were direct references to published and copyrighted ELT materials e.g.:

And eh basically what I worked with them was the [name of publisher] book on teaching computers to students and it's about as dry as you could probably get. You know it's very hard to <\$=> get <\\$=> make oscilloscopes and analogue systems sound very very interesting.

**Table 4.3 Transcription conventions<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Incomplete Words</b>	= e.g. ident= identified specific grammar needs
<b>Truncation/false starts</b>	<\$=> marks the beginning of a truncated utterance. <\\$=> marks the end of a truncated utterance. e.g. <\$=> We had kind of <\\$=> we had two things going on for a start
<b>Interrupted utterances</b>	+ is used to mark the end of the interrupted utterance and also to mark the beginning of a resumed utterance.
<b>Overlaps</b>	<\$O> marks the beginning of an overlap. <\\$O> marks the end of an overlap. e.g. <\$3> ...with Kate but that changed <\$O2> as she will <\\$O2>. <\$2> <\$O2> Yeah initially that's what it was <\\$O2>.
<b>Unintelligible utterances</b>	<\$G1>, <\$G2> ... <\$G5> Unintelligible utterance where the number of unintelligible syllables is guessed up to a maximum of five. <\$G5+> More than five syllables in an unintelligible utterance. <\$G?> Unintelligible utterance where the number of syllables cannot be guessed.

<sup>7</sup> The transcription of laughter is dealt with in detail in Chapter Eight.

<b>Uncertain utterances</b>	<\$H>...<\\$H> Marks the beginning and end of a guessed utterance.
<b>Extra- or paralinguistic information</b>	<\$E> ... <\\$E> Any interactionally relevant extra-linguistic information is included, e.g. <\$E> student enters room where meeting is being held <\\$E>  Similarly, any relevant paralinguistic information such as sighing, coughing, laughing etc. was recorded.

All the files were saved as in plain text format, and WordSmith Tools™ (Scott, 1999) was used to generate frequency lists and concordance lines, which will be discussed below.

## 4.5 Corpus analysis tools

### 4.5.1 Wordlists

Once the corpus had been transcribed and saved as text files, a word frequency list was generated using the wordlist function of WordSmith Tools™ (Scott, 1999). Word frequency lists allow the researcher an entry point to the data, and, as Baker (2006: 47) points out, ‘used sensitively they can illuminate a variety of interesting phenomena.’ Whilst the concept of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998) provided a valuable hermeneutic to guide the analysis agenda, analysing the word frequency lists revealed discrete items that could give quantitative substance to this framework. Perhaps most importantly, word frequencies provide a genuine corpus-driven element to the study: some of the linguistic or pragmatic features which are focussed on were not selected *a priori*, but rather *a posteriori* on the basis of the wordlist. Table 4.4 shows the first twenty-five most frequent items in C-MELT (see Appendix B for extended frequency list). The raw frequencies are represented in the ‘frequency’ column, and the overall proportion of the item in relation to the corpus in the ‘%’ column.

**Table 4.4 Raw frequency list for C-MELT: First 25 items**

N	Word	Frequency	%
1.	<i>THE</i>	1,364	3.41
2.	<i>TO</i>	1,123	2.81
3.	<i>I</i>	1,117	2.79
4.	<i>AND</i>	1,084	2.71
5.	<i>YEAH</i>	824	2.06
6.	<i>THAT</i>	799	2.00
7.	<i>OF</i>	732	1.83
8.	<i>YOU</i>	726	1.82
9.	<i>A</i>	720	1.80
10.	<i>IT</i>	693	1.73
11.	<i>WE</i>	582	1.46
12.	<i>THEY</i>	580	1.45
13.	<i>IN</i>	506	1.27
14.	<i>SO</i>	475	1.19
15.	<i>IS</i>	408	1.02
16.	<i>BUT</i>	404	1.01
17.	<i>HAVE</i>	385	0.96
18.	<i>DO</i>	380	0.95
19.	<i>THINK</i>	363	0.91
20.	<i>BE</i>	328	0.82
21.	<i>KNOW</i>	316	0.79
22.	<i>IF</i>	301	0.75
23.	<i>JUST</i>	294	0.74
24.	<i>WHAT</i>	288	0.72
25.	<i>FOR</i>	280	0.70

In the wordlists, the raw frequencies and proportions are calculated on the basis of discrete items, therefore *that* (6) and *that's* (28) are counted separately. Consequently in the chapters that follow, where specific lexical or grammatical items were being examined, frequencies are calculated on the basis of the lemma, or base form (Biber *et al.*, 1998: 29), of the word and thus include person, tense and number. Where frequency is calculated on this basis, the lemma is presented in block capitals in the case of grammatical items, e.g. WE contains *we*, *we're*, *we'll* etc., and in the case of lexical items with an asterisk, e.g. teach\* contains *teach*, *teacher* etc.

The most frequent words regardless of the size of a corpus tend to be grammatical, and C-MELT is no exception as Table 4.4 shows. A crude but illuminating process was followed in order to create a picture of the specific domain of C-MELT using the Wordlist function. After the wordlist had been generated, it was scanned for nominal forms which even without context would be unproblematic for professional English language teachers. This might appear quite arbitrary. However, the decision was made on the basis of the fact that *student*, *KET* (Key English Test) and *PET* (Preliminary English Test) appeared in quite high frequency positions for nominal forms in the general wordlist. This led to a resulting curiosity about the other nominal forms which might attest the character of the corpus: teacher-teacher talk. This meant that general adjectives such as *good* and *weak* and verbs like *pass* and *fail* were omitted even though in this context of language use some of these words have very specific uses (we will return to this issue in Chapter Five). Very general nominal forms, such as *stuff*, were also left out. For the purposes of this illustration, items were not conflated in lemma form and so entries for *student* and *students*, for instance, appear separately. This resulted in the wordlist shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Domain-specific wordlist: Top 50 nominal forms**

Domain-specific Wordlist									
1	<i>students</i>	11	<i>pre-inter</i>	21	<i>language</i>	31	<i>tense</i>	41	<i>vocabulary</i>
2	<i>class</i>	12	<i>elementary</i>	22	<i>inter</i>	32	<i>advanced</i>	42	<i>assessment</i>
3	<i>KET</i>	13	<i>speaking</i>	23	<i>materials</i>	33	<i>prep</i>	43	<i>lesson</i>
4	<i>PET</i>	14	<i>intermediate</i>	24	<i>meeting</i>	34	<i>classroom</i>	44	<i>resources</i>
5	<i>semester</i>	15	<i>semesters</i>	25	<i>teach</i>	35	<i>Lab</i>	45	<i>beginners</i>
6	<i>exam</i>	16	<i>business</i>	26	<i>teaching</i>	36	<i>syllabus</i>	46	<i>KETs</i>
7	<i>classes</i>	17	<i>student</i>	27	<i>teachers</i>	37	<i>levels</i>	47	<i>lessons</i>
8	<i>certificate</i>	18	<i>exams</i>	28	<i>teacher</i>	38	<i>pronunciation</i>	48	<i>listening</i>
9	<i>level</i>	19	<i>TOEFL</i>	29	<i>attendance</i>	39	<i>IELTS</i>	49	<i>tasks</i>
10	<i>course</i>	20	<i>grammar</i>	30	<i>material</i>	40	<i>FC</i>	50	<i>coursework</i>

This gives a much clearer picture of the corpus domain, and although some of the items would be accessible to a general reader, some of the terms, such as *KET*, *PET*, *TOEFL* and so on, are accessible only to the members of the ELT community of practice (for a brief overview of the specialised language that the teachers in the

present study use, please refer to Appendix C). The jargon and professional shorthand of the community is dealt with in detail in Chapter Five.

As well as creating single-word frequencies using the Wordlist function, we can also generate cluster frequencies. The cluster size can be specified, for example, as three, and the information that this function can provide can highlight where analysis might usefully be directed. Table 4.6 below shows the first fifteen three-word clusters, or chunks (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007) which led to the isolation of items such as *think* and their function in the interaction. A very straightforward cluster list can uncover some of the discourses (Baker, 2006) in a text. In the case of C-MELT three-word clusters, it revealed items such as *I think that*, *and I think*, *I think we* and *I don’t think* prompting an investigation of what these formulations might be accomplishing in the interaction (see Chapter Seven).

**Table 4.6 Three-word clusters in C-MELT**

N	Word	Freq.
1	<i>I DON'T KNOW</i>	42
2	<i>A LOT OF</i>	41
3	<i>I THINK THAT</i>	38
4	<i>A LITTLE BIT</i>	36
5	<i>THEY HAVE TO</i>	31
6	<i>AND I THINK</i>	28
7	<i>AT THE END</i>	27
8	<i>I MEAN I</i>	25
9	<i>I THINK IT'S</i>	25
10	<i>IN TERMS OF</i>	24
11	<i>THE END OF</i>	24
12	<i>I THINK WE</i>	22
13	<i>I DON'T THINK</i>	21
14	<i>IT WOULD BE</i>	21
15	<i>DO YOU THINK</i>	20

Although wordlists are useful in this and other respects, it is important to ensure that the items or patterns that appear to be playing an important textual role are investigated in greater detail, particularly in light of the fact that any one item could potentially be playing any number of these textual roles. One way of delving deeper is to generate concordance lines for words or strings of words; the way in which the concordancing function is used in the present study is explained below.

## 4.5.2 Concordancing

A number of concordancers are available for purchase, for example, MonoConc<sup>8</sup> or WordSmith Tools (Scott, 1999; used for the present study), and freely available, for example, ConcApp<sup>9</sup> which can be used to create a concordance. A concordance is a list of all the occurrences of a particular search term in a corpus presented in relation to the context in which it occurs. This is usually in a KWIC (Key Word in Context) format, with about seven or eight words to the left and right of the search term, or *node*, which is presented in the middle of the line. Figure 4.7 shows a sample concordance line for the word *have* generated with WordSmith Tools using the CSPAE corpus. The CSPAE is a two-million word specialised corpus of spoken professional English. It contains academic discussions and White House question and answer sessions.

1	g out to be and should	<b>have</b>	been 012s. And
2	hrough 5," you ought to	<b>have</b>	0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
3	ar dental curriculum, we	<b>have</b>	a 1-year dental as
4	ct to where we are. We	<b>have</b>	designated \$1.7 mil
5	) = 12, and we can also	<b>have</b>	3x + 10 = 12 + 5x
6	, those native speakers	<b>have</b>	had 10 years to ac
7	e amount of money you	<b>have</b>	is 10 plus 5 times
8	stion? VOICE:	<b>Have</b>	the 10 to 12 peopl
9	e age issue, that if you	<b>have</b>	a 10-year-old and
10	rth Korea. The Chinese	<b>have</b>	provided 100,000 to
11	riefing after briefing, we	<b>have</b>	funded 100,000. W
12	reas, the students who	<b>have</b>	had 120 minutes, d
13	ovember of 1993. There	<b>have</b>	been 13 Senate he
14	nited States and Japan	<b>have</b>	reached 14 trade a
15	nt and insurance. We	<b>have</b>	reached 14 agreem

Figure 4.7 Sample concordance lines for *have* from CSPAE

Concordance lines can be used to investigate patterns from the point of view of what words occur with the specified node word by further ‘sorting’ the data alphabetically to the left and right. This can bring collocation and colligation patterns into relief. Collocation and colligation are Firthian concepts (1957) systematised by Sinclair (1991) in relation to corpus linguistics, with collocation relating to the words that occur around the node word/phrase and colligation relating to the ‘grammatical company a word keeps’ (Hoey, 1998, cited in Hunston, 2001). Figure 4.8 below shows the CSPAE concordance lines for *have* sorted one right (1R) and two right (2R). In this case, the numerical forms that occur around *have* become obvious.

<sup>8</sup> [www.athel.com/mono.html](http://www.athel.com/mono.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.edict.com.hk/PUB/concapp/>

1	hrough 5," you ought to <b>have</b> 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
2	of those state cuts, we <b>have</b> \$1,085,000 proble
3	f this process. We also <b>have</b> \$1.7 million design
4	t very closely. We still <b>have</b> \$1.8 billion unoblig
5	or in China, of which we <b>have</b> 10 percent. So it's
6	-- are we really going to <b>have</b> 10 short response?
7	thers, but we might not <b>have</b> 100 percent of it.
8	the people at advanced <b>have</b> 100 percent of getti
9	BINKLEY: We <b>have</b> 108 constructed re
10	one of our schools, we <b>have</b> 110 languages repr
11	ight be one or two that <b>have</b> 12 items, but --
12	taking two items -- you <b>have</b> 12 short response i
13	e of these questions -- I <b>have</b> 150 that probably
14	cific U.S. projects. We <b>have</b> 16 businesses, as
15	pport for personnel. We <b>have</b> 169 people represe

**Figure 4.8 Sample concordance lines for *have* from CSPAE sorted 1R, 2R**

Concordance lines were generated and used whenever specific linguistic items were the object of analysis in the present study. It was rarely as straightforward as simply generating the concordance lines, however. As previously mentioned, during the transcription stage of the present study extra-linguistic information was also recorded. A concordance line for *student* from the C-MELT data illustrates the potential difficulties that this produced in relation to using the concordancing application of WordSmith Tools (see Figure 4.9).

N	Concordance
1	were good even if you were an excellent <b>student</b> and I saw it happen on more th
2	with your <b>students</b> in pairs and one <b>student</b> can tell the other or you you
3	I talked with one it was just one one <b>student</b> but one KET student who came
4	ppens with KET and I I suppose when a <b>student</b> comes into university with ze
5	So is she coming or going or what. <b>Student</b> comes into staff room
6	this topic. So what I. Charging the <b>student</b> for it doesn't achieve anything.
7	money on top of it. You know. And if a <b>student</b> i= is going to class doing all
8	if you say pass fail and then you say a <b>student</b> in KET one for example has fail
9	ow anything else? Yeah I'd put the <b>student</b> in there to teach m
10	eone (Peter?) looking through pages of <b>student</b> information or class lists
11	I But I I mean I don't believe if a <b>student</b> just advances by five points
12	is at what stage would the will the <b>student</b> know where I'm going or+
13	about the the amount of time that the <b>student</b> literally has available to come
14	speakers talk simultaneously about this <b>student</b> Okay I have it written
15	appened. Yeah but it's not the <b>student's</b> fault.R

**Figure 4.9 Sample concordance lines for *student* from C-MELT**

Highlighted in grey is extra-linguistic information that appears in the concordance lines. This meant that these concordance lines were not used as actual occurrences of the word *student* and were therefore removed (or 'zapped' using WordSmith Tools software).

Therefore, although both Wordlist and Concordance functions are useful with regard to highlighting patterns and generating accompanying information in relation to discrete items and phrases in the data, it was at all stages considered essential to manually sort through the data. This sort of analytical rigour is possible only with a

small sample of language and it was fortunate that for items that were important to analyse in C-MELT, all occurrences could be examined individually as well as in the discourse context of the meeting. This counters one of the most serious criticisms of the corpus-based approach in general, that words are divorced from their original context of use (Widdowson, 1998). Hunston (2002: 23) summarises both the advantages and limitations of the corpus-based approach, including the potential for a corpus to alert us to information about language that supplements what is intuitively known (and may in fact provide counter-intuitive information, cf. Sinclair, 1991) and states that we should use the corpus as ‘one tool among many in the study of language.’ L. Flowerdew (2005) believes that corpus studies that integrate ethnography and intertextuality can help restore the communicative context, and the position of the researcher in this study is important from this perspective.

#### **4.6 Position of the researcher in the study**

In many studies of professional discourse, the researcher is typically an unknown observer from outside the profession, in Agar’s (1980) terms, the ‘professional stranger’. In the present study, however, the researcher is at one stage a *participant* and an active member of a community, at another stage an *observer* and recorder from outside the community and, perhaps primarily, the *analyst* of the data thus collected. Much has been made of the *observer’s paradox*, a term coined by William Labov for the sociolinguistic domain based on the notion of the observer effect, or the changes in a natural environment provoked by the very act of observing it. For language researchers interested in naturally occurring talk, this creates the following paradox:

The aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.

(Labov, 1972b: 209)

Fortunately, the nature of the environment, the workplace, means that the participants do not have time to concern themselves too much with the fact that they are being

recorded and generally ignore this to prioritise the tasks in which they are involved. This is not to dismiss the potential of the microphone to have some sort of impact on the interaction: members of the community may be more reticent or, equally, more forthcoming; they may choose to show more solidarity and cohesion; they may be more explicit in their references, avoiding the opaque, intertextual references which might be used under other circumstances. Of course, it can equally be argued that they may do the opposite and close ranks, using language and references which are impenetrable to an outsider-researcher. As a participant researcher, the latter is appreciably minimised. In terms of the microphone effect, although at the design stage the researcher had considered video-recording the meetings, ultimately the least intrusive recording device was chosen. Occasionally, the participants do refer to the fact that the meeting is being recorded and on one occasion the recording device even provides the source of humour (see Extract 4.1 below).

#### **Extract 4.1**

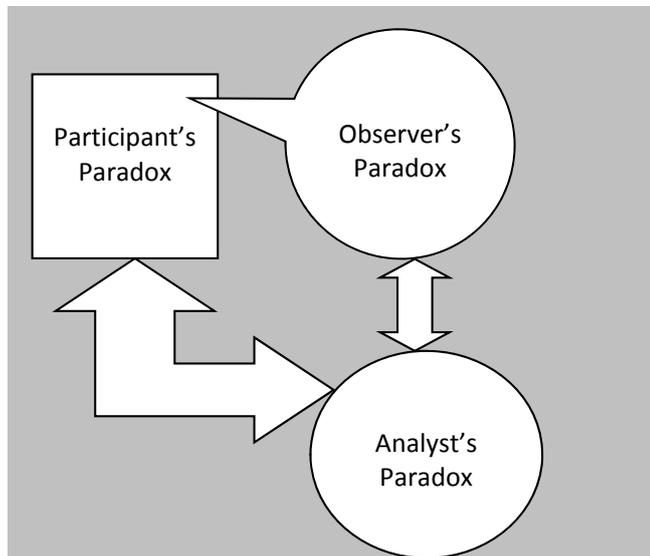
##### **C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Jenny:** What we have decided is sixty to seventy-five attendance to take the exam right?  
<E> Some laughter <E>.
- (2) **Julia:** Yeah.
- (3) **Barry:** Umhum.
- (4) **Jenny:** And eh <E> gestures uncertainty, laughing <E>.
- (5) **Barry:** Jenny we have it on tape here.  
<E> All laugh <E>.

While the microphone effect might not be possible to completely eradicate, it is possible to create conditions which ensure the participants are comfortable with, and not unduly compromised by, the research situation.

Sarangi (2002) extends the observer's paradox to the participant – the *participant's paradox* – a description of how some participants in a research situation remain conscious of the researcher's presence and may find the 'uninvolved stance' of the researcher unnatural (*ibid*: 121). Furthermore, the *analyst's paradox*, a familiar one for many language researchers, leaves us interpreting an event for the most part without the participants' insights. The interplay of all these phenomena has serious

repercussions for data analysis (see Figure 4.10 for a visual representation of how the participant, observer and analyst paradoxes interact).



**Figure 4.10 Interplay of Observer's, Participant's and Analyst's paradox (Sarangi, 2002, Appendix 2)**

Sarangi's suggested deconstruction of the monolithic notion of the 'outsider' researcher is an unlooked-for but valuable feature in the present study and both emic and etic views of the data were possible (Pike, 1967). With regard to investigating this particular community of practice, being a teacher was important for the analysis of this data. Without knowledge of the profession, much of what is going on would remain obscure. L. Flowerdew (2005: 329) highlights a resulting benefit of being both the compiler and analyst of a specialised corpus, 'the compiler-cum-analyst can [therefore] act as a kind of mediating ethnographic specialist informant to shed light on the data.' Defining topic, for example, might have been an issue for an outsider-researcher, but the position of the researcher as a member of the professional community meant that this was not a problem. Equally, an added layer of interpretation is available to this analyst in that being a member of the language teaching community of practice meant that professional jargon was identifiable and therefore quantifiable and that detailed socio-cultural knowledge of the context, essential for operationalising the CoP framework, was available. Ethical issues such as power over the data and consent have previously been discussed, as has the question of access to the data in the first instance (see section 4.3.1). Principles of openness about the purpose of the study, guaranteeing participant power over the transcripts and anonymity were adopted in

order to adhere to the ethical tenets of informed consent and ‘do no harm’. However, it was also a priority to remain cognisant of the responsibility conferred by the participants’ trust in the researcher, who is also directly or indirectly their colleague, to treat this sensitive data with respect and care. It should be noted that when participants agreed to participate in the study, the possibility of triangulating the spoken data with interviews, for example, was not pursued; later in the study for a variety of reasons, this was no longer a viable option. Participant interviews would undoubtedly have added another layer to the analysis presented in the subsequent chapters. However, bearing in mind Sinclair’s exhortation to ‘trust the text’ (2004), this means that it is a prism for analysis that is lost, not the integrity of the texts themselves.

In the design and execution of almost any study, a number of limitations are inevitable. The present study is no exception. It was approached in the previously mentioned spirit of trusting the text and so while a different level of insight may well have accrued from coding or tagging multiple features, the transcripts were kept as ‘clean’ as possible and extra-linguistic and prosodic information such as laughter and sighing was only included if it was marked in some way. Ultimately, the individual items analysed in the present study are selected by trusting the texts, in this case the meeting transcripts, to reveal their patterns under quantitative analysis, exploring these surface patterns in greater depth qualitatively, and using the CoP theoretical framework to provide a narrative for these patterns and their interpretation.

#### **4.7 Outline of analysis based on corpus insights and the CoP framework**

In Chapter Three, the CoP was defined as having three main characteristics: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. These principles for characterising the community guided the study and provided a heuristic for the data. The broad research questions *how do these teachers use language in order to effect the explicit and/or esoteric business of teaching?* and *what aspects of language use are indicative of the existence of a community?* are addressed in relation to the CoP framework and in relation to the following, more specific sub-questions:

- How are the local CoPs managed and their practices articulated?

- How is the identity of the community evident in the way that language is used?
- How are communities maintained and mutual engagement mediated?

These questions underlie each of the following analysis chapters. The selection of indicators of community that are included here are isolated based on two criteria: 1) frequency of occurrence based on the Wordlist function of WordSmith Tools (Scott, 1999), and 2) the strength of their relationship to the genre of meetings, the latter criterion being based on previous research (see Chapter Two). In other words, the most frequent and generically salient indicators are selected.

### **Chapter Five: Managing the meeting and articulating community practices**

This chapter addresses how the local CoPs of the meetings themselves are managed in terms of organisation and how contributions are articulated and managed. In this chapter the interactional architecture (Seedhouse, 2004) of the meeting itself comes under scrutiny with openings and turn design analysed in-depth. Topics and the way they are locally managed orient us to the practices of the community. Shared repertoire is unpacked in relation to the language that the teachers in Sub-corpus 2 use to place students according to linguistic ability and how the meaning of this language is locally negotiated. The investigation of turn-initial items not only corroborates established research findings on the relationship between turn-initial items and syntactically independent forms, but also highlights how in multi-party interaction, the responsibility for maintaining the flow of the meetings appears to be shared equally and with attention to maintaining relationships.

### **Chapter Six: Articulating identity**

This chapter tackles the notion of how the CoP articulates its identity by identifying how participant roles are indexed. The starting point for this chapter is the significance of pronouns in the frequency wordlist generated using WordSmith Tools™ (Scott, 1999). The broader idea of the relationship of language and context, problematised in Chapter Two, is given a more detailed discussion and the phenomenon of deixis extracted. The way in which the participant framework of the CoP is evident in referential practices is examined as well as how the tension between individual identities and community prerogatives and identities is resolved. This involves the in-

depth examination of how shifts in footing are achieved and why, how identity is encoded in the pronouns and subsequent tagging of the items identified with regard to purpose. *We* gets considerable attention as a prototypical way of invoking membership and solidarity in the CoP.

### **Chapter Seven: Managing and maintaining the community I: Hedging and politeness**

Building further on the twin notions of power and solidarity, this chapter aims to explore how the community manages mutual engagement and has created community norms to mediate this engagement. The idea of linguistic politeness is explored in relation to the way in which members of the CoP *hedge*, or *downtone*, their utterances. Items with the potential to hedge utterances emerged in Chapter Six's exploration of the CoP's participant framework and so C-MELT is compared with findings from other corpora to relate the phenomenon of hedging and the context of the CoP. *You know, I mean* and *I think* are isolated and patterns in relation to their use manifest in the data interrogated. Their pragmatic functions are illustrated with reference to extracts from the data and the way in which these constitute community norms, and thus the linguistic shared repertoire, established.

### **Chapter Eight: Managing and maintaining the community II: Humour as an interaction strategy**

The idea of *professional face* is further explored and the way in which humour and laughter punctuate the meetings given analytical space. The relationship between humour and laughter is sketched out, along with reasons for using laughter used as a proxy for humour, and the phenomena critically related to the context of the CoP. Humour is identified and categorised using Holmes and Marra's (2000a) reinforcing and subversive framework of humour in the workplace. The way in which humour and laughter are used as a sanctioning frame for criticism of the community, and a salve for professional frustrations, is presented using exchanges from the datasets. The presence of humour as an interactional strategy is further evidence of how the CoPs manage mutual engagement and it is argued that humour has become a feature of the communities' shared repertoires.

In the concluding chapter, results from the linguistic analyses are gathered together in light of the exploratory and more specific research questions. The threads of community diffuse within the data are summarised and the usefulness of corpus methods and the CoP framework assessed in relation to this type of language data.

# Chapter Five

## Managing the Meeting and Articulating Practices

*Peter: Another thing that eh so I suppose we'll just talk at random it's much easier.*

C-MELT03

*Ciarán: So. Where were we in this exciting meeting?*

C-MELT06

## **5. Managing the meeting and articulating practices**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a macro-perspective of the data by orienting to the larger interactional frame in which it takes place, the meeting itself. To this end, sequential and discursal aspects of the meetings will be explored by blending discourse analytic and corpus linguistic methods. To frame this exploration of the data, we return briefly to the principle characteristics of institutional interaction, summarised by Heritage (2004: 225) (and discussed in detail in Chapter Two):

1. it is goal-oriented and encodes institutional identities;
2. there are constraints on what is considered an ‘allowable’ contribution;
3. contributions are decoded by participants relative to particular institutional contexts, in other words, each institutional situation develops its own ‘inferential frameworks’.

Bearing these characteristics in mind, he suggests that the culmination of these features in relation to each kind of institutional interaction creates a distinctive “fingerprint” (cf. Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 95-96). The type of features he allies to the goal of revealing this fingerprint for any particular institutional situation are:

- its turn-taking system;
- the overall structure of the interaction;
- sequence organisation;
- turn design;
- lexical choice, and
- epistemological and other forms of asymmetry.

As we have seen, many types of institutional interaction are characterised by strict turn-taking systems, for example, certain types of courtroom discourse typically follow a question-answer format with the interactional power, i.e. the role of questioner, being held by the lawyer. Similarly, in a news interview, we expect the interviewer to ask the questions and the interviewee to answer them. Other types of institutional discourse may have freer turn-taking systems and this is the case with the

meetings that make up C-MELT. With this in mind, the way in which the interaction is influenced by the overall structure within which it takes place, the meeting, is prioritised. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 30) lend their full support to the argument that as meetings are such a prevalent form of face-to-face interaction in the workplace, they should be ascribed corresponding status as an object of research. Examining how participants contribute and manage their contributions in the meetings has, as will be shown, major potential for characterising what these communities of practice are like and what they are about.

As previously mentioned, from the point of view of purpose, the sub-corpora that make up C-MELT can be seen as comprising conceptually different types of meetings. The meetings in Sub-corpus 1 (México) are principally concerned with the discussion of ideas, new courses, problems in the classroom and the division of teaching material. Sub-corpus 2's (Ireland) weekly meetings are primarily scheduled to 'place' students, that is to say assign them to classes based on their linguistic ability. Other business is also dealt with at these meetings when it comes up and where necessary but in the main the meetings are understood to be for placement purposes. Week to week new students arrive in the school and so this function is imperative. By contrast, in the Mexican state university, the student cohort remains stable on the whole, although students may drop out of classes, and placement is on the basis of semester to semester examinations.

Extracts 5.1 and 5.2 represent the openings of two of the meetings: one from Sub-corpus 1 (three meetings from the English department of a state university in México) and one from Sub-corpus 2 (three meetings from a private language school in Ireland).

#### **Extract 5.1**

##### **C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Peter:** So maybe a little introduction to it.
- (2) **Kate:** Are there enough chairs? I can run and get some extras.
- (3) **Julia:** I don't know <\$G2> what to say.
- (4) **Peter:** <\$G?> very quickly.
- (5) **Barry:** Just say something and we can all argue then.
- (6) **Julia:** Right.  
<\$E> laughter <\\\$E>
- (7) **Peter:** We'll all go against it.  
<\$E> laughter <\\\$E>
- (8) **Kate:** Maybe we should start with <\$G?> one two and three <\$E> indicating teachers scheduled to speak <\\\$E>.

- (9) **Julia:** <\$G?> do <\$G?> do.  
 (10) **Barry:** Well what did you do? I know what Kate did.  
 (11) **Peter:** Okay. So if we just put the meeting a little bit in context first. Today's just to listen what the people did that was Zoe and Julia and Kate and me to some extent I also had a post PET group.

## Extract 5.2

### C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

- (1) **Brid:** <\$=> Is </\$= > Are we <\$H> started </\$H>?  
 (2) **Sally:** Are we starting?  
 (3) **Ciarán:** Yeah.  
 (4) **Brid:** Aw yeah. Am. I think em Marco is definitely+  
 (5) **Sally:** Marco is <\$O1> the highest </\$O1>.  
 (6) **Brid:** +is a <\$O1> high </\$O1>.  
 (7) **Sally:** In there.  
 (9) **Brid:** Yeah. Definitely.  
 (10) **Sally:** Upper Intermediate. <\$H> But he could even be higher </\$H>.

A superficial comparison of the openings, and the individual turns (numbered) that combine to create them, tells us that it takes the participants in Extract 5.1 eleven turns to achieve what the participants in Extract 5.2 have in four: actually get down to the business of the meeting. In this chapter we will explore the idea of topic as an organising feature of the discourse and how it carries with it the fingerprint of the community. With regard to a specific topic, student placement, we will explore the highly contextualised in-group language that has come to form a fundamental part of the community's linguistic repertoire. There is no specific turn-taking system in place for these meetings (unlike, perhaps, other more formal meeting situations)<sup>10</sup> but there is an expectation that speakers will collaborate to maintain the flow of the meeting. This is evidenced in the way in which speakers design their turns and will be explored in relation to turn initiators. A corollary of this aspect of the analysis is that it provides the opportunity to compare discourse patterns in C-MELT with established, authoritative research. In this chapter, we will also use Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris' (1997) generic model of the meeting to explore aspects of discursal asymmetry at specific phases (or lack thereof) of the meetings to conclude the discussion of the discursal and sequential properties of the meetings in C-MELT. A consequence of the broader, sequential and more local, lexical, nature of these analyses is that the local

<sup>10</sup> With regard to Spanish university inter-departmental meetings, for example, strict rules apply to who can take a turn and when (Amador Moreno, 2005: personal communication).

communities of practice that make up the postulated larger community of C-MELT will in their turn be brought into specific focus as will, therefore, each community's unique voice.

## 5.1 Topic

In Chapter Four, an overview of what the meetings in C-MELT were about was provided in the form of a table of macro-topics (Table 4.2, reproduced below).

**Table 4.2: Overview of topics discussed in the meetings**

<i>Topics</i>
Administration
Assessment/examination
Classroom issues
Extra-curricular activities
Future meetings
Pilot courses
Placing students
Professional development
Student attendance
Student motivation

The topics were identified intuitively by reading through the transcripts, rather than on any systematic basis. Intuitiveness as the underlying method of topic recognition has been highlighted by Brown and Yule (1983) and corroborated by research that orients to topic as a mode of analysis (Myers, 1998; O'Keeffe, 2003).

Gardner (1987) suggests that there is a potential source of confusion if we do not distinguish between topic in discourse and topic at sentence level. On the subject of topic at sentence level, Stubbs (1983: 125) points out that although the truth conditions for the following sentences, *Harry hit John/John was hit by Harry*, are synonymous, they do not have what he calls 'discourse equivalence' (*ibid.*). The reason for this lack of equivalence lies in sentential thematic structure, or the grammatical role of topic, which Stubbs indicates has been variously referred to as topic-comment, subject-predicate, theme-rheme and given-new at the level of the sentence. Moving away from the notion that topic is expressible within a simple noun phrase, Keenan and Schieffelin (1976: 338) propose the notion of *discourse topic* in their examination of child-adult interaction. They define discourse topic as '...the proposition (or set of propositions) about which the speaker is either providing or requesting new

information'. Within their discussion is the assertion that topic is maintained over a series of utterances in 'topic collaboration sequences' (*ibid.*: 341). Brown and Yule argue however that this sentential conceptualisation of topic is still too simplistic (1983: 75). They suggest that all these possible expressions of topic should be conflated in order to incorporate 'all reasonable judgements of "what is being talked about"' (*ibid.*). More important are the features of context upon which it is necessary to call in order to interpret the text, or the *activated features of context*, and the way in which topic is constituted in relation to these within a *topic framework* (*ibid.*).

Whilst researchers may grapple with the nuances of what constitutes a topic, speakers do not appear to display any such difficulty. Heritage and Watson's (1979) discussion of the concept of *formulation* – the ability of speakers in a conversation to sum up what they have been talking about in a single sentence – supplies direct evidence of speakers' inherent awareness of topic (Gardner, 1987: 132). As Heritage and Watson point out:

...all conversations can be seen as organized around topics in that topics are massively available to members as loci around which 'what has been talked about thus far' can be organized...

(Heritage and Watson, 1979: 149)

Swerts (1997) investigated how this intuition about topic works in practice by asking informants to divide transcripts of Dutch monologues into topic units. Divided into two groups, one group of informants worked with the spoken version of the monologues and the other did not. Swerts found that the informants who heard the monologues were more in concert with regard to their judgements of topic division than those who had not, suggesting that intonation in the form of 'speech paragraphs', or *paratones* (Brown, 1977: 86), can indicate where one topic segues into another, or *topic shift* (see Schank, 1977; Maynard, 1980; Tracy, 1984; Schegloff, 1990; Jefferson, 1993). Prosody as a marker of, amongst other things, cohesion and topic shift has been the subject of in-depth research (see for example Wennerstrom, 1998 and 2001) but is obviously not an option for analysis here as our data have been orthographically transcribed. Lexico-grammatical features of a text which coincide with topic have been an object of study (for example, Wolfson, 1982; Givón, 1983; Fox, 1987) as well as the correlation between gender and how topics are managed (Fishman, 1983; Coates, 1996, 1998; Pilkington, 1998).

While Brown and Yule suggest that formal attempts to identify topic are ‘doomed to failure’ (1983: 68), they emphasise how the notion ‘topic’ is ‘...an intuitively satisfactory way of describing the unifying principle which makes one stretch of discourse “about” something and the next “about” something else...’ (*ibid*: 70). In fact, it is the potential of topic as a scoping mechanism for longer stretches of data that make it so valuable despite the fact it defies neat description (Van Dijk, 1977). Much of the research that proposes topic as a problematic construct is concerned with casual conversation; however there are certain, institutionalised forms of discourse in which topic needs to be openly addressed and is therefore in plain view for the analyst. In her analysis of radio phone-in, O’Keeffe (2003) illustrates how readily identifiable topic is given that the format is based around a presenter providing a précis of each caller’s explicit reason for phoning in for the benefit of the listening audience. The same is often true of meetings, with one speaker, usually the Chair, outlining the items on the agenda which will become the topical focus of the meeting. In addition, the Chair’s right to provide ‘summing up’ formulations for any given topic, or the meeting in general, is institutionalised (Heritage and Watson, 1979: 150) and the constraints of the institutional context mean that speakers are expected to keep their contributions relevant. In this sense, meeting talk is radically different to casual talk in any consideration of topic. Hazadiah (1993: 56) observes that ‘one of the main characteristics of topic in conversation is that it is an entity that is not known initially but is created in the process of negotiation,’ yet as O’Keeffe (2003), for example, points out, the nature of certain contexts means that topic is more readily identifiable. This is certainly true of meeting talk, which is usually organised with either a rough or specific agenda to guide the talk.

However, it is not just the identification of topic that will illuminate our analyses and tell us more about the community of practice, though there is much to be gained from this. We will also look at how everyday language is appropriated by the community and becomes highly specific when used to talk about topics which are particular to the community. Analysing how topics are introduced, taken up, changed and managed turn-by-turn as each speaker contributes to the on-going interaction provides a tangible sense of this community of practice at work.

### 5.1.1 Unpacking the community's shared repertoire

The ritual of the meeting and its topic framework is underpinned by aspects of the teachers' shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 85). In other words, how the teachers in the data talk about themselves, their students and their practices sheds light on the repertoire, linguistic and otherwise, of their community of practice (CoP). The meetings are accepted and commonplace for the teachers, and so comprise part of the fabric of their professional lives. We have already discussed how the weekly meetings of the private language school are largely without preamble as they have been ritualised over the lifetime of the community of practice. We should also note that the shared repertoire of any community of practice includes not only linguistic resources, but also resources 'like pictures, regular meals, and gestures that have become part of the community's practice' (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999: 176). In the case of the groupings of high school students in a study by Eckert (1989), this was evident in the way that the groups identified each other, which was not necessarily a recognition in the way that they talked but also encompassed socially reified artefacts such as the places they chose to stand or sit in the yard, the clothes they wore and the activities they engaged in outside of school (see Holmes, 2001). Samples of reified objects within the professional repertoire of all of the teachers who participate in C-MELT include textbooks and reference books that are used in teaching, lesson plans, classroom observation, feedback on teaching practice and reflective practice. As Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 3) point out:

The competent members of a community not only manifest in their daily lives what counts as routine practice, but also, at a metalevel, they bring to scrutiny the very boundaries of institutional knowledge for renewal and reification

A fruitful line of analysis then is how a community of practice articulates itself and its practices, directly and obliquely. Meyerhoff (2002: 528) suggests that 'an analysis can focus on the variables that members of a CoP are actively negotiating as currency in their CoP'. For example, Rock (2005) looks at the concept of CoP in relation to the practices of police officers, in particular in relation to one aspect of their work practices, the statement and explanation of the right to silence. In this context, we look at how the teachers in Sub-corpus 2 use one aspect of their

community's currency, local and global jargon, to achieve collaborative professional understanding.

Using the wordlist function of Wordsmith Tools™ (Scott, 1999), the shared linguistic repertoire of the global ELT community – jargon which is transparent for those within the community – can be evidenced. Table 5.1 expands the domain-specific wordlist presented in Table 4.5 (see Chapter Four) by adding in lexical verbs such as *pass* and *fail* which have a specific resonance for the professional domain. There is also a *local* shared linguistic repertoire, which is apparent only to those within the specific workplace. In the meetings of one of the English departments in the data, located in México, *faltas* (an absence from class), *servicios escolares* (student services) and *permisos* ('permission' to be absent for students/teachers) are mentioned even by the non-Spanish-speaking members of staff. Where this localised jargon occurs, it is institution-specific, as above, while the other jargon that is woven into the discourse is profession-specific. Gunnarsson *et al.* (1997: xi-xii) refer to this as the interdiscursivity of the professional and institutional aspects of discourse.

**Table 5.1: Content Wordlist: The communities' professional lexicon**

1	<i>students</i>	11	<i>course</i>	21	<i>exams</i>	31	<i>teachers</i>	41	<i>IELTS</i>
2	<i>class</i>	12	<i>pre-inter</i>	22	<i>TOEFL</i>	32	<i>attendance</i>	42	<i>FC</i>
3	<i>KET</i>	13	<i>elementary</i>	23	<i>grammar</i>	33	<i>fail</i>	43	<i>progress</i>
4	<i>PET</i>	14	<i>group</i>	24	<i>language</i>	34	<i>tense</i>	44	<i>score</i>
5	<i>semester</i>	15	<i>speaking</i>	25	<i>inter</i>	35	<i>advanced</i>	45	<i>vocabulary</i>
6	<i>exam</i>	16	<i>intermediate</i>	26	<i>materials</i>	36	<i>prep</i>	46	<i>aptitude</i>
7	<i>pass</i>	17	<i>semesters</i>	27	<i>meeting</i>	37	<i>classroom</i>	47	<i>assessment</i>
8	<i>classes</i>	18	<i>business</i>	28	<i>teach</i>	38	<i>lab</i>	48	<i>beginner</i>
9	<i>certificate</i>	19	<i>student</i>	29	<i>teaching</i>	39	<i>syllabus</i>	49	<i>resources</i>
10	<i>level</i>	20	<i>weak</i>	30	<i>needs</i>	40	<i>pronunciation</i>	50	<i>coursework</i>

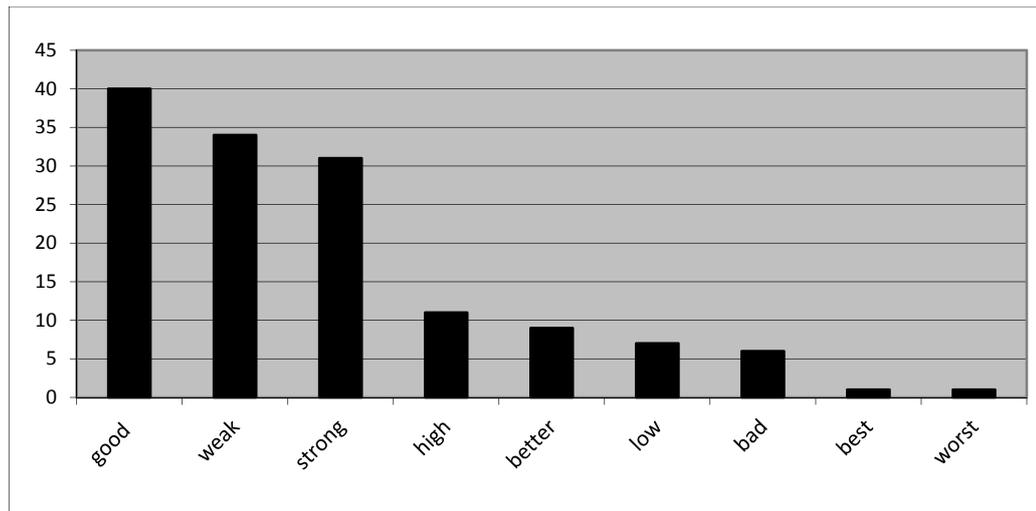
We will now explore the idea of a community lexicon in greater detail with regard to the student placement meeting.

## 5.2 Professional lexis and negotiating meaning in practice

When engaged in reflective discussion, teachers have the time and space to discuss classes, students and problems in a detailed way; however, these teachers are not engaged in *reflective* discussion but are ‘getting things done’ as expediently as possible. This can be seen in an ostensibly basic type of shorthand when referring to the students’ ability. Across Sub-corpus 2, one of the most typical activities teachers engage in is placing students in specific classes according to their language ability, regularly reviewing whether this placement is appropriate, and moving students into different classes when it is not. In training, most teachers are introduced to the metalanguage used to describe learner competence in English, as well as descriptions of level: *beginner*, *elementary*, *pre-intermediate*, *intermediate* etc. The teachers in this data just as frequently use *pre-int* and *inter* to refer to the levels ‘pre-intermediate’ and ‘intermediate’. Closer analysis of this prototypical community topic brought into relief what appears to be a vague, though for the community totally transparent, evaluative language used to describe the students’ ability in English, whether collectively or individually. The topic was isolated and language related to placement was identified through detailed reading of the transcripts. While non-specific language such as *fine* (*he seemed fine for the speaking*) and *okay* (*he’s okay in there for speaking*) were expected in terms of basic evaluation, what appears to be quite restricted lexis describing ability, in the form of a set of simple binary opposites, also became apparent: *good-bad*, *high-low*, *strong-weak*. Concordances were generated for *good\**, *bad\**, *high\**, *low\**, *strong\** and *weak\** and these were manually checked to ensure that the adjectives referred to students and/or groups of students (e.g. an intermediate class).<sup>11</sup> Figure 5.1 below shows the occurrence of this language used to evaluate students in order of frequency.

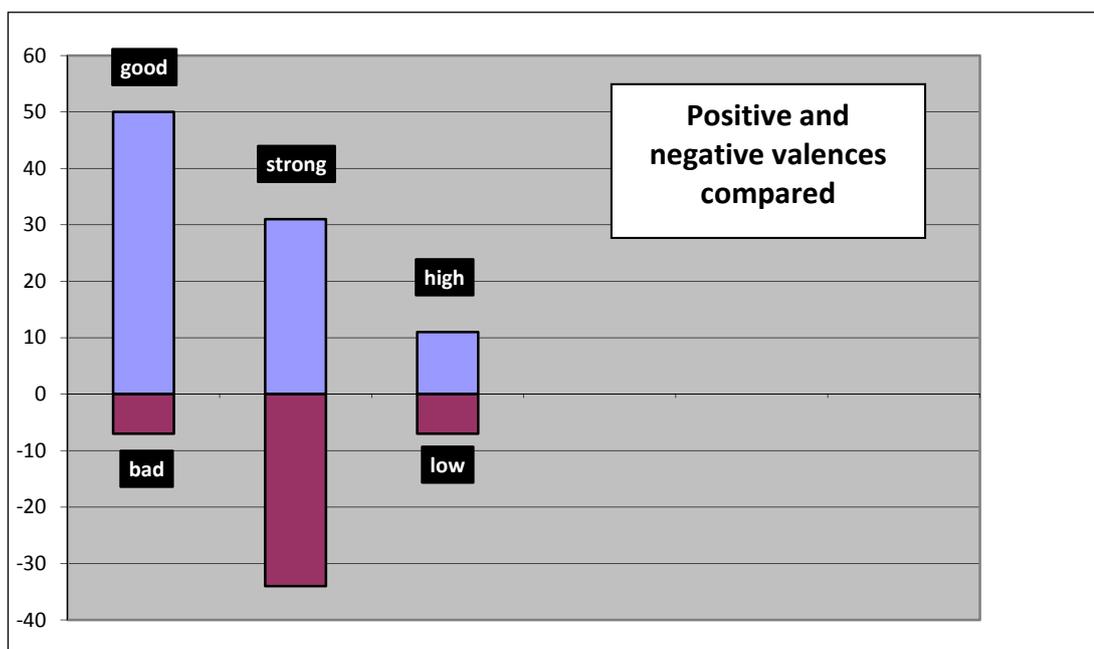
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<sup>11</sup> The asterisk on the search word (e.g. *strong\**) indicates that all lemmas were counted: for *strong*, this means that *stronger* and *strongest* were counted. *Bad* and *good* have irregular comparative and superlative forms and so, for instance, *good\** counts *good*, *better* and *best*.



**Figure 5.1** Lexis to describe students' ability/level

If we consider this aspect of the language used to describe student ability in terms of positive and negative valences, another pattern becomes clear (see Figure 5.2): positive evaluations are favoured and a more equal relationship exists between the items *strong* and *weak*. This suggests that these descriptors, *strong\** and *weak\**, have become the base level indicators of the community at large's 'pooled expert judgement' (McCarthy, 2009: personal communication), and at a local level as part of the community's shared repertoire. In addition, extremes (e.g. *best* and *worst*) are very low, indicative of a typical bell-curve in the way the classes are graded (*ibid.*).



**Figure 5.2** Lexis to describe students' ability/level: Positive and negative valences

One of the most interesting features of the terms that have become part of the community's shared repertoire is the fact that the language itself is neither highly esoteric in form, nor complex in basic linguistic meaning. In fact, these oblique terms are not, perhaps, unusual and may well be fairly explicit – for experienced teachers, that is. All the teachers in this study have at least three years experience, and have worked together for a minimum of one year. Hence, what is most interesting about the data is that though this way of evaluating is on the surface non-specific, it causes no schism in the discourse, and its unproblematic ratification helps the meetings to flow naturally. The following extract, which exemplifies this flow, is taken from one of the weekly meetings from the private language school in Ireland. These meetings are principally to discuss student placement, though other administrative business may also be introduced. Here, the teachers are discussing a student who has joined the class fairly recently.

### Extract 5.3

#### C-MELT04 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

- |     |                 |  |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| (1) | <b>Siobhán:</b> | <b>He's not strong.</b>  |
| (2) | <b>Sally:</b>   | Now <b>he's he's weak in it you know.</b>                            |
| (3) | <b>Siobhán:</b> | Hm.  |
| (4) | <b>Sally:</b>   | <b>The others would be all stronger than him.</b>                    |
| (5) | <b>Niall:</b>   | Ali? I had him on Friday.  |
| (6) | <b>Sally:</b>   | Yeah did <b>how did you find him he'd be weak now in that class.</b> |
| (7) | <b>Niall:</b>   | Yeah I would then I'd suggest maybe.                                 |
| (8) | <b>Aoife:</b>   | <b>Switch.</b>   |
| (9) | <b>Niall:</b>   | <b>Swapping</b> the two of them.                                     |

All the speakers have taught the student, and are in agreement about his level of ability. This is seen in the way that they echo one another's assessments – *He's not strong/he's weak in it you know* – and the swift resolution of the 'problem' of what should happen now (he will switch places with a student in a lower class, who is ready to move up). The student is assessed both as an individual learner and vis-à-vis how he 'fits' into a pre-intermediate class – *he'd be weak now in that class* – so, the notion that he is 'weak' is presented in relative terms. All this is achieved despite the fact the exchange is rapid, and we can also see how they solicit each other's opinion in order to ratify, and therefore legitimise, the resolution. This suggests how important it is for them to work as a cohort and highlights the mutual accountability which is thus created. The efficiency with which this is achieved is due in no small part to what the teachers

understand each ability evaluation label to encompass, which, in its turn, is made possible by the existence of the community's shared repertoire (see Cutting, 2000, 2001, for a description of a similar phenomenon in in-group language).

Extract 5.4 also displays this efficiency; the teachers are discussing a student in an intermediate class:

**Extract 5.4**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 1: Ireland]**

- (1) **Maureen:** What do you think of Manuel?  
(2) **Daniel:** Manuel's **quite good**.  
(3) **Maureen:** He is isn't he yeah.

Another characteristic of the language used to evaluate the students, which is highlighted in bold type above (and in Extract 5.5 below), is the use of boosters and downtoners (*a little/bit, fairly, quite, very, really, too*), which add further shades of meaning to the adjectives. The teachers also expand on these assessments. In some cases, a negative evaluation will be followed up with extra information as can be seen in Extract 5.5:

**Extract 5.5**

**C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 1: Ireland]**

- (1) **Chris:** ...actually I'm a bit worried about Lucia Esposito though.  
(2) **Sally:** Yeah.  
(3) **Chris:** She's been there a couple of weeks but she's+  
(4) **Sally:** Yeah she's **pretty bad** alright.  
(5) **Chris:** Yeah.  
(6) **Sally:** **She's barely keeping up with the rest in grammar and her spoken is definitely awful.**  
(7) **Anne:** Yeah.

Sally signals her agreement and endorses their evaluation with an elaboration of what *pretty bad* represents for them, and why they are worried about her in the class. On the whole, however, there are few examples of this type of elaboration in the data. While students can be evaluated individually or as a member of a class with the aim of making the class as homogenous as possible, another strategy that the teachers use is to assess students is to compare their abilities with a student who is deemed to be appropriately

placed, pointing to the use of common reference points within the community, as can be seen in Extract 5.6:

**Extract 5.6**

**C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Maureen:** **No the new girl you were saying was really good like Maria.**  
(2) **Ciara:** Well yeah do you think? She's **very good** isn't she?  
(3) **Maureen:** She is yeah. Move her up.  
(4) **Ciara:** Definitely yeah.  
(5) **Maureen:** **Well able to hold her own in the class.**  
(6) **Ciara:** **Well able yeah.** Yeah.

This extract also has similar characteristics to Extract 5.4 in that Ciara solicits Maureen's opinion and in the way that they echo the mutually ratified assessment.

In making their evaluations, the teachers do not seem to refer to the students only in terms of what they can 'do' with English – in evaluation, aspects of the students' personalities which are considered relevant may also be called upon, for example, a student who was potentially ready for the next level is held back because she is not *confident*, and another, although she is *eager to move on*, *holds them* [the class] *back a little bit*. Frequently, students are referred to as *nice*, although these personal evaluations may also be negative; one student is referred to as *a bit moody* and *limited as far as personality goes*. But these are not irrelevant or superfluous evaluations – experienced teachers realise that the personalities of the students in the classroom can seriously affect its dynamic.

What is most striking about the way that this element of the business of teaching is done is that it relies exclusively on each of the teachers having access to the shared linguistic repertoire of the workplace, and being able to understand what *good* means, how this differs from *really good* and how to place a student who is *kind of weak*. The exact provenance and explicit description of what this knowledge, in fact, comprises is a problematic matter. At least part of it can be reasonably supposed to have been inputted in training, however their operationalisation of this knowledge, where the teachers in this workplace are concerned, has developed during their time in the school. Where Cambridge ESOL examination classes are concerned, ability is defined

according to whether or not the students are capable of taking and passing the examination itself. On a more general level, ability appears to be considered as more commensurate with whether the students can deal with the material in the coursebook, and how they compare with the rest of the group. Therefore, although the language used in the meetings to evaluate seems limited and unhelpfully non-specific, clearly, its relative simplicity belies the rather complex nature of the shared professional knowledge that is invoked. Only a full member of both the local and global CoP can navigate this discourse and collaborate in its construction.

In a paper which has major importance for the way in which the community lexis is ratified online in the present study, McCarthy (1988) shows the extent to which meaning is *negotiated* locally. He focuses particularly on how this is a feature of fluent speech and stresses that it is crucial that second language learners acquire it. He also considers intonation an indispensable aspect of cohesion in talk (see also McCarthy, 1992). According to McCarthy (1988: 185), speakers ‘...assign local value to vocabulary items and negotiate with one another the range and limits of meaning potential that are being exploited’. He mentions exact repetition as a common phenomenon but highlights a more interesting one: the non-identical repetition of the previous speaker’s utterance, or *relexicalisation*, evident in Extract 5.3 above (*switch/swapping*). He notes a number of different ways in which an item can be relexicalised, for example, based on a change of item that retains the same sense (as in the case of *switch* and *swap*). Another form of relexicalisation involves a change of item that substitutes an opposing sense, for example, *How did you get on were you shy etcetera/I wasn’t actually I was completely **unnervous** about the whole thing* (ibid: 197). Extract 5.5 (*she’s pretty bad alright/She’s barely keeping up with the rest in grammar and her spoken is definitely awful*) illustrates an elaborated version of this. Pomerantz (1984) notes this pattern in relation to adjacency pairs that are evaluative in nature and suggests that assessments are routinely followed by second assessments. These can agree or disagree with the original; in agreement, for example, the second part of an assessment pair can upgrade (*Isn’t he cute/He’s adorable*), be the same (*Yeah I like it/I like it too*) or provide a weak assessment (*That’s beautiful/Isn’t it pretty*).

McCarthy (1988) considers the understanding and manipulation of this local value of vocabulary items an essential discourse skill for language learners aiming for fluency in the target language. We certainly see how these lexical discourse strategies build meaning and reflect how the community ratifies its lexis. Grafting this on to the broader institutional context, as Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 3) put it: communicating in this way ‘directs institutional members to their own categories and boundaries and serves to reinforce institutional realities,’ in the case of the present study the way in which students are placed and level descriptors are articulated. Thus, we see the way in which the larger institutional context is evident in the negotiating of the local currency of professional jargon (cf. Meyerhoff, 2002; McCarthy, 1988). Another feature of the mutually ratified institutional context becomes clear in looking at any one of the extracts presented above: the way in which the participants cooperate to create the larger discourse event: the meeting itself. We turn now to the way in which turn-taking is managed and turns designed.

### **5.3 Turn-taking in C-MELT: Turn initiators**

In their seminal 1974 paper on the turn-taking system in conversation, Sacks *et al.* observe that

...overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time, though speakers change, and though the size of turns and ordering of turns vary; that transitions are finely co-ordinated; that techniques are used for allocating turns, whose characterization would be part of any model for describing some turn-taking materials; and that there are techniques for the construction of utterances relevant to their turn status, which bear on the coordination of transfer and on the allocation of speakership.

(Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 699)

Turns are constructed out of units, called turn-construction units (*ibid.*: 701), which can consist of one word (e.g. *right* or *yeah*), or longer clauses or sentences. Other researchers would stop short of calling *right* or *yeah* turns, preferring instead the term *response token* (see below). Yngve (1970) suggested that items like *uh huh* and *okay* occupied a ‘backchannel’ as opposed to primary speakership in interaction. Jefferson (1993) highlighted the possibility for some of these backchannels to have a greater degree of *speaker incipiency*, or likelihood that a speaker is moving out of a recipient role and projecting further speaking (Drummond, 1993: 158-159). A broad view of the

turn is taken here after Sacks *et al.* (1974) with a view to using the distinction between having the turn and having the floor (Drummond, 1993: 161).

Turns contain within them the characteristic of ‘projectability’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 48), in that a speaker can project what the turn is about, and when it is likely to close. This projectability means that the listener can identify suitable points for turn transition, or ‘transition-relevance places’. Hutchby and Wooffitt (*ibid.*) give an apt example of both of these features:

**Extract 5.7**

**Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998: 48-49)**

**[SBL:1:1:10:15]**

- |   |       |                                    |                      |
|---|-------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Rose: | Why don't you come and see me some | } times<br>} I would |
| 2 | Bea:  | like to                            |                      |
| 3 | Rose: | I would like you to                |                      |

Before Rose has finished her turn, Bea has responded as she has recognised Rose's turn as an invitation. In the extract above, there are only two speakers; in the meetings that make up C-MELT, there are often nine or more speakers. This adds to the complexity of turn organisation, as with each new turn the speakers orient to the previous turn(s) and weave their own, new turn as seamlessly as possible into the exchange (McCarthy, 2003: 35). We can see how this integration is achieved by looking at the turn-construction units that speakers use to frame the beginning of their turns, or turn initiators. Tao (2003: 189) defines a turn initiator as ‘the very first form with which a speaker starts a new turn in conversation’ thus taking a very broad view of what constitutes a turn. Extract 5.8 below illustrates this in relation to the data we consider here:

**Extract 5.8**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- |     |                 |  |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| (1) | <b>Sally:</b>   | Speaking is hard we need more than one test. |
| (2) | <b>Maureen:</b> | Mm.  |
| (3) | <b>Sally:</b>   | But I I'd leave him there for this week.     |
| (4) | <b>Maureen:</b> | Mm.  |
| (5) | <b>Sally:</b>   | He's here also for quite a few months so am. |
| (6) | <b>Maureen:</b> | Okay. Okay.                                  |
| (7) | <b>Sally:</b>   | I'd hold onto him.                           |
| (8) | <b>Maureen:</b> | Yeah okay that's fine.                       |

Hence, the definition of the turn here reflects both longer utterances, such as *I'd hold onto him*, and what are elsewhere referred to as 'backchannels' (Yygve, 1970), 'minimal response tokens' such as *mm* and *yeah* (Gardner, 1997) and 'interactional' or 'non-minimal response tokens' such as *brilliant*, *really* and *okay* (McCarthy, 2003). As Gardner points out, though these items may not usually be considered full turns, 'they are systematically and overwhelmingly at TRPs [transition relevance places]' (1997: 17). For the present purposes, these items are counted as turns and are believed to have a significant role to play in the interactional architecture of multi-party discourse (see section 5.3.1 for a further discussion of minimal and non-minimal response tokens).

### **5.3.1 Investigating turn initial items**

Tao (2003) considers the issues that Schegloff (1996) raises with regard to the relationship between turns and grammar to be fundamental. The purpose of Tao (2003) is to systematically and empirically explore the link between conversational structure, specifically turn position, and grammatical design based on the assumption that 'if language is primarily used in conversational interaction, there is strong reason to believe that at least some aspects of grammar are designed for, or arise out of, conversational interaction' (*ibid*: 188; see also Schegloff, 1996). We have already exemplified Tao's operational definition of turn initiators in Extract 5.8. The data he works with is derived from two separate corpora: the Switchboard (SW) corpus (Godfrey *et al.*, 1992), a collection of telephone conversations among strangers from all regions of the US and the Cambridge University Press/Cornell University Corpus (CUP-CU), a spoken North American English corpus which consists mainly of informal face-to-face conversations among family members and/or friends (Tao and Waugh, 1998). Turns were randomly selected from both, 1000 from the SW corpus and 2000 from the CUP-CU corpus. Therefore, the samples are balanced with regard to medium and degrees of familiarity. Ultimately, 3229 turns (and turn beginnings) were examined.

The turn initial items were arrived at by instructing a computer search programme to search the corpora for the very first form following the speaker label, which does not

allow for variances in forms, such as phonological variations in an item like *oh* or pragmatic distinctions such as the difference between *oh* and *oh well*. With regard to his findings, Tao is able to confirm empirically Schegloff's (1996) observation of the dominance of lexical forms in turn beginnings. These include easily identifiable lexical forms such as *right*, *but* and *okay* but also vocalisations such as *mhm*, *oh* and *um*, which, though they are typical particles in conversation, would not necessarily be treated as lexical, for example, in dictionaries. The top twenty turn beginnings are reported by Tao are reproduced in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2 Top 20 high frequency forms and their occurrences (Tao, 2003: 191)**

No	Form	Occurrences
1	YEAH	374
2	*I/I'M/I'LL/I'VE	217
3	OH	149
4	AND	137
5	UH-HUH	133
6	WELL	88
7	*YOU	86
8	SO	78
9	UM	78
10	OKAY	70
11	RIGHT	63
12	*THAT/'S	63
13	BUT	58
14	NO	58
15	MHM	57
16	*IT/'S	51
17	*WHAT/'S	48
18	*WE	39
19	LAUGHTER	39
20	UH	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1919</b>

The majority (70%) of the top twenty types of turn beginnings function as syntactically independent forms or vocalisations, with the remainder, items such as pronouns (I, YOU, WE, IT) and the demonstrative pronoun THAT requiring a follow up element.<sup>12</sup> In fact, one of Tao's more incisive findings is this strong correlation between syntactically independent lexical forms and turn initiators.

<sup>12</sup> These dependent forms are marked with an asterisk in Table 5.2.

As turn initiators are a feature we orient to in the present study, Tao's methodological design for this paper was replicated for the C-MELT dataset. In total, 3724 turn beginnings are analysed in C-MELT and as Tao works with 3229 turn beginnings, quantitative comparison is possible with the admission of one or two caveats. First of all, Tao uses random samples from two distinct corpora whereas all of the turn beginnings in C-MELT have been isolated. This may well have an impact on the relative frequencies of the items: for example, minimal response tokens such as *yeah* may be echoed by one or two speakers.<sup>13</sup> Tao's top twenty items account for about 60% of all the turn beginnings and this pattern is replicated in C-MELT where the top twenty account for 65% of all turn beginnings. This shows that other patterns are not disrupted by this discrepancy in the datasets. Secondly, some of the minimal responses such as *uh-huh* and *mhm* have been transcribed differently in C-MELT – although their varietal equivalents, *um hum* and *mm* also appear in the top twenty. Finally, the differences between the genres Tao's data represents (stranger talk, intimate talk) within the realm of casual conversation and the institutional nature of C-MELT will certainly influence how we can interpret any similarities or differences.

*Yeah* is the most frequent turn initial type in Tao's study and this is strongly supported by the findings for C-MELT. In fact, *yeah* is by far the most frequent form in C-MELT with more than twice the occurrences of the second most frequent form *I*, even given that *I* has been conflated with *I'm*, *I'll*, *I've* and *I'd* (see Table 5.3 below).<sup>14</sup> Highlighted in grey in Table 5.3 are the items from Tao's top twenty (Table 5.2) which *also* occur in the top twenty for C-MELT, albeit with differing frequencies, underlining once again how major patterns are uninterrupted by any discrepancies in the datasets. Highlighted in yellow are what I would like to suggest are two turn beginnings from C-MELT which illustrate how pertinent the ideas of topic and the related contextual notion of topic framework are for the present study.

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, on the other hand, speakers may say *yeah* after another speaker's turn without any intention of supporting what they have said by echoing their utterance.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix D for a complete list of turn initiators in C-MELT.

**Table 5.3 Top 20 high frequency forms in C-MELT and their occurrences**

No	Form	Occurrences
1	YEAH	596
2	I/'M/'LL/'VE/'D	236
3	AND	185
4	BUT	116
5	NO	112
6	MM	110
7	OKAY	106
8	SO	105
9	OH	98
10	[NAME]	96
11	UM HMM	94
12	RIGHT	91
13	THAT/'S	76
14	WELL	73
15	IT/'S	72
16	THEY/'LL/'VE/'RE	67
17	WE/'LL/'RE/'VE/'RE	65
18	THE	50
19	YOU/'LL/'VE/'RE	40
20	BECAUSE	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2421</b>

[NAME] in Table 5.3 above refers to turns which are initiated by using a person's name. Of the 96 occurrences of this turn initial form, only 15 are used with a vocative functions, which, given its turn initial position, falls into the summoning or addressee-identification category (McCarthy and O'Keeffe, 2003). Indeed, most of these 15 occur with the addressee-identification function, which reflects the multi-party nature of the talk in C-MELT and the need to mark as relevant when a specific person is being addressed. The remaining 81 occurrences of [NAME] refer exclusively to students and serve both a turn initial and topic management function: introduction/re-introduction, continuation or clarification. Extract 5.9 illustrates this dual function.

**Extract 5.9**

**C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

**[Placement meeting]**

- (1) **Siobhán:** You were saying that guy Joo.  
(2) **Sally:** Who di=. Did you have him for speaking?  
(3) **Bríd:** Zoo. No I had him for grammar but just he asked me some really simple stuff and.  
(4) **Sally:** Mm.  
(5) **Bríd:** Was a bit confused. But he might catch on you know.  
(6) **Siobhán:** Joo is it?  
(7) **Bríd:** Zoo. Zoo. <\$E> laughing </\$E> Z-O-O.  
(8) **Sally:** Z-O-O?  
(9) **Bríd:** Animals in a zoo <\$E> laughs <\$E>.

In (3) Bríd uses the beginning of her turn to repair Siobhán's mistake in calling the student *Joo* instead of *Zoo*. Siobhán, for some reason, has not been able to orient to this repair and uses her subsequent turn (6) to ask for clarification, which Bríd supplies in (7) while also mitigating the face-threatening nature of the repair by laughing, spelling the name and in her humorous follow-up (9), *animals in a zoo*.

Another feature of [NAME] as a turn initial form is that it is invariably (apart from the 15 vocative forms) the name of a student. This reference to students as topic in C-MELT is also evidenced in THEY/'LL/'VE/'RE in position 16 (67 occurrences) of the top twenty turn initial forms. Chapter Six will tackle how person reference correlates powerfully with the identity of the community in more detail.

The next step is to identify how closely these turn initial forms are typically associated with the turn initial position (Tao, 2003: 192). As there are other positions in which these forms can be found, measuring the proportion turn initial use of the item against its overall use in the data (or entire corpus where C-MELT is concerned) should give a clear indication of the strength of its association with the turn initial position. At this stage of his analysis, Tao replaced *uh* (ranked at 20) with *the*: *the* had been just a few occurrences short for inclusion in the original table, but as one of the most frequently used items in written and spoken English<sup>15</sup> (McCarthy, 2003: 38) it makes for a more interesting case to compare (Tao, 2003: 194). Again, Tao's method was replicated with C-MELT. The percentages in Table 5.4 below indicate the degree of exclusivity of a form to the turn initial position: the higher the percentage, the more exclusively a form operates as a turn initiator (*ibid*: 192). The findings reported in Tao (*ibid.*) are presented in the column on the far right; even with a very slight variation in the forms represented, the similarity in the patterns that emerge is striking. Most of the percentages fall into a similar range with the difference  $(x) \leq 7\%$ . *But, no* and *um hum* have about 10% more occurrences in the turn initial position in C-MELT, and *right* is more than 20% more likely in the turn initial position.

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<sup>15</sup> *The* tops most word frequency lists; this is attested in C-MELT (see Table 4.4, Chapter Four).

**Table 5.4 Ratio of forms used as turn initiators to overall frequency of forms in C-MELT compared with Tao (2003)<sup>16</sup>**

Form	TI/Total freq.	Percentage	TAO (2003)
YEAH	596/824	72%	74%
I/'M/'LL/'VE/'D	236/1315	18%	13%
AND	185/1084	17%	14%
BUT	116/404	29%	19%
NO	112/209	54%	44%
MM	110/116	95%	100%
OKAY	106/217	49%	52%
SO	105/475	22%	21%
OH	98/131	75%	75%
[Name]	96		
UM HUM	94/97	97%	88%
RIGHT	91/156	58%	35%
THAT/'S	76/1002	8%	6%
WELL	73/193	38%	45%
IT/'S	72/956	7%	6%
THEY/'LL/'VE/'RE	67/789	8%	
WE/'LL/'RE/'VE/'RE	65/708	9%	7%
THE	50/1364	4%	3%
YOU/'LL/'VE/'RE	40/825	5%	8%
BECAUSE	33/177	19%	

The congruence between Tao's (2003) findings and evidence from the data in C-MELT is interesting for a number of reasons. One of Tao's major findings is the degree to which turns are based on syntactically free forms, with even the dependent forms such as *I* exhibiting some level of lexicalisation. This is borne out in C-MELT with, for example, the occurrences of *I*. For all of the occurrences in the turn initial position, just 5 are repetitions and the remainder make up expressions such as *I think*, *I mean* or *I don't think*. We return to this feature of the discourse in general in Chapter Seven. Another interesting similarity is the negligible use of *the* in a turn initial position emphasising, as Tao (*ibid*: 194) points out, the disparity between turn structure and sentence structure. Citing Sacks *et al.*'s (1974: 722-3) suggestion that turns encode projections and connections in relation to prior turns, Tao shows how this is reflected in the functional nature of the forms we see in turn initial positions and sub-categories of these functions. He identifies four main functional categories and common exemplars of these categories (Tao, 2003: 196):

- *Tying*: (continuing on from the previous speaker's/speakers' turn(s): OH, WELL, BUT, AND;
- *Assessing*: YEAH, NO, RIGHT;
- *Explaining*: SO;
- *Acknowledging*: MHM (Mm), UH-HUH (Um-hum), OKAY.

<sup>16</sup> Highlighted in grey are the forms that do not occur in Tao's original rankings (Table 5.2).

These are not hard and fast categories, for example, *so* may be used to tie a turn to the previous one, or *yeah* may also be used to acknowledge a speaker's turn (see also Schegloff, 1982; Jefferson, 1985a). We can apply some other broad functional categories to the turn initial items in the top twenty rankings: items such as *but*, *no*, *because*, *so*, *okay*, *oh*, *and* and *well* often function as discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987) in a text, and we see them here performing the function of organising phases and topics in the meetings (see also section 5.4 below). Tao (2003) refers to syntactically dependent elements such as personal pronouns and determiners, which we could usefully assign a category of their own. We are left then with items such as *yeah*, *mm*, *uh-hum* and *right*.

We have looked at the textual and metatextual nuances of C-MELT which have come to the fore as we investigated turn initiators in relation to Tao's empirical method. For example, the topic framework of the meetings impacts on turn initiators with [NAME] occurring mid-way through the rankings in Table 5.3. McCarthy's (2003) study of what he dubs *interactional response tokens* provides valuable observations which help to explicate more specific patterns of the turn-initials, *yeah*, *mm*, *uh-hum* and *right*, in C-MELT. Particularly useful is his observation that many of these interactional response tokens are synonymous with either "yes" or "no" and would have transactional efficiency used in these forms but 'would have different (less engaged) interactional implications' (*ibid*: 35). He refers to them as 'yes-plus' words and asserts that they do more than merely acknowledge or confirm previous turns: they illustrate "good listenership" (*ibid*: 36, McCarthy, 2002: 49). He considers the responsive element they encode as important for initiating input and orients to Tottie's (1991) suggestion that whilst these tokens may perform a backchannel function, they may also be considered full turns. With regard to notions of backchannel behaviour, McCarthy notes that they are predicated on the CA model of the turn-taking system (cf. Sacks *et al.*, 1974) and Schegloff's (1982) contention that at its core is the purpose of minimising turn size. However, McCarthy's analysis demonstrates how listeners:

...attend as much to the interactional and relational aspects of the talk as to the transactional and propositional content and the need to keep the channel open. The idea of “economy,” therefore, must embrace both transactional and relational concerns...

(2003: 40)

McCarthy’s study is also empirical and analyses data from two corpora: the (at that time) 3.5-million-word CANCODE<sup>17</sup> spoken corpus and a North American spoken sample of similar size from the Cambridge International Corpus. McCarthy deals specifically with *non-minimal* responses, such as *right*, *great* and *fine* in this paper and shows how they are indexical of ‘engaged listenership’ (*ibid*: 59). We can, however, usefully apply these findings and observations in relation to the character of the response tokens that appear in a turn initial position in C-MELT. In the first place, we see that a response like *right* can be followed with one (or more) of the other turn initial items (see Figure 5.3 below).

N	Concordance	
2134	The Italian’s guy is gone.	<b>Right alright alright yeah.</b> But it’s
2135	He’s a nice guy isn’t he.	<b>Right am. So</b> Chong. Yeah. Liam
2136	Or not the pay thing.	<b>Right and I think</b> we should remember
2137	make up their own version.	<b>Right but.</b> Anyway hey. But
2138	field trip justificantes.	<b>Right</b> laughs. We don’t acc
2139	to make one decision.	<b>Right I</b> think it should be separate.
2140	Right. Early on.	<b>Right</b> in that case. <b>So</b> they’re going to be
2141	that and the time before.	<b>Right</b> not always but they were for a lon
2142	in all classes really.	<b>Right okay so</b> that’s what I+ I think
2143	And we go. Okay. Hmm.	<b>Right okay.</b> Does the free hour mea
2144	covering. Laughter.	<b>Right so</b> that will be very nice. Right so
2145	seems to be a problem.	<b>Right so</b> then we’ll be in our third semest
2146	schedule changes.	<b>Right. Right so</b> maybe draw up a list of
2147	someone for Dougal.	<b>Right so yeah so</b> maybe the the main is
2148	access as a requirement.	<b>Right yeah right.</b> We we had+
2149	know but if they don’t.	<b>Right yeah.</b> I tell you the ones who
2150	don’t have the time.	<b>Right yeah.</b> Or the they’re more int

**Figure 5.3 Sample concordance lines for *right***

McCarthy states that non-minimal responses tend to cluster across speaker turns (2003: 57) and can appear in doublets or triplets (*ibid*: 54) and we see similar patterns occurring with the minimal response tokens in the turn initiators in C-MELT. If we take the case of *yeah*, patterns within the turn initial position are: *yeah but...*, *yeah I think...*, *yeah I mean...*, *yeah so...*, *yeah and...* as well as *yeah yeah*, which operate as emphatic agreement (rather than on the level of sarcasm). We will see this echoing and

<sup>17</sup> Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English © Cambridge University Press.

repetition in operation again in the closing phases of the meetings, a pattern noted by McCarthy (*ibid.*) and illustrated in section 5.1.2 below.

Stubbe (1998: 259) regards these response tokens as ‘verbal feedback’ and considers the supportive function of verbal feedback as:

...a very powerful and complex interactive resource which listeners can use to subtly influence the topical development and interactive structure of a conversation while at the same time conveying any of a wide range of affective meanings.

She also highlights the primacy of context in the interpretation of these forms in her summing up of the significance of verbal feedback – or backchannels, or response tokens, depending on how they are viewed by the analyst – in interaction. The way in which these items are interpreted are very strongly reflective of the context in which they occur. Therefore, when Jefferson (1985a: 200) interprets *yeah* and *yes* as indicative of the willingness of a speaker to shift from reciprocity to speakership and *mmm* as signalling passive reciprocity and an invitation to the current speaker to ‘go on’, it is very much tied to the interactional situation. In a comparison of *yeah*, *uh huh* and *mm hm*, Drummond’s (1993) findings also suggest a greater degree of *speakership incipency*, or the shift from a recipient to speakership role, for *yeah*.

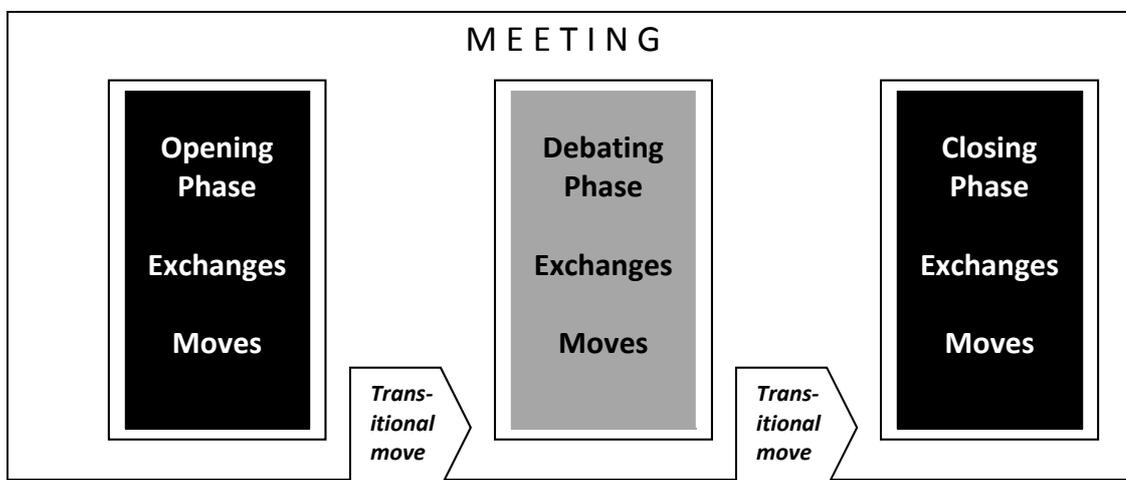
Where turn initial items are concerned, we have seen that the patterning in C-MELT very closely echoes major empirical work by Tao (2003). Closer inspection of these items shows that the higher frequency turn initiators can also operate as response tokens, therefore leading to the observation that participants in C-MELT demonstrate the sort of engaged listenership McCarthy (2003) characterises. We consider these response tokens as complete turns in themselves (as well as responses) given the institutional context of the interaction. In multi-party interaction, the responsibility for maintaining the flow of the meetings appears to be shared equally. However, there are certain points of the meetings where one person, the Chair, is responsible for the structure of the interaction. In formal meetings, this is in the opening and closing phases of the meeting. In C-MELT, this is particularly true of openings, although closings appear to be a little more ad hoc. We move now to these phases and isolate their characteristic features.

## 5.4 Phases of the meeting

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris' (1997) cross-cultural comparative study of Italian and British business meetings is particularly useful at this point. In their study of meetings as a genre, they critique previous definitions of genre and generic modelling saying that several previous models of genre, for example, Ventola's (1987) model of service encounters, tended to describe dialogic rather than multi-party interaction. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris posit a generic model for the meetings they analyse based on the following assumptions:

1. meetings are task-oriented and decision-making encounters;
2. as such, they involve the co-operative effort of the Chair and the Group;
3. meetings are structured into hierarchically ordered units.

They characterise three principle procedural phases of the English language meetings in their data (1997: 209), as shown in Figure 5.4 and suggest that the opening and closing phases of the meetings are the most rule-governed stages (*ibid.*; see also Lüger, 1983).



**Figure 5.4** Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris' (1997) generic structure of corporate meetings (English meetings)

Within each of these procedural phases, they analyse the interaction that is produced at the level of the exchange and the moves that make up the exchange. This model is predicated on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model of the exchange (discussed in Chapter Two). Acts, as we have seen, are the smallest interactive elements and

indicate what the speaker intends. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris start at the level of Moves, or the beginning of a new communicative act, as these both accomplish the business of the meeting and reveal how the meeting is managed. In relation to this context, they define the exchange as made up of ‘clusters of moves’ which ‘represent self-contained units of discourse realising well-defined sub-tasks within the management of the meetings’; the boundaries of these exchanges are marked by ‘topic shift moves’ (1997: 211).

We will look in detail now at the *opening phase* of the meetings, and attempt to characterise the sequential and discursal features which are typical to the exchanges which make up this phase. We will concentrate particularly on Sub-corpus 1 (México) for this section as the opening exchanges are more explicit than those of Sub-corpus 2 (Ireland). The reasons for this have been explored in section 5.1.

#### **5.4.1 Openings**

Previous research significant to the sequential characteristics of conversational openings is principally in the area of conversation analysis (CA), and within this domain *telephone* conversation openings have been isolated as particularly suitable to the enterprise. Schegloff (1979: 24) rationalises that this is due to the fact that telephone conversations are interactional encounters which are exclusively ‘speech’ oriented – the interactants do not have the non-linguistic tools of gesture or facial expression to expedite or alter the message they are transmitting, or in effect communication by telephone can ‘push accomplishment into one channel’ (Hopper 1989: 192). Schegloff (1986: 115) presents a prototypical, in his words ‘canonical’, opening routine in telephone conversation thus:

- (a) A summons-answer sequence, consisting of a telephone ring and the first answerer’s turn;
- (b) Identification/recognition sequences, consisting of each party identifying and displaying recognition of the other;
- (c) An exchange of greeting tokens;
- (d) An exchange of initial enquiries and their responses.

Hopper (1989) tested this canonical routine against twenty-five telephone conversation openings and found that there were quite diverse formats of openings in his data, and divergences from Schegloff's prototypical routine were the rule rather than the exception. On a more general point as regards openings, he concedes that 'there are certain tasks that must get accomplished to opening a state of conversational speaking' and 'there may be a certain necessity in the order in which participants do these tasks' (Hopper, 1989: 191-192).

Openings are a significant locus of study as, 'the opening is a place where the type of conversation being opened can be proffered, displayed, accepted, rejected, modified – in short, incipiently constituted by the parties to it' (Schegloff 1979: 25).

Schegloff's comments are in relation to casual conversation; however, we can argue here that the participants in C-MELT also carry expectations for the meetings based on previous experience. Indeed, in the case of Sub-corpus 2, the placement meeting is such a ritualised form that they are characterised by a highly truncated opening phase and go straight to the debating phase.<sup>18</sup> The meetings in Sub-corpus 1, therefore, offer a richer seam analytically with regard to the opening phase. These meetings have not become ritualised for two possible reasons. Firstly, two of the meetings are given over to the discussion of pilot programmes and the implementation of a new system of placing and assessment; therefore, the participants are discussing uncharted professional territory. Secondly, there is a regular staff turnover in the Mexican English department which may have implications for this aspect of the management of the meetings.

The opening moves for each meeting were analysed and distinctive pattern emerged. Within each opening, three distinct phases are discernible, the first of which is illustrated in Table 5.5:

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<sup>18</sup> Drew and Chilton (2000) observe a similar type of truncation in their investigation of telephone calls 'just to keep in touch' amongst family members. As these calls have become habitualised, there is a divergence, in the form of truncation, from the canonical opening sequence suggested by Schegloff (1986).

**Table 5.5: Phase structure of the openings in Sub-corpus 1 [México]**

Phase	Features	Function	Linguistic Features
<b>Preamble</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation to setting: physical setting (chairs, materials etc), procedural issues (minutes etc.)</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• Establishing the Chair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meta-organisation</li> <li>• Breaking the ice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse markers</li> <li>• Laughing/joking/banter/badinage</li> </ul>
<b>Structuring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justification of meeting</li> <li>• Negotiating the structure of the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Account of purpose of meeting</li> <li>• Structuring the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse markers</li> <li>• Accounts</li> <li>• Collaborative language</li> </ul>
Inaugural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation to topic one <b>T1</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To initiate topical business of meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse markers</li> <li>• Hedging</li> <li>• Enumeration of items on the agenda</li> </ul>

Each of these phases will be considered and exemplified individually. The meeting is considered to have opened once the first topic (**T1**) has been initiated. We turn now to an exemplification of the preamble phase.

Before each meeting can proceed to the debating/exploratory phase, a variable range of moves must be produced, which has been glossed the ‘preamble’ phase. This is the most stable of the phases and in the following extract, all of the features outlined in Table 5.5 above are evident.

**Extract 5.10: Preamble phase**

**C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Peter:** So maybe a little introduction to it.  
(2) **Kate:** Are there enough chairs? I can run and get some extras.  
(3) **Julia:** I don't know what to say.  
(4) **Peter:** <\$G?> very quickly.  
(5) **Barry:** Just say something and we can all argue then.  
(6) **Kate:** Right.  
<\$E> laughter <\$E>  
(7) **Peter:** We'll all go against it.  
<\$E> laughter <\$E>

Peter is the head of department and, as such, takes on the role of Chair in the meeting. His first turn (1) is framed by the discourse marker *so* and is followed by an utterance which presupposes the necessity of some form of *preamble* to the meeting. In (3), Julia displays some anxiety about what she should say. Barry responds to this by suggesting that she can say what she likes as the main object of the meeting is for everyone to argue, which provokes general laughter. Humour is a recurrent phenomenon in the meetings in general, frequently at strategic points and often in the openings. In this instance, Peter expands upon Barry's humorous suggestion, and the ensuing laughter serves the function of breaking the ice. Adelswärd and Öberg (1998: 412) stress the complex interactional goals that laughter accomplishes in talk, and state that mutual (or in this case, collective) laughter is a sign of rapport. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) focus on the role of humour in the workplace, echoing Adelswärd and Öberg's position in their consideration of humour and laughter: as an important index of solidarity, a sense of belonging to a group. However, they also consider humour indexical of the power relationships in the workplace, 'humour typically constructs participants as equals, emphasising what they have in common and playing down power differences' (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 109-110). With this in mind, Peter's contribution to Barry's humorous utterance can be interpreted as collusive.

Humour also surfaces another preamble phase, though its function is different as is exemplified in Extract 5.11 below:

**Extract 5.11: Preamble phase**

**C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- |     |               |   |
|-----|---------------|---|
| (1) | <b>Julia:</b> | No I'm not.                                       |
| (2) | <b>Barry:</b> | Julia you called it.                              |
| (3) | <b>Julia:</b> | I can just pass on. I didn't. Peter did. I just.  |
| (4) | <b>Kate:</b>  | <\$E> Laughing <\\$E> Peter isn't here.           |
| (5) | <b>Barry:</b> | You're chair.                                     |
| (6) | <b>Julia:</b> | Yeah. I can quickly pass on a couple of things... |

In this extract, the humour is in the form of banter. In (1), Julia is responding to a colleague’s playful assertion that she is ‘in charge’.<sup>19</sup> This gives rise to a humorous exchange regarding Julia’s ‘responsibility’ for the meeting, which she denies in (3). Kate uses laughter to softly challenge this denial, the implication of her rather obvious ‘Peter isn’t here’ is that someone needs to take charge. It can be argued in light of this exchange that the meeting cannot proceed without the establishment of the ‘Chair’, which is accomplished in Barry’s turn (5). Julia then accepts this procedural role and the meeting can commence. Humour is a significant phenomenon in its own right, and is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Eight.

The next phase of the opening is what will be termed the ‘structuring’ phase. This phase also contains linguistic features which are similar across the data in Sub-corpus 1 though to a more variable degree, as it is not as stable as the preamble phase. The typical linguistic features of this phase are reproduced in Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6 ‘Canonical’ structuring phase**

Phase	Features	Function	Linguistic Features
<b>Structuring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justification of meeting</li> <li>• Negotiating the structure of the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Account of purpose of meeting</li> <li>• Structuring the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse markers</li> <li>• Accounts</li> <li>• Collaborative language</li> </ul>

The following extract is prototypical in that it displays all of the features, albeit in a different order:

**Extract 5.12: Structuring phase**

**C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Kate:** Maybe we should start with <\$G?> one two and three.  
(2) **Julia:** <\$G?> do <\$G?> do.  
(3) **Barry:** Well what did you do? I know what Kate did.  
(4) **Peter:** Okay. So if we just put the meeting a little bit in context first.

<sup>19</sup> Though the recording starts at (1), this was the first utterance noted by the researcher who was present at the meeting. It is also indicative of the way in which meetings form part of the larger discursive picture in any institution, with the participants moving in and out of workplace conversations.

Today's just to listen what the people did that was Helen and Julia and Kate and me to some extent I also had a post PET group. Working solidly enough everyday.

Kate's hedged turn, '*maybe we should...*' suggests a possible structure for the meeting and Barry's turn collaborates this orientation to initiating the meeting, though it is rather more direct. Peter, the Chair, assumes control of the structuring phase, and it is only when he does so that the meeting can reach the next phase of opening. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 209) have also noted this aspect of meeting openings, the individual that takes on the role of chair 'becomes invested with the unconditional power of opening and closing the meeting [...] no other participant is allowed to carry them out without committing a noticeable breach of conventions'. This is not problematic in Extract 5.12 as Peter assumes control smoothly by framing his turn authoritatively, using the discourse marker *okay*. Across the data as a whole, *okay* marks a topic boundary<sup>20</sup>, whilst in the openings it is marking an assumption of control of the business phase of the meeting. This is also evident in the next extract (the preamble phase is marked in italics):

**Extract 5.13: Structuring phase**

**C-MELT\_03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- |     |                |   |
|-----|----------------|---|
| (1) | <b>Rita:</b>   | <i>Are you taking minutes?</i>                        |
| (2) | <b>Olivia:</b> | No I'm not. It's. <SE> Rita laughs <SE> Sorry Rita.   |
| (3) | <b>Peter:</b>  | <b>Okay</b> so I have a class at ten so that'll be... |

Within the structuring phase of the meetings, there is a need to 'account' for the meeting, to provide some sort of justification for it, which is often synopsised at this stage and used to move the meeting forward and initiate the first topic or item on the agenda. It also creates an implicit structure for the meeting, for example the account given in Extract 5.12, *Today's just to listen what the people did*. In the meeting where Julia is Chair, she provides the following account for the meeting *Yeah. I can quickly pass on a couple of things that he [Peter] told me*: the meeting is justified as a forum to communicate information about the coming semester, equally fact that Julia is the 'messenger', that she has been authorised to do so by the director is significant. It justifies not only the meeting but her management of it. After the account has been

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<sup>20</sup> In 93% of the occurrences in the corpus, *okay* functions as a discourse marker at a topic boundary.

provided, the meeting is justified, its context has been framed and the first topic can be initiated. Hence the meeting can proceed to the final phase of opening, where the main business of the meeting to be discussed is introduced, or the *inaugural* phase. The main features of the inaugural phase are described in Table 5.4 and reproduced in Table 5.7 below.

**Table 5.7 ‘Canonical’ inaugural phase**

Phase	Features	Function	Linguistic Features
Inaugural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orientation to topic one <b>[T1]</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To initiate topical business of meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discourse markers</li> <li>Hedging</li> <li>Enumeration of items on the agenda</li> </ul>

The inaugural phase can be used to enumerate the items on the agenda, and the agenda may be explicitly referred to at this stage:

**Extract 5.14: Inaugural phase**

**C-MELT03 [sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[T1] indicates where the meeting moves to the first topic]**

**Peter:** Yeah *okay*. We'll have to stop in five minutes five minutes. **So** just a few quick little avisos as they say in Spanish and then we'll *get down to the main item on the agenda* eh where are they oh God. **Right** eh *number one eh one* of the eh **[T1]** this is kind of a general issue *by the way* talk to those who are here now. Eh about people taking days off eh **just** I want you to know that personally I have absolutely no problem about it taking days off but...

Hedges (such as *just* and *kind of*) and discourse markers (such as *okay* and *so*) are very prominent in the turns that make up the opening, with items such as *okay* and *right* occurring at the opening of the turns themselves in order to frame the topics that follow. While the latter forms have been discussed in section 5.2, the former need much greater elaboration, and are dealt with in Chapter Seven.

At this point of the meeting, ‘the end of the beginning’ as it were, the Chair’s role as overt stage manager of the meeting fades, surfacing only when mediation at problematic points, such as digression or even conflict, is required. While the openings of the meetings in Sub-corpus 1 are sufficiently elaborated in the interaction to facilitate a detailed description of their features, closings are not so accommodating. We move now to this phase.

### 5.4.2 Closings

Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 289) appeal again to intuition when they assert that a conversation does not ‘simply end, but is brought to a close’ and explore the ways in which this is achieved in conversation. Investigating the way in which closings are accomplished in C-MELT was complicated somewhat by the fact that for at least three of the meetings, the recorder was switched off at some point near the end of the meeting; this means that the final turns were not recorded and we cannot define the ‘closing’ of the meeting as the very last things that were said. The tendency of the meetings to ‘fade out’ rather than ‘close’ is exemplified in Extract 5.15, the final seven turns of one of the meetings:

#### Extract 5.15

##### C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

- |     |                  |   |
|-----|------------------|---|
| (1) | <b>Samantha:</b> | Yeah and as an add on maybe an add on hour a week of TOE= cos I’ve also had a couple of teachers ask me are the TOEFL classes starting this semester and I was. |
| (2) | <b>Peter:</b>    | Yeah it’s the one to get a scholarship out of Mexico. Yes that’s what they will be asked to get yeah.   |
| (3) | <b>Kate:</b>     | So it’s probably more realistic.  |
| (4) | <b>Samantha:</b> | In Mexico as well.  |
| (5) | <b>Peter:</b>    | Sorry.  |
| (6) | <b>Samantha:</b> | For in Mexico as well.  |
| (7) | <b>Peter:</b>    | Yeah yeah in other words to get the government or anybody to give you a scholarship they will.  |

In closing a conversation, speakers in a casual mode are faced with the necessity of disengaging from the interaction, whilst simultaneously ensuring that speaker relationships are attended to and maintained. Schegloff and Sacks (1973) investigate how this is achieved in dyadic, casual conversation and highlight that speakers orient to closing a conversation by initiating what they call *pre-closing* and *terminal*

*sequences*. These require the co-operation of both of the speakers and they note the existence of adjacency pairs in these sequences. Terminal sequences, such as *bye bye then/bye*, effectively close the conversation but cannot be introduced randomly without some sort of closing preamble, or what Schegloff and Sacks (*ibid.*) call a pre-closing sequence. As Liddicoat (2007: 256) states, ‘a conversational closing is in fact a series of activities which lead up to an exchange of terminal components and the closing of a conversation.’ In opening a conversation, speakers tend to start from a common point and then diverge whereas in closing, speakers move from divergence to convergence, and this convergence facilitates the enacting of a terminal sequence (Button, 1987). Extract 5.16 shows the closing of a meeting that is unusual in that it actually displays a pre-closing and terminal sequence. This meeting was called in order to disseminate information about the timetable for the new semester; the teachers are discussing where they can find time on the schedule for English class and they are discussing the unscheduled hours on the timetables that might be used for it. Students have few free hours and in those hours they are free may be expected to go to the library.

**Extract 5.16**

**C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Jenny:** Does the free hour mean they have a free hour or what?  
 (2) **Jack:** Yeah.  
 (3) **Sam:** It means library.  
 (4) **Jack:** Or.  
 (5) **Rita:** Sometimes they just don’t have class at one o’clock.  
 (6) **Sam:** Or at six o’clock or at eight o’clock.  
 (7) **Kate:** Hmm right. Well eight o’clock’s okay but six o’clock.  
 (8) **Sam:** I know.  
 <\$E> Pause 5 seconds <\\$E>.  
 (9) **Jenny:** *Hmm*.  
 (10) **Laura:** **That it?**  
 (11) **Kate:** **Right.**  
 (12) **Jenny:** **I think we can formally close.**  
 (13) **Kate:** **I pronounce this meeting closed.**  
 <\$E> **Some laughter, shifting of chairs** <\\$E>.  
 (14) **Rita:** **We are done.**

The pause of five seconds after the last topic<sup>21</sup> has been discussed creates a space for closing to occur. Jenny’s verbalisation *hmm* opens up the possibility for closing the meeting and starts the pre-closing sequence developed in turns (10) to (14). Schegloff

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<sup>21</sup> The available free time slots in the students’ timetables. These were normally very early in the morning or later in the evening.

and Sacks (1973: 303) note items like *we-ell* and *so-oo* (with downward intonation contours) as typical ways of initiating a pre-closing sequence. We do not have that intonational information about Jenny's *hmm*, but can infer from Laura's *That it?* that it may well have had downward intonation. At (10), Laura moves to close but, as she is not the Chair, needs to formulate her contribution as a question rather than a statement. In this meeting, the Head of Department (HoD) is not present; he has called the meeting but deputised Julia as Chair as he was unable to attend. We have already seen Julia's reluctance to inhabit this role (in Extract 5.11) and she does not take up her right as Chair to close the meeting. What is interesting about the pre-closing and terminal sequences in Extract 5.16 is how the teachers collaborate to bring the meeting to a formal conclusion; without the HoD to chair the meeting (and with a reluctant colleague happy to pass on information but not take charge) they take joint responsibility. Both Jenny and Kate orient to a humorous frame in closing (*I think we can formally close/I pronounce this meeting closed*) and Rita's *we are done* provides the closing of the bracket after laughter. The fact that we are dealing with multiparty conversation may seem to preclude the presence of adjacency pairs in that much of the research deals with dyadic communication; however, we see that in Extract 5.16 Jenny and Kate produce a proposal/agreement adjacency pair (*I think we can formally close/I pronounce this meetings closed*). Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 297-298) highlight that the crucial contribution of the pair format is that by adjacently positioning a second part:

...a speaker can show that he [sic] understood what a prior [part] aimed at and that he [sic] is willing to go along with that. Also, by virtue of the occurrence of an adjacently produced second, the doer of the first can see that what he intended was indeed understood, and that it was or was not accepted.

By orienting to the echoing of the humorous frame, Jenny and Kate are showing that they have understood and accept Laura's suggestion that the meeting close, the communal laughter adds a further scaffold to this acceptance. Rita's turn appears to be the second part that the communal laughter requires. Therefore, despite the fact that the talk takes place in a multiparty environment, we still see this pair format for terminal sequences in action. When the HoD<sup>22</sup> or DoS<sup>23</sup> are present at the meetings,

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<sup>22</sup> HoD = Head of Department. In Sub-corpus 1, this is Peter.

<sup>23</sup> DoS = Director of Studies. In Sub-corpus 2, this is Aoife for the first meeting (C-MELT04) and thereafter Ciarán (C-MELT05; C-MELT06).

there are less elaborated pre-closing sequences, if only because the responsibility for closing lies with the Chair as Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) assert.

An important feature of closings is that they mark a moving out of topic talk; in a casual conversation, face-to-face or on the phone, participants may have things they wish to talk about, or *mentionables* (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 300), but that they have not introduced at that point. The pre-closing sequence provides for the re-opening of topic talk and the insertion of previously ‘unmentioned mentionables’ (*ibid*: 305). In the context of the meeting, there is usually an explicit formal agenda or an implicitly understood purpose for meeting which defines what the mentionables for the meeting are. However, in Extract 5.17 Aoife (the DoS) provides the opportunity for teachers at the meeting to introduce any new topics they may wish to.

**Extract 5.17**

**C-MELT04 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Aoife:** Yeah. Okay but anyway if anyone comes up with any ideas then it would just either.
- (2) **Niall:** Umhum.
- (3) **Aoife:** Go straight to Paul or let me know and I’ll tell him.
- (4) **Siobhán:** Mm okay.
- (5) **Aoife:** **Is there anything else?**
- (6) **Niamh:** That’s for you <SE> handing over some money <SE>
- (7) **Aoife:** Oh this is for Aileen grand thanks Niamh.

In the case of Extract 5.17, a participant does not choose to introduce a new topic for the meeting, but rather uses the invitation to give Aoife a contribution to a collection to buy a present for a staff member who is leaving. In the case of Extract 5.18, the invitation to contribute (*has anybody anything?*) is taken up by Sally, who uses the opportunity to remind Ciarán that she will be doing some teaching observation on Wednesday.

**Extract 5.18**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

**[Note: The ‘people’ that Ciarán refers to in (1) are new students who have just arrived]**

- (1) **Ciarán:** There’ll be a few people going into the afternoon classes so I’ll write up the names now in a couple of minutes. Am. **No there’s nothing else. Has anybody anything?**
- (2) **Sally:** **Did you mention I’d be observing?**

- (3) **Ciarán:** Oh yeah. Sally's going in observing you tomorrow and Emma you on Wednesday.
- (4) **Ciara:** Wednesday. Both classes is it Sally?
- (5) **Sally:** Just the second one.
- (6) **Emma:** The second one?
- (7) **Sally:** The second one.
- (8) **Ciarán:** Hm. Actually that's it.
- (9) **Ciara:** That it?
- (10) **Ciarán:** Thank you kindly.
- (11) **Emma:** Thanks Ciarán.

Extract 5.18 also displays the sort of terminal sequences that Schegloff and Sacks (1973) refer to: *thank you kindly/thanks Ciarán*. An interesting aspect of the topics proffered in the pre-closing sequences by the teachers in response to the Chair's invitations is that they tend to be of short duration. No invitation to introduce a new topic has been made in Extract 5.19. At the end of the meeting, Peter (the HoD) moves to close by making an arrangement<sup>24</sup> for the next meeting (*when could we meet again? Is a weekly meeting maybe a little bit too maybe once a fortnight at least?*). When two of the participants answer his question – Rita (3) and Olivia (4) – Peter summarises the response and this is bounded by *okay* suggesting a final turn. Harry, however, initiates a new topic (6) and this is supported by Julia (7); Peter moves to shut this topic down fairly decisively by summarising it and again bounding the move with *okay*. The meeting closes when Rita echoes the boundary marker and thanks Peter; in Extract 5.18, the meeting also closes with a participant thanking the Chair.

#### Extract 5.19

C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

[Note: <\$O> marks the beginning of an overlapped utterance; </\$O> marks the end of an overlapped utterance]

- (1) **Peter:** I'm teaching <\$O29> this after I'll write that down </\$O29> chapter four done. Eh I think maybe should we I think we should meet maybe a little bit regularly. <\$O30> When could we meet again? </\$O30>. **Is a weekly meeting maybe a little bit too maybe once a fortnight at least?**
- (2) **Olivia:** <\$O29> You've got that battery haven't you </\$O29>.
- (3) **Rita:** <\$O30> I think that would be a good idea </\$O30>.
- (4) **Olivia:** Yeah. Once a fortnight.
- (5) **Peter:** Once a fortnight **okay**.
- (6) **Harry:** Yeah we should try to start preparing for that PET exam like we need.
- (7) **Julia:** We need to get all the resources.
- (8) **Peter:** And resources for that as well. **Okay**.
- (9) **Rita:** **Okay. Thank you.**

<sup>24</sup> Button (1987: 104) identifies making arrangements as one of the sequence types regularly used to move out of closings along with back-references, topic initial elicitors (e.g. *yeah, okay*), in-conversation objects (e.g. minimal response tokens), solitudes (*drive carefully, take care*), re-iterating the reason for a phone call and appreciations (*thank you*).

Meeting openings in Sub-corpus 1 share a number of similar sequential and discursive patterns while the openings in Sub-corpus 2 do not. This is in no small measure due to the fact that the meetings in Sub-corpus 2 have one principal task, are a weekly feature of the institutional CoP and as such have become highly ritualised. Closings, while they do not have obvious patterns, have some similar features, such as occasionally terminal sequences and pre-closings which admit of the insertion of meeting mentionables. Extract 5.16 is a notable exception to the rest of the meetings in C-MELT, in that the person with the most hierarchical power is not chairing the meeting and the speakers work together to perform the closing function that in the other meetings the HoD or DoS exclusively holds as Chair.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a macro-view of the internal structure of the meetings in C-MELT. By focussing on the larger interactional frame, turn design, lexical choice and how asymmetry impacts on the openings and closings of the meetings, the fingerprints of the CoPs under analysis here begin to come into focus. With regard to turn design, the quantitative findings based on the C-MELT data corroborate with Tao's (2003) systematic research into turn initial items, suggesting that C-MELT has not only internal validity, but also has much in common interactionally with casual conversation in the way that participants design their turns. These turn initial items also provide us with a deeper insight into the topic framework of the meetings; the way in which students' abilities are described and the descriptors negotiated and supported providing a sharp angle on the joint enterprise of the CoP in Sub-corpus 2. The pooled expert judgement that has become part of the community's shared repertoire is articulated through the highly contextualised, negotiated meaning of quite ostensibly basic everyday vocabulary. While the lack of a specific turn-taking system and a close alignment between the turn initial items in C-MELT and Tao's (2003) research on samples of casual conversation suggest a relaxed hierarchy, we see that openings and closings belie this. The openings and closings are, as Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) suggest, the most rule-governed and part of this structure is derived from hierarchical institutional roles. Using the complexities of the relationship between language and context, we turn now to a more detailed consideration of these roles in the CoPs and explore how identities are invoked and indexed.

## Chapter Six

# Articulating Identity in Context

***Kate:** 'We're separate'.*

***Sam:** We're part of the university too.*

***Barry:** We always paint ourselves as separate from the university then.*

***Jack:** Yeah autonomous.*

***Barry:** Subversive.*

***Kate:** An autonomous state.*

C-MELT02

## 6. Articulating identity in context

### 6.0 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Four, in order to study naturally occurring language it must first be abstracted from its context by recording it on analogue tapes and then preserved artificially as a written artefact. A tension for spoken language analysts is created in the reduction of a dynamic phenomenon to written text, though advances in technology will no doubt one day preclude these limitations of recording and transcription. However, the abstraction of naturally occurring language from its context of use provides an apposite starting point for this chapter. The context of the interaction presented in this study has been described from the perspective of the institutions and situations within which the data was collected, and context itself is considered the *sine qua non* for any interpretation of the data. But the primacy of context, and what we mean when we invoke the idea of *context*, will require some further consideration. Therefore, we first return to the notion of context, which was dealt with in a more general way in Chapter Two, to review what has been understood by the term. What we focus specifically on here is the relationship between the referential language that the teachers in these meetings use, and the information this reflects regarding the context(s) in which they are interacting. Reference itself:

...is a socially significant phenomenon. Language in everyday life is used continually to talk about the world, whether it is represented as an objective reality or as a creation of verbal practices. Moreover, such talk is action and can constitute social reality rather than just reflecting it.

(Hanks, 1990: 4)

It is this duality of reference that is of particular significance to this study – a focus on referential practice can bring aspects of the context into focus for the researcher as well as illustrating how referential practice creates, in real time, the professional CoP.

Deixis, as an analytical means of retrieving contextual information about the interactional situation, is highlighted and the ways in which deixis has been defined and categorised are briefly explored. Person reference is specifically focussed on with regard to how the relevant *participant framework* (Goffman, 1979; see section 6.3 below) is created in the CoPs and it is found that person deictic reference is one tangible way in which the two distinct, professional CoPs overlap. The pronouns that index participant roles are analysed in detail and the potential ambiguity of reference

within each pronoun recognised. For each pronoun that indexes the participant framework of the CoPs, the potential referents are isolated and a matrix of reference proposed. Each pronoun is tagged and quantitative and qualitative analyses that illustrate the relationship between the participant framework and the contexts of the CoPs presented.

## 6.1 Context

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, Heritage (1984) has suggested that interaction is both context-shaped and context-renewing. While it has been observed that context is a crucial, albeit elusive, notion that it may not ever be possible to achieve definitional consensus on, this is ‘not a situation that necessarily requires a remedy’ (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 2), and it may well be in the exploration of the what we mean by context that real insights are arrived at. Goodwin and Duranti (*ibid*: 3) suggest that context is a frame (cf. Goffman, 1974) that surrounds the event under analysis (in this case spoken interaction in meetings) and ‘provides resources for its appropriate interpretation’ (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 3). They suggest that it is important that any description of context is approached from the point of view of:

1. the perspective(s) of the participant(s) operating in the ‘social and psychological world’ (Ochs, 1979: 1) within which they find themselves embedded;
2. an appreciation of the activities that participants use to ‘constitute the culturally and historically organised social worlds they inhabit’ (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 5);
3. the fact that participants experience a multiplicity of contexts, and these contexts are not stable but ‘are capable of rapid and dynamic change’ (*ibid.*).

It is clear that adequately recording all these dimensions of context in our ‘frozen’ data is unrealistic at best. However, Rühlemann (2007: 59) suggests a key aspect of situational context, *setting*, or the ‘social and spatial context within which talk occurs’ (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 5), which can be explored through person, place and time *deixis*. Levinson, in fact, suggests that the ‘*single* most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of the

languages themselves, is through the phenomenon of deixis' (1983: 54, my italics). The phenomenon of deixis serves as a constant reminder to us that language can only be interpreted within its context of use, moreover, as Hanks observes, '...deixis links language to context in distinguishable ways, the better we understand it, the more we know about context' (1992: 48).

## 6.2 Referential practice: Deixis

Much of the literature on referential practices stems from the philosophy of language and linguistic anthropology disciplines, and therefore some of the various terms used for the language phenomena described in this chapter – *indexicality*, *deixis*, *shifters* – can at times overlap, or have wholly separate conceptual resonance (see Fludernik, 1991 for a discussion of distinctions between shifters and deixis). Linguistic items such as *here* and *now* have been glossed as *shifters* or *indexicals*, which depend for meaning on the interactional context in which they are uttered (Jespersen, 1977 [1924]; Jakobson, 1971 [1957]; Silverstein, 1976). De Fina *et al.* (2006: 4) categorize indexicality as connecting '...utterances to extra-linguistic reality via the ability of linguistic signs to point to aspects of the social context.' Levinson (2004) suggests that the term *deixis* has become associated with linguistics, whilst *indexicality* has become linked with philosophy of language. However, he does distinguish them by describing indexicality as 'the broader phenomena of contextual dependency' and deixis as the 'linguistically relevant aspects of indexicality' (*ibid.*: 97). Hanks notes how, traditionally, the term *deictic* 'designates (roughly) linguistic elements which specify the identity or placement in space or time of individuated objects relative to the participants in a verbal interaction' (1990: 5). Green defines deixis as 'that phenomenon whereby the tripartite relationship between the linguistic system, the encoder's subjectivity and contextual factors is foregrounded grammatically or lexically' (1995: 11), the typical linguistic expressions of the spatio-temporal context are demonstratives, first- and second-person pronouns, tense markers, adverbs of time and space and motion verbs (Huang, 2007: 132).

In his series of lectures on deixis in 1971, Fillmore cites a number of examples of individual sentences that have been dissected by such notable linguists as Sapir ('The farmer kills the duckling') and Chomsky ('Sincerity may frighten the boy') in order to highlight their grammatical and semantic properties (1997 [1971]: 7). Whilst the type

of information a linguist may derive from these sentences may be potentially quite intricate, interpreting them in the abstract takes no account of how the sentence can be actually used and understood, or the role it may play in the ongoing conversation (*ibid*: 8). There is no consideration of what Rommetveit (1968: 185) calls *deictic anchorage*, or how deictic items reflect the embeddedness of an utterance in a situation (*ibid*: 88).<sup>25</sup> In his (1997 [1971]: 63) discussion of deictic terms such as *here* and *there*, Fillmore points out that the referents can be used in one of three different ways and he calls these *gestural*, *symbolic* and *anaphoric*. The following examples make clear the distinction with reference to the word *there*:

1. I want you to put it *there* (gestural)
2. Is Johnny *there*? (symbolic)
3. I drove the car to the parking lot and left it *there* (anaphoric)

Given the origin of the word deixis (*deiktikos* ‘apt for pointing with the finger’), Lyons has suggested that deixis ‘at its purest’ is ‘where the utterance is accompanied by some sort of extra-linguistic gesture’ (1973: 10), as in Fillmore’s first example above. With this in mind, Hindmarsh and Heath (2000) analyse the type of gestures that accompany deictic reference in a technological environment which requires speakers to refer to a complex, and continually changing, range of objects on screens and in documents. As the data under analysis in this study is audio-recorded spoken interaction, this type of multi-modal interpretation is not possible. However, what Fillmore calls the *symbolic* meaning of deictic referents can be analysed, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Rauh’s (1983: 9) starting point for her discussion of deixis is the idea that deictic expressions are dependent upon or related primarily to the situation of the encoder of an utterance.<sup>26</sup> The initiative for constructing meaning lies with the encoder who encodes the message from their own perspective, or ‘centre of orientation’. This draws on original work by Bühler who claims that the deictic field is characterised by this existence of a central point, the origin of co-ordinates, *origo* or point of orientation, which determines the value of the elements and ‘thus the symbolic (lexical) meaning of the deictic expressions in the field’ (1934: 102, cited in Rauh, 1983: 24).

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<sup>25</sup> Fillmore suggests a ‘worst case scenario’ for an ‘unanchored’ sentence: finding a message in a bottle which says ‘Meet me here at noon tomorrow with a stick about this big’ (Fillmore, 1997 [1971]: 60).

<sup>26</sup> Where the encoder of an utterance is the addresser, and the decoder the addressee.

Construction and reconstruction of the encoder's perspective are achieved via deictic expressions, of which pronouns, demonstratives, time adverbs like *now* and *then*, tenses and place adverbs like *here* and *there* are examples. Rauh suggests that deictic dimensions (e.g. local, temporal and personal) are determined by localistic and ego-centric criteria – the encoder relates objects of different kinds to himself (ego-centric), and the identification of these objects are differentiated according to their local domains (localistic). Later work has rejected ego-centrism in linguistic theory (see Jones, 1995), arguing that this view of language, and in this case deictic reference, excises the importance of the addressee or receiver. Carter and McCarthy implicitly include this dialogic aspect of deictic reference in their definition of deixis as a linguistic phenomenon by saying it ‘refers to the way speakers orient themselves *and their listeners*...in relation to the immediate situation of speaking’ (2006: 178; emphasis added). Clarke and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986) see reference as a collaborative process, in that although a speaker may encode a referent, speaker-hearer shared knowledge is a prerequisite for the identification of the referent. Rühlemann (2007: 60) observes that deixis ‘interfaces text and situational context in that deictic items such as *you* or *tonight* are textually realised but understood situationally.’ The situational knowledge the participants in any interaction share is a result of on-going interaction with their context, both linguistically and non-linguistically. Hindmarsh and Heath underline in their study of deictic reference how the production and intelligibility of reference rests upon the activity in which the reference is embedded – ‘referential practices both constitute and are constituted by that activity’ (2000: 1875), and the following case in point<sup>27</sup> exemplifies how extra-linguistic shared knowledge is demonstrated **linguistically**:

**Extract 6.1 [attested]**

...am if the group tutors could meet up with the students for fifteen minutes approximately on **Wednesday Thursday** or **Friday of this week** ... **it's August already**.

Whilst the sense of the extract can be fairly easily construed: the meeting is in McCarthy's (1998: 10) taxonomy concerned with *information provision* in that the

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<sup>27</sup> O'Boyle (2006), personal communication, provided this example of how time reference in a teaching community has a highly contextualised character. It was noted at a weekly meeting of English language teachers in the English department of a university in Ireland.

DoS is outlining the various duties and tasks for the teachers for the coming week. The time deictic references which reflect the interaction as a snapshot of this point in time such as *Wednesday Thursday* or *Friday of this week* are clear and unambiguous (as long as we accept that this meeting took place at a specific point in time). However, the utterance *it's August already* is a deictic reference of a different order. There is a situational significance beyond the spoken text that calls upon a shared knowledge that is not only extra-linguistic, but can *only* be decoded by members of this local community of practice, and, as in the case of the present researcher, by a member of the global community of practice. It is common in many Northern hemisphere English language schools for the summer months, particularly July and August, to be the busiest in terms of student enrolment. Although some of these students may well be on long-term study plans, many more complete two-week or month-long programmes during this time. Therefore, when the DoS invokes this time reference, he is referring to the fact that this particularly busy time is almost over. In order to decode this message detailed background knowledge and contextual information is essential. As Wales (1996: 26) stresses, ‘both speaker[s] and addressee[s] co-operate in the formation of a universe of discourse, based on the assumption of a body of knowledge, held in common to a greater or lesser degree, and bearing some relation to the “real world” “out there”’ – this idea that the discourse creates a discourse world for the interactants harks back to the idea of the discourse community, and how the discourse creates the community (Swales, 1988: 212, see Chapter Three). Exploration of deictic reference can orient the analyst to the points in the discourse where the community is being specifically indexed, and even created, in real time.

### 6.2.1 Dimensions of deixis

In his definition of deixis as the ‘formal properties of utterances which are determined by, and which are interpreted by knowing, certain aspects of the communication act in which the utterances in question can play a role’, Fillmore (1997 [1971]: 61) delineates these known ‘certain aspects’ as:

- 1) the **identity** of the interlocutors in a communication situation;
- 2) the **place/s** in which these interlocutors are located;

- 3) the **time** at which the communication act takes place (encompassing both *encoding* and *decoding* time);
- 4) the **ongoing interaction** in which the utterance has a role;
- 5) the **social relationships** on the part of the participants in the conversation.

The first three make up what Levinson refers to as the ‘traditional categories’ of deixis (1983: 62), and what Rauh (1983: 11) refers to as ‘deictic determination’: *person*, *place* and *time*. Person deixis relates to the encoding of *participant roles* (Levinson, 1983; Wortham, 1996) in an utterance, usually linguistically realised in the use of personal pronouns: the first person is the speaker’s reference to her/his self, the second person as reference to one or more addressees and the third person referencing persons and entities which are neither the speaker nor addressee(s). Place deixis ‘encodes spatial location *relative* to the location of the participants in the speech event’, and is broken down into *proximal* (close to the speaker e.g. *this*, *here*) and *distal* (non-proximal, perhaps close to the addressee, e.g. *that*, *there*). Time deixis is defined as ‘the encoding of temporal points and spans *relative* to the time at which an utterance was spoken (or a written message inscribed)’, and incorporates expressions such as *now*, *then*, *yesterday*, and *this year* as well as the tense used by the speaker (Levinson, 1983: 62).

In addition to these traditional categories, Levinson highlights two other categories which have been posited: *discourse* (or *text*) deixis and *social deixis* (Fillmore’s aspects 4 and 5 above). Discourse/text deixis relates to reference to portions of unfolding discourse in which the utterance is located, and social deixis refers to the encoding of social distinctions relevant to participant roles in the interaction (*ibid.*). Fillmore (1997 [1971]: 61) posits social deixis as an extra dimension to the role-specific category of person deixis, where these social distinctions involve the encoding of social relationships, including degrees of closeness or distance.<sup>28</sup> In French, the pronoun *vous* encodes a degree of respectful distance from the addressee, while *tu* can be used to express closeness socially or emotionally to the addressee, Brown and Gilman (1960) refer to these as pronouns of ‘power and solidarity’. In Spanish, *tú*

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<sup>28</sup> Fillmore considers items such as kin titles, honorifics and name forms as falling within this category.

(informal) and *usted* (formal) encode similar relationships. Although all these relationships can be encoded with one token, *you*, in English, the complexity of the second person pronoun in terms of reference is considerable. These examples taken from the C-MELT corpus illustrate the variety of reference contained in the pronoun *you*:

**Table 6.1: Examples of *you* in C-MELT**

1)	...it would be a really boring conversation if <b>you</b> don't know the past tense...
2)	...I just find it excellent it's kind of when <b>you</b> 're caught for time...
3)	...Joo is a bit lost <\$E> laughs <\\$E> <b>You</b> were saying that guy Joo...
4)	...We can make a copy of that if <b>you</b> like. Video would be interesting...

Examples 1) and 2) are what Tao (1998) calls generic *you* expressions (GYEs), although when the generic *you* is examined from the point of view of the surrounding context, it appears to be quite specific in its reference. In example 1), *you* refers to the generalised student, in 2), the generalised teacher. The third example is a more prototypically deictic use of *you* to refer to a specific addressee, as is 4) which refers to the group of people present in the meeting. R. Lakoff (1974) and Lyons (1977: 677) distinguish one more category of deixis, *emotional* or *empathetic* deixis to describe shifts between *this* and *that* that index emotional closeness or distance, for example, *Get **that** thing out of my sight*.

At this point, it is important to mention the distinction commonly made between deixis and anaphora. Halliday and Hasan (1976) propounded a distinction between two types of reference in a text<sup>29</sup>: *endophoric* and *exophoric*. The category of endophoric reference contains anaphora and cataphora. Anaphora, in Bühler's (1934, cited in Rauh, 1983) terminology, being backward-looking reference, or reference to objects already introduced to the discourse, e.g., *Jane locked the door and then she crossed the road* and cataphora forward-looking reference to objects about to be introduced/referred to, e.g., *The following statement was issued by Jolie's agent....*

<sup>29</sup> Halliday and Hasan define a text as 'any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length that forms a unified whole' (1976: 1).

Anaphora and cataphora are generally not considered deictic, but endophoric, in that their referents are to be found, and are elements which facilitate cohesion, within the text. Obviously, endophoric reference can tell the researcher a lot about what is going on, being negotiated and understood within the boundaries of a text; exophoric reference, on the other hand, indexes the world outside the text and that which is shared by the participants in the interaction. As part of her examination of the ‘rule of implicitness’ that groups<sup>30</sup> appear to follow when referring to aspects of their shared reality, Cutting (1999, 2000) examines non-anaphoric definite references as phenomena that are intertextual and evocative of common knowledge. Definite reference is critically dependent on the group’s mutual knowledge and is therefore an indicator of what the group knows, has in common or has subsumed into its repertoire. For example, when group members are discussing tutorial tasks, the following definite reference is produced:

**Extract 6.2: Sample of non-anaphoric definite reference from Cutting (2000: 55)**

04124	BF	Has anybody done their syntax?
04125	DM	// I did it yesterday.
04126	DM	Oh that’s what I was doing yeah.
04127	BM	// No I haven’t looked at it yet.
04128	BM	Oh you were doing it in <b>the library</b> weren’t you?
04129	BM	You’re well ahead aren’t you.

As the library has not been mentioned before this point, the definite reference indexes the speakers’ shared knowledge. By examining reference and isolating types of referents, Cutting is able to show how changes in degrees of explicitness, such as an increase in implicit reference, are contiguous with increasing knowledge and an indicator of in-group membership (*ibid*: 76).

Deixis is also exophoric in that its reference is related to the extra-linguistic, or situational, context, and can provide us with a way of accessing shared knowledge in the form of the essential *dramatis personae* of the CoPs we consider here. We focus on personal pronoun usage to start to sketch out (and eventually provide a fuller picture of) identity in the CoPs. With regard to pronouns, while first- and second-person pronouns<sup>31</sup> are considered to be prototypically deictic in their basic use, third-person

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<sup>30</sup> In this case, a group of students on an MSc programme at the University of Edinburgh (see also Chapter Two).

<sup>31</sup> Both singular and plural.

pronouns have been considered prototypically non-deictic (Marmaridou, 2000: 73), or prototypically anaphoric (Wales, 1996). However, this does not take into consideration the potential for non-deictic items (such as *she* or *they*, for example) to be used deictically (Huang, 2007: 133; Green, 1995), or that ‘anaphora itself is not a purely grammatical phenomenon’ but relies on discourse for its interpretation (Wales, 1996: 26). Wales suggests that in the interplay of three worlds – ‘the real world, its mental representation and its recreation in the universe of discourse’ – pronouns ‘can be economically used to refer to all three’ (*ibid*: 44). It is this that makes the patterns of pronoun usage in C-MELT such a potentially rich seam in terms of understanding the shared repertoire of the community under analysis.

### **6.3 Person deixis: Pronoun usage and participant roles in C-MELT**

At this point we turn to reference to, and indeed creation of, participant roles in interaction, exemplified here through the phenomenon of person deixis. Pronominal reference, specifically the use of personal pronouns, will be analysed in order to illustrate how the community both conceives of and refers to its identities, institutional and professional, and indexes within these its contextual realities. In terms of the items under analysis, Rühlemann (2007: 64) observes that the term ‘personal pronoun’ may be problematic: for one thing, not all pronouns have a human referent (e.g. *it* or *they* referring to inanimate objects). Not only this, grammarians have typically seen pronouns as having the function of ‘standing for’ or acting as a ‘substitute’ for previously mentioned nouns or noun phrases (Wales, 1996: 1), thus focussing on the anaphoric properties of pronouns rather than their intriguing ‘complexity with regard to personal, social and other deixis’ (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 47). In the present analysis, both the subject and object forms of the personal pronouns *I*, *you* and *we*, or those that refer directly to the pertinent participant roles within the interaction, will be isolated, categorised and analysed. The typically anaphoric item *they* will also be focussed on, given, in this context, its overwhelming reference to students.

We will consider first the relative frequencies of the relevant pronouns: *I/me*, *you*, *he/him*, *she/her*, *we/us* and *they/them* in C-MELT. In their large-scale survey of four distinct registers, conversation, fiction, news and academic prose<sup>32</sup>, Biber *et al.* (1999: 333) note that personal pronouns are more common than other types of pronoun in

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<sup>32</sup> The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English corpus will be referred to as LGSWE.

general, with quite striking differences in the distribution of individual personal pronouns. *I/me* and *you* are most common in the register of conversation, while *he/him* are more common than *she/her* in all registers. Even though *we* is more evenly distributed, it is still more frequent in conversation. Figure 6.1 below illustrates the raw frequencies<sup>33</sup> of the individual personal pronouns in C-MELT.

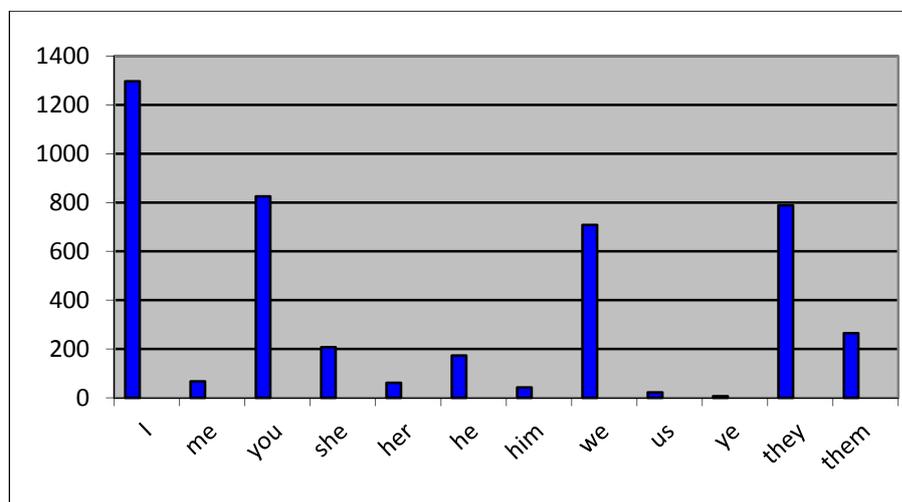


Figure 6.1: Raw frequencies for personal pronouns in C-MELT<sup>34</sup>

While the LGSWE corpus is radically larger than C-MELT corpus, the patterns of personal pronoun distribution are illuminating. In common with the pattern of the much larger corpus, the object pronouns are less frequent than the subject forms, although the feminine forms *she/her* are more frequent than the masculine pronouns *he/him*. The majority of the referents *she/her* and *he/him* were present in the private language school sub-corpus. As the majority of these meetings were concerned with the collaborative task (McCarthy, 1998: 10) of placing the students according to language level/linguistic ability, it is possible that this higher frequency of *she/her* is due to the majority of the school's students being female. As previously mentioned, we focus on personal pronouns in relation to how they encode participant roles in the discourse and thus identities in the CoP.

In relation to the notion of participant roles, Wortham's (1996) reflections on what he calls participant and non-participant deictics, or personal pronouns, are particularly interesting. He highlights how the analysis of these items can provide information about the type of participant roles being enacted by the speakers in the interaction, and

<sup>33</sup> These frequencies were generated by using the Concord function of WordSmith Tools™ (Scott, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Note: *ye* is you-plural form used in Irish English.

thus delineate the interactional framework as a whole. He provides examples of interaction in a ninth-grade history class which illustrate the conflict between the teachers who share the class. This is played out through a scenario in which the class are asked to respond to a hypothetical situation based on their reading of a letter from Cicero to Atticus. During the course of this letter, Cicero considers the tyranny of Julius Caesar and whether he should warn him of the plot to kill him or join the plotters. The first teacher, Mr Smith, supplies the situation:

**Extract 6.3 [Wortham, 1996: 339]**

Maurice let's give a good example, you'll love this  
 Suppose this dictator, me. There was a plot going on.  
 and you found out about it, and you knew it was gonna-  
 it's existing (3.0) among the people you know. Would you tell me (5.0).

When Maurice responds that he would *not* tell Mr Smith (the putative Caesar), Mrs Bailey, the other teacher, asks *would you tell me?* thus distancing herself from her colleague. Mr Smith then refers to himself and Mrs Bailey as *we*, in order to gloss them both as 'dictator', but Mrs Bailey will only refer to him as *he* or *you* – never putting herself with him as *we*. Wortham investigates the entire class and logs the referents of the personal pronouns at each point; in this way he can map the participant deictics. He predicates his methodological technique of *deictic mapping* (uncovering these interactional patterns) on Goffman's (1979) 'footing' metaphor. Goffman explains footing as 'shifts in alignment' between the speaker and hearer(s) where this alignment, '...or stance, or posture, or projected self' and changes in alignment are managed 'in the production or reception of an utterance' (1979: 4-5). Wortham suggests that by examining pronominal choice the interactional footing being enacted by participants is made manifest. Matoesian (1999) also notes this in his examination of the construction of expert identities and shows how these are reflexively embodied. He highlights how the prosecutor and the defendant at a rape trial mobilise specific interactional strategies to contextualise their shifting into and out of expert identities and how participant roles are grammaticalised in sequential action (ibid: 517).

Goffman coined the term 'participant framework' (1979: 11) as a description of the relative footing of participants at any particular point in the interaction. However, this is not to suggest that this is static – the participant framework may change during the interaction (cf. Matoesian, 1999). As Goffman does not go further than providing the general insight that a participant framework exists, others have both elaborated his theory (see O'Keeffe, 2006) and, like Wortham, sought to determine which verbal and

non-verbal cues help the analyst to understand what the tenor of the participant framework in any speech event might be. Wortham states that ‘acculturated individuals’ come to expect standard participation frameworks in given situations – a notion that has resonance both with genre analysis, and, of course, the CoP framework adopted by this study.

In order to explore the significance of the participant roles in the data, and the participant framework they reveal, it is interesting to compare the pronoun frequencies against those found in some broadly similar data. In a study which questions whether spoken Business English (SBE) can be characterised as distinct from other kinds of talk, McCarthy and Handford (2004) include frequency counts for the first forty words of each corpus they use for their analysis: CANBEC (at that time 250,000 words) and extracts of casual conversation and spoken academic English from CANCODE (340,000 words each).<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to compare C-MELT (c. 40,000 words) with these much larger corpora in terms of where pronouns appear in the respective frequency lists. The pronouns are colour-coded in the table in order to emphasise their comparative positions.

**Table 6.2: Comparison of top 25 word forms in C-MELT with CANBEC and CANCODE<sup>36</sup>**

	<b>C-MELT</b>	<b>CANBEC</b>	<b>CANCODE</b>
1.	THE	THE	THE
2.	TO	AND	I
3.	I	TO	YOU
4.	AND	I	AND
5.	YEAH	YOU	YEAH
6.	THAT	A	IT
7.	OF	IT	AT
8.	YOU	YEAH	TO
9.	A	THAT	THAT
10.	IT	OF	OF
11.	WE	WE	MM
12.	THEY	ER	IN
13.	IN	IS	WAS
14.	SO	IN	IT’S
15.	IS	SO	OH
16.	BUT	IT’S	KNOW
17.	HAVE	ERM	ER

<sup>35</sup> CANBEC stands for Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus and CANCODE for Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English. (CANBEC and CANCODE © Cambridge University Press).

<sup>36</sup> Source: McCarthy and Handford (2004: 194).

18.	DO	BUT	THEY
19.	THINK	ON	BUT
20.	BE	FOR	WE
21.	KNOW	KNOW	KNOW
22.	IF	THEY	IS
23.	JUST	BE	LIKE
24.	WHAT	WELL	WELL
25.	FOR	HAVE	HE

Despite the considerable difference in terms of the size of C-MELT in comparison to these corpora, the frequency lists are quite similar. Comparing C-MELT and CANBEC particularly, as both deal with what could most generally be referred to as workplace talk, *we* occurs in the same position, although CANBEC and CANCODE are more similar in relation to the position of *they*. The position of *they* immediately below *we* aptly characterises the C-MELT corpus: reference to the teachers as individuals or a collective (*I, you, we*) is as significant as reference to the students as a collective (*they*). As the principal focus here is on participant roles, for the purpose of analysis the subject and object forms of the pronouns are merged. Thus *I* and *me* will be counted as one item I, *you* and *ye* as YOU, *we* and *us* as WE and *they* and *them* as THEY. Section 6.3.1 describes how these items are tagged in relation to their referential function; we see considerable ambiguity within YOU and WE and the potential of THEY to be ambiguous, although this study represents a special case for THEY in this regard.

*I* does not invariably encode the same sort of ambiguity of these three; nevertheless, it presents an analytical conundrum of its own. As Tao (2003) has pointed out in relation to turn initial items (see Chapter Five), *I* has a marked tendency to appear in semi-lexicalised forms such as *I think*, *I mean* and *I know*. A look at how *I* occurs in three-word clusters illustrates this tendency (see Table 6.3)

**Table 6.3 Three-word clusters *I***

	Cluster	Freq.
1.	<i>I mean I</i>	63
2.	<i>I don't know</i>	58
3.	<i>I think that</i>	45
4.	<i>and I think</i>	29
5.	<i>I think it's</i>	29
6.	<i>I don't think</i>	26
7.	<i>I think I</i>	26
8.	<i>but I think</i>	24

9.	<i>I think we</i>	24
10.	<i>what I mean</i>	20
11.	<i>you know I</i>	19
12.	<i>I don't really</i>	18
13.	<i>I think the</i>	18
14.	<i>know what I</i>	18
15.	<i>because I think</i>	15
16.	<i>I I think</i>	14
17.	<i>I know I</i>	14
18.	<i>yeah I think</i>	14
19.	<i>I I mean</i>	13
20.	<i>I think it</i>	13

*I* encodes the identity of the speaker, though this is by no means exclusively the case (see Extract 6.4), and combines with verbs like *mean* and *think* to create epistemic phrases (Thompson and Mulac, 1991) whose functions merit attention in their own right. We will deal with phrases like *I think* and *I mean* and *you know* in relation to their hedging function in Chapter Seven.

As can be seen in Extract 6.4 below, *I* is not exempt from ambiguity. In turn (6) Peter is not speaking for himself but is ventriloquising (Tannen, 2006; Tannen *et al.*, 2007): that is to say he has shifted into the persona of ‘student’. This is partially humorous but is also intended to make clear for Olivia what he means when he says that the students mix up their vowel sounds and occasionally say *bitch* when what they mean is *beach*.

#### Extract 6.4

##### C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

[HoD is asking teachers to introduce their students to the phonemic alphabet used in their textbook and explicitly teach pronunciation]

- (1) **Peter:** So after hearing ‘bitch’ and ‘tit’ and stuff like that for a lot. We just it just falls like water off a duck you know I mean and until we kind of really get some way of keeping that upfront for them you know.
- (2) **Olivia:** I don’t even believe you heard them say those words did you.
- (3) **Sam:** Yeah.
- (4) **Lucy:** Yeah you do.
- (5) **Olivia:** Oh.
- (6) **Peter:** I’m going to the bitch for the weekend.  
<SE> Laughter <SE>.

In fact, later in the exchange, after Peter’s elucidation of what he means, Olivia responds, *Ah. I thought they were reading*. One of the most important things then is to

follow Wortham's (1996) lead in exploring the referent for the pronouns that index participant roles. The way in which these pronouns are chosen and tagged is described below.

### 6.3.1 Reference tagging of pronouns in C-MELT

Figure 6.2 shows how, when the pronoun cases are conflated, it is clear that a common pattern is interrupted: where usually *I* and *you* appear close together, in C-MELT, *THEY* is equally significant, with *YOU* and *WE* occurring with a lesser, but relatively similar frequency.

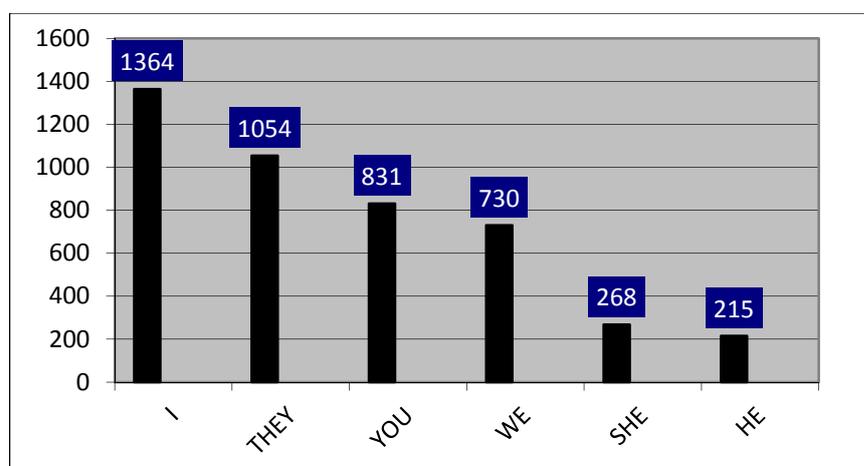


Figure 6.2: Frequencies for merged pronouns in C-MELT

However, with either the raw frequencies or the merged frequencies, we are left with one or two analytical concerns. Firstly, there is the question of how much of the pronoun usage reflects deictic or anaphoric reference to the actors in the community with whom we are concerned: the teachers individually/as a collective and the students individually/as a collective. Secondly, as previously mentioned, it could be intuited that a proportion of the pronoun usage would be tied up in pragmatic markers such as *I think* and *you know*; equally, *THEY* might refer to some object or entity other than the students. With the first question in mind, concordance lines for each item were generated using WordSmith Tools (Scott, 1999). It was obvious from even a preliminary reading of these concordance lines that there were complex layers of reference, particularly within *YOU* and *WE*. These cases were analysed in detail within each of the six meeting transcripts being used in the quantitative analysis, and the specific reference of each was tagged according to the contextual reference which emerged in subsequent, detailed readings. The tagging codes that were applied and their descriptors are detailed in Table 6.4.

**Table 6.4: Tagging codes for WE and YOU**

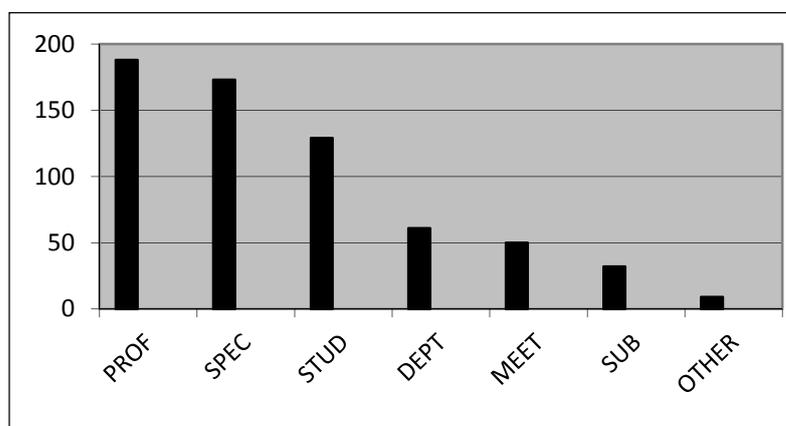
<b>WE</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>YOU</b>	<b>Reference</b>
[PROF]	As professionals, e.g. in the classroom with our students	[PROF]	Generic, impersonal reference to the professional/teacher, e.g. in the classroom with our students
[DEPT]	The teachers as a whole within this department/school	[DEPT]	The teachers in this department/school (can include speaker in generic use or exclude in plural use)
[MEET]	Procedural ‘we’: everyone in this room at this meeting, at this point in time	[MEET]	Generic, impersonal reference to the group of people in the room at this point in time
<b>WE</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>YOU</b>	<b>Reference</b>
[OTHER]	‘We’ indexes some other entity e.g. <i>a bit of both as we say in Ireland</i>	[SPEC]	A specific person, or people, are addressed
		[STUD]	Generic use, where referent is the student e.g. <i>we’ll just say you can do one semester...</i>
		[OTHER]	‘You’ is used to index some other entity or perform another function, e.g. <i>Things like ‘what did you do yesterday?’</i>

A large proportion of the occurrences of *I* consists of *I think, I don’t think, I know, I don’t know* and repetition. In contrast to YOU and WE, *I* was not tagged, as within C-MELT the referent was almost always unambiguous. This is not necessarily true of *I* in general, which may be used with at least as much flexibility as YOU and WE. What is interesting, and will be shown below, is how speakers shift between reference to their individual identities and reference to their stake in the collective identity. As Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris observe, ‘in a professional business setting, negotiating between “I” as an individual and some form of collective identity “we” is an everyday matter involving tactical choices, whether conscious or unconscious’ (1997: 175). When concordance lines for THEY were generated, it was obvious that its primary reference within C-MELT is to the students as a collective. In fact, only 5% of the occurrences index some object or entity apart from the students; 95% of the occurrences unambiguously refer to the students.

## **6.4 Exploring the participant framework in C-MELT**

### **6.4.1 YOU**

*You know* and *you see* were removed from the YOU count, leaving the referential breakdown illustrated in Figure 6.3.



**Figure 6.3: Breakdown of YOU in C-MELT**

The high occurrence of YOU [SPEC] referring to a specific person or people is to be expected, however, where it occurs it is often accompanied with the name/s of the people being addressed to avoid ambiguity, as is shown in Extract 6.5. As there are, on average, ten people, and therefore ten potential individual addressees, present at the meetings at any one time, this is unsurprising.

**Extract 6.5**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

**[Student placement meeting]**

- (1) **Sally:** Well is there room for one more? Yeah will **you** [SPEC] put her up so **Ciarán**.
- (2) **Ciarán:** Okay. Are **you** [SPEC] sure?
- (3) **Sally:** Yeah.

The generic use of YOU is clearly more significant than the specific use; generic you expressions or GYEs (Tao, 1998) account for 66% of YOU. The majority of this ‘generic’ reference is to the teacher as professional, [PROF]. The importance of this *you* in terms of footing can be seen from the extracts (6.6, 6.7 and 6.8) below:

**Extract 6.6**

**C-MELT\_03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Teachers are discussing how many units of the textbook they are all working from they should cover in one semester]**

**Steve:** **You** [PROF] have to be careful not to let the students pull **you** [PROF] down to the level they want to do.

**Extract 6.7****C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Anna is telling the other teachers about the supplementary materials she is compiling and how these materials might be used]**

**Anna:** And then the other thing we [DEPT] have thanks to Samantha is a set of these real ads from a [local] newspaper which will help them with the speaking exam. So **you [PROF]** can practise with your students in pairs and one student can tell the other or **you [PROF] you [PROF]** could tell them if it's about a café please ask questions about a café.

**Extract 6.8****C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Kate is reporting on a pilot course she taught on the previous semester, specifically how she put together a syllabus for the class in the absence of a specific textbook]**

**Kate:** But em <math>\\$=></math> in that <math>\\$=></math> in that kind of respect there was no focus. So the classes developed according to what the students wanted to do and what they needed to do and what as the classes went by what **you [PROF]** could perceive that they needed to do and what they asked for themselves. Basically so they they the course kind of grew as opposed to was there initially.

This use of *you* provides an objective way of describing classroom practices and therefore a professional footing with regard to these practices. In Extract 6.7, this use of *you* provides Anna with a non-threatening, non-patronising way of suggesting how to exploit the supplementary material. In Extract 6.8, Kate is subtly implying that any professional teacher in a similar position would have taken her organic, responsive approach to syllabus planning during the pilot course. With regard to casual conversation, Tao (1998: 25) interprets the generic use of *you* as the speaker inviting the hearer to share his or her own perspective and a way of rendering 'subjective judgements and personal experiences shared knowledge among interlocutors.' In all of these extracts the potential of **YOU [PROF]** to not only invoke but stake out professional shared knowledge, or common ground, is evident, as is, arguably, its potential to mitigate (professional) face-threatening acts (FTAs). Without shifting footing to the generic *you*, Anna's utterances might have been construed as, at best, stating the obvious, and perhaps, at worst, as telling the other teachers how to do their jobs. This would indeed be a bone of contention. Later in this particular meeting, the discussion turns to different ways of introducing the past tense to elementary students. As the group of teachers working together on the classes known as *KET One* have decided to cover a certain number of units of the book, and leave the remainder to the *KET Two* teachers, a problem has arisen with regard to teaching the past simple for the *KET One* group. It is important that they introduce and teach it, but using different

materials to those in the book as the unit which deals with it has been assigned to the *KET Two* course. One teacher objects, saying that the unit in the book is the perfect way to introduce the past simple, and he has always used the book; when the others suggest alternative ways of presenting past simple, he reacts to what he clearly sees as a breaching of the boundary of professional respect behaviour.

**Extract 6.9**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Note: You know is also features in this extract; you know is excluded from YOU and is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Seven]**

- (1) **Anna:** There are lots of different techniques Harry like one of the things I find the students really like is when **you [PROF]** introduce something from real life and **you [PROF]** don't even <\$O23> open the book <\\$O23> and then when they open the book they go 'oh this is what I've been doing' and then you know and with a simple pack with 'evening' 'study'+
- (2) **Harry:** <\$O23> Well nah no <\\$O23> Well I mean you [SPEC] have you [SPEC] have your style at introducing.
- (3) **Anna:** Yeah well.
- (4) **Harry:** And I have my style at introducing m= my material my way of doing it as well.
- (5) **Anna:** Yeah.
- (6) **Harry:** Now am eh if I want to introduce stuff I really like to but then I'll supplement but I don't you know and you [SPEC] like to do it another way.
- (7) **Anna:** Sure.
- (8) **Harry:** Don't you know let me use my style teaching in my class.

There is considerable tension during this exchange; despite Anna's attempt to operate on a professional footing, Harry interprets her message personally. Although the HoD, Peter, does not interrupt the exchange (as Chair of the meeting he might have been expected to intervene in a potential conflict), he does comment on what is at issue:

**Extract 6.10**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[HoD speaking]**

I think there's another issue too that it's not just simple past I mean the chapters are just it was down simple past. I think the thing is that the chapters have a lot of other language too that's important to do. And I think that from our experiences that when **we [PROF]** everybody teaches what they want when they want it's fine for your own group of private students it becomes slightly chaotic then when **we [SUB]** have to do courses together ... Okay so I think the big issue is to try and get them out of the most language as possible to them through them and the more systematically **we [SUB]** do it kind of the better.

In his summary of the discussion, the HoD shifts his footing from I to the collective WE [PROF], and reformulates WE [PROF] as *everybody* in the utterance *everybody teaches what they want when they want* to suggest that it becomes *slightly chaotic* when all the teachers in the sub-group *KET One* teach as individuals rather than attending to their responsibility as members of a professional team. He uses *we* to re-establish collegial footing, and to accentuate the joint nature of the enterprise in which they are engaged. Analysing these shifts in the participant framework illustrates most clearly the value of focussing on person deictics: the mutability of identities in the discourse becomes visible and analysable. WE, I would explicitly argue, is canonical in professional and institutional discourse and the following section will show how its use and flexibility in this domain.

#### 6.4.2 WE

Pennycook (1994: 176) observes of the pronoun *we* that ‘depending on the speaker’s intention, “we” is the only personal pronoun that can (a) be inclusive and exclusive and (b) claim authority and communality at the same time’. It is perhaps not the *only* personal pronoun that possesses these characteristics (viz. YOU in this study), but the dualities are perhaps more immediately obvious with relation to *we*. As with YOU, the specific references of WE were tagged in the data; it should be stressed again that the pronouns were only tagged according to the descriptors detailed in section 6.3.1 after very detailed readings of the data. Figure 6.4 illustrates the breakdown of the uses of WE.

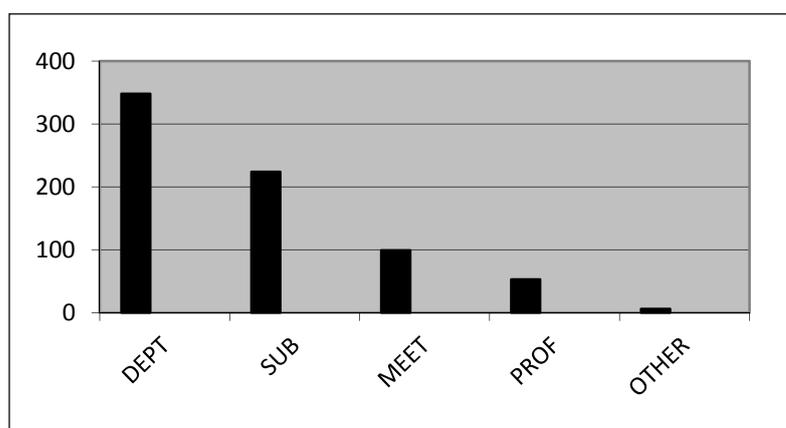


Figure 6.4: Breakdown of WE in C-MELT

The use of the procedural WE or the teachers ‘in this room at this meeting, at this point in time’ can be seen in the two following extracts (6.11 and 6.12); the extracts are from meetings in completely different locations, but exemplify succinctly how this category was distinguished:

**Extract 6.11**

**C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

**[Ciarán is acting Director of Studies and therefore Chair. Opening phase of meeting]**

- (1) **Bríd:** <\$=> Is <\\$=> Are we [MEET] <\$H> started <\\$H>?
- (2) **Sally:** Are we [MEET] starting?
- (3) **Ciarán:** Yeah.

**Extract 6.12**

**C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Opening phase of meeting]**

- (1) **Jenny:** Shall we [MEET] start?  
<\$E> Laughter <\\$E>
- (2) **Barry:** Shall we [MEET]?

The high occurrence of WE [SUB] is due to the assignment of different classes (elementary, pre-intermediate, *PET One*, *KET Two* etc.) to teams or groups of teachers; during the meetings the teachers may have to specifically refer to the group that they are teaching, as in Extracts 6.13 and 6.14:

**Extract 6.13**

**C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**Olivia:** We [SUB] found that with KET it was discussed that em what people had to do to fulfil the requirement was to sit the exam and pass right? And we [SUB] could then give them ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ or whatever...

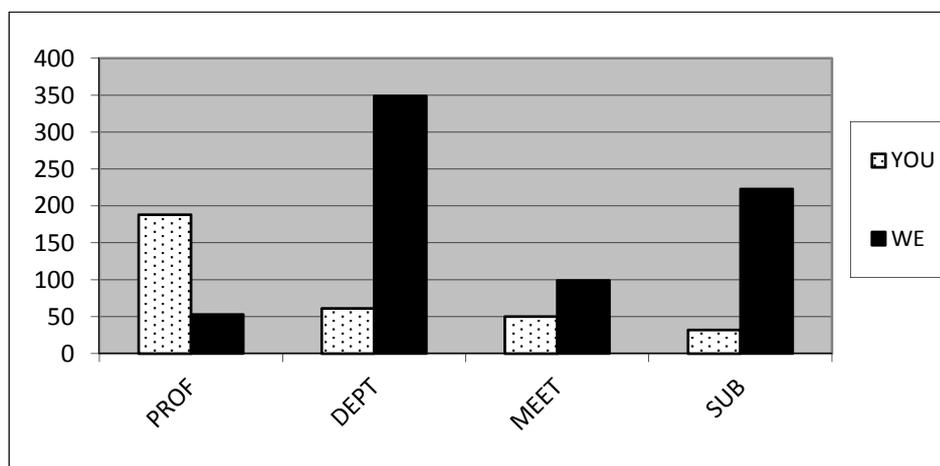
**Extract 6.14**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

**[Chris and Tommy are team-teaching a class, and discuss who will move up/down from this class at a student placement meeting]**

- (1) **Chris:** He’s just not and I think I think Tommy they’re here a long time so I think we [SUB] can hold them for a week.
- (2) **Tommy:** All right.
- (3) **Chris:** Like. They’re six-weekers eh <\$G3> they’re four-weekers. We’ll [SUB] hold them.

The idea of WE ‘as a group of professionals’ is in evidence, but the overwhelming majority of occurrences index the notional category of WE ‘the teachers as a whole in this department/school’. In fact, this use accounts for almost 50% of the total occurrences of WE. If we contrast the categories that YOU and WE have in common (see Figure 6.5), the principal uses of WE in the data become even more explicit:



**Figure 6.5: YOU and WE common categories contrasted**

There is a marked tendency to use YOU [PROF] rather than WE [PROF] as a generic reference to what (it is assumed) that teachers do or should do, can or could do in the classroom. This preference for YOU [PROF] suggests that while it is acceptable to reference the collective procedurally, as one’s institutional colleagues or as part of one’s professional sub-group, referring to frontstage practices is sufficiently face-threatening to warrant the distance that generic YOU [PROF] provides.

In Extract 6.10, the Chair can use WE [PROF] to re-focus the discussion, and it is less risky for him as HoD to invoke the collective, professional WE. However, he also shifts into WE [SUB] to re-establish the idea of the teachers in this sub-group as a collective (positive impact) rather than a group of individuals pursuing their own teaching agendas (negative impact). In the same way, appealing to the collective, and using the inclusive WE [DEPT] is a strategic choice for the Chair of the meeting, or the DoS/HoD. This does not mean that it is only the participants who hold institutional power who are most likely to use WE in this way, as is shown in Extract 6.15.

**Extract 6.15****C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]****[Discussion of why students do not come to class and what the teachers can do to combat this]**

- (1) **Zoe:** But at the end of the day they don't come if they don't come like I mean what are **we [DEPT]** gonna do <\$G?>.
- (2) **Jenny:** No nothing but we're [MEET] looking for why they don't come.
- (3) **Kate:** Yeah I mean maybe **we [DEPT]** can **we [DEPT]** can get some more information now how that would happen I mean I would have a few proposals as to how **we [DEPT]** could get that information what **we [DEPT]** could do with it or whether it would make any difference **we [DEPT]** don't know until **we [DEPT]** have the information until **we [DEPT]** do **we're [DEPT]** just+

In Kate's quite disjointed turn, she is suggesting that they try to discover why students do not come to class, and she has thought about how they would go about this (*I would have a few proposals as to how we [DEPT] could get that information*). The use of WE [DEPT] seems to indicate that the problem itself, as well as the burden of responsibility for its solution, is shared; Kate's shift between I, *I would have a few proposals*, and *we* seems to emphasise that though the proposals are hers, the information will belong to the teachers (and perhaps benefit them) as a collective.

An interesting feature of WE [DEPT] is that it is used in one of the meetings to explicitly build identity, as opposed to referring to shared knowledge and therefore staking out identity obliquely, as can be seen in Extract 6.16 below:

**Extract 6.16****C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]****[Teachers discuss the fact that they cannot take disciplinary action against students who do not come to class]**

- (1) **Jack:** Yes but **we [DEPT]** don't have the power to throw anybody out what I mean is **we [DEPT]** haven't been given that kind of clout **we [DEPT]** don't have that status in the university if they fail calculus they're out if they fail English they just continue.
- (2) **Sam:** Yeah.
- (3) **Jack:** So <\$E> laughs <\\$E> so I think **we [DEPT]** should just accept that our <\$H> horrible <\\$H> lowly status and.  
<\$E> Snort of laughter. General laughter <\\$E>.
- (4) **Barry:** **We're [DEPT]** the poor cousins.
- (5) **Jack:** Yeah and **we [DEPT]** know that.

The identity that is being demarcated is that of the knowing out-group; they may not wield institutional power, but they are aware of their ‘lowly status’. Later, in the same meeting, what they understand WE [DEPT] as indexing is returned to:

**Extract 6.17**

**C-MELT\_02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Barry:** It’s also university policy about attendance which **we’re** [DEPT] not following it’s also university policy about a lot of things which **we** [DEPT] don’t do.
- (2) **Sam:** Yeah.
- (3) **Kate:** **We’re** [DEPT] separate.
- (4) **Sam:** **We’re** [DEPT] part of the [university] too.
- (5) **Barry:** **We** [DEPT] always paint ourselves as separate from the university then.
- (6) **Jack:** Yeah autonomous.
- (7) **Barry:** Subversive.
- (8) **Kate:** An autonomous state.

In contrast to Extract 6.16, the WE that they build is a positive entity; they are a maverick collective, a group within the university which does not follow its policies. In these extracts, we see something that is particular to this group, at this point in time – the overt construction of identity. This identity is explicitly negotiated and defined within the discourse (cf. McCarthy, 1988; see Chapter Five on the negotiation of meaning). This need to define themselves, and their return to the theme of who they are, is, I would suggest, an indication that their CoP is in crisis. Against the background of intractable institutional problems over which they have little or no control, there is the need to seek support within the collective *we*.

As shown in some of the previous extracts, a shift in footing between the individual *I* and the collective WE is very common within individual turns. Within the realm of institutional discourse, these shifts are very often strategic:

**Extract 6.18**

**C-MELT\_03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[HoD is referring to the issue of covering classes if teachers need to go on leave; Antonio is the Vice-President of Academic Affairs]**

Eh about people taking days off eh just **I** want **you** [MEET] to know that personally **I** have absolutely no problem about it taking days off but a lot of the days off **we** [DEPT] get extra days and extension of vacations there **we’re** [DEPT] able to get them they’re not normal

within the university because **I** have a kind of standard agreement with Antonio that **we'll [DEPT]** always cover the classes okay.

It is politic for the HoD to keep the teachers on his side, in general of course, but also because this turn occurs in the opening phase of the meeting. There is a shift from the **I** which indexes his position as the holder of institutional power, and thus the **I** that has the responsibility for delivering a potentially face-threatening message, to **YOU** the teachers present at this meeting, to **WE [DEPT]** as a means of claiming solidarity with the teachers. A rationale for the way that the HoD constructs this turn is discussed in Chapter Seven.

### 6.5 The participant framework: Referencing stakeholders in the CoP

Where **I**, **YOU** and **WE** as first- and second-person pronouns are interpersonal in their use, **THEY**, as an anaphoric reference, has the potential to index any number of groupings of people or things. However, as previously mentioned, 95% of the occurrences of **THEY** refer to the students within the department/school; this is a clear manifestation of the relationship between the context of the discourse and referential patterns. Figure 6.6 below illustrates the total occurrences of *they* and *them* and the proportions of both which refer to the students:

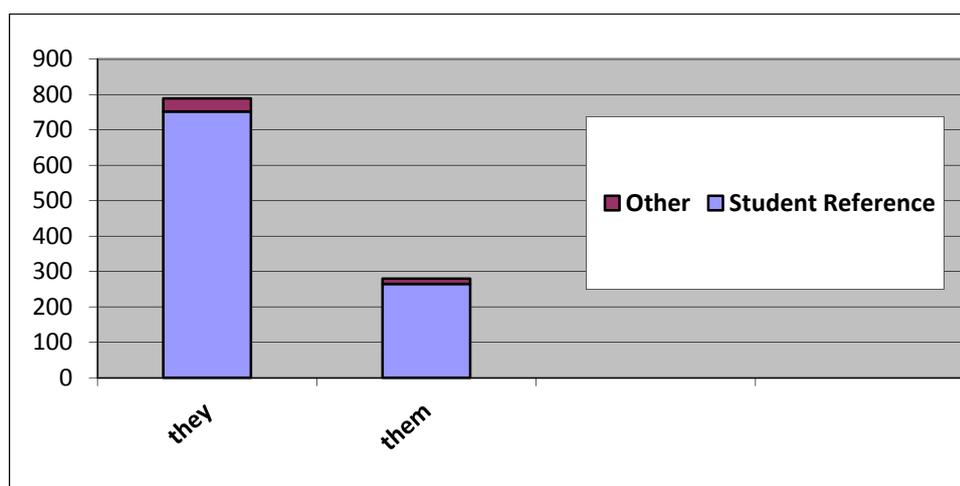


Figure 6.6 Proportion of total occurrences of *they* and *them* which refer to students

The overwhelming proportions which index student reference tell us two things about the CoPs. In a general sense, as mentioned above, the relationship between the context of the interaction and referential patterns within it become clear. Secondly, and more

crucially with regard to characterising the CoP, the key stakeholders in the CoPs' joint enterprises become evident as the participant framework is mapped and explored.

While there are significant complexities with regard to the identity (or entity) that the interpersonal pronouns I, YOU and WE encode; with the exception of 52 occurrences of *they* or *them* which index something/one other than the students, it would appear that the referents of THEY are clear and unambiguous. While in Chapter Five, individual students and the levels and classes they represent are the main content of the meetings, THEY student referents tend to be quite generic in meaning and use. In many cases, the teachers are also talking about how the students are progressing in a class, for example:

- *They're quite good, aren't they?*
- *They're just a weak advanced class*
- *If they're stuck in KET it's more of an aptitude rather than attitude...*
- *They're really eager and they're all learning fast*

If necessary, the group of students referred to as *they* is distinguished if the speaker feels that the reference is not specific enough, for instance, *and I found that they, the prope<sup>37</sup> ones*, or *it's frustrating for the other people like they would be a lot stronger*. Students are occasionally referred to as *people* (see Extract 6.19 below). It would appear that *people* is used, in both the case of the latter sample of individuated reference (*it's frustrating for the other people...*) and the extract below, when aspects of emotion or motivation rather than linguistic ability are being discussed:

**Extract 6.19**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[General discussion is about how many units in the core textbook should be covered in a semester. In order to use the same one for the second semester, everyone should agree and not go beyond these allocated units. The issue of going too slow or going too fast has come up]**

- (1) **Steve:** You [PROF] have to be careful not to let the students pull you [PROF] down to the level **they** want to do.
- (2) **Julia:** Exactly.

---

<sup>37</sup> Prope = propedéutico: Students on preparatory, foundation level courses.

- (3) **Anna:** Yeah **they** can't say the alphabet
- (4) **Olivia:** Yeah.
- (5) **Julia:** Exactly.
- (6) **Anna:** When **they** come in where are you [PROF] going to start?
- (7) **Steve:** Mm.
- (8) **Julia:** I think we [PROF] need to be responsive to the teachers the students sorry. Rather than.
- (9) **Anna:** Yeah the.
- (10) **Julia:** Deciding here how fast or how slow we [SUB] should go. The students I mean obviously **they**'re going to be going slow slowly because **they**'re not studying English they're not very focussed on it or motivated. **So we [SUB] do need to push but however we [PROF] should be responsive to them** I think <\$O15> not sit here and say we [MEET] have to do it in how many hours <\\$O15>.
- (11) **Seán:** <\$O15> I think yeah that's what I'm saying maybe within our context maybe within our context <\\$O15> the speed is okay I don't know but you know there is and I see there are arguments. **But there's the other side of it too that people rise to the level that you [PROF] push them.**

The ways in which the teachers discuss students will be returned to in Chapter Eight, where we see that students, as the out-group for the CoPs of the meetings, are occasionally the butt of jokes as well as clients of the institution the teachers can champion and protect (as does Julia in Extract 6.19 above).

## 6.6 Conclusion

The relationship between context and language illustrated by deictic reference has provided a means whereby the construction of identities in the CoPs could be analysed. After exploring the notion of context in a little more detail, deictic reference and dimensions of deixis were briefly defined and one dimension of deixis isolated, person reference. By mapping the participant deictics (Wortham, 1996), a fuller picture of the matrix of identities in the CoPs, and thus the stakeholders in the CoP's joint enterprise is established. Goffman's notion of *footing* (1979) provides a means of exploring how identities are negotiated on-line and we see how participants shift footing in order to mitigate potential face-threatening acts (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987) and are particularly careful when they are making general statements about what happens in the classroom. We move now to the ways in which participants use particular linguistic strategies to downtone or soften utterances. Orientation to this style of communication illustrates mutual engagement and carries information about how power and solidarity

are encoded in the CoP. We deal specifically with expressions such as *you know*, *I mean* and *I think*.

## Chapter Seven

# Managing and Maintaining the Community I: Hedging and Politeness

*Peter: So I would kind of request like from now on if we could cover the classes as much as possible.*

C-MELT03

## 7. Managing and maintaining the community I: Hedging and politeness

### 7.0 Introduction

In this chapter we will explore in more detail an interactional strategy that frequently co-occurs with the expressions and shifts in footing described in Chapter Six: the phenomenon of hedging. In Chapter Six, we saw the power of discrete linguistic items, personal pronouns, to provide us with evidence of how speakers, perhaps unconsciously, acknowledge the tension between their individual identities and prerogatives and those of the community in which they are operating. The mediation between the two leaves linguistic traces of identity (Richards, 2006) and affords the analyst a tantalising glimpse of the community of practice's 'fingerprint' (Heritage, 2004). Extract 7.1 below perfectly illustrates the interactional strategy and linguistic items we now turn our attention to. Peter, the Head of Department, has just opened the meeting. At meeting openings, as we have observed with Sub-corpus 1 and as is reflected in the literature, the discursive power rests with whoever is responsible for chairing or controlling the meeting (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997). Peter's turn is quite long, so it is broken down in Extract 7.1 in relation to the way that Peter himself 'brackets' it in his use of discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987), *okay*, *right*, *now* and *so*. As the Head of Department (HoD), Peter has to deliver a message to teachers about the way in which they organise their time off.

#### Extract 7.1

##### C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

[Meeting has opened with Peter (supported humorously by Julia) saying that it will have to be brief. Notes: *aviso* = announcement; Antonio is the Vice-President of Academic Affairs]

**Peter:** *Yeah okay.* <\$E> laughter <\\$E>. We'll have to stop in five minutes five minutes <\$E> clears throat <\\$E>. *So just a few quick little avisos as they say in Spanish* and then we'll get down to the main item on the agenda eh where are they oh God.

*Right* eh number one eh one of the eh *this is kind of a general issue by the way* talk to those who are here now. Eh about people taking days off eh *just I want you to know that personally I have absolutely no problem about it taking days off* but a lot of the days off we get extra days and extension of vacations there we're able to get them they're not normal within the university because *I have a kind of standard agreement with Antonio* that we'll always cover the classes okay.

Now over the last month or two that has been quite difficult to do because we were low on staff and am and *I think even besides kind of the thing with Antonio one of the issues we have is trying to get the students to come consistently to classes*. And I that when they don't have classes regularly or over a period or time because even when we naturally can't cover them it's they just get lost *you know* so we have a *kind of a vested interest* in covering their classes ourselves as well as *kind of keeping our em our kind of honesty status kind of high* there with Antonio in time for getting time off.

So *I would kind of request like from now on if we could cover the classes as much as possible. I kind of feel myself that even though sometimes* we can't always do it that just sending them to the lab isn't the most productive way of doing it. Now it is a good way of getting it done <SE> ironically <SE>.

<SE> laughter <SE>.

If we look first of all at the sequential structure of the turn, the purpose of which can best be described as a directive, a number of stages in its production are observable. Most of these stages occur before the directive has been issued and have the cumulative effect of mitigating its force:

1. Introducing the item as merely one of many; it does not take centre-stage in the meeting: ...*just a few little avisos*;
2. Making clear that all teachers, not just those present, are implicated: ...*this is kind of a general issue by the way talk to those who are here now*...;
3. Introduce specific topic: *eh about people taking time off*...;
4. Distancing: ...*just I want you to know that personally I have absolutely no problem about it taking days off*;
5. Providing a rationale for problem: *Now over the last month or two that has been quite difficult to do because we were low on staff*;
6. Issuing a directive: *So I would kind of request like from now on if we could cover the classes as much as possible*.

In Chapter Six, the way in which Peter shifts his discursive footing from the *I* of *personally I have absolutely no problem* to the *we* of *we get extra days off* was highlighted. There is another, complementary, interactional tactic threaded through this turn, here evidenced in extensive use of *kind of* but also items like *I think* and *you know*. These items appear to be semantically empty but on reading between the lines of the message we see how they contribute to marrying the transactional and

propositional content of an utterance to the interactional and relational (applied from McCarthy's 2003 observations of this pattern in relation to interactional response tokens; see Chapter Five). This additional layer in the utterance is particularly important in connection with the message that Peter is communicating, which can be reduced to the following: *If you have to take time off, make sure you cover your classes. This does not mean sending your class to the language laboratory.* Why does the Head of Department choose to communicate his message in this way? I will suggest in this chapter that a number of inter-related phenomena are implicated: power and solidarity, their relationship to linguistic politeness strategies and the creation and maintenance of community norms. Implicated also, and inherent in Extract 7.1, are the existence of (perhaps esoteric) leadership strategies. These are important to acknowledge as sensitivity to, and familiarity with, how power and politeness are navigated in the workplace setting are the prerogatives of workplace leaders (Schnurr *et al.*, 2007). In this respect, the potential for workplace leaders to simultaneously reference and create community norms for the CoP, and highlight the on-line construction/maintenance of the CoP's shared repertoire in terms of the way that members engage with one another, is illuminating.

Where we have tacitly acknowledged the influence of power and solidarity on the interaction of the community in previous analyses, we will now deal with it in greater detail. In order to preface the analysis that follows in this chapter and Chapter Eight, the area of linguistic politeness will be outlined. This will be the major hinge on which illustration and discussion of the phenomenon of hedging in this context will rest. The contribution of discrete items such as *I think*, *I mean*, and *you know* to this conceptualisation of power relations and relational language will be woven through this discussion.

### **7.1 Power in language**

As Thornborrow (2002: 5) points out the concept of power is a 'conceptual can of worms for discourse analysts' in terms of how it is defined in the first place, who can be said to hold it and how it is manifest in language. Non-theoretical conceptualisations of power suggest a quantifiable object that individuals, organisations or nations can have more or less of: *earning power*, *political power*, *military power* amongst other

things. Qualitative evaluations of what power signifies are evident in descriptions of, for example, a ‘powerful speaker’ or ‘powerful emotions’ (*ibid.*). Thornborrow traces theoretical notions of power from Dahl’s (1961) behavioural notion of power as residing in the individual rather than the organisation and observable in terms of its impact on the individual, to Lukes’ (1974) more abstract notion of power as ideological and hegemonic. Bourdieu (1992) conceives of power as ‘symbolic capital’ with certain social practices engendering more value and status than others; people who understand and have access to these practices will therefore have more power than those who do not. The idea of power as practice is evident also in the work of Foucault (1980) who sees power as organic, enacted socially and discursively. The idea that power can be represented in language is critical for all discourse analysts. Moreover, Foucault claims that ‘there are no relations of power without resistances...formed right at the point where power is exercised’ (*ibid.*: 142). Thornborrow (2002: 7) considers how power is instantiated in talk and what discursive resources are available to speakers to enact and resist it. Chapter Eight of the present study considers one way in which power is resisted (amongst other things) in the use of humour and laughter.

Locher (2004: 2-3) compares two classic definitions of power: Weber’s (1947) *macht*, the likelihood that one actor in a social relationship will be able to impose their will regardless of resistance and Brown and Gilman’s (1960) foundational linguistic work on address terms and power, which equates power with the ability of one person to control the behaviour of another. Locher is particularly interested in the inherent relational nature of power that both definitions imply (2004: 3) and goes on to state that power can be a feature of conversations where there is no obvious asymmetry or hierarchy in a relationship, ‘...force, coercion, influence, cajoling or manipulation can occur at all levels, in all speech situations, among people with obvious power differences or equivalences’ (*ibid.*: 9). Power is not necessarily positive or negative, it can be exercised with positive or negative intent, consciously or unconsciously (*ibid.*). Following Wartenburg (1990), Locher distinguishes between *power-over* and *power-to*: where *power-over* is the expression of hierarchical relationships, and is the erstwhile sociological variable, *P*. *Power-to*, on the other hand, is ‘the *ability* an individual *may* (temporarily) possess and use’, of more interest to linguists as they hypothesise the potential power a speaker may have in interaction which is not necessarily related to a speaker’s social or institutional power (Locher, 2004: 11).

Locher (*ibid*: 39) summarises her own propositions on the nature of power and its relationship to discourse in the following checklist:

- ‘Power is (often) expressed through language.
- Power cannot be explained without contextualisation.
- Power is relational, dynamic and contestable.
- The interconnectedness of language and society can also be seen in the display of language and power.’

Fairclough’s (1989, 1992, 1995) approach to the relationship between power and language is based on a three-dimensional framework which links discourse, power and social structures. He stresses how language acts as a carrier for dominant ideologies in society. The notion of ideology is critical, according to Fairclough (1989: 2), as ideologies are indexed in conventions, which in their turn are underpinned by power relations and act as a means of ‘legitimising existing social relations and differences, simply through the recurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving which take these relations and power differences for granted.’ In Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA), therefore, macro-societal structures are implicated in any analysis of an individual text. We return to CDA as an analytical prism in Chapter Eight, with an application of Holmes’ (2000b) theoretical framework for interpreting humour in workplace discourse.

Ng and Bradac (1993) suggest that language has the potential to reveal, create, reflect and obscure/depoliticise power (*ibid*: 190-191) and so the logical question must be: what linguistic choices signal power in language? In order to answer this question a crucial dimension of power and an anomaly in the linguistic construction of power should be noted. The title of Brown and Gilman’s (1960) seminal study on pronominal usage, *The pronouns of power and solidarity*, invoked by Locher (2004) above and cited in Chapter Six of the present study, provides a clue for the first of these concerns: the mutual entailment of power and solidarity. Tannen (1994: 24) suggests that ‘...power and solidarity are bought with the same currency: The same linguistic means can be used to create either or both.’ Therefore, qualitative interpretation must be brought to bear on any identification of power in discourse (Locher, 2004: 36). Holmes

and Stubbe (2003: 5) note an anomaly that is also evident in Extract 7.1: despite the fact that the greater the institutional status a speaker holds, the greater the right they have to express themselves directly and forcefully if they wish, ‘...many workplace interactions provide evidence of mutual respect and concern for the feelings or face needs of others, that is, of politeness.’ There is a huge body of research on politeness, and we will review the salient aspects of it in relation to how power and solidarity are encoded in the workplace context. By considering linguistic politeness, a rationale can be proposed that will explain why Peter chooses to say *so I would kind of request like from now on if we could cover the classes as much as possible* rather than *I want you to arrange cover for your classes from now on*.

## 7.2 Politeness theory

At this juncture, a distinction between two conceptualisations of politeness is essential. Cutting warns that in the field of pragmatics, when politeness is at issue, ‘we do *not* refer to the social rules of behaviour, such as letting people go first through a door... We refer to the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them’ (2002: 44). The way in which Watts *et al.* (2005: 3) have distinguished between first-order and second-order politeness, or politeness<sub>1</sub> and politeness<sub>2</sub>, helps to explain the distinction that Cutting suggests is crucial for the pragmatic consideration of politeness. First-order politeness, politeness<sub>1</sub>, refers to ‘...the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of sociocultural groups’ (*ibid.*) and second-order, or politeness<sub>2</sub>, referring to a scientific, linguistic concept ‘a more technical notion that can only have a value within an overall theory of social interaction’ (*ibid.*: 4-5). In his paper *Perspectives on Politeness*, Fraser (1990) identifies three major views that have informed politeness research, which are represented in brief in Table 7.1 below:

**Table 7.1 Three major trends in linguistic politeness research (based on Fraser, 1990)**

	Category	Brief description
1.	<i>Social-norm view</i>	Analogous to Watts <i>et al.</i> 's (2005) <i>first-order politeness/politeness<sub>1</sub></i> .

2.	<b>Conversation-maxim view</b>	Builds on Gricean pragmatics (1975), in particular the <i>Cooperative Principle</i> (CP). To explain how and why speakers violate Grice's accompanying maxims, Leech (1983) postulates a complementary <i>Politeness Principle</i> (PP).
3.	<b>Face-saving view</b>	The conflict between one's own needs and wishes, specifically <i>face needs</i> , and the face needs and wishes of the addressee creates a polite utterance.

To these Fraser (1990) adds his own perspective, the *conversational-contract view* of politeness, which suggests that parties in interaction enter into a conversational contract: this is determined by internal and external factors; norms evolve within the ecology of the conversation and only deviations from the norms are marked by the speakers. In order to position the analysis presented in this and the following chapter, we will present just these three views (see Eelen (2001), Locher (2004), Watts *et al.* (2005) and Bousfield (2008) for a thorough overview and critique of the field of politeness).

Fraser (1990: 220) presents the social norm view as a conventional view of politeness which assumes that each society has social norms that prescribe (and equally proscribe) certain social behaviour and ways of behaving in particular situations (he refers, for example, to a nineteenth century book on etiquette for ladies). As Held (2005: 133) points out the social norm view of politeness is easily empirically validated by its research vintage and the fact that social norms 'are bound to effect the relevant linguistic system from the outside and thus to leave behind traces in its lexicon and grammar' (*ibid*: 136). Watts (2003) separates this view of politeness, which is culturally relative at best and subjective at worst, from linguistic theories of politeness as does Cutting (2002) above, in order to foreground the linguistic and pragmatic nature of the notion of politeness. While this is the line that is taken in the present study as what we will look at is politeness in action and how it is represented in language, it is worth also acknowledging, as Bousfield (2008: 45) suggests, that nearly all theoretical views on politeness are in some way reliant on social norms.

The origins of the *conversational-maxim* view are interesting from the point of view of what people achieve using words at work, for example, giving instructions or orders, providing information, agreeing and disagreeing with one another. Early work by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) theorised the potential of words to perform acts.

Therefore, utterances can be analysed as embodiments of the speaker's intention to achieve certain purposes. Searlean Speech Act Theory (SAT) focuses particularly on the relationship between direct and indirect speech acts and the concept of *illocutionary force*, or the potential of an utterance to carry communicative force such as 'request', 'promise', 'warning' and so on, is paramount (see Cutting, 2001 for an application of SAT to in-group language). As Taylor and Cameron (1987: 47) state 'Searle assumes that to communicate successfully, speakers must get one another to "recognise what we are trying to do", that is to say, what illocutionary act is being performed/what illocutionary force some utterance possesses'. A major issue for discourse analysts is that it is often not possible to map at discourse level a correlation between linguistic form and utterance meaning and so the notion of illocution provides a useful analytical angle (see Labov and Fanshel, 1977 for example). Eggins and Slade (1997: 40-41) provide a good example of multiple ways of expressing the same meaning: Nick wants to ask David for a cigarette and could do so in any one of the following ways:

- *Can I have a cigarette, David? (modulated interrogative)*
- *Where's the cigarettes, David? (wh- interrogative)*
- *Give me a cigarette, David. (imperative)*
- *I want a cigarette (declarative)*
- *What I'd do for a cigarette! (exclamative)*

Grice (1975) suggests that the relationship between *saying* and *meaning* can be explained by assuming that talk exchanges are not a series of 'disconnected remarks' but are 'cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction' (*ibid*: 45). He posits the *Cooperative Principle* [CP]: the notion that speakers orient to providing appropriate contributions to the ongoing interaction in line with the purpose or direction of the talk. Four maxims underpin this principle and explain why conversation usually runs so efficiently:

<b>Quantity</b>	Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required
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<b>Quality</b>	Do not say what you believe to be false Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
<b>Relation</b>	Be relevant
<b>Manner</b>	Avoid obscurity of expression Avoid ambiguity Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity) Be orderly

(Grice, 1975: 45-46)

If Grice's maxims appear to preclude many utterances, this does not mean that the utterances, or strings of utterances, that do not conform to these maxims do not make sense (or are even nonsensical), simply that the hearer needs to do some interpretive work in order to infer the meaning of the utterance. In other words the hearer has an implicit understanding of *conversational implicature*, or 'how people can understand one another beyond the literal words that are spoken' (Eelen, 2001: 2). Grice assumes that speakers will *violate*, *opt out* of or otherwise *flout* the maxims he proposes and Leech (1983) builds on Grice's CP and posits the *Politeness Principle* [PP] in order to explain *why* this might happen. Within a framework of interpersonal rhetoric [IR], an area that relates the semantic meaning of an utterance with its pragmatic force, or communicative meaning, Leech holds that violations of the CP can be explained with reference to the PP. The PP suggests that one should 'minimise the expression of impolite beliefs and maximise the expression of polite beliefs' (*ibid*: 81). He formulates accompanying maxims for the PP:

<b>Tact maxim:</b>	(a) minimise the cost to <i>other</i> (b) maximise the cost to <i>self</i>
<b>Generosity maxim:</b>	(a) maximise the benefit to <i>other</i> (b) minimise the benefit to <i>self</i>
<b>Approbation maxim:</b>	(a) minimise dispraise of <i>other</i> (b) maximise the dispraise of <i>self</i>
<b>Modesty maxim:</b>	(a) minimise praise of <i>self</i> (b) maximise praise of <i>other</i>
<b>Agreement maxim:</b>	(a) minimise disagreement between <i>self</i> and <i>other</i> (b) maximise agreement between <i>self</i> and <i>other</i>
<b>Sympathy maxim:</b>	(a) minimise antipathy between <i>self</i> and <i>other</i> (b) maximise sympathy between <i>self</i> and <i>other</i>

Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003: 1635) suggest that Leech's maxims all seem to have 'universal valences,' the suggestion being that one pole, the sub-maxims labelled (a) above, are inherently more desirable than the other. Yet, they argue, 'in different cultures, and in different speech contexts within the same culture...different options or points on the continuum could be favoured' (*ibid.*). Bousfield (2008) shares this view and points out a more serious issue with Leech's PP (and by implication Grice's CP): it presupposes that 'politeness is a 'norm' for all speakers across all discourses' and this [Leech's] view:

...in privileging politeness and seeing impoliteness as socially aberrant, ignores the fact that impoliteness, whilst not 'normal' in a lay sense, is nevertheless ubiquitous across and within virtually all modes of human communication and can be quite-prevalent-to-centrally-important in many discourses.

(Bousfield, 2008: 51)

This has resonance both with Harris' (1995: 131) assertion that 'only at the most abstract level is it conceivable to regard 'Cooperation' as a presumptive universal principle of human interaction' (see also Ladegaard, 2009) and with the highly contentious issue of positing the notion that interactants can be said to be pursuing shared goals (see also Chapter Three regarding shared goals and discourse communities).

Arguably the most extensive, expository and commented upon model of politeness is the face-saving theory (Fraser, 1990) or face management (Bousfield, 2008) view of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987).<sup>38</sup> Rather than expand upon Grice and Leech's maxim-based theories, they put forward a theory of politeness that engenders linguistic as well as social psychological and social anthropological aspects (Watts *et al.*, 2005). That is not to say that they do not utilise a Gricean framework, and in fact, they state *ab initio* that they believe the Gricean approach to be 'essentially correct' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 3). They suggest that a great deal of the mismatch between actual utterances and implicatures can be explained by politeness, and emphasise the social functions of language.

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<sup>38</sup> Brown and Levinson originally published their theoretical framework of politeness in 1978 as a paper in E. Goody's *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* and republished it in book form in 1987; all page numbers in this chapter refer to the 1987 publication.

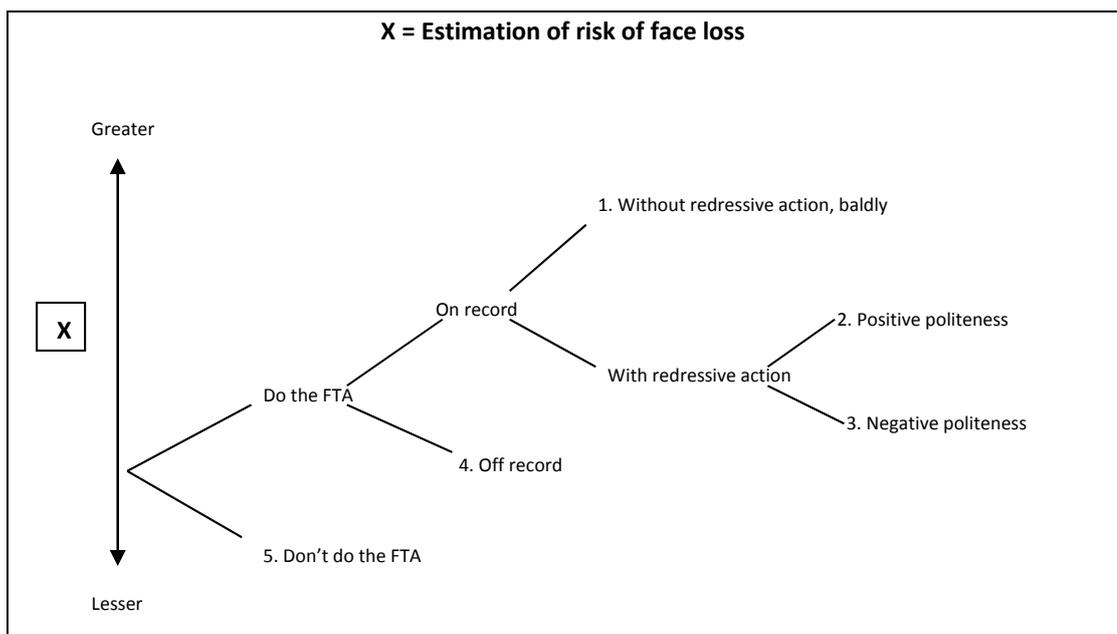
Brown and Levinson's theory, as previously touched upon in Chapter Two, is predicated on Goffman's conceptualisation of *face*, 'the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for himself' (*ibid*: 61). They propose that face has both *positive* and *negative* aspects:

- **negative face**: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and to freedom from imposition.
- **positive face**: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

(*ibid.*)

We also return to the concept of face and face management in Chapter Eight in relation to *professional face*, a construct that is posited as an analytical tool in the consideration of humour.

In order to elaborate aspects of face and politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson (*ibid*: 60) 'play' with the notion of the model person (MP), a being that possesses positive and negative face wants and also, crucially for Brown and Levinson, rationality. At the heart of the Brown and Levinson approach is the idea that certain illocutionary acts (such as requests, suggestions and compliments) can threaten either the positive or negative aspect of another person's face; these are face-threatening acts (FTAs) and they propose five superstrategies to deal with the conflict between producing these FTAs and the need to behave in a way that maintains each other's face (a rational response, hence the importance of rationality) (see Figure 7.1 for a description of these superstrategies).



**Figure 7.1 Possible Strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60)**

A speaker may simply choose not to do the FTA (5). When a speaker decides to go ahead and do the FTA, they can choose to go *on record* or *off record*. On record suggests the least amount of ambiguity, for example, *I promise to be here tomorrow*; this act poses the least threat to the hearer and therefore the choice to go *bald on record* without *redress* (1) is unproblematic. If there is a possibility that the act will pose a greater threat to the hearer's face, then the speaker may choose to go off record (4), or produce an utterance that is so indirect as to engender 'plausible deniability' (Bousfield, 2008: 59). For example, if a speaker says *Damn I'm out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today*, they may mean 'please lend me some money' but as the act is indirect, they have not committed to that and can deny that intent. Brown and Levinson state that by inviting implicatures (cf. Grice, 1975) a speaker can perform off record politeness and suggest a number of strategies such as giving hints, understating (see section 7.3), using metaphors and irony and producing ambiguous utterances. Positive politeness strategies (2) are utilised when the speaker wishes to redress the threat an FTA may have for the hearer's positive face (i.e. their need to be approved) and negative politeness strategies (3) redress threats to the hearer's negative face. Brown and Levinson suggest that three factors influence a speaker's choice of action: power, social distance and the perceived weightiness of the FTA. For example, a professional criticism may be considered particularly weighty and therefore may require a high level of mitigation as we saw in Extract 7.1 where Peter needs to produce a directive

which implies criticism of the teachers in his department and therefore poses a threat to the teachers' positive face. Brown and Levinson identify a range of linguistic micro-strategies to perform positive and negative politeness (see Brown and Levinson, 1987: 101-210) and although it is not expedient to list them all here, one or two realisations of those strategies are relevant to the present study. Positive politeness strategies include: using in-group identity markers such as jargon or in-group language, hedging opinions and deictic shift (though they do not refer to it as such, it is analogous to this phenomenon). Negative politeness strategies include: hedging illocutionary force (including hedging that is encoded in particles such as question tags e.g. *do me a favour, will you?* and hedging addressed to Grice's maxims e.g. *I think*), minimising imposition (e.g. using *just, this is just an e-mail to ask if you received my most recent draft*) and the pluralisation of *you* and *I*.

As previously mentioned, Brown and Levinson's treatise on politeness has generated vast swathes of academic text, much of which takes issue with some of its most fundamental assertions. One of the most fundamental is the assumption that interaction is always cooperative. Many commentators have noted that the assumption that speakers address themselves to systematically avoiding FTAs does not take account of the occasions when speakers quite deliberately produce utterances designed to be offensive (Austin, 1990; Culpeper, 1996, 2005; Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Bousfield, 2008). This is a significant criticism and one that has led to the re-glossing of the linguistic area of enquiry as *(im)politeness*. Austin (1990) adds what she calls face attack acts (FAAs), these acts are harmful to either the hearer's positive or negative face and are introduced into the interaction where they could potentially have been avoided. FAAs are understood by the hearer to have been intended to offend. Mills (2002, 2003, 2009) believes that politeness should not just be viewed at utterance level but at discursal and cultural level, with certain caveats. Ide (1989), Gu (1990), de Kadt (1998), J. Flowerdew (1999) and Pizziconi (2003) amongst others, have criticised Brown and Levinson from a cultural perspective, arguing that different cultures have different social norms and a pan-cultural theory of politeness is inherently flawed.

Two more observations are apposite in relation to politeness strategies in C-MELT. The first comes from Locher (2004) who sees the pro-social aspect of politeness, that is to say the creation and maintenance of mutual civility to positive ends, as largely

neglected but nevertheless important. This pro-social aspect is in contrast to what Watts (1989, 2003) calls polite behaviour, a marked surplus (see also Kasper, 1990) in linguistic behaviour that is designed to enhance our social image for our own ends. Locher's view of politeness is that it is conscious, marked behaviour which simultaneously displays positive relational work (2004: 90). Ultimately, she defines politeness in an inherently relational, bi-directional way, from the point of view of the speaker but also from the point of view of the addressee:

Politeness for the speaker:

A polite utterance is a speaker's intended, marked and appropriate behaviour which displays face concern; the motivation for it lies in the possibly, but not necessarily, egocentric desire of the speaker to show positive concern for the addressees and/or to respect the addressees' and the speaker's own need for independence.

Politeness for the addressee:

Addressees will interpret an utterance as polite when it is perceived as appropriate and marked; the reason for this is understood as the speaker's intention to show positive concern for the addressees' face and/or the speaker's intention to protect his or her own face needs.

(Locher, 2004: 91)

An important angle on politeness is one that is particularly pursued by Mills, who underlines the crucial role that the concept of the community of practice (CoP) can perform in relation to understanding linguistic politeness. Mills' work is principally in the area of gender in discourse, but the way in which she champions the rejection of 'disembodied, abstract analyses' (2002: 77) of politeness by placing its interpretation within its CoP is fundamental to the present study:

...thus, politeness should be seen as a set of strategies or verbal habits which someone sets as a norm for themselves or which others judge as the norm for them, as well as being a socially constructed norm within particular communities of practice.

(*ibid.*)

The importance of interpreting politeness in the context of the community takes precedence in the present study and is intended to provide a level of coherence for the analyses that follow. We turn now to a distinctive politeness strategy within the meetings in C-MELT, hedging (defined in section 7.3), and the ways in which it is linguistically realised along with qualitative interpretations of its purpose.

### 7.3 Hedging

The term ‘hedge’ is widely acknowledged to have been coined by G. Lakoff (1972, 1973), who defined hedges as ‘words whose meaning serves to make something fuzzier or less fuzzy’ (1973: 471).<sup>39</sup> G. Lakoff had been stimulated by psychological research on perceptions of prototypical category membership (Heider, 1971) and fuzzy set theory (Zadeh, 1965). What he observed to be underpinning both was the idea that in a set, or perceptions of a species in Heider’s work, membership is ‘not a yes-or-no matter but rather a matter of degree’ (G. Lakoff, 1973: 460). He lists over sixty words that have this property of making something ‘more or less fuzzy’, including *sort of* and *kind of*, *loosely speaking*, *strictly speaking*, *actually*, *really* and *par excellence*, and shows how hedges do not just reveal degrees of category membership but also subtleties in meaning. For example, he shows how the (American English) hedge *regular* can highlight certain metaphorical properties of a category (*ibid.*: 474):

- (a) Sarah is a spinster.
- (b) Sarah is a regular spinster.

(a) is a statement of Sarah’s marital status. In (b), while Sarah may or may not be unmarried, the use of *regular* suggests that she has certain characteristics of the category ‘spinster’: perhaps she is ‘prissy and disdains sexual activity’ (*ibid.*). These sample sentences (as well as being amusingly anachronistic to contemporary eyes) are indicative of how hedges can carry connotations of semantic meaning.

Prince *et al.* (1982: 85), in a discussion of hedging in physician-physician discourse, distinguish between two classes of hedges: one that creates fuzziness within the propositional content of the statement, or what the utterance is ‘about’, and another which marks fuzziness in the speaker’s commitment to the proposition. To illustrate this, they use the following invented sentences (*ibid.*):

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<sup>39</sup> G. Lakoff’s article, ‘Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts,’ appeared in 1972 (in *Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society 1972*, pp.183-228) and was reprinted in 1973 in the *Journal of Philosophical Logic*. All page numbers refer to the 1973 reprint.

- {(a) His feet were blue. (The speaker knows his feet were blue)  
 {(b) His feet were *sort of* blue. (His feet were non-prototypically blue)

Prince *et al.* suggest that although in (a) and (b) the propositional content varies, in both cases the speaker is committed to this propositional content. However, although (c), below, is closer in propositional content to (a), the level of speaker commitment is quite different.

(c) *I think* his feet were blue.

Therefore, hedges like *sort of* (cf. G. Lakoff, 1973) are considered *Approximators* while hedges like *I think* are dubbed *Shields* (Prince *et al.*, 1982: 86) and both are distinguished thus:

Approximators contribute to the semantics by indicating some markedness, i.e., non-prototypicalness with respect to class membership, while Shields affect the pragmatics by inducing implicatures conveying markedness with regard to speaker commitment.

*(ibid.)*

There is clearly a Gricean thrust to this inducement, or ‘invitation’ (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987) to implicature and it is certainly this manifest potential of hedging behaviour that is particularly interesting in the workplace context.

Hübler’s (1983) work on hedges and understatements classed them separately but suggested an overlap with regard to their purpose in that he considered them ‘two manipulative non-direct sentence strategies of saying less than one means’ with the aim of making ‘...sentences more acceptable and thus to increase their chance of ratification by the hearer’ (p. 23). Markkanen and Schröder (1997: 5) seize upon the taxonomical similarities between Prince *et al.*’s (1982) and Hübler’s (1983) work: what Prince *et al.* consider approximation, Hübler sees as an understatement (for example, Hübler’s *it’s a bit cold in here*) and Prince *et al.*’s shields correspond to Hübler’s notion of a hedge (for example, *it’s cold in here, I suppose*). Markkanen and Schröder (1997) echo Skelton’s (1988) questioning of the value of creating such divisions.

Aijmer (1986: 1) focuses on the discourse functions that hedges can perform based on examples from the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English (LLC) and asserts that ‘aspects of the communication situation such as the social context in which they are uttered and the surface form in which the message is presented may be in “focus” and affect the interpretation of the hedge’ (*ibid.*). She considers hedges from the point of view of not only their lexical form and position in an utterance, e.g. whether they are providing a prospective or retrospective comment on a message (*ibid.*: 14), but also on the level of speaker-listener involvement. According to Schröder and Zimmer (1997: 249):

A hedge is either defined as one or more lexico-syntactical elements that are used to modify a proposition, or else, as a strategy that modifies a proposition. The term ‘hedging’ is used to refer to the textual strategies of using linguistic means as hedges in a certain context for specific communicative purposes, such as politeness, vagueness, mitigation, etc.

Orientation to *hedging* as a communicative/interactive feature of language is evident in the range of linguistic and paralinguistic strategies that Carter and McCarthy (2006: *passim*) illustrate as performing hedging functions, or as they put it expressing ‘degrees of assertiveness’ (*ibid.*: 223). They class hedging within the category of pragmatic markers, items which mark speakers’ personal feelings and attitudes, and highlight how hedging can be performed grammatically in the use of modal verbs (*can, could, will, would* etc.) or syntactically in the use of, for example, negation (*you don’t have Jane Carey’s email address by any chance?*). They also show how different genres can have quite ritualised hedging traditions, for example the use of impersonal constructions such as *Literature, it is claimed, seeks to recapture and reconstruct tradition* in academic English (*ibid.*: 283). O’Keeffe *et al.* (2007: 175) provide a very useful overview of forms of hedging (see Table 7.2 below).

**Table 7.2 Summary of the most common forms of hedges (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007: 175)<sup>40</sup>**

Form	Example
<b>Modal verbs and verbs with modal meaning</b> e.g. <i>believe, feel, guess, imagine, reckon, suppose, think</i> , especially when used with the pronoun <i>I</i>	<i>I guess the bus service isn’t too good, is it?</i>
<b>Nouns</b>	<i>There is a possibility, the thing is, etc.</i>

<sup>40</sup> Examples in this table are taken from LCIE (the Limerick Corpus of Irish English) (Farr *et al.*, 2002).

<p><b>Adverbs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree adverbs</li> <li>• Restrictive adverbs</li> <li>• Stance adverbs</li> </ul>	<p><i>Quite, really, relatively, necessarily</i></p> <p><i>Just, only</i></p> <p><i>Of course, actually, kind of, sort of, really, maybe</i></p>
<p><b>Syntactic choices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice of question form</li> <li>• Double negative</li> <li>• Evaluative relative clause insertion</li> </ul>	<p><i>And <b>would you have thought you were</b> very close to him?</i> [as opposed to: <i>And <b>were you</b> very close to him?</i>]</p> <p><i>It's not that I'm not afraid ... vs I am afraid</i></p> <p><i>You got them to do this cross-group reporting <b>which was a good idea</b> but the time was the problem</i></p>
<p><b>Features of 'onlineness'</b> Adjustments (false starts, repetitions etc.)</p>	<p><i>And <b>will you would you</b> like to go <b>sort of</b> on a sun and sea holiday with him this year?</i></p>

The interface between semantics and pragmatics is appreciably present in the phenomenon of hedging and its politeness role is evident in how hedges are classed as functioning: as *downtoners* or *mitigators*, 'they *downtone* the force of an utterance and they *mitigate* any potential threat to face' (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007: 174) through their gradation of degrees of assertiveness (Carter and McCarthy, 2006). O'Keeffe *et al.* also assert that hedging is very much relative to the discourse context (2007: 174). Farr *et al.* (2002) illustrate this very convincingly in their comparison of hedging items across the contextual cells of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE). The findings for this study is described in more detail in section 7.3.1 and the quantitative method and findings are compared against C-MELT.

### 7.3.1 Hedging and context

Farr *et al.* (2002) isolate hedging items by scanning the single-word frequency list (see Appendix B for C-MELT's 100 most frequent items wordlist) and generating and

scanning a two-word cluster wordlist which yielded the most frequent two-word chunks. Farr *et al.* identified clausal items such as *I think* and *you know*, degree adverbs such as *really*, restrictive adverbs such as *just* and stance adverbials such as *actually*, *kind of* and *sort of*. Farr *et al.*'s study is primarily quantitative and so an explanation of the functions of the two-word and single-word hedges is not essayed; however, they do provide compelling evidence of the influence of genre on the occurrence of hedging items. Their methodology was followed for the present study in order to isolate the items with the potential to hedge in C-MELT; quite apart from the value of comparison, the Farr *et al.* study illustrates powerfully how interpreting corpora results requires the blending of quantitative methods with analysts' insight.

Based on the Farr *et al.* (2002) methodology, the single-word frequency list was scanned for the single-word items they identify; a comparison of the rank positions of these items is presented in Table 7.3 below.

**Table 7.3 Comparison of LCIE and C-MELT rankings for single-word hedging items**

<b>Hedging item</b>	<b>LCIE Rank</b>	<b>CMELT Rank</b>
<i>LIKE</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>KNOW</i>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>JUST</i>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>THINK</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>REALLY</i>	<b>83</b>	<b>66</b>
<i>KIND</i>	<b>91</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>ACTUALLY</i>	<b>97</b>	<b>52</b>
<i>PROBABLY</i>	<b>176</b>	<b>150</b>
<i>SUPPOSE</i>	<b>200</b>	<b>297</b>
<i>SORT</i>	<b>204</b>	<b>143</b>

Although LCIE is much larger than C-MELT there are some ranking similarities: *know*, *just* and *probably* are quite similar in position. There is a much larger disparity between *like*, *think* and *actually*, for example. After generating a two-word chunk wordlist, they identified the following items as having a hedging function: *you know*, *I think*, *kind of*, *a bit*, *I just*, *I suppose* and *sort of*. A two-word chunk list was also generated for C-MELT (see Table 7.4 below) and here is where a very basic ranking comparison provides interesting results. In LCIE, *you know* ranked number 1<sup>41</sup> and *I think* ranks at number 7. In C-MELT, *I think* and *you know* occur at 1 and 2

<sup>41</sup> This is also the case with CANCODE whose generic approach to corpus design LCIE follows. See O'Keeffe *et al.* (2007: 65) for the top twenty two-word chunks in CANCODE.

respectively; this appears to suggest a special relationship between the discourse domain and the type of hedging that occurs.

**Table 7.4 Top 20 two-word chunks in C-MELT**

N	Word	Freq.	%
1	<i>I THINK</i>	277	0.69
2	<i>YOU KNOW</i>	191	0.48
3	<i>I MEAN</i>	170	0.43
4	<i>KIND OF</i>	157	0.39
5	<i>OF THE</i>	119	0.3
6	<i>TO DO</i>	117	0.29
7	<i>GOING TO</i>	116	0.29
8	<i>HAVE TO</i>	113	0.28
9	<i>I DON'T</i>	98	0.25
10	<i>IN THE</i>	97	0.24
11	<i>AND THEN</i>	91	0.23
12	<i>TO BE</i>	81	0.2
13	<i>AND I</i>	77	0.19
14	<i>IF YOU</i>	74	0.19
15	<i>THE STUDENTS</i>	74	0.19
16	<i>WANT TO</i>	70	0.18
17	<i>AT THE</i>	64	0.16
18	<i>WOULD BE</i>	63	0.16
19	<i>BUT I</i>	62	0.16
20	<i>DO YOU</i>	60	0.15

As can also be seen in Table 7.4, the first four two-word chunks are actually hedging items, suggesting that hedging is an important feature in C-MELT and perhaps workplace discourse in general. This is consistent with Farr *et al.*'s findings which illustrate that the more institutionalised the situation, the higher the frequency of hedging items (2002: 18).

Combining the single- and two-word hedging items resulted in the following ranking of the top ten items with the potential to hedge in C-MELT and these are illustrated in Table 7.5 below. We distinguish here that the items have the *potential* to hedge as many of the items, particularly *just* and *like* have multiple grammatical, semantic and pragmatic functions. For example, Lee (1991) notes the polysemic nature of the item *just* and classifies it as having a *specificatory*, *depreciatory* and *emphatic* meaning. The specificatory meaning, e.g., *he left just before midnight*, contributes to the propositional meaning of the sentence; the *depreciatory* meaning of *just*, e.g., in answer to the question *why didn't you buy it? I just didn't like it*, indicates where it is

used to convey speaker attitude. Lee (1987) also observed this use of *just* to downtone or minimise descriptions of symptoms by patients in doctor-patient interaction. The emphatic *just*, e.g., *she just terrifies her students*, appears to perform an antithetical function to the depreciatory *just* in the way it intensifies the statement. Where *just* was used with a broadly specificatory or emphatic function, it was excluded from the hedging category. There were a number of ambiguous uses that were also excluded, for example when a truncated utterance ended in *just*, it was not always possible to ascribe a hedging function to it (*No it was just./...it was teacher's discretion and with KET it was just.*).

*Kind of* and *sort of* were conflated following Stubbe and Holmes (1995) as in C-MELT they are virtually interchangeable. *Kind of* (157 occurrences) is used more than *sort of* (44), a pattern in LCIE as well: *kind* ranked at 91 in the single-word list, whereas *sort* was significantly lower at 204. However, in the top twenty two-word chunks in CANCODE (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007: 65), a preference for *sort of* appears to be manifest instead. Yaguchi *et al.* (2004: 63) note a preference for *kind of* in American English. This is very evident in the Cambridge International Corpus, where *sort of* and *kind of* occupy almost identical positions in the frequency list, each to the exclusion of the other (McCarthy, 2009: personal communication).

**Table 7.5 Top 10 items with the potential to hedge in C-MELT**

Rank	Item	Frequency
1	<i>just</i>	294
2	<i>I think</i>	277
3	<i>like</i>	208
4	<i>kind of/sort of</i>	201
5	<i>you know</i>	194
6	<i>really</i>	121
7	<i>actually</i>	52
8	<i>probably</i>	46
9	<i>a bit</i>	28
10	<i>I suppose</i>	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1439</b>

As the first five hedging items account for over 80% of all potential hedges, it was decided to focus on these in terms of quantitative analysis. Concordances were generated for each of these five hedging items in order to verify that each item was, in fact, being used as to hedge an utterance. Fortunately, the size of the C-MELT corpus



with service encounters, the family, radio phone-in and teacher training feedback contextual cells. There is no doubt that C-MELT not only follows the pattern they describe but displays a higher total of hedges overall (see Table 7.6 below).

**Table 7.6 LCIE contextual cells and C-MELT compared: Occurrences of *I think* and *you know*<sup>42</sup>**

	LCIE Service Encounter	LCIE Family	LCIE Radio Phone- in	LCIE Teacher Training Feedback	C-MELT
<i>I THINK</i>	97	1500	3582	4405	6925
<i>YOU KNOW</i>	403	2083	5724	3190	4175
<b>Totals</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>3583</b>	<b>9346</b>	<b>7595</b>	<b>11100</b>

There is another interesting, perhaps not immediately obvious, pattern emerging. In the family, service encounters and radio phone-in cells, *you know* is more frequent than *I think*. Yet, in both the teacher training feedback cell and C-MELT, *I think* is more frequent than *you know*. O’Keeffe (2003, 2006) has described radio phone-in as *pseudo-intimate*, in that a range of strategies which reduce or redress the physical distance and power differential between the caller and the presenter are employed. This may explain why radio phone-in patterns are closer to the most intimate of the contexts, family discourse. Farr *et al.* (2002) suggest that for service encounters there is a pre-existing social schema and an accompanying ritualisation of roles that precludes the need to attend to or protect face in these encounters, hence the least amount of hedging is required. This frames very well the issue of choice and interpersonal functions of the hedging items that occur in C-MELT. We will now look in more detail at the functions of the hedging in C-MELT, what it illustrates about its context, and how these functions are closely linked to politeness strategies. We take the position that all hedging is related to (im)politeness strategies and what will be illuminating is the reason that these strategies are pursued.

#### **7.4 Hedging and the CoP: *You know, I think and I mean***

We will look now particularly at *you know, I think and I mean* in their context of use and use samples from the corpus to underline their interpersonal, pragmatic function

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<sup>42</sup> Normalised per million words.

as politeness strategies in the community of practice. Aijmer (2004: 177) classes *you know* and *I think* (along with *sort of*, *actually* and *and that sort of thing*) as expressions ‘which have the function of checking that the participants are on the same wavelength’ amongst other things. In a study that considers *you know*, *I mean/think* and *eh* (amongst others), Stubbe and Holmes (1995: 63) refer to all of these as ‘pragmatic devices’ which ‘oil the wheels of verbal interaction’ but from a sociolinguistic point of view may be associated with negative stereotypes. They point out that *eh* in New Zealand English is often considered negatively as it is associated with Māori speech and with working class *Pākehā* speech.<sup>43</sup> They acknowledge throughout the ‘polypragmatic’ nature of the devices (Holmes, 1986: 12) and suggest that, at the time of their study, these devices had been relatively neglected as they had been characterised in the past simply as verbal fillers or markers of hesitancy (Brown, 1977) or as hedges marking both hesitancy and uncertainty in the speech of ‘out of power’ groups such as women (R. Lakoff, 1975). These items have a range of both affective and epistemic functions (Stubbe and Holmes, 1995: 63). From an affective point of view, they can fulfil a negative politeness function (for example, to avoid saying something too directly or to temper a potentially controversial statement) as well as a positive politeness function (for example, conveying solidarity or establishing shared understanding). An interesting observation that they make (which harks back to Prince *et al.*’s 1983 taxonomy of hedging) is how the devices they examine can be categorised as either performing a primarily addressee-oriented function as in the case of *you know* or a speaker-oriented function as in the case of *I think*. They link the use of the devices to the level of formality of the speech situation: the lower the level of formality, the higher the incidence of addressee-oriented forms (e.g. *you know*); the higher the degree of formality, the higher the incidence of speaker-oriented (or we might say ‘centred’) forms (e.g. *I think*). This is particularly interesting with relation to the patterns we observed in the comparison of Farr *et al.*’s (2002) empirical findings in relation to LCIE; the more formal situations engendering not only the most hedging, but also seeming to favour *I think* over *you know*.

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<sup>43</sup> *Pākehā* is a Maori word which refers to New Zealanders of European – mainly British – descent and younger speakers from both Ethnic groups.

In order to qualify as a pragmatic device in their study a form had to (1) have a clear interactive function, expressing epistemic modality or affective meaning and (2) function as filler, in that it could be removed from the utterance without affecting meaning or syntactic structure. For example in the case of *you know*, instances which encoded confidence that the hearer shares knowledge, reassuring the hearer of validity of statement or expressing uncertainty regarding either addressee's attitude or the linguistic precision of the message were counted but they excluded uses such as *do you know...?* or the use of *you know* as a lexical verb (*you know Mary, don't you?*) (*ibid*: 69). In C-MELT, there were 194 occurrences of *you know*. These were manually sorted and all cases where *you know* was used as a lexical verb (*you know her the Spanish girl?*), or otherwise part of the syntax of the clause and could not be omitted (e.g. *(do) you know what I mean?*)<sup>44</sup> were removed, leaving 167 occurrences. *(Do) you know what I mean(?)*<sup>44</sup> is an interesting case. There are 11 occurrences in total; it certainly appeals to shared knowledge but is different to the item *you know* both syntactically and the way in which it is used, which is closer to an actual request for ratification of some assumed knowledge. All the occurrences of *(do) you know what I mean(?)* are presented in Figure 7.2 below: where the item occurs at the end of an utterance – (21), (99), (101), (147) and (151) – its function as an explicit request is present in the responses it elicits, such as *I do yeah* or *right*.

N	Concordance
9	or d'you know. Yeah. Yeah. <b>D'you know what I mean</b> before they kind of cheated
21	Hm. Everybody could dress up. <b>You know what I mean.</b> <b>I do yeah</b> well I think the
62	two hundred pesos'. <b>D'you know what I mean</b> like. We decided that that+
89	Laughs. That's mad. <b>You know what I mean.</b> 'I'm just upset'. La
94	we haven't done this let's <b>you know what I mean.</b> So I have like a list of
99	laughter He's not a real Korean <b>you know what I mean.</b> <b>No he's not.</b> Who's that?
101	Pass the KET. Pass the KET. <b>You know what I mean?</b> <b>Yeah.</b> You tell them what
147	be if any one of us use it <b>d'you know what I mean.</b> <b>Yeah. Yeah.</b> And I think
149	he is with grammar. <b>Do you know what I mean?</b> I think he was way ahead
151	just a little bit bored <b>do you know what I mean</b> so. <b>Right.</b> It might be good
175	<b>you know what I mean</b> and my class could be

**Figure 7.2 Concordance lines for *(do) you know what I mean(?)***

One other interesting feature that it is not possible to test further given the size and nature of C-MELT is that *(do) you know what I mean(?)* is used only by Irish-English and British-English speakers in the corpus. The remainder of the occurrences of *you know* performed a hedging function. Figure 7.3 below shows the first twenty concordance lines for *you know* which illustrate the sort of utterances the item hedges:

<sup>44</sup> Where the item had a questioning intonation, it was transcribed with a question mark.

N	Concordance
1	to be pre inter like before you. <b>You know</b> you you
2	all the time. <b>You know</b> I don't like the stud
3	Okay yeah. <b>You know</b> not even makin
4	that was very difficult" <b>you know</b> . But he'll be h
5	rushed job. Yeah. <b>You know</b> getting it through a
6	hey. Oh yeah. <b>You know</b> fill it in.
7	Even simple level yeah. <b>You know</b> . But just in te
8	ght for time. Yeah. <b>You know</b> and if you can just
9	can teach it then as you wish <b>you know</b> . And it's real. I thin
10	hour say from five to six where <b>you know</b> we can get people f
11	KET the KET syllabus as well <b>you know</b> so okay I suppose t
12	post PET courses. Well <b>you know</b> should we be havin
13	or talking to the student well <b>you know</b> do you think you ca
14	t it seems to me that we <b>you know</b> but we didn't we did
15	ay she was good but she was <b>you know</b> she was doing sup
16	f a things for the students too <b>you know</b> that okay we wante
17	hey're in an awful situation too <b>you know</b> . Yeah. If
18	other topics that are there too <b>you know</b> . But that that and t
19	keep those students together <b>you know</b> it may sound like a
20	in that case put it in 'chosed to' <b>you know</b> whereas you wouldn'

Figure 7.3 Sample concordance lines for *you know*

Highlighted in grey are two of the sample utterances that combine both a turn initial item and the hedge (see 12 and 13). *And, well, but* and *so* are the only items that occur over four or five times with *you know* at the beginning of a turn, indicating again, it appears, that the act of taking a turn may occasionally require mitigation. Although in C-MELT, there do not appear to be any striking quantitative patterns for particular items, there is a tendency for the hedging items to cluster together. The concordance lines for *you know* were resorted to highlight items to its left and right in order to test for collocation patterns. Although no one item occurs in collocation with *you know* more than four or five times, the tendency of hedging items and hesitations to cluster is illustrated in Figure 7.4 below.

N	Concordance
78	e there <b>could be</b> <b>sort of</b> <b>you know</b> . Barm br
74	that initial <b>sort of</b> <b>you know</b> the vagueness
75	sh around to <b>kind of</b> <b>you know</b> that chapter o
77	ge whatever <b>kind of</b> <b>you know</b> if it was
86	That they'll have I <b>mean</b> <b>you know</b> what I mean j
87	mhum. It's I <b>mean</b> <b>you know</b> how are you
140	we used to send me <b>em</b> <b>you know</b> . Oh what
141	His work and <b>em</b> <b>you know</b> . So we'll
142	ey would want to do <b>em</b> <b>you know</b> <b>kind of</b> they

Figure 7.4 Sample clusters of hedges and hesitations around *you know*

This tendency for hedges to cluster at utterance level is noted by Aijmer (2004) and Clancy (2007) has suggested that they also cluster at the level of discourse. In order to look at how *you know*, *I think* and *I mean* function in the workplace, we will, where necessary, consider them individually and in terms of what research into their *core* meanings (Jucker, 1993) has turned up but it is important to note that, for the present study at least, we will focus on the relational aspect of hedging in context rather than analyse them from a semantic or grammatical point of view. In addition, the items are presented individually where appropriate but as Aijmer (2004) and Clancy (2007) note above, as they tend to cluster across utterances and turns, it is sometimes necessary to present them together.

Studies of *you know* are numerous (for example, Östman, 1981; Schourup, 1985; Holmes, 1986; Schiffrin, 1987; Huspek, 1989; Stubbe and Holmes, 1995; Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002; Erman, 2001; Macaulay, 2002). As well as considering the function *you know* plays at a pragmatic and discoursal level, the relationship between *you know* and sociolinguistic variables such as age (e.g. Erman, 2001), class (e.g. Huspek, 1989) and gender (e.g. Holmes, 1986) – and sometimes a combination of these (e.g. Macaulay, 2002) – has been suggested. Östman (1981: 16) considers *you know* a hedge that is used for the implicit transmission of meaning, ‘the speaker steps out of his propositional frame, and metacommunicates his attitudes and feelings.’ Its prototypical meaning for Östman is ‘a striving on the part of the speaker to get the addressee to cooperate or accept the propositional content of his utterance’ (*ibid*: 17) whilst (perhaps paradoxically given the terms) implying that the speaker wants to give the addressee a greater feeling of power (*ibid*: 19). Interestingly, for the present study, Östman sees *you know* as a politeness operator mitigating against potential aggressiveness in interaction. This potential of *you know* is evident in Extract 7.2 below:

**Extract 7.2**

**C-MELT02 [Subcorpus 1: México]**

**[Teachers are discussing the potential difficulties students will have interpreting new descriptions for progress over the semester. One teacher says that they may not be able to explain them to their parents]**

- (1) **Barry:** If they're not making progress it doesn't matter what they say to their parents like.
- (2) **Julia:** Right.

- (3) **Rita:** Hmm.  
 (4) **Barry:** *You know*. Who cares.

In turn (4), Barry effectively concludes his point and it is clear that he feels that the more important issue is not whether parents understand the grades the students are achieving but that students in fact make progress, a statement which certainly could be seen as face-threatening to some or all of the other participants; however, the use of *you know* here mitigates the quite bald *who cares*. In Extract 7.3 below, *you know* is also used to mitigate a bald statement. Jenny has suggested that perhaps some students do not have a ‘natural’ aptitude for English and Jack is responding to the suggestion that these students may have difficulty passing the examination. Jack does not seem to think that these students should be given any special treatment and that eventually they will have to simply work hard in order to pass the exam.

### Extract 7.3

#### C-MELT02 [Subcorpus 1: México]

[As with Extract 7.2 teachers are discussing student progress in terms of how long it will take them to pass from KET to PET]

- (1) **Jack:** At some point they have to make the decision *you know* to get their act together and do it. But I *I mean* I don't <\$H> believe <\\$H> if a student just advances by five points <\$E> laughs <\\$E> in a semester.  
 (2) **Jenny:** Yeah okay.  
 (3) **Sam:** Yeah but <\$G2> semesters that <\$G3>.  
 (4) **Barry:** Jesus it's punishment enough sitting through more than three semesters of KET like no reflection on the teachers or anything but *I mean* they'll be bored out of their heads like so *I mean* that's enough maybe <\$E> laughs <\\$E>.

Jenny accepts Jack's viewpoint in (2) and Samantha (shortened to Sam) is about to suggest that two or three semesters of class and study are adequate to pass this particular examination (as she continues to say later in the exchange) when Barry comments that three semesters of being taught for the KET examination would be a *punishment* for the students, and so there is evidence of hedging behaviour in his repair *like no reflection on the teachers or anything* and this is further mitigated by his use of *I mean* to rephrase what he has just said. Schiffrin (1987: 304) notes a core function of *I mean* is to indicate upcoming adjustments and so its use as a repair item is predictable. However, if we look more specifically at what Barry is repairing here, we see that it is acting as what Brown and Levinson (1987) would call a *positive politeness*

function in that it attends to re-instating friendliness and solidarity where it might otherwise have been threatened.

*I mean* is also used as a signal that a speaker has reformulated their utterance in order to express their meaning more clearly (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 921). This reformulation may be used to mitigate a face-threatening utterance, in that the speaker may have expressed something and then realised that there was potential for offence within it. When it is used in this way, it can be argued that it is intended to maintain solidarity and good relations in the community. Figure 7.5 shows sample concordance lines for *I mean* in which (highlighted in grey) *I mean* is teamed with another marker of cohesion and in the case of (3), (4), (6) and (7) with a turn-initial item which appears to suggest again that turns are mitigated and managed using these items.

N	Concordance
1	n an F C track how and I mean we should be qu
2	But those ones are I mean they're kind of e
3	ter definitely. And I mean maybe we shoul
4	KET one. And I mean do you think yo
5	'third' and I mean I I always make
6	Right. And I mean if we have a well
7	y were like 'Nah'. And I mean that's not any=
8	an't rule out anything I mean you can wriggle
9	be very obvious anyway I mean they're almost jo
10	w could we+ Find I mean if I could+ I
11	it is nice to have but I mean it's interesting I t
12	' in that [PUB] book I mean that's way to ea
13	Yeah. Be= I mean the people in Sc
14	the wider way because I mean whether they go
15	Well firstly because I mean there there h
16	would be much better. I mean we don't want to
17	ing a post PET at all. I mean do you think it's
18	e Northern border I mean it could be Chin
19	Prep even before I mean they need to be
20	probably don't because I mean nobody el= we d

Figure 7.5 Sample concordance lines for *I mean*

*I think*, *you know* and *I mean* are all used in Extract 7.4 but what is also interesting here is that so far, the way that Peter speaks (and uses *you know*, see also Extract 7.1) appears to contradict Fox Tree and Schrock's (2002: 743-744) assertion that higher status speakers are less likely to use *you know*. Peter is the head of department and, as such, has the right to make more forceful utterances. The tendency for higher status speakers to speak forcefully has been noted by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Holtgraves (1986) amongst others; however, Vine (2004: 93) has contradicted this finding as,

frequently, powerful speakers in her data soften what she calls control acts.<sup>45</sup> In Extract 7.4, Peter is commenting on the name of a pilot course that he and three other teachers in the department have run; he not only hedges his right to make a suggestion (*I think I would propose...*) but also his view that the current name is unclear – in fact, it takes a little more attention to uncover the fact that he has also actually criticised the current name (*Like post PET kind of there's a certain ring that I know where I'm coming from but I don't know where I'm going*). Underlined in the extract are the other items that are hedging Peter's message and his final comment before he indicates a shift in responsibility from himself as speaker to the other participants in the use of *so* (Schiffrin, 1987) suggests his confidence that the teachers will be able to come up with a better name (*you know that sort of thing*).

#### Extract 7.4

##### C-MELT01 [Subcorpus 1: México]

- (1) **Peter:** <\$O12> Yeah *I think* </\$O12> there's a lot about that too. *I think I would* propose even that whatever we call this thing that it gets a more clearer end term name rather than a beginning name. Like post PET kind of there's a certain ring about it that I know where I'm coming from but I'm not too sure where I'm going *you know that kind of thing* so.
- (2) **Jenny:** Do you *I also think* some of the students need to understand eh the difference. *I mean maybe* they didn't really understand the difference between First Certificate and TOEFL *I think*.

Jenny follows up Peter's utterance with the identification of another problem she thinks that the students have had with this pilot course, they really did not understand the difference between two exams, the TOEFL<sup>46</sup> and the First Certificate.<sup>47</sup> Instead of using *I think*, she uses *I also think*, indicating that by allying her comment to Peter's she is claiming what we might call discursive leverage. Yet this does not mean that she issues a bald on record criticism; she mitigates this criticism of the students state of knowledge which could be understood to reflect poorly on the teachers who informed them with an adjustment in what she says marked with *I mean* (and further hedged with *maybe*) and rounds off her utterance with *I think*. Using these hedging devices marks an orientation to avoiding direct criticisms or repairing them on-line as they occur.

<sup>45</sup> Directives, requests and advice (Vine, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Test of English as a Foreign Language, administered by the Educational Testing Service.

<sup>47</sup> First Certificate in English, administered by Cambridge ESOL.

The teachers also use *you know* as a type of shorthand to invoking shared professional knowledge and, by doing so, invoke professional solidarity. Extract 7.5 shows this function of *you know* in action.

**Extract 7.5**

**C-MELT03 [Subcorpus 1: México]**

**[Anna and Samantha are describing a bank of materials that they are building]**

- (1) **Anna:** And then we can help them to say *you know* ‘what’s the address?’ or ‘what’s the name of the café?’ and blah blah blah. So there’s cafés hotels coffee shops no that would be cafés restaurants what about the others?
- (2) **Sam:** Some shops.
- (3) **Anna:** Some shops or.
- (4) **Sam:** And then.
- (5) **Anna:** Souvenir shops.
- (6) **Sam:** A couple of travel agents.
- (7) **Anna:** Stuff like that. So all contributions are gratefully accepted and there’s a suggestion sheet there for you to add more signs that you think are important. Especially if you find them in the KET book the picture preparations I took all the books out and I put them in here. And also I used the ones in the lab.

Anna is doing something potentially very face-threatening here in that she is suggesting what the teachers might do with the pictures she and Samantha are compiling, she mitigates this with *you know* and strengthens it with *and blah blah blah* after the two examples of how the pictures could be used. It is possible that without this attention and mitigation, her colleagues might feel that she is implying that they would not understand how to use the materials. Here the risk is to others, whereas in Extract 7.6 the teacher is talking about something that the other teachers will also have knowledge of (how students may need a little time before they start to improve in a class) and therefore the *you know* is almost elliptical in the way it implicitly invokes shared knowledge.

**Extract 7.6**

**C-MELT05 [Subcorpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Siobhán:** You were saying that guy Joo.
- (2) **Sally:** Who di=. Did you have him for speaking?
- (3) **Brid:** Zoo. No I had him for grammar but just he asked me some really simple stuff and.
- (4) **Sally:** Mm.
- (5) **Brid:** Was a bit confused. But he might catch on *you know*.

In Extract 7.7, the same elliptical character is observable in one of the teacher's description of how a student reacted after a speaking class. In this case, *you know* cannot be said to invoke shared knowledge, but rather to invite the participants to share his perspective (cf. Tao, 1998).

**Extract 7.7**

**C-MELT05 [Subcorpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Dave:** He obvi=. He's a bit apprehensive I was talking to him afterwards and he said "Oh my God <\$H> that was very difficult </\$H>" *you know*.
- (2) **Maureen:** But he'll be he'll be em the weakest there would he?

The same is true of the following comment made by Jack during a part of the meeting where the topic to be discussed was how much of the class textbook each teacher would cover per semester.

**Extract 7.8**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Jack:** I mean I don= I don't think it really matters if you go if you want to go ahead with your students.
- (2) **Peter:** Ah yeah.
- (3) **Jack:** I do= I don't see how it matters really. Am personally I think that the number of chapters to be covered in the book is too few. But *you know* I go very fast in my classes and I I don't know if I I haven't really seen that it makes any difference in terms of the outcome of the exam.

As they do not attend Jack's classes, the other teachers at the meeting cannot be aware of how fast or slow he covers the material in the coursebook. What *you know* is doing in this utterance is not only inviting a shared perspective (*we may all go at different speeds through the content in the textbook*) but also mitigating the force of what Jack implies next: *it doesn't matter how fast or slow we go, it does not have any bearing on the outcome of the exam*. Other forms of hedging are in evidence throughout the turn, false starts and hesitations, reformulation, the use of *really*, which soften the underlying criticism of the preoccupation with how many chapters to cover.

Where *you know* has been identified as addressee-oriented, *I think*, it has been suggested, is more likely to be speaker-oriented in its purpose (Holmes and Stubbe,

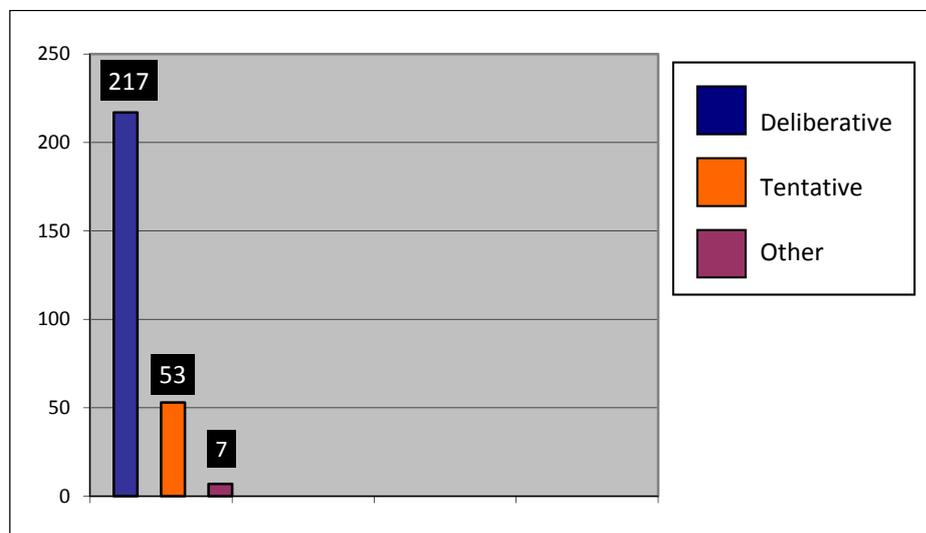
1995). In terms of propositional knowledge, *I think* is unusual in that it can express *both* certainty and uncertainty. Aijmer (1997) states that on the one hand, *I think* may convey a speaker's careful deliberation with regard to what they are saying and an accompanying authority (cf. Preisler, 1986) (*deliberative I think*) whilst on the other, it may express tentativeness or uncertainty (epistemic modality) as well as attenuating an assertion which might be too direct (*tentative I think*) (Aijmer, 1997: 21). Holmes (1985, 1990) emphasises that *I think* varies demonstrably in terms of intonation as well as syntactic position in an utterance. *I think* can add weight to an utterance in an initial position with level stress on *think*, for example, ***I think*** *that's absolutely right* (context: statusful interviewee on television) (Holmes, 1990: 186). It can also be used tentatively with a fall-rise intonation, for example, *it's got some writing on it* ***I think*** (context: a child describing an unclear photograph) (*ibid.*).<sup>48</sup> Aijmer (1997) applies prosodic, grammatical and positional classifications in her research on *I think* in the London-Lund Corpus (LLC).<sup>49</sup> *I think* is classified as deliberative if it is utterance initial, has a prosodic booster upgrading its prominence in the sentence and if it is followed by a *that*-complementiser (*I think that...*), as the *that*-complementiser also marks prominence. *I think* in medial and final positions were classed as tentative, even if they had prosodic prominence (Aijmer, 1997: 21). Aijmer found that the tentative *I think* was more frequent than deliberative *I think* in the LLC. There is no systematic prosodic information in C-MELT; nevertheless, a partial analysis can be essayed using Aijmer's syntactic and grammatical classifications (*ibid.*). The occurrences of *I think* in C-MELT were classified as follows: *I think* in a clause initial position and/or followed by the *that*-complement clause was classified as deliberative, while *I think* in a final position was classified as tentative. To make up for the lack of prosodic information for C-MELT, the medial position *I think* was analysed at clausal level; where *I think* was not syntactically necessary, this was classified as tentative. There were a small number of examples where *I think* marked an abrupt, mid-stream change of structure (anacoluthon), was part of a ventriloquised utterance (Tannen, 2006, 2007) or was

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<sup>48</sup> Holmes' (1990) study is in relation to gender differences in the distribution of hedges and boosters in women's and men's speech. While *I think* has comparable overall frequency for both women and men, there is a contrast in its functional distribution, with the deliberative function favoured by women and the tentative function preferred by men.

<sup>49</sup> The spoken part of the Survey of English Usage (SEU) (Svartvik, 1990) contains samples of informal face-to-face conversation, discussion, interviews, public speaking, sports commentaries, radio broadcasts and telephone calls/messages.

otherwise ambiguous. These are classified as *other*. Figure 7.3 below illustrates the results of this analysis.



**Figure 7.3 Comparison of Deliberative vs Tentative *I think* in C-MELT**

C-MELT shows a major preference for deliberative *I think* based on these criteria. This is very much in agreement with the context of the workplace, where professional opinions are delivered with care and attention. However, it is also critical for our purposes to return to a point that Aijmer (1997: 22) makes about the relationship between deliberative and tentative *I think* and politeness:

The effects of the deliberative and tentative *I think* are quite different even though they both have to do with politeness. The deliberative expressing positive politeness and “rapport”, while the tentative *I think* is associated with social distancing and negative politeness.

Table 7.7 shows some samples of deliberative vs tentative *I think* from C-MELT; in terms of deliberative *I think*, the samples tally with Preisler’s (1986) suggestion that speakers use this function of *I think* to indicate careful deliberation, in this case the proposal of a personal opinion on individual students’ level of language proficiency.

**Table 7.7 Samples of Deliberative vs Tentative *I think***

<i>Deliberative</i>	<i>Tentative</i>
<i>I think he was way ahead of the others this morning</i>	<i>But I mean it’s interesting I think for people to have.</i>
<i>I think he just needs a bit of time to get used to the change</i>	<i>We should be responsive to them I think</i>
<i>I think she’d be alright</i>	<i>But she’s leaving I think</i>

<i>I think they should go up</i>	<i>In terms of everything I think</i>
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Extract 7.9 is an interesting sample of the use of both *you know* and *I think* by the HoD, Peter. Again, this extract comes from the discussion concerning how many chapters of the textbook will be covered.

**Extract 7.9**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**Peter:** Again now let's be talk out honestly *you know* I have no issue about going ahead and doing it but I'm talking as an individual now *you know I think*.

Peter appears to be softening the force of his statement; whether or not they can or should go at different speeds through the textbook is not that important to him. In addition, he shifts explicitly out of HoD mode and into teacher mode (*I'm talking as an individual now you know I think*) to make this statement, suggesting it is one that would not otherwise be appropriate for the hierarchically powerful participant to suggest.

In Extract 7.10, one of the teachers has a query about a student he has had in his class for the first time that morning. He is worried that she is not strong enough for the class and the way he frames this enquiry shows how *I think* can be used with a tentative function and how hedging behaviour clusters from the point of view of discourse.

**Extract 7.10**

**C-MELT04 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

[Note: <\$O> ... <\\$O2> mark the beginning and end of overlapped utterances]

- (1) **Daniel:** I want to ask about Tomoko I haven't met her but from what I understand she was she was in a class before.
- (2) **Tommy:** Mm. Yeah.
- (3) **Daniel:** *Today I think she was she was a bit lost compared to the others.*
- (4) **Tommy:** Really?
- (5) **Daniel:** *It might just be. First impressions so I wasn't sure if.* I want to ask what you thought about her <\$O2> as the <\\$O2>.
- (6) **Tommy:** <\$O2> Oh no the previous week <\\$O2> she's always been fine.
- (7) **Daniel:** That's what I thought maybe that's the. *Just with me.* Other that I wouldn't. They're all fine.

Daniel is careful to hedge his utterances in a number of ways: primarily to show consideration to his colleague, but also to suggest that the experience that he had with this student possibly emanates from him, as a teacher (*just with me*). With regard to showing professional consideration, this query must be handled well as otherwise the suggestion might be that Tomoko has been wrongly placed in this class, which would be a highly professionally face-threatening suggestion. He handles this by hedging his opinion with *I think*, but there are accompanying layers of hedging behaviour, for example, the suggestion that it might just be *first impressions*.

Similarly, in Extract 7.11 Kate is treading potentially risky ground, with a turn which sums up a problem that the teachers are having with the students. The specific hedging items discussed in this section are marked in bold and other forms of hedging marked in grey. We note first of all that Kate uses *I think* tentatively to claim common ground with the other teachers at the meeting.

#### Extract 7.11

C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

**Kate:** Yeah. They don't have a long term view is maybe *I mean* now they're in the long term it's about to happen to them but maybe say <math>\\$O18</math> they they <math>\\$O18</math> they still don't see that ultimately even though *I mean I think* we probably all agree that it's it's a pity that English doesn't mean something to them that they don't get some credit for doing it *I mean* teenagers or students don't see the long term benefits of doing something like this and that's a terrible thing but *I mean*. It comes down to it like.

In addition, there is a highly hedged, implied criticism of the fact that the students are not taking a long-term view of the value of English as part of their degree courses and seem to devalue it in part because it is a compulsory course that they do not get credit on their transcripts for doing.<sup>50</sup> There is another risk in the turn, her suggestion that their communal subject, English, is devalued as a result.

## 7.5 Conclusion

It seems fitting to return to the multi-staged, carefully-managed directive issued by Peter, the Head of Department at the university in México, to conclude the discussion

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<sup>50</sup> Although English is a pre-requisite for graduating; a contradiction that was a major bone of contention in the workplace meetings.

on hedging and its relationship with politeness. As Schnurr *et al.* (2007: 725) point out:

...workplace leaders are likely to be particularly sensitive to normative ways of doing power and politeness and ways of conveying negative messages in an acceptable manner in their specific CoPs.

Hedging, it can be argued, is a feature of the CoPs' shared repertoire, but also, perhaps more significantly, it constitutes a norm in the pursuit of mutual engagement: by attending to power differentials in a marked and polite way, Peter, the Head of Department, is modelling 'this is the way we talk to one another'. Furthermore, the absorption of this linguistic style into the shared repertoire of the CoPs would not be possible were it not for mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of both teaching and being a teacher in that particular institution.

Hedging behaviour is typical in the community and can be said to constitute a community norm: speakers never issue critical, challenging, or otherwise impolite (in its broadest sense) utterances without hedging them in some way. As a feature of how the CoP interacts, we see that the hedging behaviour in this community is relational and constitutes a community norm. As we have seen in the case of *you know*, it can be used to invoke group membership in appealing to shared knowledge and inviting a shared perspective. *I mean* reformulates a potentially face-threatening utterance and *I think* expresses a solidarity function in its attention to the right of the listeners to be provided with a carefully considered (in this case, professional) opinion. *I think* can also be used with a tentative function to mitigate face-threatening acts. It can be argued, as above, that the hierarchically powerful interactants model the relational function of the hedging behaviour with an orientation to rapport-enhancement and maintenance, thus perpetuating a community norm. As a feature of how teachers manage their mutual engagement, I suggest it shows how solidarity is underscored and positive relationships built in the CoP. That is not to say that participants invariably communicate even negative appraisals or contributions positively or that they do not criticise the community, one another or the other stakeholders in the community, the students, or the institution itself. In Chapter Eight we turn to particular criterial feature of both CoPs: humour and laughter.

## Chapter Eight

# Managing and Maintaining the Community II: Humour and Laughter

*Ciarán:* Yeah. So anybody to go down?

*Michaela:* No but it would cheer us up a lot if you could tell us when Juan is leaving.

<\$E> laughter <\\$E>

## 8. Managing and maintaining the community II: Humour and laughter

### 8.0 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Seven, Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) politeness theory has remained at the forefront of literature on politeness in general – if principally as its whipping boy. Locher and Watts (2005: 10) suggest that Brown and Levinson's theory is not after all a theory of politeness but 'rather a theory of face-work, dealing only with the mitigation of face-threatening acts.' It is, in fact, criticism and revision of some of the shibboleths of this influential theory that have provided some of the most fruitful insights into the nature of *face*, an 'elusive' concept (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003: 1465). This chapter seeks to utilise the concepts of face, face-work and politeness and, by extension, relational work (Locher, 2004; Locher and Watts, 2005) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2002, 2005), in order to explore the interpersonal and strategic aspects of noteworthy phenomena in the data: humour and laughter. Relational work is defined as 'the "work" that individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others' (Locher and Watts, 2005: 10) comprising:

...the entire continuum of verbal behaviour from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction through to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

(Locher, 2004: 51)

Rapport management echoes much of this but suggests a conscious choice on the part of the speakers in roughly analogous ways: a *rapport-enhancement* orientation implies a desire to strengthen relationships for the speakers, a *rapport-maintenance* orientation implies a desire to simply maintain these harmonious relationships. A *rapport-neglect* orientation may have several causes but essentially encodes a lack of concern or interest in the social relationship and a *rapport-challenge* orientation implies a desire to challenge or damage harmonious relationships (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2005). The occurrences of humour and laughter also provide a keen insight into the twin issues of power and politeness in the interaction, which builds on the findings of Chapter Seven in relation to hedging phenomena. Running parallel to the discussion of how humour (and laughter as a 'proxy' for humour, cf. Garretson and O'Connor, 2007: 89) is used as an interactional strategy for the participants is the argument that humour has a criterial function in the CoP framework.

## 8.1 Politeness, face and face-work

The notion of face is a familiar one, and in the last number of years as a general re-appraisal of classic work on politeness has been quietly gathering force, its meaning and import for the study of (im)politeness has meant that the concept itself has undergone increased scrutiny and revision. The bedrock upon which Brown and Levinson's seminal politeness theory rests is original work by Erving Goffman on the concept of *face*. He defines face as:

...the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.

(Goffman, 1955: 213)

Although he does not state explicitly that face is interactively constructed, he does conceive of it as something that is not 'lodged in the body', but rather 'is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter' (*ibid*: 214).<sup>51</sup> He states that a person invests emotional energy in the face that they present to others, and is therefore concerned with what he calls maintaining face, a process Goffman refers to as *face-work*. He defines face-work as the 'actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face' (*ibid*: 216). This may seem to narrow its range but Goffman outlines two broad functions of face-work – as an avoidance measure and as a corrective process. As de Kadt (1998: 177) points out both of these manifestations of face-work are concerned with losing face but 'ways of "having" or "maintaining" face are not spelt out.'

Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) revisits three of Goffman's original essays to highlight how re-examination of Goffman's notions of face and face-work can serve as a fruitful

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<sup>51</sup> In addition, Bargiela-Chiappini (2003: 1463) views this statement as indicative of a conceptualisation of face as comprising something that is much more than verbal behaviour.

entrée to the re-examination of our current notions of politeness in general – a necessary exercise for a notion of politeness that has never been ‘convincingly defined’ (*ibid*: 1454; see Chapter Seven for a brief overview of politeness theories). She underlines the debt that Goffman’s work owes to Émile Durkheim’s (1915) concept of social solidarity, and points out Brown and Levinson’s Durkheimian references to ‘ritual’ and ‘positive and negative rites’ (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). One of the major criticisms of Goffman’s theories has been that they are predicated on a largely white, middle-class, (male) society, and do not take adequate account of cultural or gender differences (see, for example, Mills, 2002). This criticism has also been levelled against Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, and Bargiela-Chiappini notes how the model is ‘based on Western ethnocentric assumptions such as the existence of a predominantly rational actor and the strategic, “goal-orientated” nature of face-work and of social interaction’ (2003: 1454). Spencer-Oatey (2007) suggests that the relationship between face and identity has rarely been explicitly identified.<sup>52</sup> This is despite the fact that there is a palpable line that connects the complexities of social/discourse identities (see Chapter Two) and how the concept of face has been used to rationalise linguistic choices in interaction. Locher and Watts (2005; see below) seem to take up this thread in their more inter-discursive and context-driven notion of face.

Locher and Watts (2005: 12-13) emphasise the discursive nature of face, arguing that:

Face is socially attributed in each individual instance of interaction, which implies that any individual may be attributed a potentially infinite number of faces. Faces, in other words, are rather like masks, on loan to us for the duration of different kinds of performance. Imagine a woman who, depending on the context she finds herself in, performs the role of a Prime Minister, a mother, a wife, a gardener, a cook, etc. Whether or not the performance is accepted by the other participants in the interaction will depend on their assignment or non-assignment of face, i.e., the mask associated with the performance.

This implicit rejection of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) dualistic notion of positive and negative face (see Chapter Seven) and definition of face as something more dynamic and altogether more contingent on context provides the possibility of proposing the idea of *professional face* as a feature of these CoPs. The theory put

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<sup>52</sup> Arundale (2005; cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2007) on the other hand believes that the two are not synonymous: *face* has a dyadic element in that it is manifest in social relationships, whereas *identity* is an individual phenomenon despite its breadth.

forward here is that professional face needs are more conspicuously in play than individual face needs in the context of the meetings in the present study; this cannot be argued as tightly as for the hedging behaviour in Chapter Seven, but it does also relate to the preference for YOU [PROF] over WE [PROF] in Chapter Six. How the use of humour mitigates threats to professional face, as well as performing the relational function of creating the community, will be shown. In order to elaborate the way in which humour is conceived and analysed, previous research on humour and laughter is described in section 8.2, as well as some caveats with regard to identifying laughter with humour and how this is addressed in the following analysis.

## **8.2 Humour and laughter: previous research**

Analysis of the phenomenon of humour has been undertaken across a wide variety of disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and organisational studies (for an extensive overview of linguistic theories of humour and laughter, see Attardo, 1994 and Raskin, 2006). Perhaps inevitably, defining humour itself is problematic; there is some overlap in terms (wit, joking) and many studies focus on laughter specifically. Laughter has been proposed as the language of humour (Zijderveld, 1983), though the equating of laughter with humour has been also been criticised (Adelswärd and Öberg, 1998; Osvaldsson, 2004). What emerges from much of the earlier work is the conception of humour as a “social lubricant” which ‘makes the routine flow of life possible’ (Martineau, 1972: 103) and this is relatively uncontested throughout a literature that has tended to focus on the functions of humour in interaction. Graham *et al.* (1992) conflate much of this research, in spite of its diversity of provenance, and highlight three broad theoretical perspectives which have informed the analysis of humour: superiority theories, incongruity theories, and relief or arousal theories. Superiority theories suggest that laughter is always directed at someone and therefore the person that laughs is expressing their superiority; incongruity theories focus on cognitive processes involved in humour; and relief or arousal theories focus on the premise that laughter, as a physical event, is the release of nervous energy. They present an extremely broad-ranging overview of humour research in a variety of disciplines, and detail twenty-four functions of humour in interaction based on this research. Particularly salient for this study is the research cited by Graham *et al.* examining the relationship

between humour and group cohesiveness. Pogrebin and Poole (1988, cited in Graham *et al.*, 1992: 166) present the following three principal functions of group humour: (1) it allows members of the group to share common experiences and define their working ideology, (2) it promotes social solidarity and (3) it helps the group to cope with a variety of forces outside of their control. Humour in groups is summarised as serving the social functions of ‘defining and re-defining a group, clarifying status relationships, and easing the tension of new or novel stimuli’ (*ibid*: 167). Research within the discipline of organisational studies has emphasised this potential of humour to provide interesting insights into not only group cohesion, but also the cultural values of the workplace, and even how social status within a workplace is negotiated (Duncan, 1982). Vinton (1989) has also described how by assimilating and mirroring the type of humour used in the workplace, employees integrate into new work situations more successfully.

Language-based research into the role of humour and laughter in the institutional context has also underlined its largely solidarity-based, collaborative nature. Adelswärd (1989) examines the social significance of laughter in a variety of institutional contexts and finds, among other things, that ‘mutual laughter is a sign of rapport and consensus’ (p. 107), a finding that is also reflected in this study (see section 8.6). However, this is not to say that the use of humour is always by its nature benign. As Hay (2000: 716) puts it, every attempt at humour expresses solidarity but also involves constructing a position of respect and status within a group. Although Hay’s humour research focuses on casual conversation, and highlights its solidarity-based, power-based and psychological functions, this view of the functions of humour can be extended to the workplace. Rogerson-Revell highlights how in current linguistic research into business communication there has been a shift in emphasis from the structural organisation of professional talk ‘towards a more pragmatic and functional analysis, focusing on the strategic use of linguistic resources to achieve certain outcomes’ (2007b: 7). An example of how humour can be used strategically to achieve a particular purpose can be seen in Collinson’s (1988) study of humour as a conduit to a masculine sense of identity in shop-floor relations. He suggests that the men were required to ‘give and take a joke, to swear and to retain their domestic authority’ (p. 197). He also highlights the use of humour

as a means to ‘control those perceived to be not “pulling their weight”’ (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, Bonaiuto *et al.* (2003) investigate the organisation of humorous sequences in group negotiations and conclude that humour ‘enables people to cautiously avoid the use of obvious criticism’ (p. 214), while at the same time providing a frame to undermine the proposals of others. Zajdman (1995) similarly considers humour as a ‘strategy’ which can mitigate a face-threatening act (FTA), and illustrates the advantages that can accrue to the speaker in using humour strategically. Even where self-deprecating, or ‘self-directed’ humour is used, it contains the circular message “‘I am weak. I admit it. To admit means to be strong. Therefore I am strong”” (p. 338). The unifying theme in these studies is the idea that through this ostensible perception of humour and group laughter as solidarity based as well as solidarity building, a subtle means of expressing and wielding power in interaction is provided.

Holmes (2000b: 161), reporting on the Language in the Workplace Project in New Zealand, highlights the lacuna which exists in humour research of tape-recorded material from authentic workplace interaction. She also provides a definition of humour that has informed subsequent studies (see Mullany, 2004; Rogerson-Revell, 2007b), and is adopted here: Utterances are defined as humorous by the analyst, ‘on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic and discursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants’ (2000: 163). Her theoretical framework combines insights from politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978/1987) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995). Brown and Levinson’s contention that humour (joking) addresses positive face needs and thus engenders solidarity is obviously most influential (though this has been contested elsewhere, see Austin, 1990; Eelen, 2001; Mullany, 2004), as well as CDA’s concept of ‘repressive discourse’ which ‘tends to distract attention away from issues of power’ (Holmes, 2000b: 165). As elaborated in Chapter Two Habermas (1984) sees institutional discourse as by its nature strategic, imbued with, and distinguished by asymmetry – or ‘power laden’ (Thornborrow, 2002: 2). However, in today’s institutional environment with its veiled hierarchies and with what Fairclough (1992) has called the ‘conversationalisation’ of institutional discourse, humour provides a way of ‘doing power’ less overtly; in other

words it ‘can be used to achieve the speaker’s instrumental goal while apparently de-emphasising the power differential’ (Holmes, 2000b: 165). While humour can be used by the institutionally powerful speakers who operate in an environment where ‘explicit orders’ are no longer acceptable (*ibid*: 175), it can also be used by the subordinates in an organisation to challenge power structures. Thus, the potential of humour to fulfil both positive and negative politeness functions is underlined, and summarised as (1) a positive politeness strategy it expresses solidarity or collegiality, as well as self-deprecation (by protecting the speakers positive face needs) and (2) as a negative politeness strategy it downtones or hedges a face-threatening act (FTA) or face attack act (Austin 1990) such as a criticism or insult. Holmes and Marra (2002a) explore how humour contributes to workplace culture by helping to create a distinctive identity for the group. Further research by Holmes and Marra (2002b) distinguishes between reinforcing and subversive humour in the workplace. It pivots on the use of subversive humour in the workplace, but also points out that the use of humour can not only reinforce existing solidarity relationships, but also existing power relationships (p. 70). In fact, Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 109-110) consider humour indexical of the power relationships in the workplace, where ‘humour typically constructs participants as equals’. This implication of humour in issues of power in the workplace is enlightening, and gives the tendency in earlier literature to equate humour and solidarity an added resonance. However, power and solidarity are not necessarily opposed, but mutually entailed (Tannen, 1994, 2006), and humour seems to be the most regularly used strategy for the hierarchically powerful participants in the interaction to downtone this power differential, as well as being a socially acceptable way for the less powerful to contest workplace hierarchies.

Mullany (2004) has highlighted the tactical use of humour within the institutional context in relation to power using data from business meetings. Her research includes the additional variable of gender, in an investigation of how meeting Chairs use humour as a device to pursue compliance from the subordinates in the company. Koester (2004, 2006) remarks that humour is frequently integrated into turns and/or sequences that combine task-related talk with relational concerns, a tendency McCarthy (2000) glosses *transactional-plus-relational*. An example from Koester’s

2006 study of the interpersonal dimensions of workplace talk shows how the transactional and the relational combine seamlessly:

**Extract 8.1 (Koester, 2006: 58)**

1. **Beth:** So that's what you want? Like a snapshot thing.
2. **Carol:** |Yeah.
3. **Beth:** Okay.
4. **Carol:** |Right. Okay. .hh So. Boy it's tiny up there!
5. **Beth:** I know, hehehe You need a big magnifying glass. [chuckles]

To summarise, the idea of the strategic use of humour underlines Holmes and Stubbe's contention that 'humour is *a valuable multifunctional resource* in workplace interaction [...] many meetings are punctuated by bursts of humour, which tend to occur at *strategic points*' (2003: 109; emphasis added). This begs the question: at what point or points do these distractions occur? This issue is explored in the analysis that follows. Previous research contributes substantial evidence of the 'fruitful line of investigation' (Mullany, 2004: 13) provided by humour. While its solidarity function is uncontested, it is complemented by a potential to be used repressively by those in power, and as a non-threatening means of subversion giving members of an institution an acceptable way of pushing the boundaries of workplace hierarchies. In the case of the teachers in this study, it supplies a safe way of criticising their colleagues, their students and how the organisation works.

### **8.3 Transcription issues**

The definitional dichotomy which exists in the literature on humour and laughter, and the disciplinary diversity of the literature on humour itself, can pose an initial problem. Does laughter in the corpus indicate humour? Or indeed, does humour always provoke laughter? As previously mentioned, some progress can be attempted in this vexed issue by consideration of the context in which the humour occurs. Adelswärd and Öberg (1998: 412) point out that identifying laughter and humour can

have its drawbacks, as although laughter can be associated with mirth, it can ‘just as well accompany feelings of embarrassment or expressions of maliciousness and spite’, in fact, laughter can also accomplish ‘complex interactional goals’ (see Poyatos, 1993 for a detailed treatment of these goals). Therefore, identifying humour in the data is not a simple case of finding instances of laughter, and of assuming that this not unambiguous indication of amusement signifies (a) the intention of the speaker to elicit laughter or (b) the interpretation of an utterance by the listeners as intended to provoke laughter. In this respect, laughter is proposed as a ‘linguistic proxy’ for humour: a form that does not embody the phenomenon but serves as a good indicator of its presence (Garretson and O’Connor, 2007: 89). Moreover, as Kotthoff (2006: 274) points out:

Laughter does not in a strict sense signal something funny, but rather creates a special form of reading (a special frame or keying) for what is said, in the sense of evoking a funny perspective on it.

In Jefferson’s (1985b) treatment of the transcription and analysis of the phenomenon of laughter itself, it is pointed out that in creating a transcript, how, or whether, we ‘get things right’ (an obscure concept in itself) is heavily dependent on what it is we wish to attend to (p. 25). Jefferson’s focus is the pervasive nature of laughter in talk, or the phenomenon of what Goffman (1961) calls ‘flooding out’: the way in which the word or utterance is ‘invaded’ by laughter. As previously mentioned, the corpus-driven method by which the insight that laughter and, as a corollary, humour, should become a focus of study raised the issue of ‘retrospective’ coding for the transcripts. Although laughter had been selected as a paralinguistic feature to be tagged, there had been no specific attention given to how variations (type of laughter, whether it was part of an individual speaker’s utterance or whether one or more participants responded to an utterance with laughter etc.) would be marked.

The methodological issue of identifying humour in the corpus was addressed as follows. The meetings of which the corpus is comprised were analysed for the phenomenon of laughter, where it was identified, the cause for the laughter was isolated. If only one speaker laughs, the tenor of the laughter was analysed to get at

its actual meaning. Group laughter was taken to indicate that the group interpreted an utterance or sequence as humorous, and this was the most obvious starting point. Other cues, which helped to identify whether or not an utterance was intended humorously, included “smile voice” (Crystal, 1969). Ultimately, the phenomenon was tagged in three different ways:

- as part of the utterance if a speaker laughed during or at the beginning/end of an utterance (<E> **laughs** </E>), or during an utterance (<E> **laughing** </E>)
- separately, if the other participants responded with laughter to an utterance (<E> **laughter** </E>)
- if the laughter was weak or prolonged (or in some other way marked), this too was noted (e.g. <E> **prolonged laughter** </E>).

This seems to ignore Adelswärd and Öberg’s (1998) admonition regarding the interpretation of laughter, and its inherent ambiguity. However, I would argue that the context in which the humour is essayed, the workplace, increases the likelihood that it be supported by laughter. I also suggest that the preferred response to an utterance which is intended as humorous is laughter, and in the interests of solidarity, and basic politeness (rather than linguistic politeness), colleagues are likely to provide this response. Indeed, Norrick (1993) claims that joking and laughter are an adjacency pair. Hay (2001) discusses a number of ways in which humour can be supported, focussing on the way in which participants contribute more humour, play along with the gag, use echo or overlap, offer sympathy and contradict self-deprecating humour. Some of these supporting functions, such as contributing more humour, are found in the data presented in this chapter, but the overriding trend is to recognise and support humour with laughter, hence its significance in frequency counts and the focus on it in this chapter.

#### 8.4 Identifying and classifying humour

As laughter was used as an indicator of humour, this was how humorous episodes were initially identified in the transcripts. During a more detailed examination, instances of failed humour were omitted from the final count of these episodes, and in total 73 humorous episodes were isolated. In each case, the speaker who initiates the humour was noted, however no particular pattern emerged until the status of the speaker within the organisation was given attention. Even given the fact that three of the meetings, C-MELT 2, 4 and 6 respectively, were not attended by the Director of Studies (DoS) or Head of Department (HoD), of those 73 episodes, 60 were initiated by the teachers and only 13 by the DoS/HoD. Even taking into consideration the fact that the DoS/HoD are not present at half of the meetings in the corpus, the proportion of humour initiated by the teachers is still significantly higher. It should be noted here that the counts referred to initiation of humorous episodes rather than initiation in general. From this perspective, the DoS/HoD holds more discursive power than the teachers in their ability to initiate, direct and change topics.

**Table 8.1: Initiation of humorous sequences<sup>53</sup>**

	Initiated by DoS/HoD	Initiated by teachers	Total
C-MELT01	5	17	22
C-MELT02	-	17	17
C-MELT03	7	5	12
C-MELT04	-	2	2
C-MELT05	1	8	9

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix E for details of these humorous sequences.

C-MELT06	-	11	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>73</b>

Richards' (2006) study of language and professional identity focuses in one chapter on varieties of humour in collaborative talk. The study is particularly interesting because it is partially based on the staffroom interaction of English language teachers, though, unlike the present one, it deals with a variety of different types of interaction, rather than meetings in particular. Richards points out not only where humour occurs, but also where it does *not* occur, that is in the discussion of arrangements, agreeing procedures and similar business (p. 103). This is also the trend in C-MELT where there is a marked absence of humour in weekly meetings (usually fairly brief, the longest is twenty minutes) that are dedicated to student placement (see C-MELT04, 05 and 06 above), deciding which students will stay in the classes they have been assigned to, or if they will be moved up or down a level. Richards highlights many functions of humour in his data, but two that stand out as being extremely similar to C-MELT are the use of humour to deflect professional concerns, and the tendency to use outside agents, whether individual or institutional, as the butt of jokes. Rogerson-Revell (2007b) points out the use of humour to mark a shift in style from formality to informality within a meeting. Within C-MELT, humour occurs at topic transition phases, but it also appears to maintain the flow of the meetings (this is also noted by Kushner, 1990, cited in Rogerson-Revell, 2007b), and is used, for example, to relieve tension. Plotting the distribution of the *laugh* tag (and each of its lemmas) showed a marked tendency for laughter to occur during the opening and closings of the meetings, a finding also reported in Holmes (2000b: 179). When humour occurred at other points, it was invariably in response to problematic issues. Although humour, as has been previously stated, is multifunctional, Holmes and Marra's (2002a: 70) distinction between (1) reinforcing humour and (2) subversive humour are particularly useful here as conceptual prisms

through which to view and interpret the data in the following analysis. As mentioned, reinforcing humour maintains or reinforces the status quo and can be divided into two sub-categories: (a) humour which reinforces existing solidarity relationships and (b) humour which reinforces existing power relationships. In general, the main focus of reinforcing humour is on solidarity and the maintenance of friendly collegial relations. Subversive humour, on the other hand, is used to challenge the existing status quo, and can be viewed as a subtle strategy available to those who are not in power. Using humour subversively does not necessarily require the speaker to mount an explicit challenge, however, so it is a relatively risk-free tactic. The teachers tend to use it, for example, as a way of criticising each other and undermining the decisions of the group. The people in the meetings with the most hierarchical power (DoS/HoD) sometimes had to enforce decisions taken at institutional or departmental level, or criticise the actions of the teachers. In order to do this, the preferred strategy is to use reinforcing humour. Table 8.2 below illustrates the most common functions of humour in the meetings, and the strategies used to realise them.

**Table 8.2: Functions of humour/laughter in C-MELT**

	Used by teachers to:	Used by DoS/HoD to:
<b>Subversive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resist each others' ideas</li> <li>• criticise/mock students</li> <li>• criticise the decisions of the group</li> <li>• criticise/mock institution</li> <li>• express jocular abuse (mocking/double entendre)</li> <li>• allude to money</li> </ul> <p><i>solidarity</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• criticise the institution</li> <li>• acknowledge how unpopular and ineffective meetings are</li> </ul> <p><i>power</i></p>
<b>Reinforcing (power/solidarity)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlight commonality of experiences (problem students/classes etc.)</li> <li>• problem-solve</li> <li>• relieve tension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issue a directive</li> <li>• make criticism of teachers</li> <li>• implement decisions</li> <li>• move meetings forward</li> </ul> <p><i>solidarity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• downtone power</li> <li>• create harmony in group (thus moving meeting forward)</li> </ul>

In some cases in this data, the teachers' use of humour can be viewed as both reinforcing and, at the same time, subversive as can be seen in Extract 8.2.

### 8.5 Subversive humour

In the extract below, the senior administrator, Rachel, interrupts a meeting where student placement is being discussed. When students pay for a course in the school, they are also required to purchase the textbook used by the class; however, in some cases students are tardy about doing this. The administrator has decided that students are not allowed to attend classes until they have paid for the book.

#### Extract 8.2

##### C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

- (1) **Rachel:** They need to come down to buy the book. That's how you solve the problem of making sure everybody buys it. **So like it or not that's how we're going to deal with it.** Em. Tommy and John.
- (2) **Tommy:** Oooh.  
<\$E> laughter <\$E>
- (3) **Daniel:** Scary yeah.

Rachel's unequivocal *So like it or not that's how we're going to deal with it* is an obvious FTA, one of the teachers responds to it by making fun of the tone in which it is delivered, and the laughter that follows is both supportive of Tommy's joking reaction to this, and also serves to break the tension that is created both by the interruption and the FTA. The exchanges that follow this extract highlight the teachers' reaction to the decision taken at an administrative level. While the decision is unpopular, it is not explicitly resisted. The humour in this extract, and its support by the other teachers present, shows that the teachers use humour as a strategy to signal their resistance. It is also interesting to note that while Rachel attempts to make this statement and move the discourse on by addressing two of the teachers (*Em. Tommy and John*) in order to tell them something else, she is prevented from doing so by the laughter that follows Tommy's *Oooh*. In one respect, this humour can be classed as subversive, in that there is an implicit resistance to the hard line

taken by the administrator – however, it can also be argued that the teachers ‘close ranks’ when they support Tommy’s utterance, and it reinforces a feeling of solidarity among them.

While in Extract 8.2, the resistance is against the strictures of the institution, Extract 8.3 illustrates subversive humour being used by a member of staff as a comment on decisions taken at a departmental level. In this meeting, the teachers are discussing student attendance, which at the university in México was often quite low. This caused countless administrative headaches as although their attendance was compulsory and, as mentioned above, a prerequisite for graduation, students frequently had classes timetabled at the same time as English or did not attend as their workload for other courses was prohibitive. At the beginning of the semester, it was decided that students would only be permitted to take the end of semester exam, which would allow progression to the next level, if they attended a certain number of classes. Those who did not would have to pay a nominal fee to take the exam. This system did not work, but as the decision was made, it would now have to be enforced. Whether or not this would encourage attendance was disputed.

### Extract 8.3

#### C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

- (1) **Barry:** What are we going to do? Threaten them? Bully them?
- (2) **Julia:** No.
- (3) **Peter:** Yeah it gets kind of <E> laughing </E>.  
<E> some laughter </E>
- (4) **Barry:** Are you supposed to go down on your hands and knees? Bribe them? Give them back their two pesos?  
<E> laughter </E>
- (5) **Kate:** What what well we’re powerless really.

While Julia responds seriously to Barry’s joking suggestion that they *threaten* or *bully* the students, Peter’s laughing support of Barry’s utterance provokes some laughter, as does the exaggeration that Barry follows up with, warming to his theme, that they *bribe them*, or *give them back their two pesos*. This last reference to the



- (2) **Steve:** What do they call him? <E> said in a posh voice <E>  
Bernard?  
<E> **laughter** <E>
- (3) **Susan:** ‘Shall we shall we say am we’ll go sailing at around two. Twoish’.

Humour which is directed against the organisation in this data is indicative of a ‘them versus us’ dynamic and in this case constructs both the other departments in the university and the students as out-groups. What is interesting is that, on the one hand, as we can see in Extract 8.2, if the administration makes a decision that could affect their students negatively, the teachers close ranks against the administration, and yet, during their meetings, the teachers also frequently direct humour against the students. In some ways, it is a safe way of framing negative evaluations, but it is also a safe way of presenting professional problems or failures. In Extract 8.6, the teacher is talking about a student who has just joined the class and has clearly been placed in the wrong class. Having the student in her class that morning has been very frustrating, and she is venting some of that frustration as part of the weekly placement meeting.

#### Extract 8.6

##### C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

- (1) **Niamh:** He’s [he has] no comprehension. He doesn’t understand what I ask him  
<E> **ironically** <E> he understands because I’m standing in front of him  
that I’m asking him if he understands.  
<E> **laughter** <E>  
You know.
- (2) **Ciarán:** Okay.
- (3) **Siobhán:** Oh God <E> **laughs** <E>.
- (4) **Michaela:** He has no idea.
- (5) **Siobhán:** Bad scene.

Ciarán as the acting DoS accepts her evaluation of the student’s comprehension but offers no other support whereas the other teachers in the exchange support not only her humorous retelling of the situation in the class but also offer sympathy by echoing what she has said *he has no idea*, and by summarising the situation as a *bad scene*. It is in no way unusual for the students to be the butt of humour as Extracts 8.7 and 8.8 further show, and there is a sense in which these situations are accepted, through the laughter which supports them, as occupational hazards that all the teachers recognise.

**Extract 8.7****C-MELT04 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Sally:** What's her name?  
 (2) **Ciarán:** Fugit?  
 (3) **Sally:** Fergit yeah.  
 (4) **Ciarán:** Yep.  
 (5) **Sally:** She's a bit difficult. She's a bit cross lookin'.  
 <E> laughter </E>  
 She just sat in the class looking <E> makes a face </E>.  
 <E> laughter </E>

The way that Sally talks about her student is completely acceptable in the meeting, and these sorts of characterisations are common in the corpus. Another example occurs when two of the teachers, Ciara and Emma, team-teach a class and are talking about two new students who have just started. One of them, Mariana, has been placed adequately, but is not a positive addition to the class:

**Extract 8.8****C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Ciara:** And just Mariana is a bit moody.  
 (2) **Emma:** Yeah <E> laughs </E> a bit limited as far as personality goes.  
 <E> laughter </E>

That is not to say that the teachers only report negatively on students as Extract 8.9 shows:

**Extract 8.9****C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Ciarán:** The new one? Aimée?  
 (2) **Ciara:** She's grand she's eh very good actually.  
 (3) **Emma:** Yeah.  
 (4) **Ciara:** She's only sixteen or something she was saying but her comprehension is great. She's just a little shy on her first day. But she'll be fine.

The meetings provide a forum for the teachers to talk about students in a way that helps them to go about the business of running effective classes, but also to provide them with an opportunity to vent some of the inevitable frustrations engendered in working

with people. Humour is clearly an effective means of doing this, and there is no point at which it is not supported with knowing laughter, or a sympathetic remark.

The following exchange also highlights the complete acceptability of making humorously negative comments, and the purpose they serve in the meetings:

#### Extract 8.10

##### C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

- (1) **Ciarán:** So anyone to go down?  
 (2) **Michaela:** No but it would cheer us up a lot if you could tell us when Juan is leaving.  
       <\$/E> **laughter** </E>  
 (3) **Siobhán:** That's exactly what I wanted to know.  
 (4) **Ciarán:** <\$/E> **laughing** </E> I'll check that out for ye.  
 (5) **Siobhán:** Please do <\$/E> **laughs** </E>.  
 (6) **Michaela:** It would make it worth the time.  
 (7) **Siobhán:** Oh he's unbearable. He's unbearable.  
 (8) **Ciarán:** I think actually he wants you for two hours private. I was only joking.  
 (9) **Siobhán:** <\$/E> **laughs** </E> I would say oh well depends how much <\$/E> **laughs** </E> maybe all it would take would be a bribe <\$/E> **laughs** </E>.  
       <\$/E> **laughter** </E>

Part of the humour near the end of the exchange is based on Ciarán's quip that not only does Siobhán have to put up with an 'unbearable' student in class, but may also have to teach him one-to-one two hours a week. Siobhán retorts that *maybe all it would take would be a bribe* to convince her to teach him. This allusion to money is a source of humour – perhaps because English language teaching is seen as more a vocational 'labour of love', than a career that is well paid.

A similar allusion to money is also evident in the highly subversive humour derived from the following comment made by a teacher at the end of what has been a difficult meeting. As previously mentioned, in México student attendance is an intractable problem in the English department, and the teachers have been discussing at great length how they can motivate the students to attend classes, as well as the sort of excuses they will accept for absences. The meeting has reached something of an impasse in this discussion of acceptable excuses for absences:

**Extract 8.11****C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Jack:** They have to get their hair done or go to the dentist.  
<\$E> laughter </\$E>
- (2) **Barry:** It's a grey area.
- (3) **Jenny:** But we get paid anyway.  
<\$E> prolonged laughter </\$E>

The laughter that follows *but we get paid anyway* goes on for twenty or thirty seconds – far longer than laughter anywhere else in the corpus, presumably because of the extremely subversive nature of the comment, and perhaps because ‘a joke is funnier if one likes the choice of target’ (Kotthoff, 2006: 275). It is interpreted here as subversive due to the fact that salary and remuneration are not considered principal aims in English language teaching. The teachers in the study are all dedicated professionals, and the subversive tenor of the laughter and humour they produce in the exchanges discussed provide a legitimate means of criticising the institution and one another, venting their frustrations and, consequently, serve a therapeutic function. The relief provided by this type of humour is often essential to maintaining collegiality, and so even though the comment is subversive, the laughter reinforces solidarity. When the teachers need to talk about negative happenings in the class, it is often done in a play frame (Coates, 2007). The following extract (Extract 8.12) illustrates a teacher explicitly taking up a play frame to help a teacher vent this frustration. The previous talk has been about a student who has become moody and problematic in the class and has been affecting the class dynamic.

**Extract 8.12****C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

[Note: <\$O> ... </\$O> indicate an overlapped utterance]

- (1) **Nicola:** He was always smiling <\$O26> yeah and it's not very </\$O26> I dunno I feel fairly frustrated </\$H> by that class this morning. It really was.
- (2) **Ciara:** <\$O26> It was probably after I had him in class <\$E> laughs </\$E> <\$O26> now.  
[...]
- (3) **Nicola:** Just very a very difficult class to get going this morning.
- (4) **Michaela:** “So does anyone?”
- (5) **Nicola:** Yeah <\$E> laughs </\$E>.  
<\$E> laughter </\$E>
- (6) **Michaela:** <\$E> ironically </\$E> Great.

Nicola reports feeling *frustrated* by the student and Ciara supports her by suggesting that perhaps the fault was hers (Ciara's) as she had had the student for class first. After Nicola's explanation of how the class as a whole was *very hard to get going*, Michaela moves into a play frame to create a picture of a helpless teacher trying to motivate a lacklustre class. This supports Nicola's story of how the class was difficult and she responds positively by laughing, which provokes collective laughter. As an episode that highlights the potential of humour and laughter to attend to and protect professional face, this extract is enlightening.

In Extract 8.13, the teachers continue to talk about the student that is in Nicola's class who is uncharacteristically sullen in comparison to other Korean students – elsewhere, one of the teachers has averred that usually Koreans are fairly *happy-go-lucky*.

**Extract 8.13**

**C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Niamh:** Who's that? Isn't he some form of like Chinese Korean?  
 (2) **Nicola:** That's no excuse though.  
 <SE> laughter </SE>

Commenting on how nationality affects how students behave in a classroom environment may seem like a risky subject professionally; however, as we see with Extracts 8.8 and 8.9 personality and nationality traits can impact on the classroom environment and, as such, are fair subjects for comment. In Extract 8.14, the humorous episode concerns making fun of Chinese students' habit of changing their own names to English names. Chinese students often do this even though they are not necessarily consistent with the names they use and the changing of names on the register/inconsistency with school's official documentation can cause administrative headaches. In this extract, over a series of turns, the teachers build up quite an elaborate humorous sequence involving a fantasy sequence, a trend that Hay (1995) notes in humour amongst friends:

**Extract 8.14**

**C-MELT05**

- (1) **Ciarán:** Who's Patrick now?

- (2) **Maureen:** Em. Li Be.  
 (3) **Siobhán:** Li Be?  
 <E> laughter </E>  
 (4) **Ciarán:** Oh that's Patrick?  
 (5) **Bríd:** You know the way they change the names.  
 [...]  
 (8) **Siobhán:** He can't make his mind up.  
 (9) **Bríd:** <E> as if she is choosing something, suggesting name is chosen randomly  
 <E> Oh yeah Patrick.  
 (10) **Siobhán:** He told me last week his name was Michael.  
 <E> laughter </E>  
 (11) **Bríd:** Compulsive liar as well.  
 (12) **Ciarán:** He wasn't happy with Michael.  
 (13) **Siobhán:** Maybe that's his confirmation name or something.  
 <E> laughter </E>  
 (14) **Ciarán:** Confirmation name.  
 (15) **Nicola:** He was calling himself Martin initially.  
 (16) **Bríd:** Oh really.  
 <E> laughter </E>

As they try to identify the student and whether or not he needs to be moved from the class that he is in, the teachers suggest humorous reasons that Li Be has changed his name several times since enrolling in the school. The first suggestion is that the name is randomly chosen (Bríd's turn (9)). After Siobhán reports that *last week his name was Michael* and Bríd jokes that the student is changing his name because he is a *compulsive liar*, Ciarán suggests that *he wasn't happy with Michael*, prompting Siobhán to suggest that *maybe it's his confirmation name or something*. They all laugh at this because of the incongruity of a Chinese student having a confirmation name; confirmation being a ritual that is particular to Christian religions, part of the Roman Catholic ritual, one that many of these teachers will have been through, involves taking an additional middle name. In fact, the humour in Siobhán's comment indexes primarily the national character of the group of teachers in the meeting (without which, the comment would not be perceived as funny). These sequences reflect how the teachers use subversive humour to talk about things that are frustrating (as in Extract 8.6 and 8.10, for example), faintly ridiculous (as in Extract 8.14), threatening in some way to their professional status (as in Extract 8.10) or unsympathetic towards the students (for example, Extract 8.6).

In the following extract, (Extract 8.15), there is a subversive element to the humour, but also a sense in which it functions to relieve frayed tempers at the end of a meeting that, rather than resolving an issue, created more administrative problems.

**Extract 8.15****C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Olivia:** Have we achieved what we came to achieve?  
 (2) **Anna:** Got a date or something?  
 <E> laughter <E>  
 (3) **Olivia:** No just confused here.  
 <E> laughter <E>  
 (4) **Jack:** <E> ironically <E> I thought the meeting was about  
 Monday.  
 <E> Laughter <E>

Anna's playful *got a date or something* is interpreted both as a comment on the formality of Olivia's *have we achieved what we came to achieve?* and as jocular abuse (*do you need to get out of work because you're meeting your boyfriend?*). The laughter that occurs in response leads Olivia to join in and humorously explain that she is trying to summarise what the group has decided because she is *just confused here*. Jack's wry *I thought the meeting was about Monday* confirms that she has every reason to be confused and implicitly criticises the course of the meeting. The overall purpose the laughter serves can be said to be at once subversive, in that the activities of the group are being negatively commented on, as well as reinforcing in that it re-establishes group harmony. Reinforcing humour, discussed in the next section, is similarly dualistic in character as it may well reinforce solidarity but it can also reinforce power relationships.

**8.6 Reinforcing humour**

In Mexico, the HoD's use of humour is occasionally used as a means of downtoning his power status within the group, as is evidenced in Extract 8.16. He has been working with three other teachers on a pilot course and in this meeting they are reporting back on their progress. He has taught an ESP course and has encountered what he feels are setbacks which are familiar to all teachers. He invokes this commonality of experience during his report:

**Extract 8.16****C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 2: México]**

- Peter:** And eh basically what I worked with them was the [name of publisher] book on teaching computers to students and it's about as dry as you could probably get. You know it's very hard to get make oscilloscopes and analogue systems sound very very interesting.  
 <E> **laughter** <E>  
 Eh related to kind of typical to eh to academic texts and the language they had problems with invariably was language from ordinary English or everyday English you know. So em I'm glad tis [it is] over.  
 <E> **laughter** <E>  
 I'm sure they are too.

His humorous retelling is responded to with supportive, knowing laughter from the teachers on his staff, as he is reinforcing his identity as a teacher like the others in the group and deflecting attention from his power status within the organisation. This is also emphasised by his stating that he is sure that the students are glad the course is over too, suggesting that despite his being the 'boss' that he has the same classroom problems as any other teacher. Although he uses this type of humour to align himself with the teachers as a group, he also uses reinforcing humour to other ends.

Reinforcing humour can also include humour which is used repressively, or to control others, therefore this aspect of it can reasonably be restricted to those who have an interest in maintaining power. This tactic is evident in Extract 8.17. Peter is discussing the issue of allocating mentors to new staff, as one teacher has just joined the group and two more new teachers are expected the following week. There have been staffing shortages, so the HoD has been taking extra classes. Gaby is the new teacher in the group.

**Extract 8.17****C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

- (1) **Peter:** And did we get anybody for you?  
 (2) **Gaby:** You were for me Peter.  
 <E> **laughter** <E>  
 (3) **Peter:** No I'm supposed to be getting out of work okay right.

The group react to Gaby's comment with laughter as there is an element of double entendre in relation to Peter being 'for' Gaby. Although Peter also laughs at this comment, his next comment is quite unambiguous, despite his tone of voice being playful. This is further strengthened by the presence of the boundary markers *okay right*, indicating that he is exercising his right to move the interaction on and have no more discussion on whether or not he will be acting as mentor to Gaby. There is a surface sense of self-deprecation here also. Generally speaking, a boss would not be expected to represent himself as wanting to 'get out' of work, but earlier in this sequence Peter referred to the fact that he has been covering classes whilst awaiting the new teachers, so the implication of this ostensibly self-deprecatory comment is that Peter has more important work to do, thus distancing himself from the lower-status teachers whose work it is. This in effect reinforces the existing power relationships in the department. This is also evident in the strategies he employs to give directives, illustrated by Extract 8.18:

**Extract 8.18**

**C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]**

**[Head of Department speaking; Note: *aviso* = announcement]**

So just a few quick little *avisos* as they say in Spanish and then we'll get down to the main item on the agenda eh where are they oh God. Right eh number one eh one of the eh this is kind of a general issue by the way ... Eh about people taking days off eh just I want you to know that personally I have absolutely no problem about it taking days off... I kind of feel myself that even though sometimes we can't always do it that just sending them to the lab isn't the most productive way of doing it. Now it is a good way of getting it done <\$E> **ironically** </\$E>.

<\$E> **Laughter** </\$E>

By the humorously ironic way he says *Now it is a good way of getting it done* (with the emphasis on *is* and *done*), he softens the force of the directive, and its implied criticism. The pill is also sweetened by his opening reassurance that *this is kind of a general issue* rather than directed against the actual teachers who were taking an inordinate amount of time off. His directive is heavily hedged (*kind of a general issue, kind of feel myself*), but the laughter that he invites with the ironic tone of *now*

*it is a good way of getting it done* breaks the tension, emphasises his understanding of how sometimes best practice is sacrificed to practicality, thus underlining his solidarity, as a teacher himself, with the other teachers.

Although reinforcing solidarity is important to the DoS/HoD, they also use humour as a subtle and non-threatening way of highlighting their power in these meetings. Sometimes this is necessary to get meetings back on track where a distraction has occurred, as is clear from Extract 8.19 below:

**Extract 8.19**

**C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]**

- (1) **Rachel:** Oh and Sally I have an e-mail for you in my office whenever you come up down for it. Daniel says hello.  
<\$E> **A few speakers say ‘ooh’ then laugh** </\$E>
- (2) **Ciarán:** Well well well Sally.  
<\$E> **laughter** </\$E>  
So. Where were we in this exciting meeting?  
<\$E> **laughter** </\$E>

Rather than explicitly saying ‘Right. Back to work’, Ciarán, the acting DoS, uses humour to gently steer the meeting. This is arguably a more successful strategy than being more forceful would have been. While some alternative interpretation could be admitted for many of these extracts, what is clear is the multifaceted ways that humour is used in the meetings. It is highly strategic in a context that, by its nature, requires speakers to be tactical discursively. Humour and laughter can highlight existing solidarity structures in the workplaces described here, but it also underpins that solidarity, as well as allowing for its creation.

### **8.7 Conclusion: Humour and the CoP**

Glenn (2003: 30) provides an interesting summary of the significance of laughter, and by extension, humour, in relation to any given group when he says that it:

...provides, at least temporarily, a group unity or awareness, a psychic connection of all the laughers. It can be induced as a means of displaying this group togetherness. It allows for the expression and maintenance of group values and standards, via the subjects and situations to which it refers. It can boost morale and ease internal hostilities and differences. Laughing at people or things external to the group can strengthen boundaries, solidifying members in their group identity against outsiders.

The idea of laughter inducing a ‘psychic connection’ resonates with Turner’s (1995 [1969]) usage of the term *communitas* to describe a fleeting feeling of communion, which comes as a recognition of an ‘essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no society*’ (1995: 97). The sharing of laughter strengthens community bonds but also is criterial for the CoP. As Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) argue situational humour displays relational identity (and hence, I would argue, CoP membership), and, indeed, has a special role as a speech genre that accomplishes this ‘because it is culture-specific; that is, it requires, more than any other speech genre, in-group knowledge’ (*ibid*: 292). Cutting (2000) and Richards (2006) both highlight humour as a significant component of their studies of particular groups; Cutting analyses how humour changes over the lifetime of the group, Richards how humour is a distinctive part of organisational life. Wenger (1998) includes it as part of a CoP’s shared repertoire and, in fact, an indicator that a CoP has formed.

When the teachers wish to vent frustrations, resist institutional strictures or criticise (or mock) students, the humorous frame provides a way of doing so that will not contravene the professional code. In addition, using humour to express these things means that their relational identity is strengthened rather than fractured; therefore, I propose that humour is the preferred mode for threats to professional face. This is a collaborative effort as professional face is a collective construct. When it is vulnerable; it requires the protection that humour and laughter provide. Humour is criterial to CoP and may even be the bedrock on which it is founded; in this respect, it provides the final piece of the puzzle for these two CoPs. In the next chapter, we will draw the threads of the discussion and the findings from each chapter together in order to provide an overview of how community and identity are expressed in these CoPs and how we might build on this research.

## Chapter Nine

# Summary and Conclusion

*Laura: Is that it? Are we finished? Can we go now?*

C-MELT02

## Summary and conclusion

Before revisiting the practical research questions that have guided this study and informed its choice of theoretical framework, one or two remarks about the nature of the interaction that we have focussed on are important to reiterate. First of all, the interaction that makes up C-MELT is from six meetings that took place in two very different teaching institutions, a private language school and a university English department, two continents and many thousands of miles apart. Moreover, this naturally-occurring language was produced during the backstage management of the esoteric business of language teaching in these locations. Therefore, one of the defining characteristics of the study is that it views teaching as an enterprise that has just *one* of its expressions in the classroom. In this, the present study is original in the domain of investigation into teachers' practices. Research that has investigated what it is that language teaching is about, and what language teachers do, has tended to focus always within the sphere of the classroom or with an eye to the classroom, as if this were the only location of a teacher's work and all other aspects of this work take place in some sort of liminal space, acknowledged but not deemed worthy of investigation. One thing that this study set out to do was to place teachers in the frame. With this in mind, the meeting interaction was recorded and transcribed and all this data stored together as C-MELT.

The primary research question, *how do these teachers use language in order to effect the explicit or esoteric business of language teaching?* was supported by the implicit question *what aspects of this language use are indicative of the existence of a community?* The hypothesis that the teachers in the workplaces represented in this study were members of a workplace community and had a 'community identity' was put to the test. The notions of *community*, and thus the identity of a community, was problematised and three influential theories of community explored, two of which have a primarily linguistic thrust, the speech community and discourse community, and one of which, the communities of practice model (CoP), focuses more on the idea of practice. Wenger (1998: 47) emphasises that the concept of practice does, of course, connote 'doing', but more than this 'it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do.' This broad notion of practice as socially constructed means that, as a theoretical framework, CoP could contain insights from

the data from the bottom-up. In addition, the potential of the CoP to provide a theoretical framework which had not been explicitly linguistically codified was seen as an opportunity to begin to operationalise it. The tripartite CoP criteria, *joint enterprise*, *mutual engagement* and *shared repertoire* were used to provide an overarching narrative for the quantitative findings generated by using corpus-based tools and the qualitative insights provided by exploring these findings in some depth.

Starting with a helicopter view of the particular site of mutual engagement that is foregrounded in this data, the meetings themselves, discourse analytic methods were blended with corpus tools to explain how this engagement is successfully managed. Conversation analysis, especially, accounted for the way in which the interactional architecture, and thus the shape of mutual engagement in the joint enterprise, was supported linguistically. The entry-point to the data was via the topics that made up the implicit or explicit agendas of the meetings and these, in turn, led us to a particularly illuminating topic within the meetings in Sub-corpus 2 [Ireland]: the negotiation of student placement. Placing students according to linguistic ability is a task that will resonate with most language teachers and the language that we see the teachers using is deceptively basic, underpinned as it is with a vast reservoir of pooled expert knowledge from within and beyond the community. According to Tsui (2005: 168), expertise in teaching has been seen as embedded in expert action, as tacit, intuitive and automatic. What we bring into relief during this particular analysis is linguistically retrievable ‘knowing-in-action’ (Schön, 1983) and a highly salient aspect of the CoP’s shared repertoire. The collaborative orientation to the smooth running in the meeting, evident in the way that speakers thread their turns into the previous turns and use particular turn initiators that attest the interweaving of contributions was shown. In this analysis, C-MELT’s internal validity was supported in the congruence of its findings with Tao’s (2003) findings from casual conversation. A sequential view of interaction, propounded by conversation analysts, was apposite in relation to the ecology of the meetings in C-MELT, with particular patterns of engagement in (openings) and disengagement from (closings) the joint enterprise evident.

Context and identity had been problematised from the outset and the symbiotic relationship between the two was next addressed. One of the ways in which context is coded into language has been theorised through the linguistic phenomenon of deixis,

and this provided the next stage of data exploration. As identity was in question, pronoun usage seemed to be a logical first step. An inherent ambiguity in even the simplest *you* in the data led to a systematic coding of *you* and *we* in relation to the utterance and discourse contexts in which they occurred. A matrix of identities was generated and an elaborated view of the participant framework of the meetings made possible. A view of the nexus of competing identities, their relationship with practices and the negotiation of practices was made possible in the pursuit of something which is, after all, just one aspect of deictic reference. A distinctive aspect of the CoPs' shared repertoire was emergent in both the exploration of how mutual engagement facilitated the joint enterprise (as in the exploration of the meeting above) and also in the ways in which identities were invoked and navigated: a mutual engagement in certain ways of expressing ideas, suggestions, directives, criticisms and frustrations.

As Wenger (1998: 74) emphasises, 'community maintenance is an intrinsic part of any practice' and distinctive ways of engaging, which have been subsumed into, and therefore constitute part of, the CoPs' shared repertoire (*ibid*: 152), were explored. These aspects of the CoPs' shared repertoires were labelled 'managing and maintaining the community'. As a study of workplace CoPs, it is not possible to sidestep the issue of how power is instantiated in the talk or how solidarity is re-established once it has been. The position that power and solidarity are mutually entailed was adopted and politeness in language, manifest in hedging, explored in relation to the CoPs. Norms for engagement also bring out the CoP's shared repertoire and therefore help to build the picture of how the CoPs have learned to interact, 'how to treat each other and how to work together' (*ibid.*) in the pursuit of their joint enterprise. Another norm for managing and maintaining the community in both workplaces, humour and laughter, was explored. Humour and laughter have a criterial role to play in the way CoPs interact, indicative as they are of a 'psychic connection' (Glenn, 2003) and a multifunctional means of bonding and criticising. In the present study, humour and laughter have shown themselves a means of not only collaboratively constructing shared professional face but also of attacking it. Playing with professional face emerges as a way of dealing with the vicissitudes of being a teacher in general, and engaging as a teacher in the individual institutions which host the CoPs in particular.

One limitation of this study is that it does not return to the participants to enquire of them their motivations for certain spoken actions or explanations of what they meant, relying instead on quantitative significance and researcher interpretation. Relying on participant knowledge is, however, problematic. Senior (2006: 248) points out the limitations of asking teachers about their classroom practices as ‘any information provided by informants who are describing their thoughts and actions in naturalistic settings must be treated with caution’ in any case, and for a number of reasons:

- teachers who agree to participate in research are generally confident in their abilities and articulate in sharing their positive experiences of language teaching;
- when teachers provide information about classroom actions, it may be tempting to be economical with the truth, or to invent a reason for doing something because they have forgotten why it was done in the first place or they may have acted on instinct;
- pedagogic world views may change day to day.

The above are in relation to interrogating classroom teaching practices; however, similar drawbacks in terms of asking teachers about their engagement in meetings can be extrapolated. In relation to politeness studies, Mills (2003) has also noted that consulting interactants is not necessarily a guarantee of uncovering intentions. Nevertheless, interpreting naturally-occurring language and practices must always be accompanied by the caveat that this is just what it is: an interpretation. Future research could use participant interviews as a method of triangulation to enhance interpretation of the spoken data and compare stated intentions and opinions with the empirical evidence of the texts.

In relation to the mega-corpora currently available, C-MELT is a minnow. This poses the problem that quantitative findings cannot be generalised, except in the most tentative way. This has been mitigated by framing quantitative findings in their context and, where possible, comparing them against larger, established corpora. Balanced against this criticism as well is the fact that a small corpus investigated by a single researcher can be mined extensively and any quantitative patterns explored in

context. Using corpus tools was a way of gaining access to patterns in the data and building a corpus had the benefit, for this researcher at least, of disembodiment of the data when an objective perspective was required.

For a study such as the present one, purely bottom-up analyses would produce nothing but a sense of atomisation were it not for a good theoretical framework within which to frame the threads of narrative provided by the findings. The CoP framework is particularly appropriate for the study of workplace interaction as it is loose enough to operationalise in relation to any workplace grouping, emphasises the local, and, as illustrated by the linguistic meta-frameworks applied to the data at each stage of the present study, admits multiple interpretations. The criteria Wenger theorises, mutual engagement which provides the opportunity for a joint enterprise to be pursued, and a shared repertoire which is the result of engagement in this joint enterprise, is a robust and yet compact hermeneutic. A logical first line for further research would therefore be a comparison of other meetings from other English language teaching schools in pursuit of a further fleshing out of what the global ELT community of practice knows and does, for many reasons but certainly in response to Candlin and Sarangi's (2006) assertion that what we need in research into professional practices is a collection of good case studies. More importantly, I would suggest that this research be done by language teachers or professionals in the field of language teaching.

Much of the research on institutional discourse has been carried out by outsiders to the institutions and their implicated professions and while it must be acknowledged that there are certain merits to this, objectivity, insofar as that is ever possible, being one of them, language teachers are in a better position to interpret data from the ELT workplace. The data and findings from this study are of particular interest to the ELT community and of particular relevance to teacher education. From a purely organisational point of view, most teacher education programmes do not include any training or support on institutional duties, such as team-teaching and meetings, which also form part of the life of a practising language teacher. As Kelchtermans (2000) has pointed out, teachers must also deal with the political realities of their positions and therefore the findings from the present study as well as the spoken data itself could be used as materials for professional development activities. In terms of future directions for research, the data could also be built on and complemented by focussing on aspects

of sociolinguistic variation, such as age and gender; features of female-speak and male-speak could be compared, for example. There is also scope for a comparison of the impact of the type of institution on the objectives of the meetings in addition to a direct comparison of Sub-corpus 1 and Sub-corpus 2. Communities are bound together by all types of linguistic practices and therefore further research into communities could use the indicators of community isolated here as starting points for the investigation of other communities. In this way, a cumulative repertoire of indicators that describe how communities signify their identities in language could be constructed.

Many types of practices, communicative or otherwise, make up the work of language teachers. I would suggest that further research of naturally-occurring language, for example, from blogs or informal conversation, which pertain to the backstage practices of being a teacher, be investigated. This would extend the purview of language teaching beyond the classroom, and provide some life and colour for the picture of the liminal spaces in the language teaching professionals' life. These are the places where the professional mask that is presented to students is put to one side and a new one, used to do the hidden work of teaching, assumed; the backstage spaces where professional successes and failures are discussed, critiqued and laughed about and bonds of community and professional identity forged.

Embarking on the present study was a direct result of professional curiosity. As a teacher, I felt that there was as much complexity to my job outside of the classroom in my professional community as there was to it inside the classroom. Straying outside the customary boundaries of research on the enterprise of English language teaching has had far-reaching benefits for me as a teacher, and as a linguist. Part of the tension for practitioners who research their own profession is that their researcher identity may be incompatible with their professional identity, or may, in fact, compromise it in some way. As I come to the end of this process, I realise that my professional identity has, on the contrary, been strengthened. In the discipline and rigour of linguistic analysis, my professional curiosity, which remains as keen, has found a promising direction.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Corpus of the Meetings of English Language Teachers (C-MELT)

### Detailed description

ID	Location	Tokens	No. of Speakers	Speaker Details	Country of birth	Sex	Age
CMELT01	México	12,784	10	<\$1> Peter [HoD] <sup>54</sup>	Ireland	M	50s
				<\$2> Kate	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$3> Julia	England	F	30s
				<\$4> Barry	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$5> Zoe	England	F	30s
				<\$6> Jenny	Uganda	F	40s
				<\$7> Keith	England	M	20s
				<\$8> Laura	New Zealand	F	30s
				<\$9> Samantha	U.S.A.	F	30s
				<\$10> Rita	U.S.A.	F	60s

CMELT02	México	7,163	11	<\$1> Julia <b>Chair</b>	England	F	30s
				<\$2> Barry	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$3> Kate	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$4> Rita	U.S.A.	F	60s
				<\$5> Samantha	U.S.A.	F	30s
				<\$6> Olivia	Scotland	F	30s
				<\$7> Jenny	Uganda	F	40s
				<\$8> Laura	New Zealand	F	30s
				<\$9> Jack	Jamaica	M	30s
				<\$10> Zoe	England	F	30s
				<\$11> Anna	Canada	F	50s

CMELT03	México	9,876	10	<\$1> Rita	U.S.A.	F	50s
				<\$2> Olivia	Scotland	F	30s
				<\$3> Peter [HoD]	Ireland	M	50s
				<\$4> Julia	England	F	30s
				<\$5> Jack	Jamaica	M	30s
				<\$6> Anna	Canada	F	50s
				<\$7> Lucy	U.S.A.	F	30s
				<\$8> Samantha	U.S.A.	F	30s
				<\$9> Harry	U.S.A.	M	40s
				<\$10> Stephen	Australia	M	40s

<sup>54</sup> HoD = Head of Department – University.

ID	Location	Tokens	No. of Speakers	Speaker Details	Country of birth	Sex	Age
CMELT04	Ireland	3,707	9	<\$1> Tommy	England	M	40s
				<\$2> Ciarán	Ireland	M	30s
				<\$3> Aoife [DoS] <sup>55</sup>	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$4> Niall	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$5> Sally	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$6> Siobhán	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$7> Daniel	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$8> Niamh	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$9> Michaela	Canada	F	40s

CMELT05	Ireland	3,604	11	<\$1> Bríd	Ireland	F	40s
				<\$2> Sally	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$3> Ciarán <b>Acting DoS</b>	Ireland	M	30s
				<\$4> Siobhán	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$5> Niamh	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$6> Maureen	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$8> Ciara	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$9> Tommy	England	M	40s
				<\$10> Chris	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$11> Michaela	Canada	F	40s

CMELT06	Ireland	2,841	14	<\$1> Sally	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$2> Maureen	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$3> Siobhán	Ireland	F	30s
				<\$4> Ciarán <b>Acting DoS</b>	Ireland	M	30s
				<\$5> Daniel	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$6> Tommy	England	M	40s
				<\$7> Rachel <b>Admin.</b>	U.S.A.	F	30s
				<\$8> Michaela	Canada	F	40s
				<\$9> Caoimhe	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$10> Ciara	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$11> Emma	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$12> Seán	Ireland	M	20s
				<\$13> Emilia	Ireland	F	20s
				<\$14> Chris	Ireland	M	20s

<b>Total tokens</b>	<b>39,975</b>
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<sup>55</sup> DoS = Director of Studies – Private language school.

### Appendix B: Wordlist for 100 most frequent items in C-MELT

N	Word	Frequency	%
1.	<i>THE</i>	1,364	3.41
2.	<i>TO</i>	1,123	2.81
3.	<i>I</i>	1,117	2.79
4.	<i>AND</i>	1,084	2.71
5.	<i>YEAH</i>	824	2.06
6.	<i>THAT</i>	799	2.00
7.	<i>OF</i>	732	1.83
8.	<i>YOU</i>	726	1.82
9.	<i>A</i>	720	1.80
10.	<i>IT</i>	693	1.73
11.	<i>WE</i>	582	1.46
12.	<i>THEY</i>	580	1.45
13.	<i>IN</i>	506	1.27
14.	<i>SO</i>	475	1.19
15.	<i>IS</i>	408	1.02
16.	<i>BUT</i>	404	1.01
17.	<i>HAVE</i>	385	0.96
18.	<i>DO</i>	380	0.95
19.	<i>THINK</i>	363	0.91
20.	<i>BE</i>	328	0.82
21.	<i>KNOW</i>	316	0.79
22.	<i>IF</i>	301	0.75
23.	<i>JUST</i>	294	0.74
24.	<i>WHAT</i>	288	0.72
25.	<i>FOR</i>	280	0.70
26.	<i>OR</i>	272	0.68
27.	<i>THEM</i>	264	0.66
28.	<i>IT'S</i>	261	0.65
29.	<i>ONE</i>	255	0.64
30.	<i>NOT</i>	242	0.61
31.	<i>WAS</i>	234	0.59
32.	<i>THEN</i>	218	0.55
33.	<i>OKAY</i>	217	0.54
34.	<i>WOULD</i>	215	0.54

35.	<i>NO</i>	209	0.52
36.	<i>LIKE</i>	208	0.52
37.	<i>THAT'S</i>	201	0.50
38.	<i>DON'T</i>	200	0.50
39.	<i>AT</i>	196	0.49
40.	<i>WELL</i>	193	0.48
41.	<i>ON</i>	189	0.47
42.	<i>THIS</i>	187	0.47
43.	<i>THERE</i>	183	0.46
44.	<i>MEAN</i>	182	0.46
45.	<i>STUDENTS</i>	180	0.45
46.	<i>ABOUT</i>	178	0.45
47.	<i>ARE</i>	173	0.43
48.	<i>GOING</i>	171	0.43
49.	<i>KIND</i>	159	0.40
50.	<i>RIGHT</i>	156	0.39
51.	<i>WITH</i>	154	0.39
52.	<i>AS</i>	153	0.38
53.	<i>GO</i>	152	0.38
54.	<i>THEY'RE</i>	150	0.38
55.	<i>CAN</i>	148	0.37
56.	<i>ALL</i>	146	0.37
57.	<i>CLASS</i>	143	0.36
58.	<i>COULD</i>	143	0.36
59.	<i>TWO</i>	142	0.36
60.	<i>UP</i>	142	0.36
61.	<i>BECAUSE</i>	140	0.35
62.	<i>KET</i>	134	0.34
63.	<i>PET</i>	134	0.34
64.	<i>OH</i>	131	0.33
65.	<i>GET</i>	125	0.31
66.	<i>REALLY</i>	121	0.30
67.	<i>SAY</i>	121	0.30
68.	<i>SOME</i>	118	0.30
69.	<i>SHE</i>	116	0.29
70.	<i>WERE</i>	116	0.29
71.	<i>THREE</i>	115	0.29
72.	<i>ENGLISH</i>	110	0.28

73.	<i>MAYBE</i>	109	0.27
74.	<i>VERY</i>	107	0.27
75.	<i>HE</i>	106	0.27
76.	<i>FROM</i>	105	0.26
77.	<i>HOW</i>	105	0.26
78.	<i>I'M</i>	105	0.26
79.	<i>HAD</i>	104	0.26
80.	<i>THERE'S</i>	104	0.26
81.	<i>EM</i>	102	0.26
82.	<i>LAUGHTER</i>	102	0.26
83.	<i>SEMESTER</i>	100	0.25
84.	<i>OUT</i>	97	0.24
85.	<i>WHO</i>	96	0.24
86.	<i>DOING</i>	94	0.24
87.	<i>EXAM</i>	93	0.23
88.	<i>WANT</i>	91	0.23
89.	<i>WILL</i>	91	0.23
90.	<i>FIRST</i>	90	0.23
91.	<i>EH</i>	87	0.22
92.	<i>GOOD</i>	86	0.22
93.	<i>OTHER</i>	86	0.22
94.	<i>BOOK</i>	84	0.21
95.	<i>SHOULD</i>	84	0.21
96.	<i>AN</i>	83	0.21
97.	<i>PEOPLE</i>	82	0.21
98.	<i>THEIR</i>	82	0.21
99.	<i>SOMETHING</i>	81	0.21
100.	<i>TIME</i>	81	0.21

## **Appendix C: Glossary of profession- and institution-specific terms used by participants in the meetings**

### **1. Cambridge ESOL General English qualifications**

Cambridge ESOL is a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge, and part of the Cambridge Assessment group. It administers and co-ordinates a large range of examination and tests which help the students that take them gain entrance to English-speaking universities or colleges, improve their employment prospects, or simply act as a measure of progress.

The main suite of General English qualifications are most frequently referred to by the speakers in Sub-corpus 1.

<b><i>CPE</i></b>	Certificate of Proficiency in English
<b><i>CAE</i></b>	Certificate in Advanced English
<b><i>FCE</i></b>	First Certificate in English
<b><i>PET</i></b>	Preliminary English Test
<b><i>KET</i></b>	Key English Test
<b><i>BEC</i></b>	Business English Certificates

### **2. Academic English Examinations**

The speakers also refer to the academic English examinations below:

<b><i>TOEFL</i></b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language
<b><i>IELTS</i></b>	International English Language Testing System

### **3. Student level**

The teachers in Sub-corpus 2 [Ireland] frequently refer to levels from the point of view of how many ELT publications define their target users: *Beginner*; *Elementary*; *Pre-intermediate*; *Intermediate*; *Upper intermediate*; *Advanced*; *Proficiency* (see, for example, the *Headway* series of student's books by Liz and John Soars, which run from *Headstart* (beginner level) to *Headway Advanced*). We can conceptualise these descriptors as roughly fitting in with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages (as illustrated in the figure below) thus:

Beginner:	A1/A2 level
Pre-intermediate:	A2/B1
Intermediate:	B1/B2
Upper intermediate:	B2
Advanced:	C1
Proficiency	C2

The speakers in Subcorpus 1 use the popular Cambridge ESOL and academic English acronyms to describe the levels of their students and the examinations themselves are plotted in relation to one another in the figure below.

CEFR	General English	Academic	Professional				
Mastery C2		<b>CPE</b> Certificate of Proficiency in English	<b>IELTS</b>			<b>BULATS</b>	
Effective Operational Proficiency C1		<b>CAE</b> Certificate in Advanced English		<b>BEC Higher</b>	<b>ILEC</b>	<b>ICFE</b>	
Vantage B2		<b>FCE</b> First Certificate in English		<b>BEC Vantage</b>			
Threshold B1		<b>PET</b> Preliminary English Test		<b>BEC Preliminary</b>			
Waystage A2	<b>YLE Flyers</b>	<b>KET</b> Key English Test					
Break-through A1	<b>YLE Movers</b>						
	<b>YLE Starters</b>						
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	Cambridge Young Learners English Tests	General English	International English Language Testing System	Business English Certificates	International Legal English Certificate	International Certificate in Financial English	Business Language Testing Service

Source: <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/cefr.html>

#### 4. Institution-specific terms: Sub-corpus 1: México

The following Spanish language terms are used by the teachers in Sub-corpus 1:

1. *Definitividad*            The assessed part of a tenure application, e.g. a paper on student pronunciation by one of the teachers.
2. *Falta*                        absence from class
3. *Permiso*                    permission to be absent from class
4. *Prope*  
    *(propedéutico)*            foundation level or course
5. *Servicios Escolares*    Student Services

## Appendix D: Turn Initiators

N= 3724

TI	Occurrence	TI	Occurrence
A	17	Better	2
About	3	Between	1
Absolutely	2	Bloody ( <i>hell</i> )	1
Act	1	Boo	1
Actually	2	Bruce	1
Added	1	Bucket	1
Again	1	Business ( <i>English</i> )	1
Agreed	1	But	116
Ah	15	By	2
Aha	2	Call	1
All	6	Can ( <i>of worms</i> )	2
Alright	9	Can (modal)	3
Am	9	Can't	1
An	6	Carol	1
And	185	Carola	4
Andrea	1	Chan	1
Animals	1	Chance	1
Another	2	Change	1
Anything	1	Cheers (=thanks)	1
Anyway	1	Clara	1
Apart ( <i>from</i> )	1	Classes	1
Apple ( <i>bobbing</i> )	1	Collette	1
Arabic ( <i>guy</i> )	1	Communication	1
Are	20	Compulsive ( <i>liar</i> )	1
As	12	Confirmation ( <i>name</i> )	1
Assessment	1	Cos (=because)	11
Assign	2	Could	6
Assuming	1	Couldn't	1
At	8	Course (=of course)	1
Aw ( <i>yeah</i> )	2	Cream ( <i>dress</i> )	1
Aye [assent]	1	Dawris	1
Bad (scene)	1	D= does ( <i>false start</i> )	1
Bank Holiday	1	Deciding	1
Barm brack	1	Definitely	3
Barry	2	Depending ( <i>on</i> )	1
Basically	1	Did	6
Baudelaire	1	Didn't	1
Be	3	Dieter	1
Because	21	Different	1
Before	1	Divided	1
Begoña	1	Diving ( <i>for</i> )	1
Benefit	1	Do	16
Bet	1	Does	6

TI	Occurrence	TI	Occurrence
Doing	3	Get	1
Don't	5	Getting	1
Down	1	Give	3
Drama	1	Go	3
Dunno	1	God ( <i>yeah</i> )	1
Dwindled	1	Good	3
D'you	3	Gosh	1
Early	1	Got	1
Eh	4	Grand (=fine)	5
Either	1	Great	2
Electronic	1	Hallowe'en	1
Eleven	1	Hamed	2
Em	16	Has	3
Especially	4	Have	5
Etienne	1	He	24
Even	6	Helping	1
Everybody	1	Her	2
Everyone	1	Here	1
Exactly	8	Hernaud	1
Exam	1	He'll	1
Examples	1	He's	24
Exams	1	Hi	2
Excellent	1	Higher	2
Except	1	His	1
Expected	1	Hold	1
Extracts	1	Hmm	49
Family	1	Homogeneous	1
Fat (chance)	1	Ho= honest	1
Femke	2	Hopefully	1
Fernando	2	How	23
Files	1	Huh	2
Film	1	Hurray	1
Find	1	I	207
Fine ( <i>MRT</i> )	2	If	25
First ( <i>Certificate</i> )	1	Important	1
For	13	In	25
Fortune ( <i>telling</i> )	1	Include	1
Forty-five	3	Indeed	1
Fred	1	Initially	1
Friday	1	Instead	2
From	2	Insufficient	1
Fugit	1	Insurance	1
<\$FX>	11	Inter	1
<\$G...>	98	Intermediate	3
Gary	1	Inya	1
General	1	Is	40
Generally	1	Isabella	1

TI	Occurrence	TI	Occurrence
Isn't	1	Misunderstanding	1
It	29	Mm	61
It's	43	Money	1
I'd	5	More	4
I'll	6	Most	2
I'm	12	Moving	1
I've	6	My	2
Jeekist	1	<\$MX>	8
Jesus	3	Najlepko	1
Job	1	Next	1
Jolly ( <i>good</i> )	1	Nine	1
Joo	1	No	112
Julia	1	Nobody	3
June	2	Noelia	3
Jung	1	None	1
Just	14	Normal	1
Keep	1	Not	8
KET	3	November	1
Kind ( <i>of thing</i> )	1	Now	9
Knitting	1	Nowhere	1
Languages	1	Occurs	1
Last ( <i>week</i> )	1	Of course	3
Laugh*	24	Of	3
Leave	1	Off	2
Lee San Ten	1	Oh	98
Li Bee	4	Okay	106
Liam	1	On	5
Like	5	Once	1
List	1	One	12
Litmus ( <i>test</i> )	1	Ones	1
Look	1	Or	29
Looking	1	Organised	1
Lovely	2	Ours	1
Malvino	1	Out	1
Marco	4	Peter	1
Marie	1	Paid	1
Mathematics	1	Pardon ( <i>me</i> )	1
Maura	2	Pass	4
May	1	Patrick	1
Maybe	17	People	2
Me	4	Pepe	1
Means	1	Perfect	3
Meant	1	Perhaps	1
Melissa	1	PET	1
Met	1	Petra	2
Microwave	1	Please ( <i>do</i> )	1
Mine	4	Póilín	2

TI	Occurrence	TI	Occurrence
Pre-intermediate	1	Something	5
Prep	2	Sometimes	1
Presentation	1	Sonya	3
Previously	1	Sorry	2
Probably	2	Sort ( <i>of</i> )	1
Problem	1	Sounds ( <i>good etc.</i> )	2
Progress	1	Souvenir	1
Protection	1	Speaking ( <i>skill</i> )	2
Put	7	Start	1
Qualified	1	Still	1
Questionnaire	1	Stretching	1
Rachel	4	Strong	1
Rather (than)	1	Stuff (like that)	1
Really	8	Subversive	1
Reference	2	Sufficient	2
Register	2	Superlatives	1
Relaxing	1	Sure	5
Repeating	1	Swapping	1
Right	91	Switch	1
Rita	1	Taking	1
Room	2	Talking	1
Rudolph	2	Teach	1
Same	1	Teaching	2
Say	4	Tell	2
Scary	1	Than	2
Scenario	1	Thank ( <i>you</i> )	2
Scores	1	Thanks	4
Seán	1	That	28
See	5	That's	48
Self-access	1	The	50
Semester	1	Their	2
Send	1	Then	7
<i>Servicios escolares</i>	1	There	12
Shall	3	There'll	1
She'll	2	There's	18
She'd	1	They	44
She	23	They'll	6
She's	12	They're	13
Should	4	They've	4
Shur	1	Things ( <i>like...</i> )	1
Significantly	1	Third	1
So	105	This	11
Soli	4	Three	7
Solya	1	Throw	1
Some	4	Tippex ( <i>v.</i> )	2
Somebody's	1	Tis ( <i>=it is</i> )	1
Someone	1	To	17

TI	Occurrence	TI	Occurrence
Today	2	Wine	2
TOEFL	1	With	1
Tommy	1	Without	1
Tomorrow	1	Working	1
Too	1	Workshop	1
Totally	1	Would	5
Towards	1	Wouldn't	1
Treasure ( <i>hunt</i> )	1	Wow	3
True	2	Write	2
Two	5	Yeah	596
Ugh	1	Yep	7
Umhum	94	Yes	41
Unit	1	You	34
Unless	1	You know	18
Until	1	Your	2
Upper	1	You'll	2
Useful	2	You're	4
Using1	1	Yuko	4
Valentina	1	Zoo	5
Veruca	1	<i>Ventriloquising: '... '*</i>	15
Very	2	<i>'Title '*</i>	5
Video	2		
Visa	1		
Want	1		
Was	2		
We	48		
Weak	3		
Wednesday	1		
Well	73		
We'd	2		
We'll	2		
We're	12		
We've	1		
What	30		
Whatever	2		
What's	6		
When	9		
Where	7		
Whereas	1		
Where's	2		
Whether	1		
Which	10		
Who	9		
Whoah	1		
Who's	6		
Why	5		
Will	1		

**\* See notes on following page**

**Notes:**

1. The idea of ‘ventriloquising’ is adopted from Tannen (2006) and Tannen *et al.* (2007). In these turn openings the speaker is speaking ‘for’ another person. For example, when discussing the excuses that students give for failure to attend class, the teachers suggest the following student excuses:

**C-MELT\_02**

<\$6> You know what I mean.

<\$5> <\$G?>.

<\$7> **‘I’m just upset’.**

<\$E> Laughter <\$E>.

<\$2> That’s another one of those grey areas shall we say.

<\$3> **‘But my English class’.**

<\$9> They have to get their hair done or go to the dentist.

<\$E> General laughter <\$E>.

<\$2> It’s a grey area.

2. This refers to when speakers allude directly to the title of a book or film, for example, ‘The Ring’ (film) or ‘Think Ahead to First Certificate’ (book).

## Appendix E: Humour and Laughter

### C-MELT01 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

	Sequence	Initiated by
1	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Just say something and we can all argue then.</i>            &lt;\$3&gt; Right.            &lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;            &lt;\$1&gt; <i>We'll all go against it.</i>            &lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
2	<p>&lt;\$6&gt; <i>Shall we start?</i>            &lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;            &lt;\$4&gt; <i>Shall we?</i></p>	Teacher
3	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; And so mine were people who got sort of about seventy to seventy-six seventy-seven on the PET exam. So we sort of took them to be pre-intermediate level and tried to get them up to low intermediate level that was the objective I think. And a lot of my students just wanted to do one extra semester that was the bulk of my students they were just finishing off their English obligation so instead of working towards the First Certificate exam &lt;\$=&gt; which is &lt;\$=&gt; well might be the final goal for some students I just u= used &lt;\$O3&gt; this em &lt;\$O3&gt; &lt;\$=&gt; spent &lt;\$=&gt; took the semester to be quite separate from the First Certificate course and did a lot of stuff on about their majors em talked a lot about jobs and CVs em job applications that was probably about half the semester that kind of thing. <i>And then just worked at consolidating the English that they already had so &lt;\$=&gt; didn't &lt;\$=&gt; didn't introduce a lot of new material did a lot of speaking practice. Quite a lot of writing reading the other one.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; &lt;\$O3&gt; What that? &lt;\$O3&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
4	<p>&lt;\$1&gt; So I started off with a group who were supposed to be computer science and electronics. <i>Started off with fifteen and with the usual tendency down to five at the end of the semester.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	HoD
5	<p>And eh basically what I worked with them was the [PUBLISHER] book on teaching computers to students and it's about as dry as you could probably get. <i>You know it's very hard to &lt;\$=&gt; get &lt;\$=&gt; make oscilloscopes and analogue systems sound very very interesting.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	HoD
6		Teacher

	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; &lt;\$=&gt; Yeah there was &lt;\/\$=&gt; &lt;\$O11&gt; there was quite a lot of &lt;\/\$O11&gt; No yeah I feel that they did get that information but not all of them took it in.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; &lt;\$O11&gt; <i>They don't read it &lt;\/\$O11&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\/\$E&gt;</p>	
7	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; &lt;\$=&gt; I &lt;\/\$=&gt; I think I have an answer for that. I think that they're actually very vague on what TOEFL is initially.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Right.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; To start off with they're very vague about it. They know.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Right.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>They know there's a book and that it has something to do with America and universities.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
8	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; And they didn't remember yes I frequently said that to them 'Do you not remember' and they were like 'Nah'. And I mean that's not any= eh that's not em any fault of ours really. It's a fault of theirs.</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; No really we gave them all the information they needed+</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Exactly and <i>plus they're adults or they're beginning to be adults so &lt;\/\$=&gt; they &lt;\/\$=&gt; &lt;\$X&gt; they've   they have &lt;\/\$X&gt; got to start copping on and paying attention.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
9	<p>&lt;\$9&gt; Yeah. But in the modules it was high levels it was always a problem to get them to go. And I think it's also partly maybe a mental thing they they're out of <i>you know they know how to answer 'what's your name?' and 'how are you?' and so they kind of like got in their heads like 'yeah English I don't have a problem with English'.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Oh dear.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
10	<p>&lt;\$1&gt; Which is probably a good seventy-five per cent of the problem &lt;\$O15&gt; maybe organising their time &lt;\/\$O15&gt; yeah that's just if you ask them they'll say "why didn't you come?" and some like eh Berenice some of yours will say <i>I just have no time allotted within my schedule to be able to go to a class even if you gave it to me unless you gave it to me at midnight.</i></p>	HoD

	<\$E> laughter <\$E>	
11	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; And there was a pile of them there and they're ninth semester <i>and there's piles of them in PET one and two</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p><i>and &lt;\$X&gt; they'd   they would &lt;\$X&gt; drive you mad like can't come to this I'm going to the emu farm tomorrow can't come to this</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p><i>they drive you mad so I said to them in the end I said I shouldn't have done this but I said look you're tenth semester next semester and Peter isn't going to sign your paper saying that you're going to pass English so therefore when you're studying for your thesis you'll have to study English as well and.</i></p>	Teacher
12	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; What are we going to do? Threaten them? Bully them?</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; No.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Yeah it gets kind of &lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Are you supposed to go down on your hands and knees? Bribe them? Give them back their two pesos?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; What what well we're powerless really.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Yeah I think we are.</p>	Teacher
13	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>I agree and disagree at the same time.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p>Ah I still don't think that we should foist on all of them a business English course unless they want to do it+</p>	Teacher
14	<p>&lt;\$6&gt; <i>Where would you like to see yours go?*</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; No no I mean you've been teaching them where do you see they would like or where would you recommend?</p> <p>*It was not this teacher's intention to provoke laughter; the unintended humour lies in the knowing laughter – basically because there are a number of humorous answers for this question – <i>to hell/anywhere but not back to my class</i> etc. – Jenny joins in the laughter before reformulating her utterance.</p>	Teachers

15	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; &lt;\$O22&gt; <i>You can only &lt;\\$O22&gt; teach 'hard drive' so many times.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; What?</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>You can only teach 'hard drive' so many times.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
16	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; They understand but the KETs and PETs probably don't because I mean nobody el= <i>we didn't even really know what we were doing let alone you guys.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
17	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; A huge range of not only sort of technical job type things but also humanistic type stuff as well.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>For engineers?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Cos they're still people even if they're.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Electronic engineers they're still people.</i></p>	Teacher
18	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; Depending on the course I mean I I didn't do job interviews.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Right.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Really?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; No &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>How could you have avoided it?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>How can you call yourself a teacher and not do.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Job interviews.</i></p>	Teacher
19	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; That's kind of why I asked what people thought about it.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>If they thought it was valid necessary sounds attractive to teach doesn't sound attractive to teach.</i></p>	Teacher

	<\$E> laughter <\$E>	
<b>20</b>	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; Yeah my students were just about at intermediate level I would say and they I mean the exams that I used at the end were <i>what would you say not watered down but they were.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Examples?</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Extracts yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; First certificate but not for example they did three readings instead of four but they were first certificate.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>They were samples.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Yeah samples.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Jesus.*</p> <p>*humour is because they have tried several words before they find the right one: <i>samples.</i></p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>21</b>	<p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Now I want you to ignore the following comment but it's useful that you know we've just bought these exams from em [PUBLISHER] you know and it says in big black bold letters in front under no circumstances must this exam be reproduced without the prior written and duly blah blah blah.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Paid for?</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>But shur people ignore this I suppose.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Tippex it out.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Tippex it out.</i></p>	<b>HoD</b>
<b>22</b>	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; Put a [UNIVERSITY] mark over it.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Would be processed and fined and things like that anyway that's why we have the four locks.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Okay so did we reach any decisions or.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	<b>HoD</b>
<b>5 = HoD      17 = T</b>		<b>TOTAL: 22</b>

## C-MELT02 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

	Sequence	Initiated by
1	<p>&lt;\$1&gt; No I'm not.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Julia you called it.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; I can just pass on. I didn't. Peter did. I just.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; Laughing &lt;\\$E&gt; <i>Peter isn't here.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>You're chair.</i></p>	Teacher
2	<p>&lt;\$1&gt; So if they're if you go down to your group or groups on Monday tell them to go to come back to the same classroom the next day and except if they're in post PET.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; And they'll know that. <i>I hope.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
3	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Oh I did the mathematics on that if we had if it if all the students had to do ten hours in the lab it would be practically impossible to do to have them at the computers.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; Hmm.</p> <p>&lt;\$6?&gt; In KET we &lt;\$G5+&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; I just mean that it's difficult enough to get them to come to class.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Yeah I think we've problems getting them to come to class never mind self-access.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p>	Teacher
4	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; &lt;\$O4&gt; Well may= maybe it was &lt;\\$O4&gt; forty-five I mean.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; I've forty-five here anyway.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; &lt;\$O5&gt; It was forty-five. Forty-five. &lt;\\$O5&gt; &lt;\$O6&gt; &lt;\$G5+&gt; or they have to pay &lt;\\$O6&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; &lt;\$O5&gt; &lt;\$H&gt; Yeah they have to pay if &lt;\\$H&gt; &lt;\\$O5&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; &lt;\$O6&gt; No not &lt;\$G?&gt; &lt;\\$O6&gt;.</p>	Teacher

	<p>&lt;E&gt; laughter &lt;E&gt;*</p> <p>*Laughter is on the basis that their attendance policy is confusing and hardly anybody knows how it really works.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p>&lt;3&gt; What was that?</p> <p>&lt;9&gt; <i>We accept field trip justificantes.</i></p> <p>&lt;3&gt; Right &lt;E&gt; laughs &lt;E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;4&gt; <i>We don't accept sickness.</i></p> <p>&lt;3&gt; <i>Visa.</i></p> <p>&lt;9&gt; <i>No we don't accept it.</i></p> <p>&lt;4&gt; <i>Family problems.</i></p> <p>&lt;1&gt; Exams?</p> <p>&lt;4&gt; Or anything like. Exams.</p>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>6</b>	<p>&lt;7&gt; <i>'I'm just upset'.</i></p> <p>&lt;E&gt; laughter &lt;E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;2&gt; <i>That's another one of those grey areas shall we say.</i></p> <p>&lt;3&gt; <i>'But my English class'.</i></p> <p>&lt;9&gt; <i>They have to get their hair done or go to the dentist.</i></p> <p>&lt;E&gt; laughter &lt;E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;2&gt; <i>It's a grey area.</i></p> <p>&lt;7&gt; <i>But we get paid anyway.</i></p> <p>&lt;E&gt; prolonged laughter &lt;E&gt;</p>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>7</b>	<p>&lt;7&gt; What we have decided is sixty to seventy-five attendance to take the exam right?</p> <p>&lt;E&gt; laughter &lt;E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;1&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;2&gt; Umhum.</p> <p>&lt;7&gt; And eh &lt;E&gt; laughing &lt;E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;2&gt; <i>Jenny we have it on tape here.</i></p>	<b>Teachers</b>

	<\$E> laughter <\\$E>	
<b>8</b>	<p>&lt;\$10&gt; We could vote.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Hmm.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; How many PET people are here now till we see. One. Two three four five. One two three four five ah there's six oh.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>Barry can count.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; What?</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Who else is missing now? Who else is missing? &lt;\$E&gt; Laughing &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; I= in KET we also &lt;\$G3&gt;+</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; The Limey.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; He's KET though.</p>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>9</b>	<p>&lt;\$9&gt; Three semesters to pass PET.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Pass KET.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; To pass KET sorry.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>KET. You're tough at KET level.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>Jeekist.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; Isn't it. Sounds more like punishment.</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>10</b>	<p>&lt;\$9&gt; Yes but we don't have the power to throw anybody out what I mean is we haven't been given that kind of clout we don't have that status in the university if they fail calculus they're out if they fail English they just continue.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; So &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt; <i>so I think we should just accept that our &lt;\$H&gt; horrible &lt;\\$H&gt; lowly status and.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; snort of laughter then general laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; <i>We're the poor cousins.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>Yeah and we know that.</i></p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>11</b>	<p>&lt;\$11&gt; KET one and they try hard they come to every class they struggle but they just can't get the fact that to make a sentence you put these verbs in this order you know and they're smart kids they do well in their other subjects</p>	<b>Teacher</b>

	<p>so. But there aren't that many of em. I I agree with Jack I don't want to beat them over the head with that. You're not good enough. Pay up your money.</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>Especially if we don't get it.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>To put into the party fund.</i></p>	
<b>12</b>	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; But if you you would have to in that case put it in 'chosed to' you know whereas you wouldn't see the exam results at this point he passed into PET three but he &lt;\$H&gt; quit &lt;\$H&gt; but sat the test &lt;\$G?&gt; sixty or.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; And then probably failed it &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt;. It's awful isn't it. <i>Yeah. It probably won't matter &lt;\$G?&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Go on Jenny.</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>13</b>	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; So it will be insufficient even if it's sufficient.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; Laughs &lt;\\$E&gt;. <i>Insufficient even if it's sufficient.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>Where did we get that kind of solution?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>When did we get that proposal?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>14</b>	<p>&lt;\$6&gt; Do you feel like we solved anything?</p> <p>&lt;\$10&gt; Insufficient sufficient.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Oh yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Does that mean me or everyone?</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; What?</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Generally. Have we achieved what we came to achieve?</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>Got a date or something?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; <i>No just confused here.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	<b>Teacher</b>

	<p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>I thought the meeting was em about Monday.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; About Monday and.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	
<b>15</b>	<p>&lt;\$2&gt; Okay. I'll go down and tell them to come back. <i>It means I don't have to teach classes.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$10&gt; Right.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>You could take the day off Barry.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Call in sick.</i></p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>16</b>	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; There are other cheaper easier places and the students come out engineers.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>And [NAME OF TOWN]'s cheaper.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>17</b>	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; I think we can formally close.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>I pronounce this meeting closed.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; Some laughter, shifting of chairs &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; We are done.</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>17 = T      0 = HoD</b>		<b>TOTAL: 17</b>

## C-MELT03 [Sub-corpus 1: México]

	Sequence	Initiated by
1	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Okay so I have a class at ten so that'll be.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Me too.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Me &lt;\$G1&gt; over.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Here.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Yeah okay.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</i></p>	HoD
2	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>So I would kind of request like from now on if we could cover the classes as much as possible. I kind of feel myself that even though sometimes we can't always do it that just sending them to the lab isn't the most productive way of doing it now it is a good way of getting it done &lt;\$E&gt; ironically with stress on <i>is</i> and <i>done</i> &lt;\$E&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>Laughter &lt;\$E&gt;.</i></p>	HoD
3	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>So just so that you see the framework and then I'll pull it together and the kind of the more thorny issues we'll just make a decision on it then and just let it run. Is that okay? So hopefully th= I'll be able to get that done as soon as Ross and Neil come and take over all the classes that I've been covering.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</i></p> <p><i>Right so that will be very nice.</i></p>	HoD
4	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>And did we get anybody for you?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>You were for me Peter.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</i></p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>No I'm supposed to be getting out of work okay right.</i></p>	Teacher
5	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>No I need like four mentors please.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</i></p>	Teacher
6	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>Another thing that eh so I suppose we'll just talk at random it's much easier.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</i></p>	HoD

7	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>I'm going to the bitch for the weekend.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; Laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;.</p>	<b>HoD</b>
8	<p>&lt;\$8&gt; <i>I think it's fun if you try to imitate the tape to to ba naw nah.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
9	<p>&lt;\$8&gt; There's no sort of reason why we couldn't do some sort of experimenting or testing with a few groups. And they haven't ac=. <i>Just one thing they're not used to our institution.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>and we have lots of classes so there's...</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
10	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; It's real English you know so that's one of the things. Maybe another question would be to ask ourselves okay just in our own teaching <i>I'm doing KET two no I'm doing KET one.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>KET one and two &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt;</p>	<b>HoD</b>
11	<p>&lt;\$6&gt; &lt;\$G5+&gt; so because we do lots of conversation and it would be a really boring conversation if you don't know the past tense.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; 'So tell me about your say again'.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; 'How how many years do you have?'</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; They've got that down so.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Yeah. They got that down.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; 'I have fifteen'.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; 'I have fifteen years'.</p>	<b>Teachers</b>
12	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; And now I'm teaching KET three and I'm not even looking at the book. Not because I'm ignoring what we decided &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\\$E&gt; but</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\\$E&gt;</p> <p>because most of my students were from KET two so were supposed to have covered that half of the book already you know.</p>	<b>HoD</b>
<b>7 = HoD      5 = T</b>		<b>TOTAL: 12</b>

## C-MELT04 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

Sequence		Initiated by
<b>1</b>	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; I think this is going to take a lot of organising actually.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Maybe what we need to do is to.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>Throw on some music</i> &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; <i>Put on a video.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>2</b>	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; I'm wondering about the ramifications there of having somebody who isn't.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Insurance.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Qualified yeah there might be.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; I don't know actually what the story with that is you could ask her though.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; We could ask her yeah she might or she might know somebody who would do it.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>Or don't call it Yoga.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; <i>Stretching.</i></p>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>2 = T      0 = DoS</b>		<b>TOTAL: 2</b>

## C-MELT05 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

	Sequence	Initiated by
1	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; Joo is it?</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Zoo. Zoo. &lt;\$E&gt; laughing &lt;/\$E&gt; Z-O-O.</p> <p>&lt;\$2&gt; Z-O-O?</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Animals in a zoo</i> &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
2	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; He was always smiling &lt;\$026&gt; &lt;\$G?&gt; yeah and &lt;/\$026&gt; it's not very I dunno &lt;\$H&gt; I feel fairly frustrated &lt;/\$H&gt; by that class this morning. It really was+</p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; &lt;\$026&gt; <i>It was probably after I had him in class</i> &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt; &lt;\$026&gt; now.</p> <p>&lt;\$F?&gt; Mm &lt;\$&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Yeah. I do too &lt;\$027&gt; &lt;\$G5&gt; &lt;/\$027&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; Just very &lt;\$027&gt; a very difficult class &lt;/\$027&gt; to get going this morning.</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>"So does anyone?"</i></p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; Yeah &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; ironically &lt;/\$E&gt; <i>Great.</i></p>	Teacher
3	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; Who's that? Isn't he some form of like Chinese Korean?</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>That's no excuse though.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; No no I'm just saying.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; <i>He's not a real Korean you know what I mean.</i></p>	Teacher
4	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; Okay.</p> <p>&lt;\$M?&gt; And em the other two in then.</p>	Teacher

	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; And the other two are going up. Perfect.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>But they have to be cheery.</i> &lt;\$G3&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>If they can't tell you a joke before they go in kick them out of the class.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$8&gt; Yeah that's the thing.</p>	
5	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; What's her name? <i>Bouquet?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; No no I I.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>Bucket.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>I'm only joking.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	DoS
6	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; Who's Patrick now?</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; Em. Li Be.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Li Be?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Oh that's Patrick?</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; You know the way they change the names.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; And eh.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>He can't make his mind up.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Oh yeah Patrick.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>He told me last week his name was Michael.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Compulsive liar as well.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>He wasn't happy with Michael.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Maybe that's his confirmation name or something.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teachers

	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; Confirmation name.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; <i>He was calling himself Martin initially.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Oh really.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;\$E&gt;</p>	
7	<p>&lt;\$3&gt; Yeah. So anybody to go down?</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>No but it would cheer us up a lot if you could tell us when Juan is leaving.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; Okay.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; That's exactly what I wanted to know.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; I'll check that out for ye.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Please do &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; <i>It would make it worth the time.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Oh he's unbearable. He's unbearable.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>I think actually he wants you for two hours private. I was only joking.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;. <i>I would say oh well depends how much &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;. Maybe all it would take would be a bribe &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teachers
8	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; He doesn't understand what I ask him. <i>He understands because I'm in front of him that I'm asking him &lt;\$H&gt; if he understands &lt;/\$H&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
9	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; Okay. Anyone else.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>Yeah. Apart from the geographical base?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
1 = DoS      8 = T		TOTAL: 9

## C-MELT06 [Sub-corpus 2: Ireland]

	Sequence	Initiated by
1	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; They need to come down to buy the book. That's how you solve the problem of making sure everybody buys it. So like it or not that's how we're going to deal with it. Em. Tommy and Sean.</p> <p>&lt;\$6&gt; <i>Oooh.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; Scary yeah.</p>	Teacher
2	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; Because she threw a fit.</p> <p>&lt;\$10&gt; Oh did she?</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; And she said she'd rather take a holiday. &lt;\$O2&gt; For the entire &lt;/\$O2&gt; summer.</p> <p>&lt;\$10&gt; &lt;\$O2&gt; Oh (elongated) &lt;/\$O2&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$1?&gt; An Italian?</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$10&gt; <i>I'd say she wanted to take a holiday alright. *</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p><i>*from her tone, it sounds like the student is lazy or does not attend class regularly or there is some other negative evaluation of her behaviour.</i></p>	Teachers
3	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; Okay. Well if she leapfrogs again she'll be she'll be out of the school.</p> <p>&lt;\$12&gt; Mm.</p> <p>&lt;\$7&gt; She just can't. Liam and Emilio. Emilia.*</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$13&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; laughing &lt;/\$E&gt; <i>Is she a man or is she a woman? You have a problem with my sexuality.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p><i>*&lt;\$13&gt;'s name is Emilia.</i></p>	Teacher
4	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; Okay I'll look into it so. So that's it. It's harsh I know but. You might as well be talking to the wall. So that's the way &lt;\$H&gt; to go &lt;/\$H&gt; from now on. So there's only a few of them left Tuesday morning.</p>	Teacher

	<p>&lt;\$13&gt; <i>So is that what we say to them tomorrow? 'Out you go'.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; <i>No class if you have no book.</i></p>	
5	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; There's a reason why we've done this &lt;\$O6&gt; &lt;\$G4&gt; &lt;/\$O6&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;+</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; &lt;\$O6&gt; <i>Off with their head</i> &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; &lt;\$G5&gt; the first time I think didn't we.</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; Yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>He'll have to go.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; Laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p>	Teacher
6	<p>&lt;\$7&gt; Oh and Sally I have an e-mail for you in my office whenever you come up down for it. Daniel says hello.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; <i>A few speakers say 'ooh'</i> &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>Well well well Sally.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; <i>So. Where were we in this exciting meeting?</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p>	Teachers (and DoS)
7	<p>&lt;\$5&gt; Okay so we have those two.</p> <p>&lt;\$3&gt; <i>I said like the &lt;\$G3&gt;.*</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$5&gt; That should go up anyway.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Okay.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$12&gt; Bet that didn't go down very well.</p> <p>*&lt;\$3&gt; says something inaudible here but it is the source of the laughter. From &lt;\$12&gt;'s comment <i>bet that didn't go down very well</i>, she has probably told a student that they were not yet good enough to move up a level.</p>	Teacher

8	<p>&lt;\$13&gt; What's her name?</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Fugit?</p> <p>&lt;\$13&gt; Fergit yeah.</p> <p>&lt;\$4&gt; Yep.</p> <p>&lt;\$13&gt; <i>She's em a bit difficult. She's a bit cross lookin'.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$13&gt; <i>She just sat in the class looking &lt;\$E&gt; obviously makes a face &lt;/\$E&gt;.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
9	<p>&lt;\$6&gt; Which one is Mi Young? <i>Oh yes.*</i></p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; Cream dress &lt;\$O10&gt; brown hair &lt;/\$O10&gt;.</p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>*The way that &lt;\$6&gt; says <i>oh yes</i> makes it sound as if he has realised just who she is and that she is difficult to forget for whatever reason (she is difficult? Particularly attractive?)</p>	Teacher
10	<p>&lt;\$10&gt; And just Mariana is a bit moody but.</p> <p>&lt;\$11&gt; Yeah &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;. <i>A bit limited as far as personality goes.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p>	Teacher
	<p>&lt;\$4&gt; Am. Oh yeah. At ten thirty I probably won't be around <i>so if you have any questions at all about the syllabus Sally will sort it out.</i></p> <p>&lt;\$E&gt; laughter &lt;/\$E&gt;</p> <p>&lt;\$1&gt; &lt;\$E&gt; smiling &lt;/\$E&gt; I'm not sure if I'll sort it out.</p> <p>&lt;\$9&gt; <i>'I'll sort you out'</i> &lt;\$E&gt; laughs &lt;/\$E&gt;.</p>	Teacher
11 = T      0 = DoS		TOTAL: 11

<b>Initiated by DoS/HoD</b>	<b>Initiated by teachers</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>73</b>

**Appendix F: Publications relating to this thesis**

- Vaughan, E. 2007. "I think we should just accept...our horrible lowly status": Analysing teacher-teacher talk within the context of community of practice.' *Language Awareness*, 16(3): 173-189.
- Vaughan, E. 2008. "Got a date or something?": An analysis of the role of humour and laughter in the workplace meetings of English language teachers. In: A. Ädel and R. Reppen (Eds.) *Corpora and Discourse: The Challenge of Different Settings*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 95-115.
- Vaughan, E. (forthcoming). How can teachers use a corpus for their own research? In: M.J. McCarthy and A. O'Keeffe (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics*. London: Routledge.