

# **Community and identity in language: Small words, big ideas**

Elaine Vaughan & Brian Clancy

University of Limerick/Mary Immaculate  
College, Ireland.

Sociolinguistics Symposium 20

June 15-18, 2014

Jyväskylä, Finland

# What will we talk about?

<\$1> What year were ye in Cyprus?

<\$2> In ninety five.

<\$3> Four.

<\$2> Five.

<\$3> Oh right.

<\$2> Four **we** were in France and [name] was there.

<\$3> Three **we** were in France.

<\$1> Three **we** were in France.

<\$5> Ninety+

<\$2> Oh it's four so.

<\$5> +ninety five **we** were <\$G?>.

<\$3> Yeah that's+

<\$1> Ninety-four **ye** were in Spain mum.

<\$6> Do you feel like **we** solved anything?

<\$1> Does that mean me or everyone?

<\$6> Generally. Have **we** achieved what we came to achieve?

<\$7> Got a date or something?

<\$E> Laughter <\\$E>

<\$6> No just confused here.

<\$E> All laugh <\\$E>

# Summary of the Data

---

C-MELT

Family corpus

---

**Length of recording**

3.5 hours

1 hour

**Number of speakers**

33

6

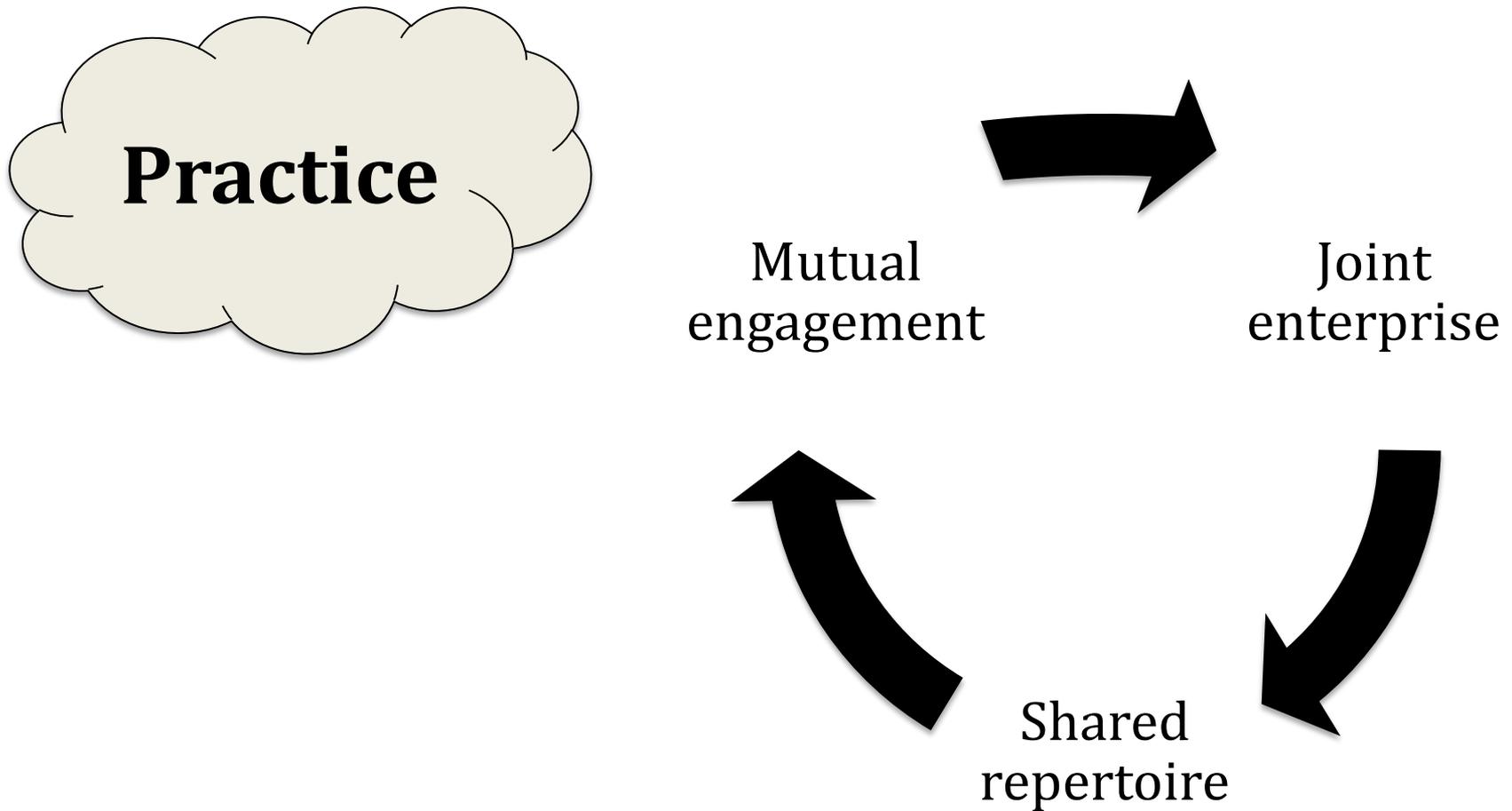
**Number of words**

39,975

12,531

---

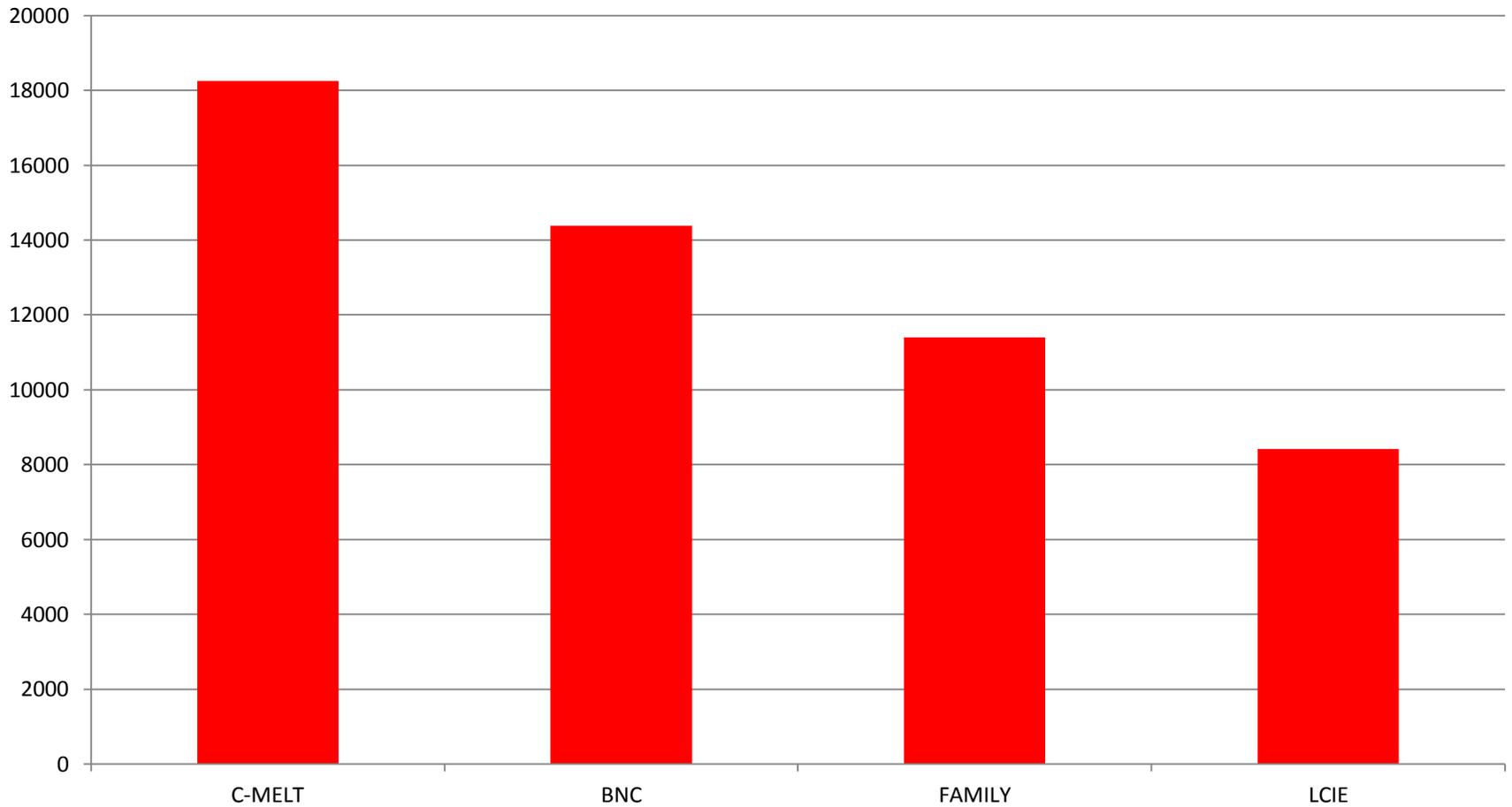
# A basic outline of the framework (Wenger 1998)



# A corpus view of the data

	C-MELT	Family Corpus	LCIE	BNC (Spoken)
1	the	the	the	the
2	to	you	I	I
3	I	it	and	you
4	and	I	you	and
5	yeah	to	to	it
6	that	a	it	that
7	of	and	a	a
8	you	of	that	's
9	a	that	of	to
10	it	in	yeah	of
11	<b>we</b>	is	in	n't
12	they	yeah	was	in
13	in	no	is	<b>we</b>
14	so	it's	like	is
15	is	on	know	do
16	but	what	he	they
17	have	do	on	er
18	do	<b>we</b>	they	was
19	think	now	have	yeah
20	be	was	there	have

# *We* normalised per million words



# *We*

- ““We” is always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and rejection, of inclusion and exclusion’  
(Pennycook 1994: 175)
- Complexity of reference: encoding and decoding

# We in the family - inclusive

- <\$1> It's nothing got to do with <\$02> presents <\\$02>.
- <\$2> <\$02> Shut up <\\$02>.
- <\$3> <\$E> laughing <\\$E> Come here [name] shut up.
- <\$1> It's nothing to do with presents and happiness it's got to do with celebrating the birth of Jesus.
- <\$5> Okay so **we** won't give you <\$01> any presents <\\$01>.
- <\$1> <\$01> **We**'re not <\\$01> <\$02> allowed be happy <\\$02> <\$03> because **we** are Catholic <\\$03>.
- <\$2> <\$02> [name] shut up <\\$02>.
- <\$3> <\$03> You're having no <\\$03> presents so are you?
- <\$5> I'll say a prayer for you.
- <\$1> **We** are Catholic. **We** are not allowed be happy. It's all about the birth of Jesus.
- <\$E> speaker two laughs <\\$E>

# *We in the family - exclusive*

<Daughter> Mm. Because one night **we** were goin right and **we** got stopped. Another two got in in front of us and **we** said what oh they're gold cards.

<Daughter> **We** have them outside too the eighty mini bulbs. Is that what they are? Eighty mini bulbs <\$G3> yeah **we've** them too.

<Son> Are you doin corpus stuff?

<Daughter> Ah **we** hit at it last semester like.

<Son> +aren't **we** already twinned with Quimper?

<Daughter> It's in France.

# I, YOU, WE...

<DoS> Right. So yeah that's the spirit of the thing. The other thing is that **I** want to mention to **you** is eh it's a huge big issue that's **we're** facing everyday about students getting lost or not coming in and eh eh a wider kind of an issue...

# *We* in the workplace: Mapping participant deictics (Vaughan, 2009 after Wortham, 1996)

WE	REFERENCE
[PROF]	As professionals, e.g. in the classroom with our students
[DEPT]	The teachers as a whole within this department/school
[MEET]	Procedural 'we': everyone in this room at this meeting, at this point in time
[OTHER]	'We' indexes some other entity e.g. <i>a bit of both as we say in Ireland</i>

# Explicitly articulating identity

Julia: Because that's what **we're** trying to do **we're** trying to make **them** study and learn English. But making **them** pay for not is not. Because there are some students that two hundred and fifty is not that much money and it won't touch them and there are others. Who it really hurts and that's total= **that's just an issue that is so far removed from learning English.** I don't know.

Olive: **We're** teachers here **we're** not here to decide **who pays what or.**

Kate: Yeah.

Anna: Exactly.

# Negotiating identity

Barry: It's also university policy about attendance which **we're** not following it's also university policy about a lot of things which **we** don't do.

Samantha: Yeah.

Katie: **We're separate.**

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

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

Jack: Yeah **autonomous.**

Barry: **Subversive.**

Katie: An **autonomous state.**

# Negotiating identity...

(Vaughan 2007)

**Stuart:** 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. So <\$E> laughs <\\$E> so I think **we** should just accept that our horrible lowly status and.  
<\$E> laughter <\\$E>

**Barry:** **We're** the poor cousins.

**Stuart:** Yes and **we** know that.

<\$E> Snort of laughter. General laughter <\\$E>

# Concluding remarks

- How to 'flesh out' (linguistically) the ideas of community and identity?
- Small, high frequency items: complex, rich and rewarding